

# Homer

## The Iliad

translated and abridged by  
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This abridged version of Homer's *Iliad* has been prepared by Ian Johnston of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, from my translation of the complete poem. This abridged translation is roughly one-third the length of the original poem. Each line is a direct translation from the Greek original (i.e., I have shortened the poem by removing large parts of it, not by rewriting different sections). In many places, I have included a very short prose summary of the missing material placed in square brackets and italics (e.g., [*Summary sentences*]). However, these short summaries do not include all details of the omitted text. And in many places no summary is provided for missing material.

This translation uses the traditional Latinate spellings and common English equivalents for the Greek names (e.g., Achilles, Menelaus, Achaeans) rather than modern renditions which strive to stay closer to the Greek (e.g., Akhilleus, Menelaos, Akhaians), with the exception of a few names of gods (Cronos, Ouranos) and a few others. Where there is a common English rendition of the name (e.g., Ajax, Troy, Teucer), I have used that. A dieresis over a vowel indicates that it is pronounced by itself. For example "Deïphobus" is pronounced "Day-ee-pho-bus" not "Day-pho-bus" or "Dee-pho-bus."

In numbering the lines, I have normally included a short indented line with the shorter line immediately above it, so that the two partial lines count as a single line in the tally. Note that the numbering of the lines starts again in each book.

Note that Homer calls the Greek forces at Troy *Achaeans*, *Danaans*, or *Argives*, not *Greeks*. *Alexander* is an alternative name for *Paris*. And *Troy* is frequently called *Ilion*.

At the end of this text there is a **Glossary of Names and Places**.

A printed paperback edition of this abridged translation is available from [Richer Resources Publications](#).

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### Book One

#### The Quarrel at the Ships

Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles, son of Peleus -  
that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans  
to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls  
deep into Hades, leaving their dead bodies  
carrion food for dogs and birds -  
all in fulfillment of the will of Zeus.

Start at the point where Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
that king of men, quarreled with noble Achilles.

Which of the gods incited these two men to fight?

That god was Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto. 10  
Angry with Agamemnon, he cast plague down  
onto the troops - deadly infectious evil.  
For Agamemnon had dishonoured the god's priest,  
Chryses, who'd come to the ships to find his daughter,  
Chryseis, bringing with him a huge ransom.  
He begged Achaeans, above all the army's leaders,  
the two sons of Atreus:

"Menelaus, Agamemnon, sons of Atreus,  
all you well-armed Achaeans, may the gods  
on Olympus grant you wipe out Priam's city, 20  
and then return home safe and sound.  
Release my dear child to me. Take this ransom.  
Honour Apollo, far-shooting son of Zeus."

All the Achaeans roared out their support:

"Respect the priest. Take the generous ransom."

Displeased, Agamemnon dismissed Chryses roughly -

"Old man,  
don't let me catch you by our hollow ships,  
sneaking back here today or later on.  
I'll not release the girl to you, no, not before  
she's grown old with me in Argos, far from home, 30  
working the loom, sharing my bed. Go away.  
If you want to get home safely, don't anger me."

The old man, afraid, obeyed his words, walked off in silence,  
along the shore by the tumbling, crashing surf.  
Some distance off, he prayed to Lord Apollo,  
Leto's fair-haired child:

"God with the silver bow,  
hear my prayer: Force the Danaans  
to pay full price for my tears with your arrows."

So Chryses prayed. Phoebus Apollo heard him. 40  
He came down from Olympus top enraged,  
carrying on his shoulders bow and covered quiver,  
his arrows rattling in anger against his arm.  
So the god swooped down, descending like the night.  
He sat some distance from the ships, shot off an arrow -  
the silver bow reverberated ominously.  
First, the god massacred mules and swift-running dogs,  
then loosed sharp arrows in among the troops themselves.  
Thick fires kept burning corpses ceaselessly.

For nine days Apollo rained death down upon the troops. 50  
On the tenth, Achilles summoned an assembly.  
White-armed Hera put that thought into his mind,

concerned for the Danaans, seeing them die.  
The men gathered. The meeting came to order.  
Swift-footed Achilles rose to speak:

"Son of Atreus,  
I fear we're being beaten back, forced home,  
if we aren't all going to be destroyed right here,  
with war and plague killing off Achaeans.  
Come now, let's ask some prophet, priest,  
interpreter of dreams - for dreams, too, come from Zeus -  
a man who might say why Apollo is so angry, 60  
whether he faults our prayers and offerings,  
whether somehow he'll welcome sacrificial smoke  
from perfect lambs and goats, then rouse himself  
and release us from this plague."

Achilles spoke and took his seat.  
Then Calchas, Thestor's son, stood up before them all,  
the most astute interpreter of birds, who understood  
present, future, past. His skill in prophecy,  
Apollo's gift, had led Achaean ships to Troy.  
He addressed the troops, thinking of their common good:

"Apollo does not fault us for prayers or offerings, 70  
but for his priest, disgraced by Agamemnon,  
who did not free his daughter and take ransom.  
That's why the archer god has brought disaster,  
and will bring still more. He won't remove  
this wretched plague from the Danaans,  
until we hand back bright-eyed Chryseis,  
give her to her beloved father, freely,  
without ransom, and offer holy sacrifice  
at Chryse. If we will carry out all that,  
we may change Apollo's mind, appease him." 80

So he spoke and sat back down. Then, Atreus' son,  
wide ruling, mighty Agamemnon, stood up before them,  
incensed, spirit filled with huge black rage.  
Eyes blazing fire, he rounded first on Calchas:

"Prophet of evil, when have you ever said  
good things to me? You love to predict the worst,  
always the worst! You never show good news.  
Now, in prophecy to the Danaans,  
you say archer Apollo brings us pain  
because I was unwilling to accept 90  
fine ransom for Chryses' daughter, Chryseis.  
But I have a great desire to take her home.  
Still, I'm prepared to give her back, if that's best.  
I want the people safe, not all killed off.  
But then you'll owe me another prize.  
I won't be the only Argive left without a gift.  
That would be entirely unfair to me.  
You all can see my spoils are going elsewhere."

At that point, swift-footed Achilles answered the king:

"Noble son of Atreus, most acquisitive of men, 100  
how can brave Achaeans give you a prize now?  
There are none left for us to pass around.  
We've divided up what we allotted,  
loot from captured towns we devastated.  
For men to make a common pile again  
would be most unfair. Send the girl back now,  
as the god demands. Should Zeus ever grant  
we pillage Troy, a city rich in goods,  
we'll give you three or four times as much."

Mighty Agamemnon then said in reply: 110

"Achilles, you're a fine man, like a god.  
But don't conceal what's in your heart.  
You'll not trick me or win me with your words.  
You intend to keep your prizes for yourself,  
while the army takes my trophy from me.  
That's why you tell me to give Chryseis back.  
Let Achaeans give me another prize,  
equal in value, something I'll enjoy.  
If not, then I'll take a prize myself by force,  
The man I visit is going to be enraged. 120  
But let's postpone discussion of all this.  
Let's drag a black ship down to the sacred sea,  
select a crew, load oxen on for sacrifice,  
and Chryseis, that fair-complexioned girl,  
so with a sacrifice we may appease  
the god who shoots from far away."

Scowling grimly, swift-footed Achilles interposed:

"You insatiable creature, quite shameless.  
I didn't come to battle over here  
because of Trojans. I have no fight with them. 130  
They never stole my bulls or horses,  
or razed my crops in fertile Phthia,  
where heroes grow. Many shady mountains  
and the roaring sea stand there between us.  
But you, great shameless man, we came with you,  
to please you, to win honour from the Trojans -  
for you, dog face, and for Menelaus.  
You don't consider this, don't think at all.  
You threaten now to confiscate the prize  
I worked so hard for, gift from Achaea's sons. 140  
When we Achaeans loot some well-built Trojan town,  
my prizes never match the ones you get.  
The major share of war's fury rests on me.  
But when we hand around the battle spoils,  
you get much larger trophies. Worn out in war,  
I reach my ships with something fine but small.  
So I'll return home now, back to Phthia.

It's far better to sail back in my curved ships.  
I don't fancy staying here unvalued,  
to pile up riches, treasures just for you." 150

To that, Agamemnon, king of men, shot back:

"Fly off home then, if that's your heart's desire.  
I'll not beg you to stay on my account.  
I have others around to honour me,  
especially all-wise Zeus himself.  
Of all the kings Zeus cherishes, it's you  
I hate the most. You love constant strife -  
war and combat. So what if you're strong?  
Some god gave you that. So scurry off home.  
Take ships and friends. Go rule your Myrmidons. 160  
I don't like you or care about your rage.  
But I'll make this threat: I'll take your prize,  
fair-cheeked Briseis. I'll fetch her in person.  
You'll see just how much I'm the better man.  
And others will hate to speak to me as peers,  
in public claiming full equality with me."

As Agamemnon spoke, Peleus' son, Achilles,  
was overwhelmed with anguish, heart torn two ways,  
debating in his shaggy chest what he should do:  
Should he draw out the sharp sword on his thigh, 170  
incite the crowd, kill Atreus' son, or suppress his rage,  
control his fury? As he argued in his mind and heart,  
he slid his huge sword part way from its sheath.  
At that moment, Athena came down from heaven.  
White-armed Hera sent her. She cherished both men,  
cared for them equally. Athena stood behind Achilles,  
grabbed him by his red-brown hair, invisible to all  
except Achilles. In astonishment he turned.  
At once he recognized Pallas Athena,  
the dreadful glitter in her eyes. Achilles spoke - 180  
his words had wings.

"Child of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
why have you come now?<sup>0</sup> Do you wish to see  
how overbearing Agamemnon is?  
I'll tell you where all this is going to lead:  
that arrogance will soon cost him his life."

Glittery-eyed Athena then spoke in reply:

"I came down from heaven to curb your passion,  
if you obey. White-armed Hera sent me.  
She loves you both alike, cares equally.  
Give up this quarrel. Don't draw your sword. 190  
Fight him with words, so he becomes disgraced.  
For I say to you, and this will happen,  
because of Agamemnon's arrogance  
some day gifts three times greater than this girl

will be set down before you. Control yourself.  
Obey."

Swift-footed Achilles answered Athena:

"Goddess, men should follow your instructions,  
though angry in their hearts. It's better so.  
The person who's obedient to the gods,  
the gods attend to all the more."

Obeying Athena's words, 200  
Achilles relaxed his huge fist on the silver hilt  
and pushed the massive sword back in its scabbard.  
Athena then returned to heaven, home of Zeus,  
who bears the aegis, and the other gods.

Achilles turned again on Agamemnon, Atreus' son,  
with harsh abuse, his anger still unabated:

"You drunken sot, dog-eyed coward, timid as deer.  
A king who gorges on his own people!  
You lord it over worthless men. If not, 210  
son of Atreus, this would be your last offence.  
I'll tell you, swear a great oath on this point,  
by this sceptre, which Achaea's sons take in hand  
whenever they do justice in Zeus' name.  
An oath on this has power. On this I swear -  
the time will come when Achaea's sons  
all miss Achilles, a time when, in distress,  
you'll lack my help, a time when Hector,  
that man killer, destroys many warriors.  
Then grief will tear your hearts apart,  
because you shamed Achaea's finest man." 220

So the son of Peleus spoke, throwing to the ground  
the sceptre with the golden studs. Then he sat down,  
directly facing furious Agamemnon.

Then Nestor stood up, clear, sweet orator from Pylos.  
Sweeter than honey the words flowed from his tongue.  
Concerned about their common good, he said:

"Alas, this is great sorrow for Achaeans.  
Priam and Priam's children will be glad,  
the hearts of other Trojans swell with joy,  
should they find out about such quarreling, 230  
a fight between you two, among Danaans  
the very best for counsel or combat.  
But listen. You are both younger men than I.  
And I've been colleague of better men than you,  
Yet they heard me and followed my advice.  
So listen, both of you. That's what's best now.  
Agamemnon, you're an excellent man,  
but do not take Briseis from Achilles.

Let that pass. Achaea's sons gave her to him first.  
And you, Peleus' son, don't seek to fight the king, 240  
not as your enemy. Son of Atreus, check your anger.  
Set aside, I urge you, your rage against Achilles,  
who provides, in the middle of war's evils,  
a powerful defence for all Achaeans."

Mighty Agamemnon then replied to Nestor:

"Old man, everything you say is true enough.  
But this man wants to put the rest to shame,  
rule all of us, lord it over everyone.  
But some, I think, will not obey him.  
So what if the gods, who live forever, 250  
made him a spearman? Is that some reason  
we should let him say such shameful things?"

Achilles, interrupting Agamemnon, shouted:

"I'd be called a coward, a nobody,  
if I held back from any action  
because of something you might say.  
Order other men about. Don't tell me  
what I should do. I'll not obey you any more.  
But I will tell you this - remember it well -  
I'll not raise my hand to fight about that girl, 260  
no, not against you or any other man.  
You Achaeans gave her to me, and now,  
you seize her back again. But you'll not take  
another thing from my swift black ship -  
you'll get nothing else with my consent.  
If you'd like to see what happens, just try.  
My spear will quickly drip with your dark blood."

Then they stood up, dissolving the assembly by the ships.  
Agamemnon dragged a swift ship down the shore,  
chose twenty sailors, loaded it with oxen, 270  
offerings for the god, and led on fair-cheeked Chryseis.  
Shrewd Odysseus shipped on as leader. All aboard,  
they set off, carving a pathway through the sea.

Atreus' son ordered troops to cleanse themselves.  
The men bathed in the sea, washed off impurities.  
They then made sacrificial offerings to Apollo -  
hundreds of perfect bulls and goats - beside the restless sea.  
Savory smells curled up amid the smoke high into heaven.

The men thus occupied, Agamemnon did not forget  
the challenge he'd made earlier to Achilles. 280  
He called his heralds, Talthibius and Eurybates:

"Go to Achilles' tent, Peleus's son,  
take fair-complexioned Briseis by the hand.  
Bring her to me. If he won't surrender her,  
I'll come myself in force and take her.

For him that will be a worse disaster."

With these firm orders, he dismissed the men, who moved off,  
heavy hearted, along the shore of the restless sea.

They reached the huts and ships of the Myrmidons.

There they found Achilles seated by his hut  
and his black ship. As he saw them approach, 290  
in his heart Achilles sensed their purpose. He called them.

"Cheer up, heralds, messengers for gods and men.

Come here. I don't blame you, but Agamemnon.

He sends you both here for the girl Briseis.

Come, Patroclus, born from Zeus, fetch the girl.

Give her to these two men to take away.

Let them both witness, before blessed gods,

mortal men, and that unfeeling king,

if ever there's a need for me again 300  
to defend others from a shameful death."

Patroclus did as his dear comrade had requested.

He led out fair-cheeked Briseis from the hut  
and gave her up to be led off. The heralds went back,  
returning to Achaean ships, Briseis with them,  
but against her will.

Achilles then, in tears,

withdrew from his companions, sat by the shore,  
staring at the wide gray seas. Stretching out his hands,

he cried aloud, praying repeatedly to Thetis,

his beloved mother. "Mother, since you gave me life - 310  
if only for a while - Olympian Zeus,

high thunderer, should give me due honour.

But he doesn't grant me even slight respect.

For wide-ruling Agamemnon, Atreus' son,

has shamed me, has taken away my prize,

appropriated it for his own use."

As he said this, he wept.

His noble mother heard him from deep within the sea,

where she sat by her old father. Quickly she rose up,

moving above gray waters, like an ocean mist,

and settled down before him, as he wept. She stroked him, 320  
then said:

"My child, why these tears? What sorrows

weigh down your heart? Tell me, so we'll both know.

Don't hide from me what's on your mind.

With a deep groan, swift-footed Achilles then replied.

"Why should I tell you what you know? Heralds came

to take away Briseis from my huts,

the girl who is my gift from Achaea's sons.

So now, if you can, protect your son.

Go to Mount Olympus, implore Zeus,  
if ever you in word or deed have pleased him. 330  
For often I have heard you boast in father's house  
that you alone of all the deathless gods  
saved Zeus of the dark clouds from disgraceful ruin.  
Clasp his knee, remind him of all that,  
so he'll want to help the Trojans somehow,  
corner Achaeans by the sea, by their ships' prows,  
have them destroyed, so they all enjoy their king,  
so the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon,  
himself may see his foolishness, dishonouring  
Achilles, the best of the Achaeans." 340

Thetis, shedding tears, answered her son, Achilles:

"O my child, why did I rear you,  
since I brought you up to so much pain?  
But I'll tell these things to thunder-loving Zeus.  
I'll go myself to snow-topped Mount Olympus,  
to see if he will undertake all this.  
Meanwhile, you should sit by your swift ships,  
angry at Achaeans. Take no part in war.  
I'll go to Zeus' bronze-floored house, clasp his knee.  
I think I'll get him to consent."

Thetis spoke. 350  
Then she went away, leaving Achilles there.

Odysseus sailed to Chryse, bringing with him  
the sacrificial animals as sacred offerings.  
When they had sailed into deep anchorage,  
they took in the sails and stowed them in the ship,  
then rowed the ship in to its mooring place.  
Then Chryseis disembarked from the ocean ship.  
Resourceful Odysseus led her to the altar,  
placed her in her beloved father's hands, then said: 360

"Chryses, I have been sent by Agamemnon,  
ruler of men, to bring your daughter to you,  
and then, on behalf of the Danaans,  
to make an offering to lord Apollo -  
all these sacrificial beasts - to placate the god,  
who now inflicts such dismal evil on us."

Raising his arms, Chryses prayed out loud on their behalf:

"Hear me, god of the silver bow, protector  
of Chryse, mighty lord of holy Cilla,  
sacred Tenedos. You heard me earlier, 370  
when I prayed to you. Just as you honoured me,  
striking hard against Achaeans then, so now,  
grant me what I pray for - remove disaster,  
this wretched evil, from the Danaans."

So Chryses spoke. Phoebus Apollo heard him.

Meanwhile, Achilles, divinely born son of Peleus,  
sat down in anger alongside his swift ships. Not once  
did he attend assembly where men win glory,  
or go out to fight. But he pined away at heart,  
remaining idle by his ships, yearning  
for the hue and cry and clash of battle. 380

Thetis did not forget the promise to her son.  
She rose up through the ocean waves at day break,  
then moved high up to great Olympus. She found Zeus,  
wide-seeing son of Cronos, some distance from the rest,  
seated on the highest peak of many-ridged Olympus.  
She sat down right in front of him. With her left hand,  
she clutched his knees, with her right she cupped his chin,  
in supplication to lord Zeus, son of Cronos:

"Father Zeus, if, among the deathless gods, 390  
I've ever served you well in word or deed,  
then grant my prayer will be fulfilled.  
Bring honour to my son, who, of all men  
will be Fate's quickest victim. For just now,  
Agamemnon, king of men, has shamed him.  
He seized his prize, robbing him in person,  
and kept it for himself. But honour him,  
Zeus, all-wise Olympian. Give the Trojans  
the upper hand, until Achaeans respect my son,  
until they multiply his honours." 400

Cloud gatherer Zeus, greatly troubled, said:

"A nasty business.  
What you say will set Hera against me.  
She provokes me so with her abuse. Even now,  
in the assembly of immortal gods,  
she's always insulting me, accusing me  
of favouring the Trojans in the war.  
But go away for now, in case Hera catches on.  
I'll take care of this, make sure it comes to pass.  
Come, to convince you, I'll nod my head.  
Among gods that's the strongest pledge I make. 410  
Once I nod my assent, nothing I say  
can be revoked, denied, or unfulfilled."

Zeus, son of Cronos, nodded his dark brows.  
The divine hair on the king of gods fell forward,  
down over his immortal head, shaking Olympus  
to its very base. The conference over, the two parted.  
Thetis plunged from bright Olympus back into the sea.

*[At a meeting of the gods, Zeus quarrels with Hera, who has guessed what Zeus has just promised to do for Thetis. Hephaestus soothes everyone. The gods enjoy a rich feast and then retire to bed.]*

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## Book Two

### Agamemnon's Dream

*[During the night Zeus tricks Agamemnon by sending him a false dream promising him victory over the Trojans and urging him to lead his troops to battle. Agamemnon gets up determined to follow what the dream has told him.]*

When goddess Dawn rose high up on Olympus,  
bringing light to Zeus and the immortals,  
Agamemnon bid the loud-voiced heralds summon  
all the long-haired Achaeans to assembly.  
Such a call went out. Men answered on the run.  
But first, Agamemnon convened a meeting  
of all his great-hearted senior counselors.  
They met by Nestor's ships, king born on Pylos.  
Agamemnon spoke to the assembled group:

"My friends, listen.  
A divine Dream has just come to me, 10  
through the sacred night, as I lay asleep,  
in form, size, and voice just like worthy Nestor.  
He stood above my head and spoke these words:

'Hear what I have to say. I come to you  
as Zeus' messenger, with his orders.  
He bids you quickly arm long-haired Achaeans,  
for now you can take Troy, city of wide streets.  
Immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus  
no longer disagree about all this. 20  
Hera's entreaties have persuaded them.  
The Trojans can expect from Zeus more sorrows,  
more disasters. Remember what I've said.'

"With that, Dream flew off, sweet Sleep released me.  
Come, then, let's get long-haired Achaeans  
somehow armed for battle."

Agamemnon finished speaking and sat back down.

Nestor stood up before them, king of sandy Pylos.  
With a wise sense of their common cause, he addressed them:

"My friends, chiefs and leaders of the Argives,  
if any other Achaean had told us such a dream, 30  
we would declare it quite false, dismiss it.  
But now the man who has a claim to be  
the greatest of Achaeans has witnessed it.  
So come, let's find a way to arm Achaea's sons."

So Nestor spoke. Then he began to make his way back,  
leaving the council meeting. The others stood up,  
all sceptre-bearing kings, following Nestor's lead,  
his people's shepherd. Troops came streaming out to them.

Just as dense clouds of bees pour out in endless swarms  
from hollow rocks, in clusters flying to spring flowers, 40  
charging off in all directions, so from ships and huts  
the many clans rushed out to meet, group after group.  
Among the troops Rumour blazed, Zeus' messenger,  
igniting them. The assembly was in uproar.

*[The Achaean assembly finally grows quiet and waits for the leaders to speak.]*

But a single man kept on yelling out abuse -  
scurrilous Thersites, expert in various insults,  
vulgar terms for inappropriate attacks on kings,  
whatever he thought would make the Argives laugh.  
Of all the men who came to Troy, he was the ugliest:  
bow legged, one crippled foot, rounded shoulders 50  
curving in toward his chest. On top, his pointed head  
sprouted thin, scraggly tufts of hair. Achilles hated him,  
as did Odysseus, too, both subject to his taunts.  
But now Agamemnon was the target of his gibes.

"Son of Atreus, what's your problem now?  
What do you lack? Your huts are stuffed with bronze,  
plenty of choice women, too - all presents  
we Achaeans give you as our leader,  
whenever we ransack some city.  
Or are you in need of still more gold, 60  
a ransom fetched by some horse-taming Trojan  
for his son tied up and delivered here  
by me or by some other Achaean?  
Or do you want a young girl to stash away,  
so you can screw her all by yourself?  
It's just not fair that you, our leader,  
have botched things up so badly for us,  
Let's sail home in our ships, leave this man,  
our king, in Troy here to enjoy his loot."

Once he stopped, noble Odysseus stood up quickly, 70  
confronting Thersites. Scowling, he lashed out sternly:

"Shut up, chatterbox. You're a champion talker.  
But don't try to have it out with kings.  
I'll tell you how things are going to be.  
If I find you being so foolish any more,  
then let Odysseus' head no longer stay  
upon his shoulders, let him no longer  
be called the father of Telemachus,  
if I don't grab you, rip off all your clothes,  
cloak and tunic, down to your cock and balls, 80  
and beat you back to the fast ships in tears,  
whipping you in shame from our assembly."

Saying this, Odysseus lashed out with the sceptre,  
hitting Thersites hard across his back and shoulders.  
He doubled up in pain, shedding many tears.

In the middle of Thersites' back sprang up  
bloody welts beneath the golden sceptre.  
He sat down, afraid and hurt, peering around,  
like an idiot, and rubbing away his tears.  
The soldiers, though discontent, laughed uproariously,

90

Then Nestor, the Geranian horseman, cried out:

"Son of Atreus, you must maintain with force  
your previous plan to lead the Argive troops  
directly to the harsh demands of war.  
And let those one or two be damned,  
the men who don't think like Achaeans,  
the few of them who yearn to go back home -  
something they'll find impossible to do."

Mighty Agamemnon then answered Nestor:

"Old man, in our assembly once again  
you win out over all Achaea's sons.  
O father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo -  
if I only had ten such counselors  
among Achaeans, king Priam's city  
would soon fall. But let's go off to eat,  
so we can resume the fight. Every one of you,  
get your spears and shields prepared for action.  
Feed your swift-footed horses properly.  
Inspect the chariots with a careful eye,  
so we can stand all day and battle Ares,  
hateful god of war. We'll get no respite,  
not even for a moment, except at dusk,  
when nightfall separates the frenzied soldiers.  
But if I see a man coming out to fight  
reluctantly, hanging back by our curved ships,  
he'll not escape being food for dogs and birds."

100  
110

Argives answered Agamemnon with a mighty roar,  
like waves by a steep cliff crashing on the rock face,  
lashed by South Wind's blasts, always foaming on the rock,  
whipped on by every wind gusting here and there.  
The men leapt up, moved off, scattering to ships,  
set fires by their huts, and each man ate his dinner.

120

Every man then sacrificed to the immortal gods,  
praying to escape death and war's killing zone.  
Agamemnon, king of men, sacrificed an ox,  
a fat one, five years old, to Zeus, exalted son of Cronos.  
He summoned the best senior men of all Achaeans.  
Then Agamemnon prayed on their behalf:

"Most powerful Zeus,  
exalted lord of thunder clouds, Zeus,  
who dwells in heaven, grant my prayer -  
May the sun not go down, nor darkness come,

130

before I have cast down Priam's palace,  
covered it with dust, destroyed its doors  
in all-consuming fire, and with my bronze sword  
sliced to shreds the tunic on Hector's chest.  
May many of his comrades lie beside him,  
face down on the ground, teeth grinding dirt."

So he prayed. But Cronos' son did not grant his wish.  
Zeus took the offering but increased their suffering.

Once the men had prayed, scattering barley grain, 140  
they pulled back the beast's head, slit its throat, flayed it,  
sliced thigh bones out and hid them in twin layers of fat,  
with raw meat on top. They cooked these on split wood,  
then placed the innards on spits in Hephaestus' fire.  
When the wrapped-up thigh bones were completely cooked,  
and they'd tasted samples of the inner organs,  
they chopped up the rest, arranged the meat on spits,  
cooked it carefully, then drew it from the fire.  
This work finished, the men prepared a meal and ate.  
Each soldier's appetite was fully satisfied - 150  
all dined equally. When every man had eaten  
as much food and drink as anyone could wish,  
Geranian horseman Nestor was the first to speak.

"Lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
king of men, let's end our discussions now,  
and not postpone work given by the gods.  
Come, let heralds of bronze-clad Achaeans  
summon all the soldiers to assembly.  
Let's move together across the wide front,  
to stir Achaea's men with blood-lust for this war." 160

Agamemnon, king of men, agreed with Nestor.  
He ordered clear-voiced heralds immediately  
to sound the battle call to long-haired Achaeans.  
The call went out. Troops assembled on the run.  
Around Agamemnon, kings nurtured by the gods  
rushed to establish order. With them strode Athena,  
her eyes glittering, holding up the aegis -  
her priceless, ageless, eternal aegis,  
its hundred golden tassels quivering, 170  
each finely woven, valued at a hundred oxen.  
With this, she sped on through Achaean ranks,  
like lightning, firing soldiers' hearts for war.  
As she passed, she roused in men that hot desire  
to fight, to kill. At once she made each man feel war  
far sweeter than returning home, finer than sailing  
in the hollow ships back to his dear native land.  
Just as an all-consuming fire burns through huge forests  
on a mountain top, and men far off can see its light,  
so, as soldiers marched out, their glittering bronze  
blazed through the sky to heaven, an amazing sight. 180

*[The Achaean troops march out in formation. The text lists the origin, the size, and the leadership of each contingent]*

Then wind-swift Iris came to Troy as messenger  
from aegis-bearing Zeus carrying grim news.  
Trojans had summoned an assembly by Priam's palace gates.  
There all had gathered, young and old. Standing by Priam,  
swift-footed Iris spoke, sounding like Polites, Priam's son.

"Hector, I call on you, on you above all, to follow  
my instructions - the numerous allies here  
in Priam's great city all speak different languages  
from far-scattered regions. So let each man  
issue orders to the ones he leads,  
let him now organize his countrymen,  
then lead them out to battle."

190

Iris spoke. Hector understood her words.  
Immediately he ended the assembly.  
Men rushed to arm themselves. They opened up the gates.  
Troops streamed out, infantry and horses. A huge din arose.  
In the plain, some distance off, a high hill stood by itself.  
Here the Trojans and their allies marshaled forces.

*[The forces of the Trojan and their allies are listed at length]*

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## **Book Three**

### **Paris and Helen**

Once troops had formed in ranks under their own leaders,  
Trojans marched out, clamouring like birds, like cranes  
screeching overhead, when winter's harsh storms drive them off,  
screaming as they move over the flowing Ocean,  
bearing death and destruction to the Pygmies,  
launching their savage attack on them at dawn.  
Achaean came on in silence, breathing ferocity,  
determined to stand by each other in the fight.

Then godlike Paris stepped out, as Trojan champion.  
Brandishing two bronze-tipped spears, he challenged  
the best men in the whole Achaean force to fight -  
a single combat, to the death. War-loving Menelaus  
noticed Alexander striding there, and he rejoiced.  
Menelaus was pleased to see Paris there,  
right before his eyes. Menelaus had in mind  
taking revenge on the man who'd injured him.  
When godlike Alexander saw Menelaus there,  
he moved back into the ranks, among his comrades.  
Seeing this, Hector went at Alexander, insulting him:

10

"Despicable Paris, handsomest of men,  
but woman-mad seducer. How I wish  
you never had been born or died unmarried.

20

That's what I'd prefer, so much better  
than to live in shame. Can you now  
not face Menelaus? If so, you'd learn  
the kind of man he is whose wife you took.  
You'd get no help then from your lyre, long hair,  
good looks - Aphrodite's gifts - once face down,  
lying in the dirt. Trojans must be timid men.  
If not, for all the evil things you've done  
by now you'd wear a garment made of stones." 30

To Hector godlike Alexander then replied:

"Hector, you're right in what you say against me.  
Those complaints of yours are not unjustified.  
The spirit in your chest is fearless. But don't blame me  
for golden Aphrodite's lovely gifts.  
Men can't reject fine presents from the gods,  
those gifts they personally bestow on us,  
though no man would take them of his own free will.  
You want me now to go to battle. 40  
Then get the others to sit down - Trojans and Achaeans.  
Put me and war-loving Menelaus  
in their midst to fight it out for Helen."

So Paris spoke. Hearing those words, Hector felt great joy.  
He went to the middle ground, between the armies,  
halted Trojan troops, grasping the centre of his spear shaft.  
Hector then addressed both sides:

"You Trojans, you well-armed Achaeans,  
listen now to what Paris has to say,  
the man whose actions brought about our fight. 50  
He bids the other Trojans, all Achaeans,  
set their weapons on the fertile ground.  
He and war-loving Menelaus here  
will fight it out alone between the armies  
for Helen and for all her property.  
Whichever one comes out victorious,  
the stronger man, let him seize all the goods,  
and take the woman as his wife back home.  
Let others swear a solemn oath as friends."

So Hector spoke. The soldiers all grew silent. 60  
Then Menelaus, loud in war, answered Hector:

"Listen now to me. More than anyone,  
my heart has suffered pain. So now I think  
Argives and Trojans should part company,  
since you have suffered many hardships,  
thanks to the fight between myself and Paris,  
a fight that he began. Whichever one of us  
death takes, our fate, let that man perish.  
You others quickly go your separate ways."

Then Iris came as messenger to white-armed Helen.  
Standing near by, swift-footed Iris said:

70

"Come here, dear girl.  
Look at the amazing things going on.  
Horse-taming Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans,  
men who earlier were fighting one another  
in wretched war out there on the plain,  
both keen for war's destruction, are sitting still.  
Alexander and war-loving Menelaus  
are going to fight for you with their long spears.  
The man who triumphs will call you his dear wife."

With these words the goddess set in Helen's heart  
sweet longing for her former husband, city, parents.  
Covering herself with a white shawl, she left the house,  
shedding tears. She did not go alone, but took with her  
two attendants. They soon reached the Scaean Gates.  
Priam was sitting there. He called out to Helen.

80

"Come here, dear child. Sit down in front of me,  
so you can see your first husband, your friends,  
your relatives. As far as I'm concerned,  
it's not your fault. For I blame the gods.  
They drove me to wage this wretched war  
against Achaeans. Tell me, who's that large man,  
over there, that impressive, strong Achaean?  
Others may be taller by a head than him,  
but I've never seen with my own eyes  
such a striking man, so noble, so like a king."

90

Then Helen, goddess among women, said to Priam:

"My dear father-in-law, whom I respect and honour,  
how I wish I'd chosen an evil death  
when I came here with your son, leaving behind  
my married home, companions, darling child,  
and friends my age. But things didn't work that way.  
So I weep all the time. But to answer you,  
that man is wide-ruling Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus, a good king, fine fighter,  
and once he was my brother-in-law,  
if that life was ever real. I'm such a whore."

100

The old man then spied Odysseus and asked:

"Dear child, come tell me who this man is,  
shorter by a head than Agamemnon,  
son of Atreus. But he looks broader  
in his shoulders and his chest. His armour's stacked  
there on the fertile earth, but he strides on,  
marching through men's ranks just like a ram  
moving through large white multitudes of sheep.  
Yes, a woolly ram, that's what he seems to me."

110

Helen, child of Zeus, then answered Priam:

"That man is Laertes' son, crafty Odysseus,  
raised in rocky Ithaca. He's well versed  
in all sorts of tricks, deceptive strategies."

Priam, the old man, saw a third figure, Ajax, and asked: 120

"Who is that other man? He's over there -  
that huge, burly Achaean - his head and shoulders  
tower over the Achaeans."

Then Helen,  
long-robed goddess among women, answered:

"That's massive Ajax, Achaea's bulwark.  
Across from him stands Idomeneus,  
surrounded by his Cretans, like a god.  
Around him there stand the Cretan leaders.  
Often war-loving Menelaus welcomed him  
in our house, whenever he arrived from Crete. 130  
Now I see all the bright-eyed Achaeans  
whom I know well, whose names I could recite.  
But I can't see two of the men's leaders,  
Castor, tamer of horses, and Pollux,  
the fine boxer - they are both my brothers,  
whom my mother bore along with me.  
Either they did not come with the contingent  
from lovely Lacedaemon, or they sailed here  
in their seaworthy ships, but have no wish  
to join men's battles, fearing the disgrace, 140  
the many slurs, which are justly mine."

Helen spoke. But the life-nourishing earth  
already held her brothers in Lacedaemon,  
in their own dear native land.

*[Both sides participate in a sacrifice and prayers before the single combat]*

Then Hector, Priam's son, and lord Odysseus  
first measured out the ground, took lots, and shook them up  
in a bronze helmet, to see who'd throw his bronze spear first.  
Then every Trojan and Achaean held up his hands,  
praying to the gods:

"Father Zeus, ruling from Mount Ida,  
mighty, all-powerful, of these two men, 150  
let the one who brought this war to both sides  
be killed and then go down to Hades' house.  
And grant our oath of friendship will hold firm."

So they prayed. Hector of the flashing helmet  
turned his eyes to one side and shook out the lots.  
Alexander's token fell out immediately.  
When the two men, standing on each side with their troops,

had armed themselves, they strode out to the open space  
between the Trojans and Achaeans, staring ferociously.  
The two men approached each other over measured ground,  
brandishing their spears in mutual fury. 160  
Alexander was the first to hurl his spear.  
It struck Menelaus' shield, a perfect circle,  
but the bronze did not break through, the point deflected  
by the powerful shield. Then Menelaus, Atreus' son,  
threw in his turn. First he made this prayer to Zeus:

"Lord Zeus, grant I may be revenged on this man,  
who first committed crimes against me,  
lord Alexander. Let him die at my hands,  
so generations of men yet to come 170  
will dread doing wrong to anyone  
who welcomes them into his home as friends."

Menelaus then drew back his long-shadowed spear,  
and hurled it. It hit the son of Priam's shield,  
a perfect circle. The heavy spear pierced through it,  
went straight through the fine body armour, through the shirt  
which covered Alexander's naked flesh.  
But Paris twisted to the side, evading a black fate.  
Pulling out his silver-studded sword, the son of Atreus  
raised it and struck the crest of Paris' helmet. 180  
But the sword shattered into three or four pieces,  
falling from his hand. The son of Atreus, in vexation,  
looked up into the wide heavens, crying out:

"Father Zeus,  
what god brings us more trouble than you do?  
I thought I was paying Alexander  
for his wickedness, but now my sword  
has shattered in my fist, while from my hand  
my spear has flown in vain. I haven't hit him."

As Menelaus said these words, he sprang forward,  
grabbing the horse hair crest on Paris' helmet, 190  
twisting him around. He began dragging Paris off,  
back in the direction of well-armed Achaeans.  
The fine leather strap stretched round Paris' soft neck,  
right below his chin, was strangling him to death.  
At that point Menelaus would've hauled back Paris  
and won unending fame, if Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter,  
had not had sharp eyes. Her force broke the ox-hide strap,  
leaving Menelaus clutching in his massive hands  
an empty helmet. Whipping it around, Menelaus  
hurled the helmet in among well-armed Achaeans. 200  
His loyal companions retrieved it. He charged back,  
with his bronze spear, intent on killing Alexander.  
But Aphrodite had snatched Paris up - for a god  
an easy feat - concealed him in a heavy mist,  
and placed him in his own sweetly scented bedroom.

Then Aphrodite went to summon Helen.  
She found her on the high tower, in a crowd  
among the Trojan women. She clutched Helen  
by her perfumed dress, twitched it, then addressed her,  
in the form of an old woman, a wool carder, 210  
someone who used to live in Lacedaemon,  
producing fine wool, a woman Helen really liked.  
In this shape, divine Aphrodite spoke to Helen:

"Alexander is asking you to come back home.  
He's in the bedroom, on the carved out bed,  
his beauty and his garments glistening.  
You wouldn't think he's just come from some fight.  
He looks as if he's going to a dance,  
or if he's sitting down right after dancing."

Aphrodite spoke, stirring emotion in Helen's heart. 220  
Noticing the goddess' lovely neck, enticing breasts,  
her glittering eyes, Helen was astonished.

"Goddess, why do you wish to deceive me so?  
Are you going to take me still further off,  
to some well populated city somewhere  
in Phrygia or beautiful Maeonia,  
because you're in love with some mortal man  
and Menelaus has just beaten Paris  
and wants to take me, a despised woman,  
back home with him? Is that why you're here, 230  
you and your devious trickery?  
Why don't you go with Paris by yourself,  
stop walking around here like a goddess,  
stop directing your feet toward Olympus,  
and lead a miserable life with him,  
caring for him, until he makes you his wife  
or slave. I won't go to him in there -  
that would be shameful, serving him in bed.  
Every Trojan woman would revile me afterwards.  
Besides, my heart is hurt enough already." 240

Divine Aphrodite, angry at Helen, answered her:

"Don't provoke me, you obstinate girl.  
I might lose my temper, abandon you,  
and hate you just as much as I have loved you.  
I could make Trojans and Danaans hate you, too.  
Then you'd suffer death in misery."

Aphrodite spoke. Helen, born from Zeus, was too afraid.  
She covered herself in her soft white linen shawl,  
went off in silence, unnoticed by all the Trojan women.  
With goddess Aphrodite in the lead, 250  
they came to Alexander's lovely house.  
There the attendants quickly set about their work.  
Helen, goddess among women, went to her room upstairs,

where laughter-loving goddess Aphrodite  
picked up a chair and carried it for Helen.  
She placed it facing Paris. Helen, child of Zeus,  
who bears the aegis, sat down. With eyes averted,  
she began to criticize her husband:

"You've come back from the fight. How I wish  
you'd died there, killed by that strong warrior  
who was my husband once. You used to boast  
you were stronger than warlike Menelaus,  
more strength in your hands, more power in your spear.  
So go now, challenge war-loving Menelaus  
to fight again in single combat.  
I'd suggest you stay away. Don't fight it out  
man to man with red-haired Menelaus,  
without further thought. You might well die,  
come to a quick end on his spear." 260

Replying to Helen, Paris said:

"Wife,  
don't mock my courage with your insults.  
Yes, Menelaus has just defeated me,  
but with Athena's help. Next time I'll beat him.  
For we have gods on our side, too. But come,  
let's enjoy our love together on the bed.  
Never has desire so filled my mind as now,  
not even when I first took you away  
from lovely Lacedaemon, sailing off  
in our sea-worthy ships, or when I lay with you  
in our lover's bed on the isle of Cranae. 280  
That's how sweet passion has seized hold of me,  
how much I want you now."

Paris finished speaking.  
He led the way to bed. His wife went, too.  
The two lay down together on the bed.

Atreus' son paced through the crowd, like a wild beast,  
searching for some glimpse of godlike Alexander.  
But no Trojan nor any of their famous allies  
could reveal Alexander to warlike Menelaus.  
If they'd seen him, they had no desire to hide him.  
For they all hated Paris, as they hated gloomy death. 290  
Agamemnon, king of men, addressed them:

"Listen to me, Trojans, Dardanians, allies -  
victory clearly falls to war-loving Menelaus.  
So give back Argive Helen and her property,  
compensate us with a suitable amount,  
something future ages will all talk about."

As he finished speaking, the other Achaeans cheered.

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## Book Four

### The Armies Clash

The gods all sat assembled in the golden courtyard, with Zeus there, too. Gracious Hebe went among them, pouring nectar. They toasted each other in golden cups, as they looked out on Troy. Then Zeus, son of Cronos, wishing to irk Hera with a sarcastic speech, addressed them:

"Why don't we discuss  
how this warfare is going to finish up -  
whether we should re-ignite harsh combat,  
this horrific strife, or make both sides friends.  
If this second option pleases all of us, 10  
if we find it sweet, then king Priam's city  
remains inhabited, and Menelaus  
takes Argive Helen home with him."

Athena and Hera sat together muttering, plotting trouble for the Trojans. Angry at Zeus, her father, Athena sat there silently, so enraged she didn't say a word. But Hera, unable to contain her anger, burst out:

"Most fearful son of Cronos, what are you saying?  
How can you wish to undermine my efforts, 20  
prevent them from achieving anything?  
What about the sweat which dripped from me,  
as I worked so hard, wearing my horses out,  
gathering men to wipe out Priam and his children.  
Go ahead then. But all we other gods  
do not approve of what you're doing."

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus, irritated, said to her:

"Dear wife, what sort of crimes have Priam  
or Priam's children committed against you,  
that you should be so vehemently keen 30  
to destroy that well-built city Ilium?  
Do as you wish. We shouldn't make this matter  
something you and I later squabble over,  
a source of major disagreements.  
But I'll tell you this - keep it in mind.  
Whenever I get the urge to wipe out  
some city whose inhabitants you love,  
don't try to thwart me. Let me have my way.  
I'll give in to you freely, though unwillingly.  
For of all towns inhabited by earth's peoples, 40  
under the sun, beneath the heavenly stars,  
sacred Ilium, with Priam and his people,  
expert spearmen, stands dearest in my heart.  
My altar there has always shared their feasts,

with libations and sacrificial smoke,  
offerings we get as honours due to us."

Ox-eyed Hera then said in reply to Zeus:

"The three cities I love the best by far  
are Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae,  
city of wide streets. Destroy them utterly, 50  
if you ever hate them in your heart.  
But my own work must not be wasted,  
worth nothing. I'm a god, the same race as you -  
I'm crooked-minded Cronos' eldest daughter.  
Another thing - in addition to my birth -  
I'm called your wife, and you rule all immortals.  
In this matter, then, let's both support  
each other's wishes - you mine, I yours.  
Other gods will follow our example.  
Instruct Athena to go immediately 60  
where Trojans and Achaeans carry on  
their bitter conflict. There she should try  
to get the Trojans to break their oaths first,  
by harming the glorious Achaeans."

Hera spoke. The father of gods and men agreed.  
He spoke up to Athena - his words had wings.

"Go quickly to the Trojan and Achaean troops.  
Try to get the Trojans to break their oaths first,  
by injuring the glorious Achaeans."

Zeus' words stirred up Athena's earlier desires. 70  
She darted from Olympus summit, sped off,  
like a comet sent by crooked-minded Cronos' son.  
Athena went down into the Trojan crowd,  
looking like Laodocus, Antenor's son,  
a strong spearman, seeking godlike Pandarus.  
She met Pandarus, Lycaon's powerful son,  
a fine man, standing there with his sturdy regiment,  
Standing near him, Athena spoke. Her words had wings.

"Fiery hearted son of Lycaon,  
why not do as I suggest? Prepare yourself 80  
to shoot a swift arrow at Menelaus.  
You'd earn thanks and glory from all Trojans,  
most of all from prince Alexander.  
He'd be the very first to bring fine gifts,  
if he could see warlike Menelaus,  
son of Atreus, mounted on his bier,  
his bitter funeral pyre, killed by your arrow.  
So come, then, shoot an arrow at him."

Athena spoke and thus swayed his foolish wits.  
Pandarus strung the bow, then set it on the ground. 90  
Then, removing the cover from his quiver,

Pandarus took out an arrow, a fresh-winged courier  
bearing dark agony. Next he quickly set  
the keen arrow on the string, swearing an oath  
to the archer god, Lycian-born Apollo,  
that he would make splendid sacrifice, first-born lambs,  
when he got back to his city, holy Zaleia.

Gripping the arrow notch, the ox-gut bowstring,  
he pulled back, drawing the string right to his nipple,  
iron arrow head against the bow. Once he'd bent  
that great bow into a circle, the bow twanged,  
the string sang out, the sharp-pointed arrow flew away,  
eager to bury itself in crowds of men.

100

But, Menelaus, the immortal sacred gods  
did not forget you. Athena, Zeus' daughter,  
goddess of war's spoils, was first to stand before you,  
to ward off the piercing arrow - she brushed it from your skin,  
just as a mother brushes a fly off her child  
while he lies sweetly sleeping. Athena led the arrow  
to the spot where the gold buckles on the belt  
rest on the joint in the double body armour.

110

The keen arrow dug into the leather strap,  
passed right through the finely decorated belt,  
through the richly embossed armour, the body mail,  
his most powerful guard, worn to protect his flesh,  
by blocking spears and arrows. The arrow pierced it,  
going through that mail, and grazed the skin of Menelaus.  
Dark blood at once came flowing from the wound.

When Agamemnon saw dark blood flowing from the wound,  
that king of men shuddered. Mighty Agamemnon,  
taking Menelaus by the hand, with a bitter groan,  
spoke to his companions, all grieving with him:

120

"Dear brother, that oath I swore to was your death -  
letting you step forward to fight Trojans,  
as Achaea's champion. For now the Trojans  
have shot you, walking roughshod on their oaths,  
that treaty they swore to in good faith. But, Menelaus,  
I'll be in dreadful pain on your account,  
if you die, if fate now ends your life,  
if I return to arid Argos totally disgraced.

130

Your bones will lie rotting here in Trojan soil,  
recalling the work we failed to finish.  
Then some arrogant Trojan, leaping up  
onto the tomb of famous Menelaus,  
will shout: 'May Agamemnon's anger  
always end like this. His Achaean army  
he brought here in vain. He returned home,  
back to his native land in empty ships,  
abandoning courageous Menelaus.'

That's what he'll say. Before that day  
I hope the broad earth will lie over me!"

140

Then Menelaus, to cheer up Agamemnon, said:

"Take courage. Don't upset Achaeans.  
This sharp arrow is not a fatal hit.  
My gleaming belt protected me on top,  
as did my body chain mail underneath,  
forged in bronze."

While the Achaeans  
were looking after Menelaus, Trojan ranks advanced,  
shields ready, once more armed with all their weapons,  
fully charged with passionate desire for battle. 150

Just as thundering ocean surf crashes on the sand,  
wave after wave, driven by the West Wind's power,  
one wave rising at sea, then booming down on shore,  
arching in crests and crashing down among the rocks,  
spewing salt foam, so then Danaan ranks,  
row after row, moved out, spirits firmly set on war.  
Each leader issued his own orders to his men.  
The rest marched on in silence. You'd never think  
such a huge army could move out and keep its voice  
buried in those chests, in silent fear of their commanders. 160  
As they marched, the polished armour on them glittered.

As for the Trojans, they were like thousands of ewes  
standing in a rich man's farm, bleating constantly,  
waiting for someone to come and collect white milk,  
as they hear lambs call. Just like that, the din rose up  
throughout the widespread Trojan force. They shared no words -  
they had no common language, but mixtures of tongues,  
with men from many lands. Ares urged the Trojans on,  
while bright-eyed Athena kept rousing the Achaeans.  
With them came Terror, Fear, and tireless Strife, 170  
sister and companion of man-destroying Ares -  
at first small in stature, she later grows enormous,  
head reaching heaven, as she strides across the earth.  
Strife went through crowds of soldiers, casting hatred  
on both sides equally, multiplying human miseries.

When the two armies came to one common ground,  
they smashed into each other - shields, spears, fierce angry men  
encased in bronze. Studded shields bashed one another.  
A huge din arose - human cries of grief and triumph,  
those killing and those killed. Earth flowed with blood. 180

Antilochus was the first to kill a man -  
a well armed Trojan warrior, Echepolus,  
son of Thalysius, a courageous man,  
who fought in the front ranks. He hit his helmet crest,  
topped with horsehair plumes, spearing his forehead.  
The bronze point smashed through the frontal bone.  
Darkness hid his eyes and he collapsed, like a tower,  
falling down into that frenzied battle. As he fell,  
powerful Elephenor, son of Chalcodon,  
courageous leader of the Abantes, seized his feet 190

and started pulling him beyond the range of weapons,  
eager to strip him of his armour quickly.  
But Elephenor's attempt did not go on for long.  
Great-hearted Agenor saw him drag the dead man.  
He stabbed Elephenor with his bronze spear,  
right in his exposed side, where his shield left him  
vulnerable as he bent down. His limbs gave way,  
as his spirit left him. Over his dead body,  
Trojans and Achaeans kept fighting grimly on,  
attacking like wolves, man whirling against man. 200

Then Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Simoeisius,  
Anthemion's son, a fine young warrior.  
He was born on the banks of the river Simoeis,  
while his mother was coming down Mount Ida,  
accompanying her parents to watch their flocks.  
That's why the people called him Simoeisius.  
But he did not repay his fond parents for raising him.  
His life was cut short on great Ajax's deadly spear.  
As he was moving forward with the men in front,  
Ajax struck him in the chest, by the right nipple. 210  
The bronze spear went clean through his shoulder.  
He collapsed in the dust, like a poplar tree,  
one growing in a large well-watered meadow,  
from whose smooth trunk the branches grow up to the top,  
until a chariot builder's bright axe topples it,  
bends the wood, to make wheel rims for a splendid chariot,  
letting the wood season by the riverbank.

Death then came to Diores, son of Amarynceus.  
He was hit by a jagged rock on his right shin,  
beside the ankle. It was thrown by Peirous, 220  
captain of Thracians. The cruel rock crushed both tendons  
and the bone. He fell onto his back down in the dust.  
There he reached out with both hands for his companions.  
His spirit left his body with each gasp he took.  
Peirous, who'd thrown the rock, ran up and speared his gut.  
His bowels spilled out onto the ground. Darkness hid his eyes.  
As Peirous moved off, Thoas, an Aetolian, hit him,  
his spear striking him above the nipple. The bronze spear point  
bit into his lungs. Thoas moved in to close quarters,  
pulled the heavy spear out from his chest, drew his sharp sword, 230  
then drove it straight into the middle of his belly,  
destroying Peirous' life. But Thoas couldn't strip  
the armour off. For Peirous' companions,  
Thracian men, whose hair is piled atop their heads,  
rallied round, holding out long spears, forcing Thoas  
away from them. Thoas was big, strong, and brave,  
but he fell back, shaken. And so those two warriors  
lay stretched out in the dirt beside each other -  
one Thracian chief, one captain of bronze-clad Epeians.  
And many other men lay dead around them. 240

## Book Five

### The Battle Continues

Danaans then began to push the Trojans back.  
Each leader killed his enemy. First, Agamemnon,  
king of men, threw huge Odius, chief of the Halizoni,  
from his chariot. His spear first struck him in the back,  
between the shoulder blades, as he turned to flee.  
It drove clean through his chest. Odius pitched forward  
with a thud, his armour rattling round him as he fell.

Idomeneus slaughtered Phaestus, son of Borus,  
a Meonian, who'd come from fertile Tarne.

With his long spear, skilful Idomeneus struck him  
in his right shoulder, as he climbed in his chariot. 10

Dreadful darkness came and gathered Phaestus in.

Those attending Idomeneus stripped the armour.

Then with his sharp spear Menelaus, son of Atreus,  
killed Scamandrius, son of Strophius, a huntsman.

Artemis herself had taught him how to shoot  
every animal raised in the mountain forests.

But archer Artemis was no help to him then,

no more than was his expertise in archery,

at which he'd been pre-eminent in former times. 20

Meriones then killed Phereclus, son of Tecton,  
Harmon's son, whose hands could make fine objects of all sorts.

Pallas Athena had a special love for him.

He was the one who'd made well-balanced ships

for Paris at the start of all the trouble,

bringing disaster on the Trojans and on Paris, too,

for he was ignorant of what gods had decreed.

Meriones went after Phereclus as he ran off,

hurled his spear straight into his right buttock.

The spear point pushed on through, below the bone, 30

piercing his bladder. He fell down on his knees,

screaming. Then death carried him into its shadows.

Then Meges killed Pedaeus, Antenor's bastard son.

Theano had raised him with all care, loving him

as one of her own children, to please her husband.

That famous spearman Meges, son of Phyleus,

coming up close, drove a sharp spear in his neck,

into the nape behind his head. The bronze point,

slicing under his tongue, smashed through his teeth.

He fell into the dust, jaws locked on the cold bronze. 40

Eurypylyus, Euaemon's son, killed lord Hypsenor,

son of proud Dolopion, Scamander's priest,

a man honoured by his people as a god.

Eurypylyus, Euaemon's splendid son, caught him

as he ran off in front of him. Going quickly after him,

Eurypylyus struck at Hypsenor's shoulder -

his sharp sword sliced off Hypsenor's brawny arm.

The bloody limb fell on the ground. Then death's black night,  
all-powerful Fate, moved in and stole away his sight.  
Thus these men kept toiling in the battle frenzy.

50

*[Athena inspires Diomedes to win battlefield glory. He kills many Trojans, including Pandarus, captures the famous horses of Aeneas, and wounds the goddess Aphrodite]*

Then the two Ajaxes, Odysseus, and Diomedes  
roused Danaans, urging them to battle.  
They did not fear the Trojans' powerful attack  
and stood their ground like clouds set in place by Zeus,  
son of Cronos, above a range of mountain peaks  
on a windless day, quite motionless, while the force  
of North Wind and other raging blasts is sound asleep.  
When these storm winds blow, they scatter shadowy clouds.  
That's the way Danaans held their positions then,  
without flinching, without fear. The son of Atreus  
moved through the troops and gave out many orders.

60

"My friends, be men. Let courage fill your hearts.  
In the heat of battle remember honour,  
each man's reputation. When men recall  
their honour, more troops are saved than slaughtered.  
Those who run away lose life and fame."

Agamemnon spoke, then quickly hurled his spear.

Antilochus and Menelaus then killed Pylaemenes,  
a man like Ares, leader of the Paphlagonians,  
great-hearted, shield-bearing men. The son of Atreus,  
famous spearman Menelaus, struck him,  
as he stood up in his chariot, hitting him  
right on his collar bone. Antilochus hit Mydon,  
Atymnius' noble son, the attendant driver,  
as he was wheeling his sure-footed horses round.  
He struck him with a rock square on the elbow.  
The reins, decorated with rich ivory,  
fell from his hands onto the dusty ground.  
Antilochus sprang out and with his sword struck Mydon  
on the temple. Gasping with pain, Mydon pitched over,  
and tumbled from the well-made chariot headfirst,  
his head and shoulders disappearing in the dirt.  
For some time he stayed stuck, buried in deep sand,  
until his horses kicked him flat, level with the dust,  
stamping him into the ground, as Antilochus  
whipped them on, leading them back to Achaean troops.

70

80

*[The fighting continues. Hector rallies the Trojans. The Lycian leader Sarpedon is wounded. Diomedes, with Athena's help, wounds the god Ares and sends him from the battle.]*

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## Book Six

### Hector and Andromache

Now the grim war between Trojans and Achaeans  
was left to run its course. The battle raged,  
this way and that, across the entire plain,  
as warriors hurled bronze-tipped spears at one another,  
between the Simoeis and Xanthus rivers.

Ajax, son of Telamon, Achaea's tower of strength,  
was the first to break through ranks of Trojans,  
punching out some breathing room for his companions.  
He hit Acamas, son of Eussorus, a strong brave soldier,  
best of the Thracians. Ajax's spear struck him first 10  
on the peak of his horse-plumed helmet. The sharp bronze  
drove right into his forehead - dead in the centre -  
straight through bone into the brain. Darkness fell on his eyes.

Diomedes, expert in war cries, killed Axylus,  
son of Teuthras, a rich man, from well-built Arisbe.  
People really loved him, for he lived beside a road  
and welcomed all passers-by into his home.  
But not one of those men he'd entertained now stood  
in front of him, protecting him from wretched death.

Diomedes took the lives of two men - Axylus 20  
and his attendant charioteer, Calesius.  
So both men went down into the underworld.  
Euryalus killed Dresus and Opheltius,  
then charged after Aesepus and Pedasus,  
whom the naiad nymph Abararea bore  
to noble Boucolion, son of high-born Laomedon,  
his eldest son. His mother bore Pedasus in secret.  
Bucolion had had sex with the nymph  
while tending to his flock. She became pregnant,  
then gave birth to two twin sons. Euryalus, 30  
son of Mecistus, slaughtered both of them,  
destroying their strength and splendid bodies.  
Then he stripped the armour from their shoulders.

Hector issued orders to the Trojans, shouting:

"You proud Trojans, wide-renowned allies,  
friends, be men, summon up your fighting strength,  
while I go to Troy in person, to instruct  
the old men of the council and our wives  
to pray to the gods and promise sacrifice."

With these words, Hector of the shining helmet moved away. 40  
As he went, black leather running round the outer edge  
on his studded shield struck his neck and ankles.

*[Diomedes and Glaucus prepare for single combat but discover that their fathers were friends. So they refuse to fight  
and exchange gifts instead]*

Meanwhile Hector reached the Scaean Gates and oak tree.  
The Trojans' wives and daughters ran up round him,

asking after children, brothers, relatives, and husbands.  
Addressing each of them in turn, he ordered them  
to pray to all the gods. For many were to face great grief.

*[Hector goes to the palace. He meets his mother and tells her to offer a sacrifice to Athena. Then he talks with Paris and Helen. He goes home, but is told his wife is out, so he returns to the Scaean Gates]*

There his wife ran up to meet him, Andromache,  
holding at her breast their happy infant child,  
well-loved son of Hector, like a beautiful star. 50  
Hector had named him Scamandrius, but others  
called him Astyanax, lord of the city,  
because Hector was Troy's only guardian.  
Hector looked at his son in silence, with a smile.  
Andromache stood close to him, weeping.  
Taking Hector by the hand, she spoke to him.

"My dear husband, your warlike spirit  
will be your death. You've no compassion  
for your infant child, for me, your sad wife,  
who before long will be your widow. 60  
For soon the Achaeans will attack you,  
all together, and cut you down. As for me,  
it would be better, if I'm to lose you,  
to be buried in the ground. For then I'll have  
no other comfort, once you meet your death,  
except my sorrow. I have no father,  
no dear mother. So, Hector, you are now  
my father, noble mother, brother,  
and my protecting husband. So pity me.  
Stay here in this tower. Don't orphan your child 70  
and make your wife a widow."

Great Hector of the shining helmet answered her:

"Wife,  
all this concerns me, too. But I'd be disgraced,  
dreadfully shamed among Trojan men  
and Trojan women in their trailing gowns,  
if I should, like a coward, slink away from war.  
My heart will never prompt me to do that,  
for I have learned always to be brave,  
to fight alongside Trojans at the front,  
striving to win fame for father and myself. 80  
My heart and mind know well the day is coming  
when sacred Ilion will be destroyed,  
along with Priam of the fine ash spear  
and Priam's people. But what pains me most  
about these future sorrows is not so much  
the Trojans, Hecuba, or king Priam,  
or even my many noble brothers,  
who'll fall down in the dust, slaughtered  
by their enemies. My pain focuses on you,  
when one of the bronze-clad Achaeans 90

leads you off in tears, ends your days of freedom.  
If then you come to Argos as a slave,  
working the loom for some other woman,  
fetching water from Hyperia or Messeis,  
against your will, forced by powerful fate,  
then someone, seeing you as you weep  
may well say: "That woman is Hector's wife.  
He was the finest warrior in battle  
of all horse-taming Trojans in that war  
when they fought for Troy.' Someone will say that, 100  
and it will bring still more grief to you,  
to be without such a man to save you  
from days of servitude. May I lie dead,  
hidden deep under a burial mound,  
before I hear about your screaming,  
as you are dragged away."

With these words,  
glorious Hector stretched his hands out for his son.  
The boy immediately shrank back against the breast  
of the finely girdled nurse, crying out in terror  
to see his own dear father, scared at the sight of bronze, 110  
the horse-hair plume nodding fearfully from his helmet top.  
The child's loving father laughed, his noble mother, too.  
Glorious Hector pulled the glittering helmet off  
and set it on the ground. Then he kissed his dear son  
and held him in his arms. He prayed aloud to Zeus  
and the rest of the immortals.

"Zeus, all you other gods,  
grant that this child, my son, may become,  
like me, pre-eminent among the Trojans,  
as strong and brave as me. Grant that he may rule  
Troy with strength. May people someday say, 120  
as he returns from war, 'This man is far better  
than his father.' May he carry back  
bloody spoils from his slaughtered enemy,  
making his mother's heart rejoice."

He placed his son in the hands of his dear wife.  
She embraced the child on her sweet breast, smiling  
through her tears. Observing her, Hector felt compassion.  
He took her hand, then spoke to her.

"My dearest wife,  
don't let your heart be sad on my account.  
No man will throw me down to Hades 130  
before my destined time. I tell you this -  
no one escapes his fate, not the coward,  
nor the brave man, from the moment of his birth.  
So you should go into the house, keep busy  
with your own work, with your loom and wool,  
telling your servants to set about their tasks.  
War will be every man's concern, especially mine,

of all those who live in Troy."

Having said these words,  
glorious Hector picked up his plumed helmet.  
His beloved wife went home, often looking back, 140  
as she went, crying bitterly. She quickly reached  
the spacious home of Hector, killer of men.  
Inside she met her many servants and bid them all lament.  
So they mourned for Hector in his own house,  
though he was still alive, for they thought he'd not come back -  
he'd not escape the battle fury of Achaean hands.

*[Paris rejoins Hector, and together they leave Troy to return to battle]*

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## Book Seven

### A Truce to Bury the Dead

*[Paris and Hector return to battle and enjoy considerable success against the Achaeans. Hector challenges the Achaeans to produce a volunteer to fight him in single combat. Ajax is chosen by lot. The two men fight, but heralds stop the conflict. The two men exchange gifts.]*

Well-armed Achaeans, came inside the son of Atreus' hut.  
Agamemnon, king of men, sacrificed an ox,  
a male five years old, to the exalted son of Cronos.  
They flayed the beast, prepared and carved it up,  
chopping it skilfully into tiny pieces.  
When everyone had had his fill of food and drink,  
old Nestor spoke up first, outlining for them  
a plan he had. Earlier his advice had seemed the best.  
Keeping in mind their common good, he said:

"Son of Atreus, you other Argive leaders, 10  
many long-haired Achaeans have been killed.  
Fierce Ares has scattered their dark blood  
beside the fair-flowing Scamander river.  
Their souls have departed down to Hades.  
So tomorrow you should call a halt.  
Stop Achaeans fighting. We should all assemble,  
then carry off the bodies of the dead  
with mules and oxen. Then we'll burn them  
a short distance from our ships, so each of us,  
when we return, may take back the bones. 20  
Let's set up one single common funeral mound  
close by the fire, angled back from the plain.  
Then we'll build with all speed from that mound  
some high walls with turrets, to guard us and our ships.  
Outside we'll dig a deep trench close by,  
to enclose the walls and hold out chariots -  
soldiers, too, if those impetuous Trojans  
should ever drive us back in battle."

So Nestor spoke. All the kings approved his plan.

Meanwhile the Trojans were meeting on the city heights,  
by Priam's palace doors - they were confused and fearful. 30  
Antenor, a wise counsellor, was the first to speak:

"Listen to me, you Trojans, Dardan allies,  
so I may say what the heart in my chest prompts.  
Come now, let's give back Argive Helen  
and her possessions to the sons of Atreus  
for them to keep. We've broken the truce  
and are fighting once again, so I don't see  
how things will work out very well for us,  
unless we carry out what I propose." 40

Antenor spoke, then sat down. Before them all,  
lord Alexander, husband of fair-haired Helen,  
stood up to reply. His words had wings:

"I flatly refuse. I won't give up my wife.  
But I will surrender all the goods  
I carried back from Argos to our home.  
I'm willing to give up all of it,  
even to add to it things of my own."

Paris spoke, then sat back down. Priam stood up,  
descendant of Dardanus, wise as the gods. 50  
Thinking of their common cause, he spoke out:

"Listen to me, Trojans, Dardan allies.  
You should prepare your dinner and then eat,  
here in the city, as before. But remember -  
keep sentries posted. Each man should stay awake.  
Tomorrow morning Idaios should go  
to the hollow ships, to tell the sons of Atreus,  
both Agamemnon and Menelaus,  
what Alexander has just now proposed,  
the very man whose cause launched this dispute. 60  
Idaios should propose this wise suggestion -  
if they'll consent to postpone grim warfare,  
so we can burn our dead, we'll fight later,  
until god adjudicates between us,  
and awards one side the victory."

They heard what Priam said and readily agreed.  
Throughout the army, in the ranks, they ate their dinner.

At dawn Idaios went out to the hollow ships.  
There he found Danaans, companions of Ares,  
assembled by the stern of Agamemnon's ship. 70  
The loud-voiced herald, standing in their midst, spoke out:

"Son of Atreus, other Achaean leaders,  
Priam and other noble Trojans have instructed me  
to tell you what Alexander has proposed,  
if that meets with your approval, an offer

you will want to hear. That man began our strife.  
All the property which Paris brought here  
in his hollow ships to Troy - how I wish  
he'd died before that day! - he'll hand over  
and add more goods from his own home. 80  
But he says he'll not return that noble lady,  
wife of Menelaus, though the Trojans wish  
he'd do that. There's more. My orders tell me  
to speak to you to see if you are willing  
to put a stop to the harsh clash of war,  
until such time as we have burned our dead.  
We will fight later, until god chooses  
between us, makes one of us victorious."

Idaios spoke. They all remained silent, speechless.  
At last Diomedes, skilled at war shouts, cried out: 90

"Let no man now accept Alexander's stuff,  
nor Helen. For it's quite clear, even to a fool,  
the Trojans are tied down to lethal fate."

Diomedes spoke. All Achaea's sons roared out,  
approving the reply of horse-taming Diomedes.  
Mighty Agamemnon then addressed Idaios:

"Idaios, you yourself have heard our answer,  
what Achaeans think of what you offer.  
And I agree with them. But I don't object  
to burning corpses, for when men die, 100  
one should not deny the bodies of the dead  
a swift propitiation in the flames.  
So let Zeus, Hera's loud-thundering husband,  
stand as witness here to our pledged word."

Saying this, Agamemnon held up his sceptre,  
invoking all the gods. Idaios then returned,  
going back to sacred Ilion. There the Trojans  
and Dardanians were sitting in a meeting,  
a general assembly, awaiting his return.  
He came, stood in their midst, and delivered his report. 110  
Then they quickly organized two working parties -  
some to collect bodies, others to get firewood.

Argives also moved swiftly from their well-decked ships.  
Some hurried to bring in the dead, others to find wood.  
Just as the sun began to shine down on the fields,  
rising from the gently flowing Ocean depths,  
climbing into the sky, the two groups met each other.  
At that point it was hard to recognize each dead man.  
They washed blood off with water and piled them onto carts.

Next day, just before dawn, still at night, in half light, 120  
a chosen group of Achaeans was awake around the pyre.  
Beside it, on an angle, they made a common grave,

back from the plain. From that mound they built a wall,  
with high towers, to defend them and their ships.  
Outside the wall they dug a big ditch, wide and deep,  
close to the rampart, setting stakes down in the trench.

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## Book Eight

### The Trojans Have Success

*[At a council of the gods, Zeus announces he is going to assist the Trojans and forbids the other gods to join in the battle]*

Long-haired Achaeans gulped a quick meal by their huts.  
Then they armed themselves. On the other side, in town,  
Trojans, too, prepared to fight. They threw open all the gates.  
The army streamed out, foot soldiers and charioteers,  
making a huge din. As the two groups moved out  
to the same spot, they crashed together, smashing shields  
and spears, the battle frenzy of bronze-armed warriors.  
Embossed shields collided one against the other,  
a tremendous noise. Screams of pain and triumph,  
came from soldiers - those killing, those being killed - 10  
and the earth was saturated with their blood.

In early morning, as that sacred day grew stronger,  
weapons hurled by both sides grimly took their toll -  
men kept on dying. But when the sun was at its height,  
Father Zeus set up his golden balance, placed on it  
two fatal destinies, one for horse-taming Trojans,  
one for bronze-armed Achaeans. Gripping the scales,  
he raised them by the centre. One scale sank down,  
the one which held the Achaeans' fate that day - 20  
it moved down to the all-sustaining earth,  
while the Trojans' fate rose up toward wide heaven.

*[Zeus sends a bolt of lightning to force the Achaean leaders back. They retreat and rally to hold their ground]*

Once more Olympian Zeus put force into the Trojans.  
They drove Achaeans back, right to their deep trench,  
Hector at the front, proudly showing off his strength.  
By the time Achaeans had rushed through the stakes,  
as they crossed the ditch, many had died at Trojan hands.  
At last they halted by the ships and stayed there,  
calling out to one another. Raising their hands,  
each man prayed fervently to all the gods.  
Hector drove his fine-maned horses back and forth, 30  
his eyes glaring like a Gorgon or man-killing Ares.

*[Hera and Athena decide to defy Zeus and join the battle to assist the Achaeans. Zeus sees them leaving heaven and stops them.]*

Now the sun's bright light sank down into the ocean,  
dragging black night over fertile croplands.

The end of daylight made the Trojans sorrowful,  
but Achaeans welcomed the arrival of black night,  
something they'd been praying for constantly.

Then glorious Hector assembled all the Trojans  
some distance from the ships, by the swirling river,  
in open ground where there were no corpses in plain view.  
Hector then addressed his Trojans:

"Listen to me, 40  
you Trojans, Dardanians, you allies.  
Just now I stated we'd go back to Troy today,  
once we'd destroyed the ships and slaughtered  
all Achaeans. But darkness intervened.  
That's the only thing that spared the Argives  
and saved their ships beached on the shore. Come then,  
let's do what black night demands - prepare a meal.  
So from your chariots take out of harness  
those horses with their lovely manes, feed them,  
then quickly bring here from the city 50  
cattle and stout sheep. Bring sweet wine as well,  
and bread from your own homes. Gather lots of wood,  
so all night long, until first light of dawn,  
we can burn many fires, lighting up the sky.  
That's all I have to tell you at this time.  
I've more orders for horse-taming Trojans  
for tomorrow. I hope and pray to Zeus,  
to the other gods as well, I'll drive away  
these death-infected dogs, conducted here  
in their black ships by mortal fates." 60

Hector finished speaking. Trojans gave a shout.  
They untied their sweaty horses from their yokes,  
tethered them with straps, each by its chariot.  
From the city they soon brought cattle and stout sheep,  
sweet wine and bread from home. They gathered piles of wood  
and made perfect sacrificial offerings to the gods.  
From the plain, the wind carried the sweet-smelling smoke  
right up to heaven. But the blessed gods weren't willing  
to accept it, for sacred Ilion, and Priam,  
and Priam's people, rich in sheep, did not please them. 70  
So all night long men sat there in the battle lanes,  
with high expectations, burning many fires.  
Just as those times when the stars shine bright in heaven,  
clustered around the glowing moon, with no wind at all,  
and every peak and jutting headland, every forest glade  
is clearly visible, when every star shines out,  
and the shepherd's heart rejoices - that's the way  
the many Trojan fires looked, as they burned there  
in front of Ilion, between the river Xanthus  
and the ships, a thousand fires burning on the plain. 80  
By each sat fifty men in the glow of firelight.  
Horses munched on wheat and barley, standing there  
by their chariots, awaiting the regal splendour of the dawn.

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## Book Nine

### Peace Offerings to Achilles

Meanwhile, as the Trojans maintained their careful watch,  
Panic, chilling Fear's dread comrade, gripped Achaeans,  
their best men suffering unendurable anguish.

Atreus' son, heart overwhelmed with painful sorrow,  
went to give out orders for clear-voiced heralds  
to summon all the warriors to assembly,  
calling them one by one, not with a general shout.  
He himself, with his heralds, carried out the task.  
The counselors sat heart sick. Agamemnon stood,  
his face shedding tears like a black water spring  
whose dark stream flows down a sheer rock precipice. 10  
With a sigh, Agamemnon addressed the Argives:

"My friends, leaders, Argive counselors,  
Zeus, son of Cronos, has snared me badly  
in grievous folly. Deceptive god,  
he promised me - he nodded his assent -  
that I'd lay waste to well-built Ilium,  
before I went back home. Now he tricks me.  
He's devised a cruel deceit for me,  
telling me to return to Argos in disgrace, 20  
after the deaths of so many warriors.  
That's what now delights all-powerful Zeus,  
who has hurled down so many lofty towns,  
and who'll still demolish many more -  
such is his power, irresistible."

Then horseman Nestor, standing up before them, said:

"Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,  
king of men, I'll begin and end my speech  
with you, for you are lord of many men. 30  
Zeus gave you sceptre and laws to rule them.  
Thus, you, above all, should speak and listen,  
then act upon what other men may say,  
if their spirit prompts them to speak well.  
You'll get the credit for what they begin.  
So I'll say what seems to me the best advice.  
No one else has set out a better scheme  
than the one which I've been mulling over  
a long time now, ever since you, my lord,  
made Achilles angry by taking back  
that young girl Briseis from his hut, 40  
against my judgment. Repeatedly,  
I urged you not to do it. But then you,  
surrendering to your arrogant spirit,  
shamed our strongest man, honoured by the gods.  
You still have that prize you took. So now let's think

how we may make amends, win him back with gifts  
and gracious speeches, and be friends once more."

Agamemnon, king of men, then answered Nestor:

"Old man, you expose my folly justly.  
I was deluded. I don't deny that. 50  
The man whom Zeus loves in his heart is worth  
whole armies. And this man Zeus now honours  
by destroying an army of Achaeans.  
Since my delusion made me follow  
my mistaken feelings, I'm now willing  
to make amends, to give in recompense  
immense treasures. I'll list these rich gifts  
in presence of you all - seven tripods  
which fire has not yet touched, ten gold talents,  
twenty shining cauldrons, twelve strong horses 60  
whose speed has triumphed and earned them prizes.  
A man who has as much as I have won  
from racing these sure-footed animals  
would not be poor, or lack possessions,  
or need precious gold. And then I'll give him  
seven women of Lesbos, skilled in crafts,  
whom I chose for myself when he captured  
well-built Lesbos. They surpass all women  
for their beauty. These I shall present to him.  
With them the one I seized from him, Briseis, 70  
daughter of Briseus. I'll solemnly swear  
I never once went up into her bed  
or had sex with her, as is men's custom,  
where men and women are concerned.  
All these things he will receive immediately.  
If gods grant we destroy Priam's great city,  
when we Achaeans allocate the spoils,  
let him come and load his ship with gold,  
with bronze, as much as he desires. He may choose 80  
twenty Trojan women for himself,  
the loveliest after Argive Helen.  
If we get back to the rich land of Argos,  
he can then become my son-in-law.  
I'll honour him just as I do Orestes,  
my son, whom I dearly love. He's being raised  
in great prosperity. In my well-built home,  
I have three daughters - Chrysothemis,  
Iphianessa and Laodice.  
He can take whichever one he chooses  
back home as his wife to Peleus' house 90  
and pay no bridal gift. I'll give much more  
to bring about our reconciliation,  
a dowry bigger than any man so far  
has ever handed over with his daughter.  
I'll give him seven populous cities,  
Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,  
holy Pherae, fertile Antheia,

lovely Aepea, and vine-rich Pedasus,  
all near the sea, beside sandy Pylos. 100  
People living in these places own a lot,  
many sheep and cattle. They will honour him  
and give him gifts, as if he were a god.  
Under his laws and sceptre they'll do well.  
I shall give all this if he will abate  
his anger. Let him concede. Only Hades  
is totally relentless and unyielding.  
That's why of all the gods, he's the one  
men hate the most. And let him acknowledge  
my authority, for I'm the greater king.  
In age I can claim to be his senior." 110

Geranian horseman Nestor then said in reply:

"Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,  
king of men, the gifts you're offering  
to lord Achilles can't be criticized.  
But come, let's send out hand-picked men  
to go with all speed to Achilles' hut,  
Peleus' son. And may those whom I select  
agree to do it. First, let Phoenix,  
whom Zeus loves, be leader, then great Ajax,  
and lord Odysseus. Let herald Odius 120  
accompany them, along with Eurybates.  
Bring some water for our hands. Let's observe  
a holy silence, so we may pray to Zeus,  
son of Cronos, to take pity on us."

Nestor spoke. All present approved of what he'd said.  
Along the shore of the tumbling, crashing sea,  
the envoys made their way, offering up their prayers  
to world-circling Earthshaker Poseidon to help them  
more easily convince the great heart of Achilles.  
They came to the ships and huts of the Myrmidons. 130  
There they found Achilles. He was easing his spirit  
with a tuneful finely decorated lyre.  
It had a silver cross-piece. In astonishment,  
Achilles got up off his chair and stood up quickly,  
still holding the lyre. Patroclus did the same,  
standing up as soon as he saw the embassy.  
Swift-footed Achilles greeted them and said:

"Welcome.  
My dear friends have come. I must be needed.  
Among Achaeans you're the men I love the most,  
even in my anger."

With these words, 140  
lord Achilles conducted them inside his hut  
and seated them on chairs covered with purple rugs.  
Moving up close to Patroclus, Achilles said:

"Son of Menoetius, set out for us  
a larger wine bowl, and mix stronger wine.  
Prepare a cup for everyone. These men,  
my closest friends, are under my own roof."

Achilles spoke. Patroclus obeyed his dear companion.  
Then in the firelight he set down a large chopping block,  
placed on it slabs of mutton, goat, and the chine 150

while Automedon held the meat. He sliced up  
small pieces, then got them ready on the spits.  
The son of Menoetius, godlike man, stoked the fire,  
a huge one. Once the blaze died down and flames subsided,  
Patroclus spread the glowing embers, laid the spits  
lengthwise on top, setting them in place on stones  
and sprinkling on the sacred salt. When the meat was cooked,  
he laid it out on platters. Patroclus took the bread,  
then passed it in fine baskets round the table. 160

Achilles served the meat and sat down by the wall,  
directly opposite godlike Odysseus.  
Achilles told Patroclus, his companion,  
to sacrifice to all the gods. Patroclus threw the offering  
into the fire. Then each man helped himself,  
eating the food prepared and set before him.  
They all ate and drank to their full heart's content.  
Then Ajax gave a nod to Phoenix. Seeing that,  
lord Odysseus filled up his cup with wine  
and proposed a toast:

"Good health, Achilles. 170

We have not had to go without our share  
of feasts, either in Agamemnon's hut,  
Atreus' son, or here, for you've prepared  
a richly satisfying meal. But now  
our business is not pleasant banqueting.  
For we are staring at a great disaster.  
And, my lord, we are afraid, in a quandary,  
whether we can save our well-decked ships,  
or whether they will be destroyed, unless  
you put on your warlike power once again. 180

For haughty Trojans and their famous allies  
have camped close to the ships and barricade  
and lit many fires throughout their army.  
They claim nothing can prevent them now  
from attacking our black ships. And Zeus,  
son of Cronos, has sent them his signal,  
on their right a lightning flash. Hector,  
exulting hugely in his power,  
in a terrifying manic frenzy,  
puts his faith in Zeus, fears neither man nor god. 190

A killing passion now possesses him.  
He prays for holy dawn to come quickly,  
vowing he'll hack apart the high sterns  
of our ships, burn them in destructive fire,

and by those very ships kill the Achaeans  
driven out in desperation by the smoke.  
So rouse yourself, late though it may be,  
if you've a mind to save Achaeans  
from their suffering at this Trojan onslaught.  
If not, you'll suffer future agonies. 200  
You won't find any cure for such despair.  
Before that happens, you should think about  
how to help the Argives at this evil hour.  
Agamemnon will give you worthy gifts.

*[Odysseus lists the presents Agamemnon has offered, repeating the commander's earlier words]*

But if your heart continues to resent  
Atreus' son and his gifts, then take pity  
on all Achaeans, our exhausted soldiers.  
They will pay you honours like a god."

Swift-footed Achilles then answered Odysseus:

"Divinely born son of Laertes, 210  
resourceful Odysseus. I must be blunt  
about what I think and where all this will lead,  
so you do not sit there and, one by one,  
try to entice me with sweet promises.  
I hate like the gates of Hell any man  
who says one thing while thinking something else  
which stays hidden in his mind. So I'll declare  
what, in my view, it's best for me to say -  
I don't believe that Agamemnon,  
Atreus' son, or any other Argive 220  
will persuade me, for no thanks are given  
to the man who always fights without rest  
against the enemy. Whether one fights  
or stays behind, the shares are still the same.  
Coward and brave man both get equal honour.  
Death treats idle and active men alike.  
I've won nothing for all I've suffered,  
battling on, pain in my heart, with my life  
always under threat. Just as a bird  
takes scraps of food, whatever she can find, 230  
to her fledglings, but herself eats little,  
so have I lain without sleep many nights,  
persevered through bloody days of fighting,  
in battling men in wars about their wives.  
With ships, I've seized twelve towns and killed their men.  
On land, in the area of fertile Troy,  
I claim eleven more. From all these,  
I took fine treasure, lots of it, brought it  
to Agamemnon, Atreus' son - I gave it  
all to him. He stayed back at the swift ships. 240  
He shared very little of what he got,  
keeping most of it for his own use.  
He gave prizes to the best of men, the kings,

and they hung on to them. From me alone  
he stole away a prize, a woman whom I love.  
Let him have his pleasure in bed with her.  
Why must Argives fight against the Trojans?  
Why did Atreus' son collect an army  
and lead it here if not for fair-haired Helen?  
Are Atreus' sons the only mortal men 250  
who love their wives? Every good and prudent man  
loves his wife and cares for her, as my heart  
loved that girl, though captured with my spear.  
Since he's taken my prize out of my hands  
and cheated me, let him not try to take  
another thing from me. I know him too well.  
He'll never persuade me to agree.  
But, Odysseus, let him rely on you  
and other kings as well to save his ships  
from fiery destruction. He has done much 260  
without me already. He's built a wall,  
constructed a large wide ditch around it,  
and fixed stakes inside. But for all these things,  
he's not been able to check the power  
of man-killing Hector. When I fought  
beside Achaeans, Hector wasn't eager  
to push the battle far from his own walls.  
But now I don't want to fight lord Hector.  
Tomorrow I'll make holy sacrifice  
to Zeus, to all the gods, and load my ships, 270  
once I've dragged them down into the sea.  
You'll see, if you wish, if you're interested,  
tomorrow my ships will be sailing off,  
on the fish-filled Hellespont, men rowing  
with great eagerness. And if Poseidon,  
famous Earthshaker, gives us fair sailing,  
in three days I'll reach fertile Phthia.  
There I own many things I left behind  
when I made this disastrous trip to Troy.  
I'll take back from here more gold, red bronze, 280  
fair women, and gray iron - all I captured.  
But mighty Agamemnon, Atreus' son,  
in his arrogance, seized back from me  
the prize which he awarded. Tell him that.  
Repeat in public everything I say,  
so other Achaeans will grow angry,  
if he, still clothed in shamelessness, hopes  
at any time to deceive some Argive.  
Cur that he is, he doesn't dare confront me  
face to face. I'll discuss no plans with him, 290  
no actions. He cheated me, betrayed me.  
His words will cheat no more. To hell with him.  
Let him march to his death by his own road,  
for Counsellor Zeus has stolen his wits.  
I hate his gifts. And he's not worth a damn.  
Not even if he gave me ten times, no,  
lain twenty times more than all he owns right now,

or will possess in future, not even  
all the wealth amassed in Orchomenus,  
or Egyptian Thebes, where huge treasures sit 300  
piled up in houses - that city of gates,  
one hundred of them, through each can ride  
two hundred men, horses and chariots  
all together - not even if he gave me  
gifts as numerous as grains of sand  
beside the sea or particles of dust,  
not for all that would Agamemnon win  
my heart, not until he satisfies me  
in full for all my heartfelt bitter pain.  
I'll never take as wife any daughter  
of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, 310  
not even if her beauty rivals that  
of golden Aphrodite, or her skill  
in crafts equals bright-eyed Athena's.  
I will not marry her. Let him select  
another Achaean, someone like himself,  
a more prestigious king than me. For me,  
if the gods keep me safe and I get home,  
Peleus himself will find me a wife.  
There are plenty of Achaean women  
in Hellas and in Phthia - daughters of lords, 320  
men who govern cities. From them I'll choose  
the one I want to make my cherished wife.  
My heart has often felt a strong desire  
to take a woman there as my own wife,  
someone suitable for marriage, to enjoy  
the riches which old Peleus has acquired.  
Life is worth more to me than all the wealth  
they say was stored in well-built Ilion  
some time ago, when they were still at peace,  
before the sons of Achaea came, 330  
more than all the treasures of the archer,  
Phoebus Apollo, stacked on the stone floor  
in rocky Pytho. Men can steal cattle,  
fat sheep, get tripods, herds of sorrel horses.  
But no man gets his life back, not by theft  
or plunder, once it has flown out from him,  
passed beyond the barrier of his teeth.  
My goddess mother, silver-footed Thetis,  
has said two fates may bring about my death.  
If I remain here, continuing the fight 340  
against the Trojans' city, that means  
I won't be going home, but my glory  
will never die. But if I go back home,  
my fame will die, though my life will last  
a long time - death will not end it quickly.  
And so I encourage all the rest of you  
to sail back home. You'll not attain your goal,  
steep Ilion, because far-seeing Zeus  
shields that city with his hand. Its people  
have confidence in that. Thus, you should go. 350

Report this message to Achaean leaders -  
that's the privilege of senior men -  
their minds must come up with some better plan  
to save the Achaean fleet and army  
beside the hollow ships. The one they've got  
won't work, since anger still keeps me away.  
Let Phoenix stay here with me, sleep here,  
so tomorrow he may join our voyage  
to his dear native land, if that's his wish.  
For I will not take him back by force."

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Achilles spoke. Astounded by his speech, they all sat there,  
in silence, stunned by the sheer force of his refusal.  
After a pause, old horseman Phoenix spoke:

"Glorious Achilles, if your mind  
is really set on going back, if you  
are totally unwilling to protect  
our swift ships from destructive fire,  
because that anger has consumed your heart,  
how can I remain here, dear lad, alone,  
away from you? Old horseman Peleus  
sent me with you, on that day he shipped you  
from Phthia to join Agamemnon.  
You were young, knowing nothing about war,  
which levels men, or about public debates,  
where men acquire distinction. Thus Peleus  
sent me to teach you all these things,  
so you could speak and carry out great actions.  
Given all this, dear lad, how can I wish  
to be alone and separated from you?  
No, not even if god himself promised  
to cast off my old age, to make me young,  
the man I was when I first left Hellas,  
land of beautiful women, running  
from my angry father, Amyntor.  
I was the one, godlike Achilles,  
who raised you up to be the man you are.  
You would refuse to attend a banquet  
with anyone or eat in your own home,  
unless I set you on my knees, fed you,  
cut the meat, and held the wine cup for you.  
Many times you soaked the shirt on my chest,  
slobbering your wine, a helpless baby.  
I've gone through a lot for you, worked hard,  
bearing in mind that gods had taken care  
I'd never have some children of my own.  
Godlike Achilles, I made you my son,  
so that if I ever met disaster,  
you'd protect me. So, Achilles, subdue  
your giant passion. It's not right for you  
to have an unyielding heart. Gods themselves  
are flexible, and they have more honour  
than we possess, more power, too. Men pray

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when they go wrong or make mistakes,  
propitiating gods with offerings,  
gentle prayers, libations, sacrifice.  
If Agamemnon were not bringing gifts -  
and naming more to come - but persisting,  
inflexibly angry, I wouldn't tell you  
to cast aside your rage and help the Argives,  
no matter how painful their distress. 410  
But he's giving plenty now, more later.  
He has sent out his greatest warriors,  
selected from the whole Achaean army,  
your finest friends among the Argives.  
Don't show contempt for what they have to say  
or insult their coming here. Up to now,  
your resentment has been justified.  
Once the ships catch fire, it will be harder  
to defend them. So accept the gifts.  
Achaean are honouring you like a god. 420  
If you return to man-killing battle  
without the gifts, you'll never get such honour,  
even though you may push the conflict back."

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

"Phoenix, dear old father, noble lord,  
I don't need such honours, for I possess  
honour in the will of Zeus. That will keep  
me here beside my own hollow ships,  
so long as there is breath within my body,  
strength in my limbs. But I'll say this to you - 430  
bear it in mind - do not confuse my heart  
with these laments, these speeches of distress,  
all serving that heroic son of Atreus.  
You should not love him, in case I hate you,  
who are now my friend. You would be noble  
to join with me, and so injure the man  
who injures me. Be equal king with me.  
Take half my honours. These men report back.  
You stay here. Sleep in your soft bed. At dawn,  
we shall consider whether to go back 440  
to our own land, or whether to remain."

Achilles spoke. His eyebrows gave a silent signal  
to Patroclus to set a firm bed out for Phoenix,  
so the others would quickly think of leaving.  
But Ajax, godlike son of Telamon, spoke up:

"Noble son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus,  
let's be off. I don't think we'll bring this talk  
to a successful end, not on this trip.  
We must report this news, though it's not good,  
to the Danaans waiting to receive it. 450  
For Achilles has turned his great spirit  
into something savage in his chest."

He's cruel and doesn't care for friendship  
of his comrades, how we honoured him  
above all others there beside the ships.  
He has no pity. Any man accepts  
reparations for a murdered son or brother.  
The man who killed them pays a large amount  
to stay there in his own community.  
The other man's angry heart and spirit  
are checked, once he takes the compensation. 460  
But with you, gods have put inside your chest  
unchanging evil passions, and all this  
over a single girl. Now we are offering  
seven of the best we have and much more.  
You should turn your passion into kindness,  
the hospitality of your own house.  
For we are guests here under your own roof,  
chosen from the Argive host. We believe  
that we, of all Achaeans, are the ones 470  
most dear to you, your closest friends,  
far more so than all the others."

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

"Ajax, noble son of Telamon, your people's leader,  
everything you say matches what I feel.  
But my heart chokes with rage when I recall  
how that son of Atreus behaved towards me  
with contempt, as if he were dishonoring  
some vagrant. But you'd better go, take back  
this message - I shall not concern myself 480  
with bloody war until lord Hector,  
murderous son of Priam, comes against  
the huts and sea ships of the Myrmidons,  
killing Achaean soldiers as he goes,  
until he starts to burn our ships with fire.  
I think that Hector will be held in check  
around my hut, around my own black ship,  
for all his eagerness to battle on."

So Achilles spoke. The men each took a goblet  
with two handles, gave offerings, and went back to the ships. 490  
Achaean's sons stood up and welcomed them with toasts  
in golden cups, one after another, asking questions.  
The first to speak was Agamemnon, king of men:

"So come, tell me, famous Odysseus,  
great glory of Achaeans, does he wish  
to protect our ships from all-destroying fire,  
or does he refuse, his mighty spirit  
still gripped with anger."

Lord Odysseus,  
who had endured much, replied:

"King of men,  
mighty Agamemnon, son of Atreus, 500  
that man's unwilling to let go his rage.  
He's full of anger, more so now than ever.  
He despises you, your gifts, and tells you  
to think for yourself with the Argives,  
how you may save Achaean ships and men."

Odysseus spoke. They all were silent and disheartened,  
especially by the force with which Achilles had refused.  
Achaean's sons sat a long time speechless, troubled.  
They poured libations. Then each man went to his hut,  
where he lay down and stretched out to take the gift of sleep. 510

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## Book Ten

### A Night Raid

*[The Achaeans call for a volunteer to spy out the Trojan camp. Diomedes and Odysseus set off and capture a Trojan spy, Dolon. He tells them the lay out of the Trojan camp. Diomedes kills Dolon, and he and Odysseus move into the camp and kill a number of sleeping Thracian soldiers and capture the king's horses. Then they return to camp.]*

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## Book Eleven

### The Achaeans Face Disaster

As Dawn rose from her bed beside lord Tithonus,  
bringing light to immortal gods and men alike,  
Zeus sent Strife down to the fast Achaean ships,  
the savage goddess, carrying the sign of war.  
She stood by Odysseus' broad-beamed black ship  
in the middle of the line, so she could be heard  
in both directions, from the huts of Ajax,  
son of Telamon, to those of Achilles,  
whose well-balanced ships were drawn up at the ends,  
for these men trusted courage and their own strong hands. 10  
Standing there, the goddess screamed out a piercing call,  
a dreadful sound. In the heart of each Achaean,  
she put strength for war, for unremitting combat.  
To men war then became sweeter than sailing back,  
going home in their hollow ships to their dear native land.

Then each man told his charioteer to curb his horses  
and line up in good formation at the ditch's edge,  
while they marched ahead on foot in all their armour,  
moving fast, shouting bravely in the early dawn.  
They arranged their ranks on the far side of the ditch, 20  
well beyond the chariots following at some distance.  
Then Cronos' son brought them confusing signs of trouble,  
sending down from high in heaven a rain of blood  
dripping from the sky, for his intention was

to hurl the heads of many brave men down to Hades.

On the opposite side, by the high ground on the plain,  
Trojans gathered round Hector, fine Polydamas,  
Aeneas, whom Trojan people honoured like a god,  
and three sons of Antenor - Polybus, Agenor,  
godlike man, and youthful Acamas, who seemed  
like one of the immortals. In the front ranks, 30  
Hector carried his shield, an even perfect circle.  
As some ominous star now suddenly appears,  
shining through the clouds, and then disappears again  
into the cloud cover, that's how Hector looked,  
as he showed up in front, then in the rear,  
issuing orders. All in shining bronze, he flashed  
like lightning from Father Zeus, who holds the aegis.

Then, just as reapers work in some rich man's fields,  
arranged in rows facing each other, cutting the crop, 40  
wheat or barley, scything handfuls thick and fast,  
that's how Trojans and Achaeans went at each other,  
slicing men down. No one thought of lethal flight.  
The sides were matched in fury equally - they fought  
like wolves ripping at each other. Looking on, Strife,  
goddess who brings much sorrow, was delighted.

*[The Achaeans enjoy a series of successes in the battle, especially Agamemnon. But then he is wounded and has to withdraw from the fighting.]*

Gazing down from Ida, the son of Cronos made the fight  
an equal combat, so on both sides men killed each other.  
With his spear, Tydeus' son wounded brave Agastrophus,  
son of Paeon, on the hip. There were no horses ready, 50  
close at hand for his escape, a fatal blunder.  
His attendant was holding them some distance off,  
while he went on foot through those fighting at the front,  
until lord Diomedes robbed him of his life.

Hector kept a sharp watch on those men. With a shout,  
he went after them, taking ranks of Trojans with him.

*[The fighting continues. Paris wounds Diomedes. Odysseus slaughters many allies, but is wounded and has to withdraw. The Trojans press forward.]*

But the brave Achaeans would not have given way,  
if Alexander, fair-haired Helen's husband,  
had not stopped Machaon, shepherd of his people,  
as he was proving himself among the very best. 60  
Alexander's arrow, with a triple barb,  
hit Machaon's right shoulder. Then Achaeans,  
who breathe fighting spirit, feared for Machaon -  
they thought he might be captured, should the battle change.  
At that point Idomeneus spoke to Nestor:

"Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory  
of Achaeans, come, climb up into my chariot.

Let Machaon get in there beside you.  
Drive those sure-footed horses to the ships,  
and quickly, too. Machaon's a healer  
and so worth more than other men, with skill  
to cut out arrows and use healing potions."

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He finished. Geranian horseman Nestor heard him.  
He climbed into the chariot. Machaon got in beside him,  
son of that excellent healer Asclepius.  
Nestor whipped the horses. They dashed off willingly,  
their spirits happy to be heading for the hollow ships.

Then Father Zeus, enthroned on high, put fear in Ajax.  
He stood bewildered, shifted his seven-layered shield  
onto his back, turned, looked round at throngs of Trojans,  
like some wild beast, then backed off step by step, retreating,  
but often turning back. Just as a tawny lion  
is driven from a farmyard holding cattle  
by dogs and farmers, who keep watch all night long  
to stop it tearing some well-fed cow to pieces,  
but the beast, ravenous for meat, keeps charging in,  
without success, for a storm of spears rains down on him,  
thrown by eager hands, followed then by burning sticks,  
which, for all his fierce desire, make him afraid,  
so, at dawn, he slinks away in bitter disappointment -  
that's how Ajax most unwillingly retreated then,  
away from Trojans, his spirit in distress.

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When Eurypylus, fine son of Euaemon,  
saw Ajax being attacked by this hail of spears,  
he went and stood by him. He hurled his shining spear  
and hit Apisaon, son of Phausius,  
a shepherd to his people, below his diaphragm,  
in the liver. His legs gave way. Eurypylus rushed up  
to strip armour from his shoulders, but he was seen  
by godlike Alexander, as he was pulling off  
the armour from Apisaon. So Paris grabbed his bow,  
aimed at Eurypylus, then shot an arrow in his leg,  
hitting his right thigh. The arrow shaft snapped off.  
His thigh was crippled. So Eurypylus moved back  
among his comrades and thus escaped destruction.

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Thus these soldiers went at the fight like a raging fire,  
as Neleus' horses carried Nestor from the fight.

Swift-footed Achilles, looking on, noticed Nestor.  
Achilles stood by the stern of his broad-beamed ship,  
watching the harsh work of battle, the pitiful retreat.  
At once he spoke out to Patroclus, his companion,  
calling him beside the ship. From inside the hut  
Patroclus heard him. He came out, looking like Ares.  
This moment marked the start of his final rush to death.  
Patroclus, Menoetius' fine son, was the first to speak:

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"Why did you summon me, Achilles?  
Is there something you need me to carry out?"

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

"Fine son of Menoetius, joy of my heart,  
I think the time has come for the Achaeans 120  
to stand around my knees in supplication,  
for their needs have now become unbearable.  
But Patroclus, dear to Zeus, go now -  
ask Nestor who that wounded person is  
he's taking from the battle. From the back,  
he looked exactly like Machaon,  
son of Asclepius. But I didn't see  
his face, for the horses passed me quickly  
in their haste to gallop on."

Achilles spoke.

Patroclus then obeyed his dear companion. 130  
He went on the run through Achaean huts and ships.

When the others reached the huts of Nestor, Neleus' son,  
they stepped out on the fertile earth. Then Eurymedon,  
Nestor's aide, unharnessed horses from the chariot.  
The two men let the sweat dry on their tunics,  
standing in the sea shore breeze. They went inside the hut  
and sat down on some chairs. The two men drank  
and quenched their parching thirst. They started talking,  
enjoying each other's pleasant conversation.  
Then Patroclus stood in the doorway, like some god. 140  
Seeing him, old Nestor leapt up from his shining chair,  
took him in hand and invited him to sit.  
Patroclus declined, staying where he was.

Geranian horseman Nestor then said to Patroclus:

"Why is Achilles showing pity now  
for Achaea's sons, those men hurt with spears  
and arrows? He knows nothing of our trouble,  
the great suffering which afflicts the army.  
For our best men lie injured at the ships,  
crippled by arrows, spears, and swords. 150  
Strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus, is hurt,  
as is Odysseus, famous for his spear,  
Agamemnon and Eurypylus as well,  
with an arrow in his thigh. This man here,  
hurt with an arrow from some bowstring,  
I've just brought in from battle. Achilles is brave,  
but shows no pity, feels nothing for Danaans.  
His courage will profit no one but himself.  
I think he might bitterly regret all this,  
once our army is destroyed. O my friend, 160  
that day Menoetius sent you from Phthia  
in Agamemnon's cause, he gave you orders.

Both lord Odysseus and myself were present.  
We heard all he said to you there in his house.  
Old Peleus ordered his son Achilles  
always to be the best, to stand pre-eminent,  
above all other men. Menoetius, son of Actor,  
told you: 'My son, Achilles is by birth  
a finer man than you. But you are older.  
In strength he is by far your better, 170  
but it's up to you to give shrewd advice,  
prudent counsel, and direction to him.  
He'll comply, for that works to his benefit.'  
That's what the old man said. But you forget.  
Even now, if you'd speak to fierce Achilles,  
you might persuade him. Who knows? Some god  
might help you shift his spirit with your words.  
A friend's persuasion is an excellent thing.  
At least let him send you to war, in command 180  
of other Myrmidons - it may well be  
you'll prove a saving light to the Danaans.  
Let him also give you his fine armour  
to carry into battle, so Trojans may confuse  
the two of you and thus refrain from fighting.  
Achaea's warrior sons are tired out.  
They might gain a breathing space, something rare  
in warfare. Your troops are fresh. They might drive  
Trojans worn out with fighting to the city,  
far from our ships and huts."

Nestor finished speaking.  
His words stirred up the heart inside Patroclus' chest. 190  
He went off on the run along the line of ships,  
towards Achilles, descendant of Aeacus.

*[On his way back to Achilles Patroclus meets the wounded Eurypylus, helps him back to his hut, and remains with him.]*

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## **Book Twelve**

### **The Fight at the Barricade**

Then the din of war raged round the sturdy wall.  
The battered timbers on the tower rattled.  
Argives, broken by Zeus' whip, were all hemmed in  
beside their hollow ships, held back by fear of Hector,  
whose powerful presence scared them, for, as before,  
he battled like a whirlwind. Just as some wild boar  
or lion faced with dogs and huntsmen keeps turning,  
confident of his strength, and men form in a line,  
preparing to go against the beast, hurling spears 10  
in volleys from their hands - still it doesn't tremble,  
show any fear in its brave heart, but its courage  
kills the beast - repeatedly it whirls itself around,  
threatening the ranks of men - that's how Hector then

moved through the troops, urging men to attack the ditch  
Achaean had no choice but to defend their ships -  
gods helping Danaans in the fight were sad at heart.

*[The Achaeans defend the wall, but the Trojans keep attacking. Zeus sends an ominous sign to the Trojans, but Hector decides to ignore it and press the attack.]*

At that point, glorious Hector and the Trojans  
would not have crashed the gates or long bolts in the wall,  
if Counselor Zeus had not stirred his son Sarpedon  
against Achaeans, like a lion going at short-horn cattle. 20  
He called out to Glaucus, Hippolochus' son:

"Glaucus,  
why are we two awarded special honours,  
with pride of place, the finest cuts of meat,  
our wine cups always full in Lycia,  
where all our people look on us as gods?  
Why do we possess so much fine property,  
by the river Xanthus, beside its banks,  
rich vineyards and wheat-bearing ploughland?  
It's so we'll stand in the Lycian front ranks  
and meet head on the blazing fires of battle, 30  
so then some well-armed Lycian will say,  
'They're not unworthy, those men who rule Lycia,  
those kings of ours. It's true they eat plump sheep  
and drink the best sweet wines - but they are strong,  
fine men, who fight in the Lycians' front ranks.'  
Ah my friend, if we could escape this war,  
and live forever, without growing old,  
if we were ageless, then I'd not fight on  
in the foremost ranks, nor would I send you  
to those wars where men win glory. But now, 40  
a thousand shapes of fatal death confront us,  
which no mortal man can flee from or avoid.  
So let's go forward, to give the glory  
to another man or win it for ourselves."

Sarpedon spoke. Without making any move  
Glaucus agreed. They marched on straight ahead,  
leading their large company of Lycians.  
With his strong hands, Sarpedon grabbed the parapet and pulled.  
The whole construction fell apart, breaching the wall,  
creating a passage through for many men. 50

Ajax and Teucer now advanced together  
to attack Sarpedon. Teucer hit him with an arrow  
on the gleaming strap around his chest which held  
his protective shield. But Zeus defended his own son  
from deadly fates to make sure he'd not be destroyed  
by the ships' sterns. Ajax then jumped in, striking his shield.  
The point did not pass through, but its momentum  
knocked Sarpedon back in the middle of his charge.  
Sarpedon withdrew a little from the parapet,

but did not retreat completely, for his heart  
was set on seizing glory. So he called out,  
rallying his godlike Lycians:

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"You Lycians,  
Why is your fighting spirit lessening?  
It's hard for me, although I'm powerful,  
to breach this wall alone and carve a pathway  
to the ships. So come, battle on with me.  
The more men there are, the better the work done."

On the other side, the Argives reinforced their ranks  
inside the wall. For both sides a major fight ensued.  
Lycians, though strong, could not break the Danaan wall  
and cut their way through to the ships. Danaan spearmen  
could not push the Lycians back, repel them from the wall,  
High on the wall they hacked each other's armour -  
leather bucklers and large round shields across their chests,  
quivering targets. Many men were wounded,  
flesh slashed with pitiless bronze, those who turned aside  
and left their backs exposed while fighting and those  
hit right through their shields. Everywhere along the wall,  
along the parapet, men's blood was spattered  
from Trojans and Achaeans. But even so,  
Trojans could not dislodge Achaeans from the wall,  
until Zeus gave glory above all other men  
to Hector, son of Priam, who was the first man  
to jump inside that wall of the Achaeans.  
He raised a resounding yell, crying to his Trojans:

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"Drive forward, you horse-taming Trojans.  
Breach that Argive wall. Then burn the ships  
with a huge fire."

With these words, he drove them on.  
Their ears all caught his call. Hurling themselves at the wall  
in a dense mass, gripping sharp spears, they began to climb.  
Hector picked up a rock lying before the gates,  
thick at its base but tapering sharply on the top.  
Two of the best working men now living  
could not lever that stone out of the ground easily  
into their cart, but Hector carried it with ease alone.  
Hector lifted up that rock, then carried it  
straight to the doors guarding the strongly fitted gates,  
high double doors with two cross pieces holding them inside  
secured with a single bolt. Hector moved up closer,  
planted himself before the doors, his legs wide apart  
to throw with greater force, then hurled that rock  
right at the centre of the doors. He smashed both hinges.  
The stone's momentum took it clear through the doors.  
The gates groaned loudly. The bolts were sheared right off.  
The impact of that boulder shattered all the planks.  
Glorious Hector, his face like night's swift darkness,  
leapt inside. The bronze which covered his whole body

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was a terrifying glitter. In his hand he held two spears.  
Once he'd jumped inside the gates, no one moving out  
to stop him could hold him back, except the gods.  
From his eyes fire blazed. Wheeling through the throng,  
he shouted to his Trojans to climb the wall.  
His men responded to his call. Some scaled the wall,  
others came pouring through the hole made in the gates.  
Danaans were driven back among their hollow ships  
in a rout, and the noisy tumult never stopped.

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## Book Thirteen

### The Trojans Attack the Ships

*[Poseidon decides to flout Zeus' instructions and comes down to assist Achaean troops fighting to defend their ships]*

At that point, Trojans, like some fire or windstorm,  
marched behind Hector, son of Priam, in a mass,  
shouting and screaming with excitement, hoping  
to seize Achaean ships and kill the best men there.  
But Poseidon, who encircles and shakes the earth,  
roused the Argives, once he'd moved up from the sea.  
If Ares had come there, he would have approved of them,  
as would Athena, who inspires men in war.  
Those known for their great bravery did not back off.  
They fought lord Hector and the Trojans spear for spear,  
shield with layered shield, in close-packed formation,  
shields linked together and helmet touching helmet,  
troops shoulder to shoulder. As men moved their heads,  
horsehair crests on shining helmet ridges touched -  
that's how densely packed they stood in that formation.

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The Trojans came on in a mass, led by Hector,  
always charging forward, like a rolling boulder,  
which some river in a winter flood dislodges  
from a cliff beside its banks, its great flood eroding  
what supports that lethal stone. In its fall, it bounces -  
woods crash underneath it, as it accelerates  
in a straight line, unimpeded - then it hits the plain,  
where, for all its impetus, its motion stops.  
That's how Hector threatened then to smash his way  
with ease down to the sea, to Achaea's huts and ships.  
But when he ran into the tight-packed lines of men,  
he came close but was held in check. Achaea's sons  
faced up to him with swords, with double-bladed spears,  
and pushed him back. Shaken, Hector had to give ground.

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By the ships' sterns both sides met in frantic battle.  
That man-destroying combat bristled with long spears  
gripped by men to hack each other's flesh apart.  
As troops moved up tightly bunched, men's eyes went blind  
in the blaze of glittering bronze, glaring helmets,  
finely polished body armour, gleaming shields.

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It would take a hard man to find joy in the sight  
of all that suffering and show no trace of sorrow.

Then Aeneas went at Aphareus, son of Caletor,  
as he was facing him. His sharp spear hit his throat.  
Aphareus' head snapped back - his shield and helmet  
fell down on him, and Death, which takes the living spirit,  
gathered him in. 40

Antilochus kept watching Thoön.  
As he turned, he rushed up and stabbed him,  
severing the vein which runs the full length of the back  
up to the neck - Antilochus slashed through this vein.  
Thoön fell, stretching his arms up from the dust,  
reaching to his friends. Antilochus jumped on him  
and began to strip the armour on his shoulders.  
But he kept his eyes alert, for he was surrounded,  
with Trojan men on every side, thrusting their spears. 50

As Antilochus went through that crowd of men,  
he was observed by Adamas, son of Asius,  
who charged close in - his sharp bronze spear struck  
the middle of his shield. But dark-haired Poseidon,  
unwilling to concede Antilochus' life,  
made the spear point fail - so part of it got stuck  
in Antilochus' shield, like the charred end of a stick,  
and half fell on the ground. Adamas then withdrew,  
returning to the group of his companions,  
avoiding death. But Meriones went after him, 60  
as he moved back, and hit him underneath his navel,  
in the scrotum, the most agonizing way  
for men to perish miserably in battle.  
When that spear struck Adamas, he doubled up,  
bent down over the spear, writhing like a bull  
which farmers in the mountains bind with willow shoots  
and drag along by force, against the creature's will.  
That's how Adamas, once hit, twitched there for a while,  
but not for long. Warlike Meriones, running up,  
yanked out his spear. Then darkness covered up his eyes. 70

The Trojans advanced. Just like blasts of storming winds  
striking the earth under Father Zeus' thunder,  
then with a roar slicing into the sea, whipping up  
a crowd of surging waves across a booming ocean,  
with lines of arching foam, one following another -  
that how Trojans marched behind their leaders  
in a tight formation, one behind the other,  
glittering in bronze. Like man-destroying Ares,  
Hector, son of Priam, led them. He held his shield  
in front of him, an even circle made of hide, 80  
densely packed, then covered with a solid layer  
of hammered bronze, helmet gleaming round his temples.

The first fighter to challenge Hector was great Ajax,

who marched out with long strides and shouted:

"Come closer,  
you poor man. Why try to scare the Argives?  
When it comes to fighting, we're not ignorant.  
Zeus' harsh whip has lashed Achaeans back,  
and your heart now wants to break our ships.  
But we've got hands to raise in their defence.  
In fact, I think it's far more likely now 90  
we'll take your well-built city - these hands of ours  
will smash it long before you seize our ships.  
I say the time has come when you'll run back,  
praying to Father Zeus and other gods,  
to make your horses with their lovely manes  
fly as fast as hawks, when they speed through dust  
to get you to your city on the plain."

As Ajax spoke, a bird flew out on the right,  
a high-flying eagle. Encouraged by the omen,  
the Achaean soldiers responded with a cheer. 100  
Glorious Hector then said to Ajax in reply:

"What are you saying, you stupid boaster?  
I wish it were as certain that I was  
the son of aegis-bearing Zeus himself,  
with Hera for my mother, and honoured  
like Apollo or Athena, as I am that this day  
brings disaster to the Argives - all of them.  
You'll lie among the dead, if you dare  
to stand up to my long spear. It will slice  
your lily skin. Then once you fall down there, 110  
beside Achaea's ships, Trojan dogs and birds  
will feed upon your flesh and fat."

Hector spoke.  
Then he advanced - the troops moved up behind him,  
making a huge din, even from soldiers at the back.  
On the other side, the Argives raised a shout.  
They hadn't lost their courage. They'd held their line  
against the finest Trojans launching their attack.  
The noise from both sides went up into bright Zeus' sky.

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## Book Fourteen

### The Wounded Leaders Rally the Troops

As Nestor sat drinking wine, listening to the noise of war,  
he said to Asclepius' son:

"Noble Machaon,  
think about how this battle will end up -  
the shouting from our young men by the ships  
is getting louder. You should sit here for now."

Drink some sparkling wine, till Hecamede  
with the lovely hair draws you a warm bath  
and washes the dried blood off your body.  
I'll go to a lookout, see what's going on."

Nestor took the well-made shield belonging to his son, 10  
horse-taming Thrasymedes. It lay there in the hut,  
gleaming bronze. The son was fighting with his father's shield.  
Nestor took a strong spear with a sharp bronze point,  
then stood outside the hut. At once he saw a shameful sight -  
Achaeans in retreat, pushed back by their enemies,  
high-hearted Trojans. The Achaean wall was breached.

The old man was lost in thought, his heart divided  
between two courses. Should he seek out the crowd  
of swift-riding Danaans, or see if he could find 20  
Agamemnon, son of Atreus, his people's shepherd?  
As he thought it over, the best course seemed to be  
to find the son of Atreus.

Meanwhile, the other men  
kept up the fight, kept on butchering each other.  
Around their bodies the unwearied bronze rang out,  
as they thrust with swords and double-bladed spears.

Then Nestor came across the kings the gods sustain -  
they were walking round among the ships - all the ones  
whom bronze had wounded - Diomedes and Odysseus,  
along with Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

The kings had set out in one group together, 30  
each one leaning on a spear, to see the fighting  
and check the progress of the war. Deep in their chests  
they were very troubled. When old Nestor met them,  
the anxiety in their Achaean hearts  
was even more acute. Mighty Agamemnon  
spoke to him and said:

"Nestor, son of Neleus,  
great glory of Achaeans, why are you here?  
Why have you left the battle? I'm afraid  
that mighty Hector will make good those words 40  
he used to threaten us, in that speech  
he gave his Trojans, saying he'd not return  
from our ships to Troy until he'd burned them  
and slaughtered all the men. That's what he said.  
And now it's happening. What chaos!"

Geranian horseman Nestor answered Agamemnon:

"What's happened so far is over, done with -  
not even high-thundering Zeus himself  
could make that something else - our wall is down.  
We put our faith in it as a firm defence  
for ships and for ourselves. Whichever way you look, 50

even if you really try, you cannot tell  
from what direction we are being attacked.  
It's all confused. The killing is haphazard.  
The battle shouts fill heaven. As for us,  
if thinking is a help, we should consider  
how these events will end. I'm not saying  
we should rejoin the fight - that's not expected  
from those who have been wounded."

Agamemnon, king of men, replied:

"Nestor,  
since the men now fight at our ships' sterns, 60  
and since our strong wall and ditch are useless -  
something crushing for Danaans, whose hearts  
had trusted they'd provide a firm defence  
and keep our soldiers and our ships secure -  
from this I gather that almighty Zeus  
must enjoy it when Achaeans perish  
without a name, right here, far from Argos.  
I felt when Zeus was giving the Danaans  
his full assistance, and I know it now,  
when he gives the glory to the Trojans, 70  
like blessed gods, while draining all our strength,  
our fighting spirit. But come now, let's agree  
to what I propose. Let's drag down those ships  
drawn up in line closest to the surf  
and pull them all into the sacred sea,  
moor them there with stones in deeper water,  
until the coming of immortal night -  
which may prevent the Trojans' fighting.  
Then we can shift the other ships. To flee  
from ruin, even at night, brings no shame. 80  
It's better to escape one's own destruction -  
to run off - than let it overtake you."

In response to this, Odysseus scowled and said:

"Son of Atreus, how can such words as these  
come from your mouth? I'm finished with you.  
I wish you ruled some other army,  
some useless men, and were not our leader.  
Zeus sees to it that from our youthful days  
to our old age we must grind away  
at wretched war, till, one by one, we die. 90  
Are you really willing to leave Troy,  
city of wide streets, for whose sake we've borne  
so many evils? You'd better keep that quiet -  
another Achaean man may hear the news,  
learn what you've proposed in words no man  
should ever let pass through his mouth at all,  
no man whose heart has any understanding  
of what's appropriate to say, no one  
who is a sceptred king whom men obey -

as many as those Argive troops you lead. 100  
From what you've said, I think you've lost your mind.  
In the middle of a fight, you tell us now  
to drag our well-decked ships down to the sea,  
so that, though Trojans may be winning now,  
they'd get what they most pray for realized -  
the complete annihilation of us all.  
For once we drag our ships into the sea,  
Achaean then will never go on fighting -  
the whole time they'll be looking over here  
and pulling out from battle. Then your plan, 110  
you leader of the army, will destroy it."

Agamemnon, king of men, replied:

"Odysseus,  
that harsh rebuke of yours has stung my heart.  
But I'm not the man to tell Achaea's sons  
to drag our well-decked ships into the sea  
if they're not willing. So show me someone  
with a better plan than mine - young or old -  
I'll welcome it."

Then Diomedes,  
skilled in battle shouts, spoke up:

"That man's close by.  
We've no need to search too long, if you'll listen, 120  
without any one of you resenting me  
because I'm younger than the rest of you.  
I claim worthy descent through Tydeus,  
who lies in Thebes hidden underground.  
So you would never label me by birth a coward,  
a weakling, and thus demean what I advise,  
if what I say is good. We must go back there,  
to the battle, though we're wounded. Once there,  
we'll stand back from combat, beyond the range  
of flying weapons, in case someone is hit 130  
and gets more wounds. But we'll urge on the others,  
even those who, wallowing in their feelings,  
have stood aside, without fighting up to now."

They listened well to Diomedes and agreed.  
So they set off, led by Agamemnon, king of men.

*[In order to deceive Zeus and allow Poseidon to help the Achaeans, Hera enlists the help of Aphrodite and Sleep. She visits Zeus on Mount Ida and seduces him. They make love, and Zeus falls asleep. Poseidon then continues to assist the Achaeans.]*

The kings themselves, though wounded, organized the men -  
Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus.  
Moving among the warriors, they supervised  
the exchange of weapons. The best men put on  
the best equipment, the worst men got the worst. 140

On the other side, glorious Hector organized his men.  
Then he and dark-haired Poseidon launched the fight,  
the most destructive moments of that battle,  
one commanding Trojans, the other leading Argives.  
The sea surged up to the Achaean huts and ships,  
as the two sides met with a tremendous noise,  
louder than ocean surf booming on shore, driven there  
from the depths by the harsh North Wind, louder, too,  
than a roaring fire as it jumps to burn the trees  
in some mountain clearing, louder than the wind  
which howls through the highest branches of some oak tree,  
a wind which at its worst makes the most piercing noise -  
that's how loud the shouting came from Trojans and Achaeans,  
terrifying screams, as they went at each other.

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*[In the ensuing battle, Ajax seriously wounds Hector by hitting him in the head with a rock. Hector has to withdraw from the fighting]*

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## **Book Fifteen**

### **The Battle at the Ships**

*[Zeus wakes up, looks at the battlefield, and turns on Hera for deceiving him. He then arranges for Poseidon to leave the fighting and for Apollo to cure Hector of his wound. Hector returns to battle fully reinvigorated, and Apollo joins the fighting in support of the Trojans]*

Trojans charged in a mass assault, led by Hector,  
moving with huge strides. Phoebus Apollo marched  
in front of Hector, his shoulders covered up in clouds,  
holding the fearful aegis, with its double fringe  
glittering ominously. The smith Hephaestus  
had given it to Zeus to make men run from war.  
Apollo now held this aegis in his hands,  
as he lead on the army. The Argives, closely packed,  
stood their ground. Shrill war cries came from either side,  
arrows flew from bowstrings, many spears were thrown.  
Some impaled themselves in the flesh of quick young men.  
Many fell halfway before they reached white skin,  
skewered in earth, still longing to taste flesh.

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As long as Phoebus Apollo held the aegis steady  
in his hands, on both sides weapons hit their mark -  
men kept on dying. But when Apollo stared directly  
at the swift Danaans and then shook the aegis,  
howling a horrific roar, he bewitched them all -  
the spirit in their chests then lost the will to fight.  
Just as two wild beasts stampede a herd of cattle  
or large flock of sheep, coming suddenly in dark night,  
with no herdsman present, that's how Achaeans,  
in their weakness, were then put to flight. Apollo  
sent the panic, glorifying Hector and his Trojans.

20

Then, as men killed each other, the battle front collapsed.

Hector slew Stichius and Arcesilaus -  
one a leader of bronze-armed Boeotians,  
one a trusted comrade of brave Menestheus.  
Aeneas slaughtered Medon and Iasus.  
Then lord Agenor slew Clonius, and from behind  
Paris struck Deïochus just below the shoulder,  
as the latter fled from soldiers fighting in the front.  
He drove the bronze spear straight through the man.

30

While Trojans were stripping armour from the corpses,  
Achaean jumped in the ditch they'd dug, on the stakes,  
running to and fro, forced to withdraw behind their wall.  
Hector then gave a great shout to his Trojans:

"Charge the ships. Leave the blood-stained spoils alone.  
Whoever I see not moving to the ships  
on the other side, I'll make sure he dies  
right there. His relatives, men and women,  
won't be burying him, once he's dead,  
with the proper rites of fire. Instead,  
the dogs will rip him up before our city."

40

Saying this, Hector swung his whip down from his shoulders,  
lashing on his horses, calling Trojans in the ranks.  
They all shouted with him, then drove the horses  
pulling chariots. A tremendous noise arose.  
In front, Phoebus Apollo easily knocked down  
the banks of the steep trench with his feet - he kicked dirt  
into the middle, making a long broad causeway,  
as wide as the distance a man can throw his spear  
when he's showing off his strength. Trojans poured through,  
wave after wave of them, with Apollo leading on,  
holding up the priceless aegis. The Achaean wall  
he easily demolished, as a child will scatter sand -  
in a childish game beside the sea he builds a sand wall,  
then with his hands and feet flattens it for fun.

50

Hector went straight for glorious Ajax, both men  
struggling over the same ship. Hector was unable  
to push Ajax back and burn the ship, while Ajax  
could not drive Hector off, now that Apollo  
had brought him so far. Noble Ajax hurled his spear.  
He hit Caletor, son of Clytius, in the chest,  
as he was bringing fire to the ships. With a crash,  
he collapsed, and the burning torch dropped from his hands.

60

Then great Telamonian Ajax roused the Argives:

"Friends, be men. In your hearts remember shame.  
In the killing zone let each man shame the rest.  
That sense of shame saves more men than it kills.  
Those who flee help no one, and they get no glory."

70

Ajax spoke. The men were already keen to fight.

By now they were in among the ships, encircled  
by the outer row of those they'd dragged up first.  
But Trojans kept on pouring in. So Argives were forced  
to move back from the ships' first row. But they stayed  
in a single group beside the huts, not scattering  
throughout the camp, held there by shame and fear.

Hector did not stay in the well-armed Trojan group,  
but, like an eagle swooping down upon some flock  
of winged birds feeding by a river bank - 80  
wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans - he rushed  
straight at the dark-prowed ships to take on Ajax.  
With his mighty hand Zeus pushed him from the back,  
while urging other warriors to accompany him.

Hector grabbed hold of a seaworthy ship, at the stern,  
the fine fast boat which brought Protesilaus to Troy,  
though it didn't take him back to his own native land.  
In close combat by this ship, Achaeans and Trojans  
were hacking at each other. By this point, the battle 90  
was no more a matter of standing at some distance,  
enduring showers of spears and arrows, but of fighting  
at close quarters - united by a common spirit -  
battling with sharp axes, hatchets, long swords,  
and double-bladed spears. Many lovely swords,  
with dark mountings, fell to earth, from hands and shoulders  
of those fighting warriors. Earth flowed black with blood.  
Hector seized hold of that ship and would not let go -  
gripping the ornamental marker on the stern,  
yelling to his Trojans:

"Bring fire. Raise a general shout. 100  
Now Zeus has given us a day that makes up  
for everything - to seize the ships that came here,  
contravening the gods' will, creating  
many troubles for us, because our elders  
in their cowardice restrained me, held back  
my troops, when I was keen to fight it out  
at the ships' sterns. But if all-seeing Zeus  
dulled our minds then, now he commands us,  
now he drives us forward."

Ajax could not hold his position any longer. 110  
Assailed by flying spears, he backed off a little,  
abandoning the deck on that well-balanced ship.  
He moved to the raised platform, seven feet high,  
and looked for Trojans, always jabbing with his pike,  
pushing from the ship any Trojan bearing tireless fire,  
always yelling fearful shouts at the Danaans.

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## Book Sixteen

### Patroclus Fights and Dies

While the men kept on fighting at the well-decked ships,  
Patroclus went to Achilles, his people's shepherd,  
shedding warm tears, like a fountain of dark water  
whose stream flows over the lip of a sheer rock face.  
Looking at him, swift-footed, godlike Achilles  
felt pity. So he spoke to him - his words had wings:

"Why are you crying, Patroclus, like some girl,  
an infant walking beside her mother,  
asking to be picked up. She pulls the robe  
and stops her mother strolling on ahead, 10  
looking up at her in tears, until the mother  
lifts her up. You're crying just like that girl,  
Patroclus. Is there something you need to say  
to the Myrmidons or me? Some news  
that only you have heard?"

With a heavy sigh,  
horseman Patroclus, you then replied:

"Achilles,  
Peleus' son, by far the strongest of Achaeans,  
don't be angry with me. Such great despair  
has overcome the Argives. For all those  
who used to be the bravest warriors 20  
are lying at the ships with sword and spear wounds -  
powerful Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
hit by a spear, famous spearman Odysseus  
with a stab wound, and Agamemnon, too.  
An arrow struck Eurypylus in the thigh.  
Many healers, exceptionally skilled  
in various medicines, are with them now,  
tending their wounds. But it's impossible  
to deal with you, Achilles. I hope anger  
like this rage you're nursing never seizes me. 30  
It's disastrous! How will you be of use  
to anyone in later generations,  
if you won't keep shameful ruin from the Argives?  
You're pitiless. Perhaps horseman Peleus  
was not your father, nor Thetis your mother -  
the gray sea delivered you, some tall cliff,  
for you've an unyielding heart. If your mind  
shuns some prophecy, or your noble mother  
has told you news from Zeus, at least send me,  
and quickly, with the others in our troop 40  
of Myrmidons. I could be a saving light  
for the Danaans. Give me your armour  
to buckle round my shoulders, so Trojans,  
mistaking me for you, may stop the fight."

Patroclus finished his entreaty. How wrong he was!  
He was praying for his own death, his dreadful fate.  
Swift-footed Achilles, with some heat, replied:

"My dear divinely born Patroclus,  
what are you saying? I'm not concerned  
with any prophecy I know about, 50  
nor has my noble mother said a thing  
from Zeus. But dreadful pain came in my heart  
and spirit when that man wished to cheat  
someone his equal and steal away that prize,  
and just because he's got more power.  
That really hurt, given that I've suffered  
in this war so many pains here in my chest.  
Achaea's sons chose that girl as my prize.  
I won her with my spear, once I'd destroyed  
her strong-walled city. Lord Agamemnon 60  
took her back, out of my hands, as if I were  
some stranger without honour. But let that be -  
it's over, done with. Besides, my spirit  
didn't mean to stay enraged for ever,  
in although I thought I wouldn't end my anger  
until the cries of warfare reached my ships.  
Come, put my famous armour on your shoulders  
and lead war-loving Myrmidons to battle,  
since black clouds of Trojans now surround the ships,  
expecting victory, and Argives stand 70  
crammed in by the sea shore, with little space,  
while a city full of Trojans comes at them  
without fear, because they don't see near them  
my helmet with its glittering front. Soon enough,  
they'd be running back, filling the gullies  
with their dead, if mighty Agamemnon  
treated me with kindness - but now they fight  
all through our camp. For there's no spear raging  
in the fists of Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
to protect Danaans from disaster. 80  
I've not heard the voice of Agamemnon  
crying out in his vile head. As for Hector,  
that man-killer's voice echoes everywhere,  
shouting at Trojans, who fill all the plain  
with their noise, as they defeat Achaeans  
in this battle. Even so, Patroclus,  
you must stave off disaster from the fleet.  
Go after them in force - they may fire those ships  
and rob us of the journey home we crave.  
Now, pay attention to what I tell you 90  
about the goal I have in mind for you,  
so you'll win me great honour and rewards,  
so all Danaans will send back to me  
that lovely girl and give fine gifts as well.  
Once you push the Trojans from the ships, come back.  
If Zeus, Hera's mate, who loves his thunder,  
gives you the glory, don't keep on battling  
those war-loving Trojans with me absent.  
You would decrease my honours. Don't let  
the joy of fighting and of killing Trojans 100

lead you on to Ilion, just in case  
some deathless Olympian god attacks you.  
Apollo, the far-worker, loves his Trojans.  
So make sure you come back here again,  
once your saving light has reached our ships.  
O Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo -  
if only no single Trojan or Achaean  
could escape death, and just we two alone  
were not destroyed, so that by ourselves  
we could take Troy's sacred battlements!"

110

Tell me now, you Muses living on Olympus,  
how the fire first got tossed onto Achaean ships.  
It was Hector. He came up close to Ajax,  
then with his great sword hacked Ajax's ash spear,  
right behind the point. He cut straight through it,  
so Telamonian Ajax still gripped the spear,  
but it was useless without its bronze spear head,  
which fell some distance off, clanging on the ground.  
The heart in mighty Ajax recognized gods' work.  
He shuddered, for he perceived how high-thundering Zeus  
was denying completely all his fighting skill,  
wanting the Trojans to prevail. Ajax backed off,  
out of range. Then onto that swift ship the Trojans threw  
untiring fire, which spread itself immediately  
in a fiery blaze that no one could extinguish.  
The ship's stern started to catch fire.

120

At that moment,  
Achilles, slapping his thighs, said to Patroclus:

"Up now,  
divinely born Patroclus, master horseman.  
In the ships I see destructive flames going up.  
Trojans must not seize our ships and leave us  
with no way to escape. Put armour on,  
and quickly. I'll collect the soldiers."

130

Achilles spoke. Patroclus dressed in gleaming bronze.  
First, he fixed on his shins the beautiful leg armour,  
fitted with silver ankle clasps. Around his chest  
he put on the body armour of Achilles,  
swift-footed descendant of Aeacus - finely worked  
and glittering like a star. On his shoulders he then slung  
his bronze silver-studded sword and a large strong shield.  
On his powerful head he set the famous helmet  
with its horsehair crest. The plume on top nodded  
full of menace. Then Patroclus took two strong spears  
well fitted to his grip. He didn't choose Achilles' spear,  
for no Achaean man could wield that weapon,  
so heavy, huge, and strong, except for brave Achilles.  
It was made of ash wood from the peak of Pelion.

140

Meanwhile Achilles went to and fro among the huts,

getting all his Myrmidons to arm themselves.  
They rushed out, like flesh-eating wolves, hearts full  
of unspeakable fury, beasts which in the mountains 150  
have caught and ripped apart some huge antlered stag.  
Then in a pack they charge off, jaws all dripping blood,  
to lap black surface water with their slender tongues  
in some dark spring, vomiting up clots of blood  
from their crammed bellies, while in their chests their hearts  
are resolute. That's how the leaders and commanders  
of the Myrmidons rushed around brave Patroclus,  
comrade of swift Achilles, Aeacus' descendant,  
who stood among them there, urging on the horses  
and the warriors carrying their shields. 160

*[Achilles offers a libation and a prayer to Zeus.]*

The armed warriors who went with brave Patroclus  
marched out in formation, until, with daring hearts,  
they charged the Trojans, immediately swarming out,  
like wasps beside a road, which young lads love to torment,  
constantly disturbing them in their roadside nests -  
those fools make mischief for all sorts of people.

When Trojans saw the brave son of Menoetius  
with his attendant, both in glittering armour,  
all their hearts were shaken and their ranks fell back.  
They thought Peleus' swift-footed son by his ships 170  
had set aside his anger and made friends again.  
Each man glanced around, checking how he might escape  
his own complete destruction.

Patroclus was the first  
to throw his bright spear right at the central mass  
where most troops clustered, by the stern part of the ship  
of great-hearted Protesilaus. He hit a man,  
Pyraechmes, who'd led Paeonian charioteers  
from Amydon, by the broad flowing Axius.  
Struck by that spear in his right shoulder, he fell down  
screaming on his back there in the dust. Comrades round him, 180  
his Paeonians, ran off - Patroclus terrified them,  
now he'd killed their leader and best fighter.

*[The Achaeans rally and attack the Trojans]*

The leaders then began to kill each other  
in the scattered fighting. First, Menoetius' brave son  
with his sharp spear struck Areilycus in the thigh,  
as he was turning. He drove the bronze straight through,  
breaking the bone. Areilycus fell face down in the dirt.  
Then warlike Menelaus hit Thoas in the chest,  
in a place where it was open right beside his shield.  
The blow collapsed his limbs. Meges, Phyleus' son, 190  
saw Amphiclus charging at him, but hit him first,  
spearing the top of his leg, where a man's muscle

is the thickest. The spear point sliced his tendons,  
and darkness closed his eyes. Then the sons of Nestor  
went into action. Antilochus jabbed his sharp spear  
at Atymnius, driving the bronze point in his side,  
so he fell forward. Maris, who was close by,  
angry about his brother, charged Antilochus  
holding his spear, and then stood by his brother's body.  
But godlike Thrasymedes moved too quickly for him. 200  
Before Maris could thrust, he lunged out at his shoulder.  
He didn't miss. The spear point sheared off muscle  
at the bottom of his arm and broke the bone in two.  
Maris fell with a crash, and darkness veiled his eyes.  
Thus, these two, slaughtered by two brothers, went off  
to Erebus. They'd been Sarpedon's brave companions,  
spearmen sons of Amisodarus - he'd reared  
the raging Chimera, who'd killed so many men.  
Ajax, son of Oileus, jumped out at Cleobulus,  
captured him alive, stuck in that confusion. Even so, 210  
Ajax struck him with his sword across the neck,  
draining his fighting strength. The sword grew warm with blood.  
Dark death closed up his eyes, and strong fate embraced him.

Thus these Danaan leaders each killed his man.  
Just as ravenous mountain wolves suddenly attack  
young goats or lambs and seize them from the flock,  
when in the mountains an inattentive shepherd  
lets them wander off - once the wolves see them,  
they attack at once, for those young lack the heart to fight -  
that's how Danaans then went after Trojans, 220  
whose minds now turned to shameful flight, for they'd lost  
their will to battle on.

Hector realized  
the tide of victory in that fight was changing,  
but he stood there, trying to save his loyal companions.  
Just as those times a cloud comes from Olympus,  
moving from the upper air across the sky,  
when Zeus brings on a rain storm - that's how Trojans  
fled yelling from the ships, crossing the ditch again  
in complete disorder. Hector's swift-footed horses  
carried him and his weapons back, leaving behind, 230  
against their will, the Trojans held up at the trench  
dug by Achaeans. In that ditch many swift horses  
lost their master's chariots when poles snapped at the end.

*[Patroclus pursues the fleeing Trojans]*

When Patroclus had cut the Trojans' front ranks off,  
he pushed them back again towards the ships,  
keeping them from the city they were trying to reach.  
Between the ships, the river, and the lofty wall,  
in that middle ground, he kept charging at them,  
killing them, avenging deaths of many comrades.  
There he first struck Pronous with his shining spear, 240

where Pronous' shield had left his chest exposed.  
His limbs gave way, and he fell down with a thud.  
Patroclus next rushed at Thestor, son of Enops,  
who just sat crouching in his polished chariot,  
paralyzed with terror, reins slipping from his hands.  
Coming up, Patroclus struck him with his spear  
right on the jawbone, smashing through his teeth.  
Patroclus pulled his spear back, dragging Thestor  
out across the chariot rail. Just as a man  
sitting on a rocky point hauls up a monstrous fish 250  
out of the sea, using a line and bright bronze hook -  
that's how Patroclus dragged Thestor from his chariot,  
mouth skewered on the shining spear. He threw him down,  
face first. As Thestor fell, his spirit abandoned him.  
Then Erylaus rushed up, but Patroclus struck him  
with a rock right on his head, smashing the entire skull  
inside his heavy helmet. Erylaus collapsed  
on the ground face down.

Death, who destroys men's hearts,  
flowed all around Patroclus, as he slaughtered  
Erymas, Amphoterus, Epaltes, 260  
Tlepolemus, son of Damastor, Echius,  
Pyris, Ipheus, Euippus, and Polymelus,  
son of Argeas - all these Patroclus laid out,  
one by one, on the earth, which nourishes all men.

*[Sarpedon moves out against Patroclus and is killed. The Achaeans charge on against the Trojans retreating back towards the city with Patroclus in pursuit.]*

At that point Achaea's sons would have captured Troy  
and its high gates, at Patroclus' hands, as he raged  
with his frenzied spear, but for Phoebus Apollo,  
who stood there on the well-built wall, intending  
to destroy Patroclus and assist the Trojans.  
Three times Patroclus started to climb up a corner 270  
on that high wall. Three times Apollo shoved him back,  
his immortal hands repelling the bright shield.  
But when Patroclus, for the fourth time, came on  
like some god, Apollo, with a terrific cry,  
shouted these winged words at him:

"Go back,  
divinely born Patroclus. This city  
of proud Trojans, according to its fate,  
will not be ravaged by your spear, nor even  
by Achilles, a far better man than you."

Apollo spoke. Patroclus drew back a little, 280  
evading the anger of Apollo, the far shooter.

Then Patroclus launched a charge against the Trojans,  
intent on slaughter. Three times he assaulted them,  
like war god Ares, with terrific shouts. Three times

he killed nine men. But when he attacked a fourth time,  
then, Patroclus, you saw your life end. For Phoebus,  
a terrible god, in that grim fight came up against you.  
Patroclus failed to see Apollo, as he moved  
through the confusion, for he advanced towards him  
hidden in thick mist. Apollo stood behind him. 290

Then with the flat of his hand, he struck Patroclus  
on his back, on his broad shoulders - that made his eyes  
lose focus. Next, Phoebus Apollo knocked the helmet  
from his head. The horsehair crest rolled with a clatter  
under horses' feet. The dust and blood then stained  
the helmet's plumes. Up to that time, gods had not let  
that helmet with its horsehair plume get smudged with dirt,  
for it was always guarding godlike Achilles' head,  
his noble forehead, too. Later Zeus awarded it  
to Hector to carry on his head, as his death loomed. 300

In Patroclus' hands, his heavy long-shadowed spear,  
thick and strong, with its bronze point, was completely smashed.  
His tasseled shield and strap fell from his shoulders  
down on the ground. Next, Apollo, Zeus' son, loosened  
the body armour on Patroclus. His mind went blank,  
his fine limbs grew limp - he stood there in a daze.  
From close behind, Euphorbus, son of Panthous,  
a Dardan warrior, hit him in the back,  
with a sharp spear between the shoulder blades.  
Euphorbus surpassed all men the same age as him 310  
in spear throwing, horsemanship, and speed on foot.  
He'd already knocked twenty men out of their chariots,  
and that was the first time he'd come with his own chariot  
to learn something of war. Pulling the spear out of Patroclus' flesh,  
Euphorbus ran back again to blend in with the throng.  
He didn't stand his ground, even though Patroclus  
had no weapons for a fight. So Patroclus,  
overwhelmed by the god's blow and spear, withdrew,  
back to the group of his companions, avoiding death.

But when Hector noticed brave Patroclus going back, 320  
wounded by sharp bronze, he moved up through the ranks,  
stood close to Patroclus and struck him with his spear,  
low in the stomach, driving the bronze straight through.

Patroclus fell with a crash, and Achaea's army  
was filled with anguish. Just as a lion overcomes  
a tireless wild boar in combat, when both beasts  
fight bravely in the mountains over a small spring  
where they both want to drink, and the lion's strength  
brings down the panting boar - that's how Hector,  
moving close in with his spear, destroyed the life 330  
of Menoetius' noble son, who'd killed so many men.  
His spirit fluttered from his limbs and went to Hades,  
lamenting its own fate, the loss of youthful manhood.

## The Fight Over Patroclus

Once Hector had killed Patroclus and stripped off the famous armour from the corpse, he then tried to drag away the body, so with his sharp bronze he could hack Patroclus' head from off its shoulders, then pull back the corpse to give to Trojan dogs. But Ajax moved in close with his shield up, like a wall. So Hector gave ground, withdrawing to the company of his companions, then jumped up in his chariot. Then, with a great shout, he called out to his Trojans:

"Trojans, Lycians, Dardan spearmen, 10  
be men, my friends. Recall your battle fury,  
until I can put on the lovely armour  
of great Achilles, which I stripped off  
the great Patroclus, once I'd killed him."

With these words, Hector of the shining helmet left that furious conflict and strode quickly off. Then, standing apart from that dreadful fight, he changed his armour. He gave his own equipment to war-loving Trojans to carry to the city, sacred Ilion, then put on the immortal armour of Achilles, son of Peleus, which heavenly gods had given to Achilles' well-loved father. 20

From far away, cloud-gatherer Zeus gazed down on Hector, as he dressed himself in the battle armour of Peleus' godlike son. Shaking his head, Zeus then spoke to his own heart:

"You poor wretch,  
you're not considering your own death at all -  
it's getting closer. So you're putting on  
the immortal armour of the finest man,  
who makes other men afraid. You've just killed 30  
his comrade, a kind, courageous man,  
and then vainly stripped the armour off  
his head and shoulders. But for the moment,  
I'll give you great power, to compensate you,  
since you'll not be coming back from battle,  
or handing over to Andromache  
the glorious armour of the son of Peleus."

The son of Cronos spoke, then nodded his dark brow. He changed the armour so it suited Hector's body. Then the fearful war god Ares entered Hector, filling his limbs with strength and courage. He set off, to the tremendous shouts of all his famous allies, as he paraded there in front of them, dazzling them all with the armour of the great-hearted son of Peleus. 40

*[The fight over the corpse of Patroclus continues, with many warriors falling on both sides]*

Throughout that entire day the great combat raged,  
a bitter conflict. The men kept toiling on without a pause,  
sweat dripping on their knees and legs, under their feet,  
and running down men's eyes and hands, as both sides  
battled over swift-footed Achilles' brave companion.  
Trojans sought to drag the corpse back to Ilion, 50  
Achaean to their hollow ships. Around Patroclus  
the conflict grew intense. Neither Ares nor Athena,  
who incite warriors to battle, if they'd seen that fight,  
would have disparaged it, not even if they'd been  
intensely angry. That's how destructive Zeus made  
the conflict for men and horses that day men fought  
over Patroclus.

Godlike Achilles, at this time,  
knew nothing of Patroclus' death, for they were fighting  
under the walls of Troy, away from the fast ships.  
He'd never imagined in his heart that Patroclus 60  
was dead. He thought he was alive and would return.

*[The fighting over the dead body continues.]*

Then Ajax spoke to Menelaus, skilled at war shouts:

"Look now, divinely raised Menelaus,  
see if you can spot Antilochus alive,  
son of great-hearted Nestor. Get him to go  
with speed to rouse up fiery Achilles,  
by telling him his companion, the man  
he loves the most by far, has just been killed."

Ajax spoke. Menelaus, expert at war shouts, agreed.  
He issued many orders to Meriones 70  
to the Ajaxes, as well:

"You two Ajaxes,  
Argive leaders, and you, Meriones,  
let each man bear in mind the kindnesses  
of poor Patroclus, who, when he was alive,  
knew how to treat every man with care.  
Now fatal death has overtaken him."

With these words, fair-haired Menelaus went away,  
glancing warily in all directions, like an eagle,  
which, men say, has the sharpest sight of all the animals  
flying in the sky - a bird which, while soaring high, 80  
doesn't miss the swiftly running hare crouched down  
under a leafy bush, and, swooping low, seizes it  
at once, and then tears out its life - that's how, Menelaus,  
raised by gods, your bright eyes kept searching all around  
through groups of many comrades, seeking Nestor's son,  
to see if he was still alive. Then Menelaus,  
quickly seeing him on the left flank of the battle  
encouraging his companions, urging them to fight,

came up to him. Then fair-haired Menelaus said:

"Divinely raised Antilochus, come here, 90  
so you can learn the painful news, something  
I wish had never happened. You already know,  
I think, for your own eyes can see it,  
how some god is rolling this disaster  
over the Danaans, giving victory  
to the Trojans. The best Achaean,  
Patroclus, has been slaughtered, a huge loss  
for the Danaans, who miss him badly.  
You must run quickly to Achaean ships 100  
to tell Achilles, so he can bring the corpse  
in safety to his ship - the naked body,  
for now Hector of the gleaming helmet  
wears his armour."

Menelaus finished speaking.

Hearing that news, Antilochus was overwhelmed.  
For a long time he stood in shock, speechless. His eyes  
filled up with tears, his strong voice failed. But even so,  
he did not neglect what Menelaus told him.  
Giving his armour to his noble comrade  
he set off on the run. As he wept, his swift feet 110  
took him from the battle, bearing the bad news  
back to Achilles, son of Peleus.

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## Book Eighteen

### The Arms of Achilles

As the men fought on like a blazing fire raging,  
swift-footed Antilochus came to Achilles  
with his news. He found Achilles by his beaked ship,  
sensing in himself what had already happened.  
Noble Nestor's son approached, shedding warm tears.  
He told him the agonizing truth:

"Son of warlike Peleus,  
you must hear this dreadful news - something  
I wish weren't so - Patroclus lies dead.  
Men are fighting now around the body.  
He's stripped. Hector with his gleaming helmet 10  
has the armour."

Antilochus finished speaking.

A black cloud of grief swallowed up Achilles.  
With both hands he scooped up soot and dust and poured it  
on his head, covering his handsome face with dirt,  
covering his sweet-smelling tunic with black ash.  
He lay sprawling - his mighty warrior's massive body  
collapsed and stretched out in the dust. With his hands,

he tugged at his own hair, disfiguring himself.  
The women slaves acquired as battle trophies  
by Achilles and Patroclus, hearts overwhelmed  
with anguish, began to scream aloud. They rushed outside  
and beat their breasts around warlike Achilles.  
Then all the women's legs gave way, and they fell down.  
Across from them, Antilochus lamented,  
eyes full of tears, as he held Achilles by the hand.  
Achilles' noble heart moaned aloud. Antilochus  
feared he might hurt himself or slit his throat  
with his own sword. Achilles gave a huge cry of grief.  
His noble mother heard it from the ocean depths  
where she was sitting by her ancient father.  
Thetis left the cave. Her sisters went with her in tears.  
Around them sea waves parted, until they came  
to fertile Troy. They emerged, climbing up on shore,  
one after another, right where the Myrmidons  
had dragged up their ships in close-packed formation  
near swift Achilles. Then his noble mother moved  
beside him, as he was groaning bitterly.  
With a sharp cry, she cradled her son's head, then spoke.  
As she grieved, she spoke to him - her words had wings:

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"My child, why are you crying? What sorrow now  
has come into your heart? Speak out. Hide nothing.  
Zeus has given you what you begged him to  
when you stretched your hands out to him -  
all Achaea's sons by their ships' sterns  
are hemmed in there, desperate for your help  
and suffering a terrible ordeal."

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With a heavy groan,  
swift-footed Achilles then answered Thetis:

"Yes, Mother,  
Olympian Zeus has indeed accomplished  
what I asked. But what pleasure's there for me,  
when Patroclus, my beloved companion,  
has been destroyed, the man I honoured  
as my equal, above all my comrades.  
I've lost him and the armour, which Hector took,  
once he'd killed him, that massive armour,  
so wonderful to look at, which the gods  
gave as a priceless gift to Peleus  
on that day they placed you in the bed  
of a mortal man. If only you had stayed  
among the eternal maidens of the sea  
and Peleus had married a mortal wife.  
But now there'll be innumerable sorrows  
waiting for your heart, once your child is killed.  
You won't be welcoming him back home again.  
My own heart has no desire to live on,  
to continue living among men,  
unless Hector is hit by my spear first,

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losing his life and paying me compensation  
for killing Menoetius' son, Patroclus."

Through her tears, Thetis then answered Achilles:

"My son, from what you've just been saying, 70  
you're fated to an early death, for your doom  
comes quickly as soon as Hector dies."

Swift-footed Achilles answered her with passion:

"Then let me die, since I could not prevent  
the death of my companion. He's fallen  
far from his homeland. He needed me there  
to protect him from destruction. So now,  
since I'm not returning to my own dear land,  
and for Patroclus was no saving light  
or for my many other comrades, 80

all those killed by godlike Hector while I sat  
here by the ships, a useless burden  
on the earth - and I'm unmatched in warfare  
by any other Achaean armed in bronze,  
although in council other men are better -  
so let wars disappear from gods and men  
and passionate anger, too, which incites  
even the prudent man to that sweet rage,  
sweeter than trickling honey in men's throats,  
which builds up like smoke inside their chests, 90

as Agamemnon, king of men, just now,  
made me enraged. But we'll let that pass.  
For all the pain I feel, I'll suppress the heart  
within my chest, as I must. So now I'll go  
to meet Hector, killer of the man I loved.  
As for my own fate, let it come to me  
when Zeus and the other deathless gods  
determine. For not even strong Hercules,  
the man Lord Zeus, son of Cronos, loved the most,  
escaped his death. He was destroyed by Fate 100  
and by malicious Hera's anger, too.

And so for me. If a like fate has been set,  
then once I'm dead, I'll just lie there. But for now,  
let me seize great glory - let me make  
so many Trojan and Dardan matrons weep,  
and with both hands wipe tears from their soft cheeks,  
and set them on to constant lamentation,  
so that they'll know I've long refrained from war.  
Don't keep me from battle. Though you love me,  
you'll not convince me."

Silver-footed Thetis 110  
then said to Achilles:

"My child, what you say is true -  
it's no bad thing to protect companions

when they're in trouble from complete disaster.  
But now the Trojans have your lovely armour,  
all your glittering bronze. It's on the shoulders  
of Hector with the shining helmet -  
he boasts about it. But I don't think  
his triumph will last long, since his death  
is coming closer. But you must not rejoin  
Ares' conflict until with your own eyes  
you see me in the morning here again. 120  
I'll return at sunrise, and I'll bring you  
lovely armour made by lord Hephaestus."

Then the silver-footed goddess Thetis went away  
to fetch that lovely armour from Olympus  
for her beloved son.

As Thetis' feet carried her  
towards Olympus, Achaeans were running back,  
with a huge noise, fleeing man-killing Hector,  
until they reached their ships beside the Hellespont.  
But those well-armed Achaeans couldn't extricate 130  
Achilles' comrade, dead Patroclus, from the spears,  
for they'd been overtaken by Trojan warriors  
and chariots once again, with Hector, Priam's son,  
as furious as fire. Three times glorious Hector,  
from behind, seized the corpse's feet, keen to drag it off,  
shouting furiously to his Trojans. Three times,  
the two Ajaxes, clothed in their full battle strength,  
beat him from the corpse. But Hector kept on coming  
without a pause, confident of his fighting power.

Then Achilles, loved by Zeus, moved into action. 140  
Around his powerful shoulders Athena set  
her tasselled aegis. Then the lovely goddess  
wrapped his head up in a golden cloud, so from him  
a fiery light blazed out right up to heaven.  
He strode from the wall, then stood there by the ditch.  
But recalling what his mother said to him,  
he didn't mingle with Achaeans. As he stood there,  
he cried out. From far away, Pallas Athena  
added her voice, too, causing great consternation  
among the Trojans. As thrilling as a trumpet's note 150  
when it rings clearly, when rapacious enemies  
besiege a city - that's how sharp and piercing  
Achilles' voice was then. When the Trojans heard it,  
that brazen shout Achilles gave, all their hearts  
were shaken. Their horses with the lovely manes  
turned back the chariots, anticipating trouble  
in their hearts. Charioteers were terrified, seeing  
the fearful inextinguishable fire blazing  
from the head of the great-hearted son of Peleus.  
For Athena, goddess with the glittering eyes, 160  
kept it burning. Three times godlike Achilles yelled  
across that ditch. Achaeans then, with stronger hearts,

pulled Patroclus out of spear range and laid him on a cot.  
His dear companions gathered mourning round him,  
Achilles with them, shedding hot tears when he saw  
his loyal companion lying on a death bed,  
mutilated by sharp bronze. He'd sent him out to war  
with chariot and horses, but never welcomed him  
at his return.

Then ox-eyed queen Hera  
made the unwearied sun, against his will, go down  
into the stream of Ocean. So the sun set. 170  
Godlike Achaeans now could pause for some relief  
from the destructive killing of impartial war.

For their part, once Trojans drew back from that harsh fight,  
they untied swift horses from their chariots and then,  
before they thought of food, called for a meeting.  
There everyone stayed standing. No one dared sit down,  
all terrified because Achilles had appeared,  
after his long absence from that savage conflict.  
The first to speak was Polydamas, Panthous' son, 180

"My friends, consider both sides of this issue.  
For my part, I advise us to return  
into the city - we should not stay here,  
on the plain, waiting for dawn beside the ships.  
Personally, I was glad to spend the night  
by their swift ships, hoping then we'd capture  
those curved vessels. But now I really have  
a dreadful fear of Peleus' swift-footed son.  
He has a reckless heart - he's not a man  
to rest content in the middle of the plain, 190  
where Trojans and Achaeans have a share  
of Ares' battle fury. So let's go back,  
return into the city. Trust me when I say  
that's how things will go. For now, sacred night  
has stopped the swift-footed son of Peleus.  
But if tomorrow he moves into action  
fully armed and encounters us still here,  
we'll recognize him well enough. Anyone  
who gets away and makes it back to Ilion  
will be a happy man. For dogs and vultures 200  
will eat many Trojans. I don't want to hear  
that such events have happened. If we all  
follow my advice, although reluctantly,  
tonight we'll collect our forces in one group.  
Walls, high gates, and doors with fitted planks,  
polished and bolted shut, will guard the city. "

With a scowl, Hector of the flashing helmet then replied:

"Polydamas, what you say displeases me -  
you tell us to run back into the city  
and stay inside it. Haven't you already 210

been cooped up long enough within those walls?  
But now, when the son of crooked-minded Cronos  
allows me to win glory by the ships,  
hemming the Achaeans in beside the sea,  
this is no time, you fool, to say such things  
before the people. Not a single Trojan  
will take your advice. I won't permit it.  
But come, let's all follow now what I suggest.  
You must take dinner at your stations  
all through the army, making sure you watch. 220  
Tomorrow morning early, right at dawn,  
we'll fully arm ourselves with weapons,  
then take keen battle to those hollow ships.  
If indeed it's true that lord Achilles  
is returning to that battle by the ships,  
if he wants that, so much the worse for him.  
I won't run from him in painful battle,  
but stand against him, fighting face to face,  
whether great victory goes to him or me.  
In war the odds are equal, and the man 230  
who seeks to kill may well be killed himself."

Hector spoke. The Trojans roared out in response.  
The fools! Pallas Athena had robbed them of their wits.

Meanwhile, Achaeans mourned Patroclus all night long  
with their elegies. Among them, Peleus' son  
began the urgent lamentations, placing  
his murderous hands on the chest of his companion.  
Achilles, amid his groans, addressed his Myrmidons:

"Alas, what a useless promise I made then,  
the day I tried to cheer Menoetius up 240  
at home, telling him when I'd sacked Ilion,  
I'd bring his splendid son back there to him,  
But Zeus does not bring to fulfillment  
all things which men propose. Now both of us  
share a common fate, to redden the same earth  
right here in Troy. Old horseman Peleus  
will not be welcoming me at my return  
back to his home, nor will my mother Thetis.  
For in this place the earth will cover me.  
And now, Patroclus, since I'm journeying 250  
under the earth after you, I'll postpone  
your burial till I bring here Hector's head,  
his armour, too, the man who slaughtered you,  
you courageous man. I'll cut the throats  
of twelve fine Trojan children on your pyre,  
in my anger at your killing. Till that time,  
you'll lie like this with me by my beaked ships,  
and round you Trojan and Dardanian women  
will keep lamenting night and day, shedding tears,  
the very women we two worked hard to win 260  
with our strength and our long spears, by looting

prosperous cities of mortal men."

After these words, godlike Achilles told his comrades to place a large tripod on the fire, so they could wash the blood clots from his comrade's corpse. On the blazing fire, they set a cauldron with three legs, poured water in it, then brought split wood to burn below the water. Fire licked the cauldron's belly and made the water hot. Once it had boiled inside the shining bronze, they washed him, rubbed oil thickly over him, and filled his wounds with ointment nine years old. Then they placed Patroclus on a bed, covering him with a fine woolen cloth from head to foot, and a white cloak on the cloth. Then all night long, the Myrmidons around swift-footed Achilles mourned Patroclus with their lamentations.

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Meanwhile, silver-footed Thetis reached Hephaestus' home. Hephaestus came limping up to Thetis and sat down in a shining chair. Then, clasping her hand, he spoke:

"Long-robed Thetis, why have you come here, to our house, an honoured welcome guest? To this point, you haven't come here often. But say what's on your mind. My heart tells me I shall do it, if I can accomplish it, if it's something that can be carried out."

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Thetis answered him in tears:

"Oh, Hephaestus, is there any goddess on Olympus who's suffered so much painful sorrow in her heart to equal the unhappiness that Zeus, son of Cronos, loads on me more than any other god? He gave me a son to bear and raise as an outstanding warrior. And that's the reason why I've come here now, asking at your knees if you'd be willing to give my son, who is fated to die soon, a shield, helmet, good leg armour fitted with ankle clasps, and body armour, too. His previous equipment was all taken when Trojans killed his loyal companion. Now my son lies in the dust, heart filled with pain."

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The famous crippled god then answered Thetis:

"Cheer up. Don't let these things afflict your heart. I wish I could hide him from distressful death, when his cruel fate arrives, as surely as I know there'll be fine armour for him - such splendid armour that it will astound all the many men who chance to see it."

With these words, Hephaestus left her there, going to start his bellows. He directed them right at the fire, then told them to start working. So the bellows, twenty in all, started blowing on the crucibles, each one emitting just the right amount of air, sometimes blowing hard to help when he was busy, sometimes gently, whatever way Hephaestus wished, so his work could go ahead. He threw on the fire enduring bronze and tin, precious gold and silver. Next, he placed the great anvil on its block, took up a massive hammer in one hand and in the other his tongs.

The first thing he created was a huge and sturdy shield, all wonderfully crafted. Around its outer edge, he fixed a triple rim, glittering in the light, attaching to it a silver carrying strap. The shield had five layers. On the outer one, with his great skill he fashioned many rich designs. There he hammered out the earth, the heavens, the sea, the untiring sun, the moon at the full, along with every constellation which crowns the heavens - the Pleiades, the Hyades, mighty Orion, and the Bear, which some people call the Wain, always circling in the same position, watching Orion, the only stars that never bathe in Ocean stream.

Then he created two splendid cities of mortal men. In one, there were feasts and weddings. By the light of blazing torches, people were leading the brides out from their homes and through the town to loud music of the bridal song. There were young lads dancing, whirling to the constant tunes of flutes and lyres, while all the women stood beside their doors, staring in admiration.

Then the people gathered in the assembly, for a dispute had taken place. Two men were arguing about blood-money owed for a murdered man. One claimed he'd paid in full, setting out his case before the people, but the other was refusing any compensation. Both were keen to get the judgment from an arbitration. The crowd there cheered them on, some supporting one, some the other, while heralds kept the throng controlled. Meanwhile, elders were sitting there on polished stones in the sacred circle, holding in their hands the staffs they'd taken from the clear-voiced heralds. With those they'd stand up there and render judgment, each in his turn. In the centre lay two golden talents, to be awarded to the one among them all who delivered the most righteous verdict.

The second city was surrounded by two armies, soldiers with glittering weapons. They were discussing

two alternatives, each one pleasing some of them -  
whether to attack that city and plunder it,  
or to accept as payment half of all the goods  
contained in that fair town. But those under siege  
who disagreed were arming for a secret ambush. 360

Their dear wives and children stood up on the walls  
as a defence, along with those too old to fight.  
The rest were leaving, led on by Pallas Athena  
and Ares, both made of gold, dressed in golden clothes,  
large, beautiful, and armed - as is suitable for gods.  
They stood out above the smaller people with them.  
When the soldiers reached a spot which seemed all right  
for ambush, a place beside a river where the cattle  
came to drink, they stopped there, covered in shining bronze. 370

Two scouts were stationed some distance from that army,  
waiting to catch sight of sheep and short-horned cattle.  
These soon appeared, followed by two herdsmen  
playing their flutes and not anticipating any danger.  
But those lying in ambush saw them and rushed out,  
quickly cutting off the herds of cattle and fine flocks  
of white-fleeced sheep, killing the herdsmen with them.  
When the besiegers sitting in their meeting place  
heard the great commotion coming from the cattle,  
they quickly climbed up behind their prancing horses  
and set out. They soon caught up with those attackers. 380

Then they organized themselves for battle and fought  
along the river banks, men hitting one another  
with bronze-tipped spears. Strife and Confusion joined the fight,  
along with cruel Death, who seized one wounded man  
while still alive and then another man without a wound,  
while pulling the feet of one more corpse out from the fight.  
The clothes Death wore around her shoulders were dyed red  
with human blood. They even joined the slaughter  
as living mortals, fighting there and hauling off  
the bodies of dead men which each of them had killed. 390

On that shield Hephaestus next set a soft and fallow field,  
fertile spacious farmland, which had been ploughed three times.  
Many labourers were wheeling ploughs across it,  
moving back and forth. As they reached the field's edge,  
they turned, and a man came up to offer them  
a cup of wine as sweet as honey. Then they'd turn back,  
down the furrow, eager to move through that deep soil  
and reach the field's edge once again. The land behind them  
was black, looking as though it had just been ploughed,  
though it was made of gold - an amazing piece of work! 400

Then he pictured on the shield a king's landed estate,  
where harvesters were reaping corn, using sharp sickles.  
Armfuls of corn were falling on the ground in rows,  
one after the other. Binders were tying them up  
in sheaves with twisted straw. Three binders stood there.  
Behind the reapers, boys were gathering the crop,  
bringing it to sheaf-binders, keeping them occupied.

Among them stood the king, a sceptre in his hand,  
there by the stubble, saying nothing, but with pleasure 410  
in his heart. Some distance off, under an oak tree,  
heralds were setting up a feast, dressing a huge ox  
which they'd just killed. Women were sprinkling white barley  
on the meat in large amounts for the workers' meal.

Next, Hephaestus placed on that shield a vineyard,  
full of grapes made of splendid gold. The grapes were black,  
the poles supporting vines throughout were silver.  
Around it, he made a ditch of blue enamel,  
around that, a fence of tin. A single path led in, 420  
where the grape pickers came and went at harvest time.  
Young girls and carefree lads with wicker baskets  
were carrying off a crop as sweet as honey.  
In the middle of them all, a boy with a clear-toned lyre  
played pleasant music, singing the Song of Linos,  
in his delicate fine voice. His comrades kept time,  
beating the ground behind him, singing and dancing.

Then he set on the shield a herd of straight-horned cattle,  
with cows crafted out of gold and tin. They were lowing  
as they hurried out from farm to pasture land,  
beside a rippling river lined with waving reeds. 430  
The herdsman walking by the cattle, four of them,  
were also made of gold. Nine swift-footed dogs  
ran on behind. But there, at the front of the herd,  
two fearful lions had seized a bellowing bull.  
They were dragging him off, as he roared aloud.  
The dogs and young men were chasing after them.  
The lions, after ripping open the great ox's hide,  
were gorging on its entrails, on its black blood,  
as herdsman kept trying in vain to chase them off,  
setting their swift dogs on them. But, fearing the lions, 440  
the dogs kept turning back before they nipped them,  
and stood there barking, close by but out of reach.

Then the famous crippled god created there a pasture  
in a lovely valley bottom, an open ground  
for white-fleeced sheep, sheep folds, roofed huts, and pens.

Next on that shield, the celebrated lame god made  
an elaborately crafted dancing floor, like the one  
Daedalus created long ago in spacious Cnossus,  
for Ariadne with the lovely hair. On that floor,  
young men and women whose bride price would require 450  
many cattle were dancing, holding onto one another  
by the wrists. The girls wore fine linen dresses,  
the men lightly rubbed with oil wore woven tunics.  
On their heads the girls had lovely flower garlands.  
The men were carrying gold daggers on silver straps.  
They turned with such a graceful ease on skilful feet,  
just as a potter sits with a wheel between his hands,  
testing it, to make sure that it runs smoothly.

Then they would line up and run towards each other.  
A large crowd stood around, enjoying the dancing magic, 460  
as in the middle two acrobats led on the dance,  
springing, and whirling, and tumbling.

On that shield, Hephaestus then depicted Ocean,  
the mighty river, flowing all around the outer edge.

When he'd created that great and sturdy shield,  
he fashioned body armour brighter than blazing fire,  
a heavy helmet shaped to fit Achilles' temples,  
beautiful and finely worked, with a gold crest on top.  
Then he made him leg guards of finely hammered tin.

When the famous lame god had made all the armour, 470  
he took it and set it there before Achilles' mother.  
Then, like a hawk, she sped down from Olympus,  
carrying the gleaming armour of Hephaestus.

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## Book Nineteen

### Achilles and Agamemnon

When Dawn in her yellow robe rose from Ocean's stream,  
Thetis reached the ships bearing Hephaestus' gifts.  
She found her dear son lying beside Patroclus,  
crying bitterly. Many of his companions  
mourned around him. The noble goddess went to them.  
Standing by Achilles, she clasped his hand, then said:

"My son, we must let this man lie here,  
for all our grief. He's dead once and for all.  
It's the gods' will. Now you must accept  
this splendid armour from Hephaestus - 10  
no man has ever had such gorgeous armour  
to wear around his shoulders."

With these words,  
the goddess set the armour down before Achilles.  
The wonderfully crafted metal rang out loudly.  
Fear gripped all the Myrmidons. They shrank away.  
But when Achilles saw them, his anger grew.  
His eyes glared underneath his eyelids, like a fire -  
a terrifying light. But as his hands went over  
the god's priceless gifts, he felt great joy. He gazed at them,  
filling his heart with pleasure at the rich designs. 20  
Then he spoke to his mother - his words had wings:

"Mother, this armour the god has given me  
is a work fit for the immortals, something  
no living human could create. So now,  
I'll arm myself for war."

Achilles, like a god,  
strode down along the seashore, raising fearful shouts,  
stirring Achaean warriors into action.  
So even those who up to now used to remain  
with the assembled ships - helmsmen who worked  
ships' steering oars and stewards who stayed with the ships 30  
rationing provisions - these men all showed up  
for the assembly, because Achilles had appeared  
after his long absence. Once all Achaeans  
were assembled, swift-footed Achilles rose to speak:

"Son of Atreus, has it been good for us,  
for you and me, to continue squabbling  
in a heart-rending quarrel full of grief  
for both of us, over some girl? I wish  
she'd been killed by Artemis' arrow  
right beside my ships, the day I got her 40  
as my prize, after we destroyed Lyrnessus.  
Fewer Achaeans would have sunk their teeth  
into this wide earth at enemy hands,  
if I'd not been so angry. That's really helped  
lord Hector and his Trojans. But Achaeans,  
will, I think, long recall this argument  
you and I have had. Still, though it hurts,  
we should let all this pass, repressing hearts  
within our chests - we must do that. So now,  
I end my anger. It's not appropriate 50  
for me to remain enraged for ever.  
But come, quickly urge long-haired Achaeans  
on to battle, so I may go out once again  
to face the Trojans and see if they still wish  
to spend the night beside our ships. I think  
many of them will be glad to get some rest,  
the ones who escape this deadly war  
and who evade my spear."

*[Agamemnon and Achilles are reconciled. Agamemnon gets Odysseus to produce the gifts for Achilles and to return Briseis to him.]*

Achaeans then came swarming out from their fast ships.  
Just as freezing snowflakes fall thick and fast from Zeus, 60  
driven by the raging sky-born North Wind - that's how  
crowds of them streamed out then, pouring from the ships -  
brightly gleaming helmets, strong-plated body armour,  
ash spears and embossed shields - the glitter of it all  
flashed up to heaven. All around, earth chuckled  
to see that gleaming bronze. A noise like thunder rose,  
drummed by the soldier's marching feet. Amid them all,  
noble Achilles armed himself for battle,  
his teeth clenched, eyes blazing with a fiery light,  
his heart filled with a sorrow not to be endured. 70  
As he pulled on the divine gifts which Hephaestus  
had made for him, he raged against the Trojans.  
First, he strapped on his leg armour, beautifully made,

fitted with silver ankle clasps. Then on his chest  
he fixed the body armour. Around his shoulders,  
he slung his bronze silver-studded sword, then picked up  
his huge strong shield which, like the moon, shone everywhere.  
Just like the blazing light that sailors glimpse at sea  
from a fire burning in some isolated farm,  
high in the mountains, as winds blow them further out,  
taking them against their will over the fish-filled seas  
away from loved ones - that's how Achilles' shield,  
so finely crafted, burned out far into the sky.  
Then raising the great helmet, he set it on his head.  
It glittered like a star, that helmet with its horse-hair plumes,  
adorned with the golden hairs Hephaestus placed  
so thickly round the crest. Then from its case,  
he took his father's spear, heavy, huge, and strong.  
No other Achaean could control that spear.  
He was the only one with skill enough to wield it.

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Automedon and Alcinous kept themselves occupied  
yoking the horses, tying fine chest straps round them,  
setting bits inside their jaws, and aligning reins  
back in the well-made chariot. Taking the shining whip  
which fit his grip, Automedon jumped in the chariot.  
Achilles, fully armed, climbed up beside him,  
his armour gleaming like dazzling Hyperion.  
Then he called out to those horses of his father,  
in a terrifying voice:

"Xanthus, Balius,  
you famous children of Podarge, this time  
make sure you bring your charioteer back safely  
to the Danaan army, once we've had enough  
of battle. Don't leave him out there slaughtered,  
as you did Patroclus."

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From under the yoke,  
his swift-footed horse called Xanthus spoke to him,  
ducking his head down quickly, so all his mane  
streamed down from underneath his shoulder harness  
beside the yoke towards the ground. Goddess Hera  
gave Xanthus power to speak:

"Mighty Achilles,  
on this occasion we will bring you safely back.  
But the day you'll die is fast approaching.  
We won't be the cause, but some mighty god  
and a strong fate. It was not our laziness  
or lack of speed which helped the Trojans  
strip that armour from Patroclus' shoulders.  
A powerful god born to Leto killed him  
among those fighting at the battle front,  
then gave Hector glory. The two of us  
could run as quickly as the West Wind's blasts -  
men say they are the fastest thing there is -

110

120

your fate still stays the same, to die in war,  
killed by a mortal and a god."

Once Xanthus had said this,  
the Erinyes removed his voice. Then Achilles,  
in a fury, said to his horse:

"Xanthus,  
why do you prophesy my death? There is no need.  
I know well enough I'm fated to die here,  
far from my loving parents. No matter.  
I will not stop till I have driven the Trojans  
to the limit of what they can endure in war."

With these words, he drove his sure-footed horses off,  
speeding forward to the front and screaming as he went.

130

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## Book Twenty

### Achilles Returns to Battle

*[Achilles goes into the front lines against the Trojans. Zeus tells the gods they may now join in, and they leave Olympus for the war, different gods on different sides]*

As long as the gods were far away from mortal men,  
Achaean won the glory, since Achilles  
had come back, after staying away from war so long.  
For every Trojan's limbs were seized with trembling fear  
when they observed him there, swift son of Peleus  
in that blazing armour, like man-killing Ares.  
But once Olympians mingled in the crowds of soldiers,  
then mighty Strife, who stirs men up in battle,  
went into action, while Athena kept on shouting,  
sometimes standing by the ditch they'd dug beyond the wall, 10  
sometimes yelling out beside the roaring sea shore.  
On the other side, like a black whirlwind, Ares  
kept shouting out his piercing orders to the Trojans.

But of all warriors in that fighting crowd, Achilles  
was most eager to meet Hector, son of Priam.  
His spirit urged him to glut Ares, warrior god  
with the bull's hide shield, on Hector's blood, more so  
than on the blood of any other man.

*[Aeneas and Achilles fight. Achilles wounds Aeneas, who is rescued by Poseidon. Achilles continues fighting.]*

Giving a blood-curdling scream, Achilles leapt  
among the Trojans, his heart wrapped in battle fury. 20  
First he killed Iphition, Otrynteus' brave son,  
who commanded many men. A Naiad nymph bore him  
to Otrynteus, sacker of cities, in Hyde,  
a fertile land, below snow-covered Mount Tmolus.  
As he charged right at him, godlike Achilles

struck Iphition with his spear squarely in the head,  
splitting his skull apart. He fell with a crash.  
Achilles triumphed. But down on Iphition's eyes  
the darkness fell, and then, in the first attack,  
Achaean wheel rims on the chariots ripped him up. 30

After him, Achilles went for Demoleon,  
Antenor's son, a brave defensive fighter,  
hitting the bronze cheek armour on his helmet.  
But that didn't check the spear - it smashed through,  
breaking his skull, splattering all his brains inside.  
That stopped his fighting charge. Then Hippodamas  
jumped down out of his chariot to flee Achilles.  
But Achilles speared him in the back. As he died,  
panting his life away, he screamed - just as a bull roars,  
when it's pulled around the altar of Poseidon. 40

Then he struck Dryops with his spear right in the neck.  
Dryops fell at Achilles' feet. But he left him there.  
Next, Achilles stopped Demouchus, Philetor's son,  
a big brave warrior, with a spear thrust in his knee.  
Then he hit him with his massive sword, taking his life.  
After that, he went at Dardanus and Laogonus,  
both sons of Bias, throwing them out of their chariot  
onto the ground. He hit one of them with his spear  
and slashed the other at close quarters with his sword.

Then Tros, Alastor's son, fell at Achilles knees, 50  
clutching them, begging him to spare his life,  
to capture him alive, instead of killing him,  
moved by pity for a man the same age as himself.  
What a fool! He did not know there was no way  
to change Achilles' mind - he was not a tender man  
with a soft heart, but full of fighting rage. With his hands  
Tros tried to clutch Achilles' knees, desperate  
to plead for mercy, but Achilles' sword struck him  
in his liver, which slid out from the wound.  
Black blood, pouring from the gash, filled up his lap. 60  
Then darkness veiled his eyes, and his spirit left him.

Next, Achilles moved up to Mulius and with his spear  
struck him on the ear. The bronze point, driven in hard,  
came out his other ear. Then he hit Echeclus,  
Agenor's son, with his hilted sword right on his head.  
The blood made the whole blade hot. Then dark death,  
his powerful fate, came down across his eyes.  
Next, Achilles hit Deucalion - his bronze spear point  
struck him in the arm where tendons meet the elbow. 70  
His arm now useless, Deucalion stood there waiting,  
staring death right in the face. Achilles hit him  
with his sword blade in the neck, slicing off his head.  
He knocked the head and the helmet far away.  
From Deucalion's spine the marrow spurted out,  
as his body lay there, stretched out on the ground.

Just as a terrifying fire rages through deep woods  
on a parched mountain, burning dense stands of trees,  
as the driving wind blows flames to every spot,  
that how Achilles, like a god, raged with his spear,  
attacking and killing men all through the fight. 80

The dark earth ran with blood. Just as a man yokes oxen,  
big bulls, wide in the shoulder, to grind barley  
on a well-built threshing floor, and lowing oxen  
quickly flatten all the grain, that how brave Achilles  
drove his sure-footed horses to trample on the dead  
and on their shields as well. The chariot axle underneath  
got sprayed with blood. Blood soaked the chariot rails,  
thrown up in gouts from horses' hooves and wheel rims.  
But Peleus' son pushed on to win more glory,  
blood splattered over his all-conquering hands. 90

## Book Twenty-One

### Achilles At the River

When the Trojans reached the ford across the Xanthus,  
the lovely swirling river born of immortal Zeus,  
Achilles split them in two groups, chasing one  
across the plain towards the city, where the previous day  
Achaean had fled in terror, when glorious Hector  
had prevailed. Some Trojans fled back there in panic.  
Hera sent fog in front of them to slow them down.  
But half the Trojans were crammed in along the river,  
trapped by its deep currents and its silver eddies.

Then divinely born Achilles left his spear 10  
beside a tamarisk bush and jumped into the stream,  
like an inhuman thing, armed only with his sword,  
his heart intent on killing. Turning in all directions,  
he kept on striking. The men his sword slaughtered  
cried out in terror. The water turned blood red.

When Achilles' arms grew weary from the killing,  
he plucked out of the river twelve young men alive,  
as blood payment for the killing of Patroclus,  
Menoetius' son. He led them up onto dry land, 20  
like stupefied fawns, tied their hands behind them,  
using belts they wore around their woven tunics,  
and gave them to his men to lead back to the ships.  
Then he jumped in again, eager to keep killing.

But then Achilles met someone fleeing the river -  
Lycaon, a son of Dardanian Priam,  
whom he'd captured once before in a night attack,  
taking him against his will from his father's orchard.  
With his sharp bronze Lycaon had been cutting  
young shoots from off a fig tree to make chariot rails.  
He'd had the bad luck to meet godlike Achilles. 30

That time, Achilles took him in his ship and sold him  
in well-built Lemnos, where the son of Jason  
had paid the purchase price. From there, Eëtion,  
a friend and guest from Imbros, had ransomed Lycaon,  
paying a huge sum, then sent him on to Arisbe.  
He'd escaped from there in secret and gone home,  
back to his father's house. Once he returned from Lemnos,  
for eleven days his heart enjoyed his friends.

On the twelfth, some god threw him back again  
into Achilles' hands, who was about to ship him, 40  
against Lycaon's wishes, down to dwell with Hades.

When swift-footed, godlike Achilles saw Lycaon  
totally unarmed, without his helmet, shield, or spear -  
for he'd thrown these on the ground, exhausted,  
after he'd escaped the river, worn out and sweating  
in all his lower limbs - Achilles, much surprised,  
spoke to his own courageous heart:

"What's this?

My eyes are witnessing something amazing.  
Great-hearted Trojans I've just slaughtered  
will rise again, up out of murky darkness, 50  
if this man's avoided death, returned like this,  
after I'd sold him off in sacred Lemnos.

The gray sea, which holds many people back  
against their will, hasn't seemed to stop him.  
But come, let him taste my spear point. I'll see -  
and in my heart confirm - if he'll return,  
as he's just done, or if life-giving earth,  
which keeps even strong men down, will hold him."

That's what Achilles thought, as he stood there waiting.  
Lycaon, dazed with fear, approached Achilles, 60  
eager to clasp his knees in supplication,  
heart desperate to escape dark fate and evil death.

Godlike Achilles raised his long spear, prepared to strike.  
But Lycaon, stooping down, slipped underneath the spear,  
then clasped Achilles' knees. Flying above his back,  
the spear stuck in the ground, hungry for human flesh.  
With one hand, Lycaon grabbed Achilles' knee.  
His other clutched the spear, refusing to let go.  
He begged for mercy, addressing Achilles  
with these winged words:

"By your knees, Achilles, 70  
I beg you to respect me as a suppliant.  
Have pity on me. I claim that sacred right,  
my lord, because it was at your table  
I first ate Demeter's grain the very day  
you seized me in that well-built orchard.  
You led me far from father and my friends,  
then sold me off in sacred Lemnos. For me  
you got the value of a hundred oxen,  
but I was ransomed for three times that price.

It's now twelve days since I reached Ilion, 80  
after my ordeal. Once more, deadly fate  
has placed me in your hands. I do believe  
Father Zeus must hate me, to give me to you  
for a second time. My mother, Laoltoë,  
daughter of old Altes, gave birth to me  
to live a shortened life. Altes rules over  
war-loving Leleges, in steep Pedasus,  
by the river Satnioeis. His daughter  
married Priam, who has many other wives.  
She had two sons. Now you'll have slaughtered both. 90  
You killed fine Polydorus with those men  
fighting at the front, when your sharp spear  
sent him to die. Now death comes for me, as well.  
I don't expect to escape your hands this time,  
since some god has guided me right to them.  
But I'll say one more thing - take it to heart -  
don't kill me. I'm not from the same womb  
as Hector, the man who killed your comrade,  
that kind and powerful warrior."

So Lycaon begged for mercy from Achilles. 100  
But the response he got was brutal:

"You fool,  
don't offer me a ransom or some plea.  
Before Patroclus met his deadly fate,  
sparing Trojans pleased my heart much more.  
I took many overseas and sold them.  
But now not one of them escapes his death,  
no one whom god delivers to my hands,  
here in front of Ilion, not one -  
not a single Trojan, especially none 110  
of Priam's children. So now, my friend,  
you too must die. Why be sad about it?  
Patroclus died, a better man than you.  
And look at me. You see how fine I am,  
how tall, how handsome? My father's a fine man,  
the mother who gave birth to me a goddess.  
Yet over me, as well, hangs fate - my death.  
There'll come a dawn, or noon, or evening,  
when some man will take my life in battle -  
he'll strike me with his spear or with an arrow  
shot from his bowstring."

Achilles finished. 120

Then Lycaon's knees gave way, his heart collapsed.  
He let go of the spear and crouched there, both his hands  
stretched out. Achilles pulled out his sharp sword and struck,  
hitting him on the collar bone, beside his neck.  
The whole two-edged blade sliced into him. Lycaon fell,  
lying face down on the earth. His dark blood flowed out  
and soaked the ground. Achilles seized him by the foot,  
then flung him in the river, shouting out in triumph -

his words had wings:

"Lie there, among the fish.  
They'll lick blood from your wound with no respect. 130  
Your mother won't set you on your funeral bed,  
lamenting over you. No, Scamander,  
the swirling river, will carry you away  
to the broad lap of the sea. Many fish  
will swim up to the darkly rippled surface  
to eat white fat from Lycaon. So die,  
all you fleeing Trojans, until we reach  
that sacred city Ilion, with me there,  
right behind you, fighting and killing you.  
Your flowing river with its silver eddies 140  
won't help, for all those bulls you've sacrificed  
all these years, for all the sure-footed horses  
you've thrown alive into its swirling pools.  
No matter - you'll suffer an evil fate,  
till every one of you has paid in full  
for Patroclus' death, for Achaea's dead,  
the men you slaughtered by our swift ships,  
when I was not among them there."

*[Achilles kills so many men in the river that the enraged river god Scamander rises to attack him with a wall of water. Achilles tries to outrun the river but cannot escape and is in danger of drowning. He begs the gods for help. Hera tells her son Hephaestus to start a huge fire burning all along the river. The river god begs Hephaestus to stop and ends the threat to Achilles. Meanwhile, the Trojan troops are running back to the city.]*

Then Apollo charged out to meet Achilles,  
seeking to protect the Trojans from destruction, 150  
as they fled straight for the high-walled city,  
suffering from thirst and dusty from the plain.  
Still in a rage, Achilles chased them with his spear,  
his heart filled with a strong and unremitting fury,  
still eager to win glory. At that moment,  
Achaea's sons would have captured Troy's high gates,  
if Apollo had not led Peleus' son astray,  
far from the Trojan soldiers. The far shooter tricked him,  
by standing right before Achilles' feet, looking  
exactly like Agenor. Achilles charged off 160  
in pursuit, chasing Apollo out across the plain,  
past wheat fields, turning him towards the river,  
the deep, swirling Scamander. Apollo raced on,  
only a little bit ahead, using his cunning  
to trick Achilles with his pace, so he'd think  
he could catch up. Meanwhile, the other Trojans  
fleeing in confusion, came crowding in the city,  
thronged of them, cramming the gates, happy to be there.  
They didn't dare to wait outside the wall, to check  
who made it back and who had perished in the fight. 170  
They streamed into the city in an eager rush,  
all whose legs and knees had brought them safely in.

## Book Twenty-Two

### The Death of Hector

At this point, the Trojans, having fled like deer,  
spread out through the city, resting by its sturdy walls,  
drying their sweat and taking drink to slake their thirst.  
Meanwhile, Achaeans were moving to the walls,  
their shields held up against their shoulders. But Hector  
was forced by deadly fate to stay right where he stood  
in front of Ilion, outside the Scaean Gate.

Then Phoebus Apollo spoke out to Achilles:

"Son of Peleus, why are you, a mere human,  
running so hard in an attempt to catch me, 10  
an immortal god? You're still ignorant,  
it seems, that I'm a god."

Swift-footed Achilles,  
in a towering fury, then answered Apollo:

"You've tricked me,  
god who shoots from far away, deadliest  
of all the gods. You've turned me from the wall.  
Otherwise, before reaching Ilion,  
many men would have sunk their teeth in earth"

With these words, Achilles set off towards the city,  
his heart full, charging on like a prize-winning horse  
pulling a chariot at full speed across the plain 20  
with little effort - that's how fast Achilles ran,  
sprinting with his legs and feet.

Meanwhile, old Priam  
was the first to catch sight of Achilles, as he dashed  
across the plain, blazing like that star which comes  
at harvest time - its light shines out more brightly  
than any of the countless lights in night's dark sky.  
The bronze on Achilles' chest glittered like that star,  
as he ran forward. With a cry, old Priam  
struck his head with his hand, then, reaching up,  
hands outstretched, appealed to Hector's sense of pity: 30

"Hector, my dear son, don't stand out there alone,  
facing that man with no one else to help you,  
or you will quickly meet your death, slaughtered  
by Peleus' son, who's much more powerful.  
Don't be obstinate. If only the gods  
would love Achilles just as much as I do,  
then dogs and vultures would soon gnaw at him  
as he lay there. And then my heart might shed  
its dreadful sorrow, for he's taken from me  
many valiant sons. Come here, my child, 40

inside the walls, so you can help to save  
Trojan men and women. Don't give that man,  
that son of Peleus, great glory. He'll take  
your own dear life. Have pity on me, too.  
Though full of misery, I still can feel.  
Father Zeus will kill me with a cruel fate  
on the threshold of old age, once I've seen  
so many dreadful things - my sons slaughtered,  
my daughters hauled away, their houses ransacked,  
their little children tossed down on the ground 50  
in this murderous war, my daughters-in-law  
led off captive in hard Achaean hands.  
In the end, I'll be ripped by ravenous dogs,  
in front of my own doors when some man strikes me  
with his sharp bronze or throws his spear in me,  
robbing my limbs of life - the same dogs I raised  
at home beside my table to guard the doors.  
They'll drink my blood, then lie there at the gates,  
their hearts gone mad. When a young man dies in war,  
lying there murdered by sharp bronze, that's all right. 60  
Though dead, he shows us his nobility.  
But when the dogs disfigure shamefully  
an old man, chewing his gray head, his beard,  
his sexual organs, that's the saddest thing  
we wretched mortals see."

As the old man spoke,  
his hands tugged his gray hair and pulled it from his head.  
But he could not sway Hector's heart. Beside Priam,  
Hector's mother wept. Then she undid her robe,  
and with her hands pushed out her breasts, shedding tears.  
She cried out, calling him - her words had wings: 70

"Hector, my child, respect and pity me.  
If I ever gave these breasts to soothe you,  
remember that, dear child. Protect yourself  
against your enemy inside these walls.  
Don't stand out there to face him. Stubborn man,  
if he kills you, I'll never lay you out  
on your death bed or mourn for you, my child,  
my dearest offspring - nor will your fair wife.  
Far away from us, beside Achaean ships,  
their swift dogs will eat you." 80

So these two, both crying, spoke to their dear son,  
pleading incessantly with him. But Hector's heart  
would not budge. He stood awaiting huge Achilles,  
who was getting closer. Just as a mountain snake  
waits for some man right by its lair, after eating  
poison herbs so that a savage anger grips him,  
as he coils beside his den with a fearful glare -  
that's how Hector's dauntless heart would not retreat.  
But then he leaned his bright shield up against the wall  
where it jutted out, and, with a groan, spoke up, 90

addressing his courageous heart:

"What do I do?

If I go through the gates, inside that wall,  
Polydamas will be the first to blame me,  
for he told me last night to lead the Trojans  
back into the city, when many died,  
once godlike Achilles joined the fight.  
But I didn't listen. If I'd done so,  
things would have been much better. As it is,  
my own foolishness has wiped out our army.  
Trojan men will make me feel ashamed -  
so will Trojan women in their trailing gowns.

100

I'm afraid someone inferior to me  
may say, 'Hector, trusting his own power,  
destroyed his people.' That's what they'll say.  
For me it would be a great deal better  
to meet Achilles man to man, kill him,  
and go home, or get killed before the city,  
dying in glory. But what would happen,  
if I set my bossed shield and heavy helmet  
to one side, leaning my spear against the wall,  
and went out to meet noble Achilles,

110

just as I am, promising that Helen,  
along with all the goods shipped here to Troy  
by Alexander in his hollow ships,  
the origin of our hostilities,  
would be given to the sons of Atreus,  
to take away with them - in addition,  
to give the Achaeans an equal share  
of all this city holds. Then later on,  
I'd get the Trojan elders to swear on oath  
that not a single thing would be concealed,  
that all would be divided equally,  
every treasure our lovely city owns.

120

But why's my dear heart having this debate?  
If I went out to meet him in that way,  
he'd show me no respect. He wouldn't pity me.  
Once I'd set aside my armour, he'd kill me  
on the spot, unarmed, like some woman.  
There's no way I can bargain with him now,  
like a boy and girl chatting by some rock  
or oak tree, as they flirt with one another.  
No, it's better to clash in battle right away.  
We'll see which one wins victory from Zeus."

130

That's what Hector thought as he stood there waiting.  
But Achilles was coming closer, like Enyalios,  
the warrior god of battle with the shining helmet.  
On his right shoulder he waved his dreadful spear  
made of Pelian ash. The bronze around him glittered  
like a blazing fire or rising sun. At that moment,  
as he watched, Hector began to shake in fear.  
His courage gone, he could no longer stand there.

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Terrified, he started running, leaving the gate.  
Peleus' son went after him, sure of his speed on foot.  
Achilles in his fury raced ahead. Hector ran  
under the walls of Troy, limbs working feverishly.  
They ran on past the lookout and the wind-swept fig tree,  
some distance from the wall, along the wagon track.  
They reached the two fair-flowing well springs,  
which feed Scamander's stream. The men raced past there,  
one in full flight, the other one pursuing him. 150  
The man running off in front was a brave warrior,  
but the man going after him was greater. They ran fast,  
for this was no contest over sacrificial beasts,  
the usual prizes for a race. They were competing  
for horse-taming Hector's life. The two men raced  
three times round Priam's city on their sprinting feet.

All the gods looked on. Among them the first to speak  
was Zeus, father of the gods and men:

"What a sight!  
My eyes can see a fine man being pursued  
around the walls. How my heart pities Hector, 160  
who's often sacrificed to me, burning  
many thighs of oxen on the crests  
of Ida with its many spurs and valleys,  
on the city heights, as well. And now,  
godlike Achilles is pursuing him  
on his quick feet round Priam's city. Come,  
you gods, think hard and offer your advice -  
do we wish to rescue him from death,  
or kill him now, for all his bravery,  
at the hands of Peleus' son, Achilles?"

Then Athena, 170  
goddess with the glittering eyes, replied to Zeus:

"Father, lord of lightning and dark clouds,  
what are you saying? How can you want  
to snatch the man back from his wretched death.  
He's mortal - his fate doomed him long ago.  
Well, do as you wish, but we other gods  
will not all approve your actions."

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered Athena:

"Cheer up, Tritogeneia, my dear child,  
I'm not saying how my heart intends to act. 180  
I want to please you. So you can do  
whatever your mind tells you. Don't hold back."

Athena, who was already eager, was spurred on  
by Zeus' words. She rushed down from Olympus' peak.

Swift Achilles was still pressing Hector hard

in that relentless chase. Just as in the mountains  
a hound startles from its cover some young deer,  
then goes after it through glens and valley gorges -  
and even if the fawn evades it for a while,  
cowering in some thicket, the dog tracks it down, 190  
always running till he finds it - that's how Hector  
could not shake off the swift-footed son of Peleus.

Every time he tried to dash for the Dardanian gates  
to get underneath the walls, so men on top  
could come to his assistance by hurling spears,  
Achilles would intercept him and turn him back  
towards the plain, always making sure he kept  
running a line between Hector and the city.

Like a dream in which a man cannot catch someone  
who's running off and the other can't escape, 200  
just as the first man can't catch up - that's how  
Achilles, for all his speed, could not reach Hector,  
while Hector was unable to evade Achilles.

Godlike Achilles, with a shake of his head,  
prevented his own troops from shooting Hector  
with their lethal weapons, in case some other man  
hit Hector, robbed him of the glory, and left him  
to come too late. But when they ran past those springs  
the fourth time, father Zeus raised his golden scales,  
setting there two fatal lots for death's long sorrow, 210  
one for Achilles, one for horse-taming Hector.

Seizing it in the middle, Zeus raised his balance.  
Hector's fatal day sank, moving down to Hades.  
At once Phoebus Apollo abandoned him.  
Then Athena, goddess with the glittering eyes,  
came to Peleus' son. Standing close to him, she spoke -  
her words had wings:

"Glorious Achilles,  
beloved of Zeus, now I hope the two of us  
will take great glory to Achaean ships,  
by killing Hector, for all his love of war. 220  
Stay still now. Catch your breath. I'll go to Hector  
and convince him to turn and stand against you."

Once Athena had said this, Achilles obeyed,  
rejoicing in his heart, as he stood there, leaning  
on his bronze-tipped ash spear. Athena left him.  
She came to Hector in the form of Deïphobus,  
with his tireless voice and shape. Standing beside him,  
she spoke - her words had wings:

"My brother,  
swift Achilles is really harassing you,  
with his fast running around Priam's city 230  
in this pursuit. Come, we'll both stand here,  
stay put, and beat off his attack."

Then Hector of the shining helmet answered her:

"Deiphobus, in the past you've always been  
the brother I loved the most by far  
of children born to Hecuba and Priam.  
I think I now respect you even more,  
since you have dared to come outside the wall,  
to help me, when you saw me in distress,  
while others all remained inside."

240

Goddess Athena with her glittering eyes replied:

"Dear brother, my father, my noble mother,  
and my comrades begged me repeatedly  
to stay there. They all so fear Achilles.  
But here inside me my heart felt the pain  
of bitter anguish. Now, let's go straight for him.  
Let's fight and not hold back our spears,  
so we can see if Achilles kills us both,  
then takes the bloodstained trophies to the ships,  
or whether you'll destroy him on your spear."

250

With these words, Athena seduced him forward.  
When they'd approached each other, at close quarters,  
great Hector of the shining helmet spoke out first:

"I'll no longer try to run away from you,  
son of Peleus, as I did before, going  
three times in flight around Priam's great city.  
I lacked the courage then to fight with you,  
as you attacked. But my heart prompts me now  
to stand against you face to face once more,  
whether I kill you, or you kill me.  
So come here. Let's call on gods to witness.  
If Zeus grants me the strength to take your life,  
I'll not abuse your corpse in any way.  
I'll strip your celebrated armour off,  
Achilles, then give the body back again  
to the Achaeans. And you'll do the same."

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Swift-footed Achilles, with a scowl, replied:

"Hector, don't talk to me of our agreements.  
That's idiotic, like a faithful promise  
between men and lions - they always sense  
a mutual hatred for each other.  
In just that way, it's not possible for us,  
for you and me, to be friends, or, indeed,  
for there to be sworn oaths between us,  
till one or other of us falls, glutting Ares,  
warrior with the bull's hide shield, on blood.  
You'd best remember all your fighting skills.  
Now you must declare yourself a spearman,  
a fearless warrior. You've got no escape.  
Soon Pallas Athena will destroy you  
on my spear. Right now you'll pay me back,

270

280

the full price of those sorrows I went through  
when you slaughtered my companions."

With these words, he hefted his long-shadowed spear,  
then hurled it. However, anticipating the throw,  
splendid Hector saw it coming and evaded it  
by crouching down, so the bronze spear flew over him,  
then struck the ground. But Pallas Athena grabbed it  
and returned it to Achilles, without Hector,  
that shepherd of his people, seeing what she'd done. 290  
Hector then called out to Peleus' noble son:

"You missed, godlike Achilles. So it seems  
you learned nothing from Zeus about my death,  
although you said you had. That was just talk.  
Now, see if you can cope with my bronze point.  
I hope you get this whole spear in your flesh.  
This war would then be easier on the Trojans  
with you dead, for you're their greatest danger."

With these words, Hector balanced his long-shadowed spear,  
then threw it. It struck the shield of Peleus' son, 300  
right in the centre. That spear didn't miss its mark.  
But it bounced some distance off the shield. Hector,  
angry that the spear had flown from his hand and missed,  
stood dismayed, for he had no substitute ash spear.  
So he called out, yelling to Deiphobus,  
who carried a white shield, asking him with a shout  
to pass him his long spear. But Deiphobus  
was nowhere to be seen. Then Hector in his heart  
saw everything so clearly - he said:

"This is it, then. 310  
The gods are summoning me to my death.  
I thought warrior Deiphobus was close by.  
But he's inside the walls, and Athena  
has deceived me. Now evil death is here,  
right beside me, not somewhere far away.  
There's no escape. For a long time now,  
this must have been what Zeus desired,  
and Zeus' son, the god who shoots from far,  
and all those who willingly gave me help  
in earlier days. So now I meet my fate.  
Even so, let me not die ingloriously 320  
without a fight, but in some great action  
which those men yet to come will hear about."

Hector finished speaking. He pulled out his sharp sword,  
that strong and massive weapon hanging on his thigh,  
gathered himself, then swooped like some high-flying eagle  
plummeting to the plains down through the murky clouds  
to seize a tender lamb or cowering rabbit -  
that's how Hector charged, brandishing his sharp sword.  
Achilles attacked, as well, heart full of savage anger,

covering his chest with that richly decorated shield, 330  
his shining four-ridged helmet nodding on his head,  
the golden plumes Hephaestus had set there  
shimmering around the crest. Just like that star  
which stands out the loveliest among all those  
in the heavenly night sky - the star of evening -  
that's how the sharp point then glittered on the spear  
Achilles hefted in his right hand, intent on  
killing noble Hector. He inspected his fine skin,  
to see where it was vulnerable to a blow.

But Hector's entire body was protected 340  
by that beautiful armour he'd stripped off  
powerful Patroclus, once he'd killed him,  
except for that opening where the collar bones  
separate the neck and shoulders, at the gullet,  
where a man's life is most effectively destroyed.  
As Hector charged, noble Achilles struck him there,  
driving the spear point through his tender neck.  
But the heavy bronze on that ash spear did not cut  
his windpipe, so he could still address Achilles  
and reply to him. Hector fell down in the dust 350  
Lord Achilles then cried out in triumph:

"Hector,  
I suppose you thought you could safely strip  
Patroclus, without giving me a thought,  
since I was far away. That was foolish!  
By our hollow ships he'd left me behind,  
a much greater man, to take out my revenge.  
I've drained strength from your limbs - now dogs and birds  
will tear you into miserable pieces,  
while Achaeans are burying Patroclus."

His strength fading, Hector of the shining helmet 360  
answered Achilles:

"By your life, I beg you,  
by your knees, your parents - don't let dogs eat me  
by Achaean ships. No, you should accept  
all the bronze and gold you want,  
gifts my father and my lady mother give you,  
if you'll send my body home again,  
so Trojans and Trojans' wives can bury me,  
with all the necessary funeral rites."

Scowling at Hector, swift-footed Achilles then replied:

"Don't whine to me, you dog, about my knees 370  
or parents. I wish I had the heart and strength  
to carve you up and eat you raw myself  
for what you've done to me. So there's no one  
who'll keep the dogs from going at your head,  
not even if they bring here and weigh out  
a ransom ten or twenty times as much,

with promises of more, or if Priam,  
son of Dardanus, says he'll pay your weight  
in gold. Not even then will your mother  
set you on a funeral bed and there lament  
the son she bore. Instead, the dogs and birds  
will eat you up completely." 380

Then, as he died,  
Hector of the shining helmet said to Achilles:

"I know you well. I recognize in you  
what I expected - that you'd not be convinced.  
For your heart and mind are indeed of iron.  
But think of this - I may bring down on you  
the anger of the gods that very day  
when Paris and Phoebus Apollo,  
in spite of all your courage, slaughter you  
at the Scaean Gate." 390

As Hector spoke,  
death's final end slid over him. His life slipped out,  
flying off to Hades, mourning his fate to have to leave  
such youthful manliness. Over dead Hector,  
godlike Achilles then cried out:

"Die there.  
As for my own death, I accept it  
whenever Zeus and the immortal gods  
see fit to bring it to me"

Saying this,  
He pulled his bronze spear from the corpse, set it aside,  
and stripped the blood-stained armour from the shoulders. 400  
Then the rest of Achaea's sons came running up.  
They gazed at Hector's stature, his handsome body.  
All the men who came up to the corpse stabbed it,  
looking at each other, saying:

"Look here,  
it's easier for us to deal with Hector now  
than when his fire burned our ships."

When swift-footed godlike Achilles had stripped the corpse,  
he carried out a monstrous act. He pierced  
the tendons behind both feet, from heel to ankle,  
threaded them with ox-hide thongs, and then tied these 410  
onto his chariot, leaving the head to drag behind.  
He climbed up in his chariot, brought on the splendid armour,  
then lashed his horses. They sped off eagerly,  
dragging Hector. A dust cloud rose above him,  
his dark hair spread out round him, and Hector's head,  
once so handsome, was covered by the dust, for Zeus  
had given him to his enemies to dishonour  
in his own native land. So all his head grew dirty.



in their chariots. They leapt up to get armour on. 40

On that pyre's highest point they laid out the corpse,  
hearts full of sorrow. Then, in front of the pyre,  
they flayed and made ready many sturdy sheep  
and shambling cattle with twisting horns. From all these,  
great-hearted Achilles took the fat, using it  
to cover up the corpse from head to foot, piling  
skinned carcasses around it. Next, he placed on top  
two-handled jars of oil and honey, leaning them  
against the bier. Then, crying with grief, Achilles  
threw four strong-necked horses quickly on the pyre. 50

Patroclus had owned nine dogs who ate beside his table.  
Slitting the throats of two of them, Achilles  
tossed them on the pyre. Then, with his bronze, he butchered  
those twelve noble sons of the courageous Trojans,  
his feelings grimly set on this atrocity.  
After that, he lit the fire to work its iron force  
and burn up everything. With a groan he called out,  
addressing his companion:

"Rest in peace,  
Patroclus, though you're in Hades' house.  
For I'm now completing everything 60  
I promised you before. Flames will burn  
twelve noble sons of great-hearted Trojans,  
all cremated with you. But as for Hector,  
Priam's son, I'll not feed him to the fire,  
but to the dogs."

Achilles made this threat,  
but dogs would not touch Hector. For Aphrodite,  
Zeus' daughter, kept them away, day and night.  
She covered him with immortal oil of roses,  
so Achilles would not wear away his body  
by dragging him around. Phoebus Apollo 70  
brought a dark cloud from the sky across the plain,  
shadowing the entire place where Hector lay,  
to stop Sun's power from shriveling up the flesh.

*[The fire won't start burning properly, so Achilles prays for help. The gods send the Winds to blow the fire up into a great blaze]*

But at that hour when the Morning Star appears,  
announcing that light is coming to the earth,  
the star after which Dawn in her yellow robe  
moves out across the sea, by then the fire was dying.  
The flames went out. Then Peleus' son,  
moving away from the smouldering pyre, lay down  
exhausted. Sweet sleep slipped quickly round him. 80  
But then the troops came up with Agamemnon,  
all together. The noise they made, as they marched in,  
woke up Achilles. Sitting bolt upright, he said:

"Sons of Atreus and you other leaders

of Achaean forces, you must first douse  
the smouldering pyre with gleaming wine -  
everything the powerful flames have touched.  
Then we'll collect bones from Patroclus,  
Menoetius' son, separating them with care  
from all the rest. They're easy to distinguish, 90  
for he lay in the centre of the pyre -  
the others burned some distance from him  
on the edges, the humans and the horses.  
Let's place his bones inside a golden urn,  
in a double layer of fat, until the time  
I myself am hiding there in Hades.  
I'm asking you to build a burial mound,  
nothing excessive - what seems appropriate.  
You Achaeans must build it high and wide,  
but later, once I'm gone, those who still remain 100  
beside our ships with many oars."

Once Achilles spoke,  
they did as the swift-footed son of Peleus wished.  
First, they doused the smoking pyre with gleaming wine,  
wherever flames had reached or ash was deep.  
Weeping, they picked the white bones of their comrade out  
and put them in a double layer of fat inside a golden urn.  
They placed the urn under soft linen in a hut.  
Then they traced out the dimensions of a mound,  
using stones to mark its base around the pyre,  
and then piled earth on top.

*[Achilles then organizes a series of athletic competitions in honour of Patroclus]*

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## **Book Twenty-Four**

### **Achilles and Priam**

After the twelfth dawn had come since Hector's death,  
Phoebus Apollo spoke out to the immortals:

"You gods are cruel and vindictive.  
Did Hector never sacrifice to you,  
burning thighs of perfect bulls and goats?  
And can't you now rouse yourself to save him,  
though he's a corpse, for his wife, his mother,  
and his child to look at, and for Priam, too,  
his father, and the people, who'd burn him  
with all speed and give him burial rites? 10  
No, you want to help ruthless Achilles,  
whose heart has no restraint. In that chest  
his mind cannot be changed. Like some lion,  
he thinks savage thoughts, a beast which follows  
only its own power, its own proud heart,  
as it goes out against men's flocks, seeking  
a feast of cattle - that's how Achilles

destroys compassion. And in his heart  
there's no sense of shame, which can help a man  
or harm him. No doubt, a man can suffer loss  
of someone even closer than a friend - 20  
a brother born from the same mother  
or even a son. He pays his tribute  
with his tears and his laments - then stops.  
For Fates have put in men resilient hearts.  
But this man here, once he took Hector's life,  
ties him behind his chariot, then drags him  
around his dear companion's burial mound.  
He's done nothing to help or honour him.  
He should take care he doesn't anger us. 30  
Though he's a fine man, in this rage of his  
he's harming senseless dust."

Then Hera,  
angry at Apollo, spoke up in reply:

"Lord of the silver bow,  
yes, indeed, what you say may well be true,  
if you gods give Hector and Achilles  
equal worth. But Hector is a mortal man,  
suckled at a woman's breast, while Achilles  
is the child of a goddess I raised myself.  
I brought her up and gave her to Peleus  
to be his wife, a man dear to the hearts 40  
of the immortal gods. All of you were there,  
when they got married. You, too, were with us  
at the banquet, you friend of evil men,  
clutching your lyre, as slippery as ever."

Cloud gatherer Zeus then answered Hera, saying:

"Hera, don't get so angry with the gods.  
These two will not both share equal honours.  
Still, of all mortal men in Ilion,  
Hector was the favourite of the gods.  
At least that's what he was to me. 50  
He never failed to offer me fine gifts.  
At their communal feasts, my own altar  
never went without the proper offerings,  
libations and sacrificial smoke,  
as is our right. But one of the gods  
should tell Thetis to come here before me,  
so I can put a useful plan to her,  
how Achilles can get gifts from Priam  
and then give Hector back to him."

Once Zeus had spoken, storm-swift Iris rushed away, 60  
bearing Zeus' message. Half way between Samos  
and rocky Imbros she plunged into the sea.  
As waters roared above her, she sank way down,  
just as a plummet sinks when fastened to a lure,

one fashioned out of horn from some farmyard ox  
to bring death to hungry fish. She met Thetis  
sitting in a hollow cave with other sea gods.  
Standing right beside her, swift-footed Iris spoke:

"Rouse yourself, Thetis. Zeus, whose thoughts  
endure forever, is calling for you."

70

Silver-footed Thetis then said in reply:

"Why is that mighty god now summoning me?  
I'm ashamed to associate with immortals,  
my heart holds such immeasurable grief.  
But I'll go. And no matter what he says,  
his words will not be wasted."

Saying this,

Thetis, queen of goddesses, took a dark veil,  
the blackest of her garments, then set off on her way.  
Swift Iris, with feet like wind, went on ahead.  
They found the wide-seeing son of Cronos in the midst  
of all the other blessed gods, who live forever. 80  
Once Athena had made room for her, Thetis sat  
with father Zeus. Hera placed a gold cup in her hand,  
with words of welcome. She drank, then handed back the cup.  
The father of the gods and men spoke first:

"I'll tell you the reason why I've called you here.  
For nine days immortals have been quarreling  
about Achilles, sacker of cities,  
and Hector's corpse. They keep urging Hermes,  
keen-eyed killer of Argus, to steal the body.<sup>0</sup> 90  
But I want to give honour to Achilles,  
maintain my respect for you in future,  
and keep our friendship. So you must leave quickly.  
Go to the army. Tell your son what I say.  
Tell him the gods are annoyed at him,  
that of all immortals I'm especially angry,  
because, in his heartfelt fury, he keeps  
Hector at his beaked ships and won't give him back.  
Through his fear of me, he may hand Hector over.  
I'll also send Iris to great-hearted Priam, 100  
telling him to go to the Achaean ships,  
to beg for his dear son, bearing presents  
for Achilles to delight his heart."

Silver-footed Thetis did not disagree with Zeus.  
She went speeding from Olympus' peak to her son's hut.  
His noble mother sat close by him, caressed him  
with her hand, then spoke to him, saying:

"My son,  
how long will you consume your heart with tears,  
with this grieving, not thinking about food

or going to bed. To have sex with a woman  
would do you good. I won't see you still alive  
much longer - for at this moment, Death,  
your powerful fate, is standing close at hand.  
But quickly, listen to me. For I'm here  
as messenger from Zeus. He told me this -  
the gods are angry with you. Zeus himself  
is the angriest of all immortals,  
because, in your heartfelt fury, you keep  
Hector by your beaked ships and won't return him.  
So come, now. Give him back, and for that corpse  
accept a ransom." 110  
120

Swift-footed Achilles  
then replied to Thetis, saying:

"So be it.  
Whoever brings the ransom, let that man  
have the corpse, if that's what the Olympian  
in his own heart truly desires."

Meanwhile, Cronos' son urged Iris to be off  
to sacred Ilion:

"You must go right away,  
swift Iris. Leave your home here on Olympus.  
Take this message to great-hearted Priam,  
inside Ilion - tell him he must visit  
Achaean ships to ransom his dear son,  
taking gifts to please Achilles' heart. " 130

Zeus spoke. Storm-footed Iris rushed off with the message.  
Reaching Priam's house, she found him weeping there.  
Both his head and neck were covered with the dung  
he'd grovelled in and grabbed up by the handful.  
Standing beside Priam, she spoke in a soft voice,  
but nonetheless his limbs began to tremble.

"Let your heart be brave, Priam, son of Dardanus.  
Don't be afraid. I've not come with news  
of any harm to you, but to do good. 140  
I am a messenger to you from Zeus -  
he may be far off, but he looks out for you,  
cares very much, and feels pity for you.  
The Olympian is telling you to ransom  
godlike Hector. Take presents to Achilles,  
fine things his heart will find delightful.  
You must go alone. No other Trojan man  
is to go along with you. A herald,  
an older man, may make the journey with you, 150  
to drive the mules and sturdy wagon  
and bring back to the city the body  
of the godlike man Achilles killed.  
You mustn't think of death or be afraid.

A proper escort will accompany you -  
Hermes, killer of Argus - to guide you,  
until he brings you to Achilles.  
Once he's led you to Achilles' hut,  
that man will not kill you - he'll restrain  
all other men. For he's not stupid,  
blind, or disrespectful of the gods. 160  
He'll spare a suppliant, treat him kindly."

With these words, swift-footed Iris went away.  
Priam told his sons to prepare a sturdy mule cart  
and lash on a wicker box. Then he went in person  
down to the sweet-smelling vaulted storage chamber  
lined with cedar, which held many of his treasures.  
Then he threw open fine lids on the storage chests.  
From there he took twelve lovely robes, twelve single cloaks,  
as many blankets, white coverlets, and tunics. 170  
He brought gold, weighing out a total of ten talents,  
then two gleaming tripods, four cauldrons, and a cup.

Then Priam chased the Trojans from his courtyard,  
shaming them with angry words:

"Go away,  
you wretches! You ought to be ashamed.  
Have you nothing to cry about back home,  
so you come here tormenting me like this?"

With these words, Priam went at the people with his staff,  
lashing out. They moved off, beyond the old man's rage.  
Then he began shouting at his sons, cursing them: 180

"Hurry up, you useless children, my shame.  
I wish you'd all been killed instead of Hector  
by those swift ships - the entire bunch of you!  
My life's so miserable and empty.  
I fathered sons, the best in spacious Troy.  
I don't think a single one of them is left -  
Ares destroyed all those sons of mine.  
The sons still left here are disgraceful -  
liars, prancing masters of the dance floor,  
who steal lambs and goats from their own people. 190  
Will you not prepare a wagon for me -  
and quickly? Put all those items in it,  
so we can start out on our way."

Priam finished.  
The sons, shaken by their father's torrent of abuse,  
brought out the sturdy, well-made wagon, a new one.  
They lashed the wicker basket on it, then took down  
from its peg a box-wood yoke to fit a team of mules,  
furnished with guiding rings and with a knob on top.  
They brought out with the yoke the lashing for it,  
a strap five metres long. Next, they brought out 200

from the storeroom and stowed in the well-polished cart  
the huge ransom to be paid for Hector's head. The mules  
they then put into harness, underneath the yoke,  
strong-footed beasts, a splendid gift which Mysians  
once gave Priam. Then to Priam's chariot they yoked up  
the team the old man kept for his own personal use.

The old man, in a hurry, climbed in his chariot,  
then drove out through the gate and echoing courtyard.  
In front the mules drew on the four-wheeled wagon,  
led by wise Idaios. The horses came behind.

210

The old man kept laying on the whip, urging them  
swiftly through the city. All his family followed him  
in tears, as if Priam were going off to die.

When they'd passed the gate and reached the plain,  
his sons and sons-in-law turned back to Ilion.

Looking down on that old man, Zeus pitied him.  
At once he spoke to Hermes, his dear son:

"Hermes, since your favourite task by far  
is acting in a friendly way to men  
and listening to any man you like,  
go down there. Guide Priam to Achaeans,  
to their hollow ships, so no one sees him,  
so no Danaan even is aware of him,  
until he comes to the son of Peleus."

220

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, hearing Zeus,  
did not disobey. At once he laced up on his feet  
his lovely sandals, immortal golden shoes  
which carry him across the seas and boundless earth  
as fast as winds can blow. With him he took the rod  
which puts to sleep the eyes of any man he wishes  
or wakes up others who are slumbering.

230

He quickly came to Troy and to the Hellespont.  
There he walked on in the form of a young prince  
with his first hair on his lip, looking that age  
when charms of youth are at their loveliest.

When the two men had passed the burial mound of Ilus,  
they reined in the mules and horses, stopping there  
beside the river for a drink. For by this time  
darkness had come down over the earth. Looking round,  
the herald saw Hermes approaching. He said to Priam:

240

"Be careful, son of Dardanus. At this point,  
we need to think with prudence. I see a man,  
and it seems we may be cut to pieces soon.  
Come, let's go in your chariot, or at least  
clasp him by the knees and beg for mercy.  
He may feel pity for us."

Idaios spoke.

The old man's mind was very troubled.  
He was dreadfully afraid. On his bent limbs,  
the hairs stood out, and he stayed there in a daze.  
But Hermes the Helper came up by himself,  
took the old man's hand, then asked him questions:

250

"Father, where are you going with these horses  
and these mules through this immortal night,  
when other living men are fast asleep?  
But come now, tell me - and tell me truly -  
are you sending so much treasure out  
for foreign people to keep safe for you,  
or are you leaving sacred Ilium  
in fear, now that the finest man's been killed,  
your own son, who never was reluctant  
in any battles with Achaeans."

260

Old godlike Priam then spoke out to Hermes:

"Who are you, good sir? Who are your parents?  
You speak so fairly of my doomed son's fate."

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, then replied:

"You want to test me, old man, by asking me  
of godlike Hector. My eyes have seen him  
many times in fights where men win glory.  
And when he drove the Argives to their ships,  
killing and butchering them with his sharp bronze,  
we stood there astonished. For Achilles,  
still in a furious rage with Agamemnon,  
would not let us fight. I attend on him."

270

Old godlike Priam then said to Hermes:

"If you, indeed, do serve with Achilles,  
son of Peleus, then tell me the whole truth -  
is my son still beside the ships, or has Achilles  
already carved his body limb from limb  
and thrown him to the dogs to eat?"

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, answered:

280

"Old man, birds and dogs have not yet fed on him.  
He's lying still beside Achilles' ship,  
among the huts, the same as when he died.  
For twelve days he's lain there, but his flesh  
has not decayed. But I'll be your guide -  
even all the way to famous Argos -  
attending to your every need on a swift ship  
or else on foot. No man will fight against you  
because he's thinks too little of your guide."

With these words, Hermes jumped up in the chariot  
behind the horses, quickly grabbing reins and whip.

290

He breathed great strength into those mules and horses.

When they reached the ditch and towers round the ships,  
the sentries there were starting to prepare their meal.  
Hermes, killer of Argus, poured sleep on all of them,  
then opened up the gates at once, pulling back the bars.  
He led in Priam with the wagonload of priceless gifts.  
They then reached the lofty hut of Peleus' son,  
He climbed down from the chariot and said:

"Old man,  
I am Hermes, an immortal god. I've come, 300  
because my father sent me as your guide.  
But I'll go back now. I won't approach  
within sight of Achilles. There'd be anger  
if an immortal god greeted mortal men  
face to face. But you should go inside,  
appeal to him in his father's name,  
his mother with her lovely hair, his child,  
so you may stir his heart."

With these words,  
Hermes went on his way, back to high Olympus.  
Priam then climbed from his chariot to the ground. 310  
He left Idaios there to tend the mules and horses.  
The old man went directly in the hut  
where Achilles, dear to Zeus, usually sat.  
He found Achilles there, with only two companions.

The men did not see great Priam as he entered.  
He came up to Achilles, then with his fingers  
clasped his knees and kissed his hands, those dreadful hands,  
man-killers, which had slain so many of his sons.  
Achilles looked on godlike Priam in astonishment.  
The others were amazed. They gazed at one another. 320  
Then Priam made his plea, entreating:

"Godlike Achilles,  
remember your own father, who's as old as me,  
on the painful threshold of old age.  
It may well be that those who live around him  
are harassing him, and no one's there  
to save him from ruin and destruction.  
But when he hears you're still alive,  
his heart feels joy, for every day he hopes  
he'll see his dear son come back home from Troy.  
But I'm completely doomed to misery, 330  
for I fathered the best sons in spacious Troy,  
yet I say now not one of them remains.  
I had fifty when Achaea's sons arrived -  
angry Ares drained the life of most of them.  
But I had one left, guardian of our city,  
protector of its people. You've just killed him,  
as he was fighting for his native country.

I mean Hector. For his sake I've come here,  
to Achaea's ships, to win him back from you.  
And I've brought a ransom beyond counting. 340  
So Achilles, show deference to the gods  
and pity for myself, remembering  
your own father. Of the two old men,  
I'm more pitiful, because I have endured  
what no living mortal on this earth has borne -  
I've lifted up to my own lips and kissed  
the hands of the man who killed my son."

Priam finished. His words roused in Achilles  
a desire to weep for his own father. Taking Priam's hand,  
he gently moved him back. So the two men there 350  
both remembered warriors who'd been slaughtered.  
Priam, lying at Achilles' feet, wept aloud  
for man-killing Hector, and Achilles also wept  
for his own father and once more for Patroclus.  
The sound of their lamenting filled the house.

When godlike Achilles had had enough of weeping,  
when the need to mourn had left his heart and limbs,  
he stood up quickly from his seat, then with his hand  
helped the old man to his feet, feeling pity  
for that gray head and beard. Then Achilles spoke - 360  
his words had wings:

"You unhappy man,  
your heart's had to endure so many evils.  
How could you dare come to Achaea's ships,  
and come alone, to rest your eyes on me,  
when I've killed so many noble sons of yours?  
You must have a heart of iron. But come now,  
sit on this chair. Though we're both feeling pain,  
we'll let our grief lie quiet on our hearts.  
For there's no benefit in frigid tears.  
That's the way the gods have spun the threads 370  
for wretched mortal men, so they live in pain,  
though gods themselves live on without a care.  
On Zeus' floor stand two jars which hold his gifts -  
one has disastrous things, the other blessings.  
When thunder-loving Zeus hands out a mixture,  
that man will, at some point, meet with evil,  
then, some other time, with good. When Zeus' gift  
comes only from the jar containing evil,  
he makes the man despised. A wicked frenzy  
drives him all over sacred earth - he wanders 380  
without honour from the gods or mortal men.  
Consider Peleus. The gods gave him gifts,  
splendid presents, right from birth. In wealth,  
in his possessions, he surpassed all men.  
And he was king over the Myrmidons.  
Though he was mortal, the gods gave him  
a goddess for a wife. But even to him

the gods gave evil, too, for in his palace  
there sprang up no line of princely children.  
He had one son, doomed to an early death. 390  
I'll not look after him as he grows old,  
since I'm a long way from my native land,  
sitting here in Troy, bringing pain to you  
and to your children. Think of yourself, old man.  
We hear that you were fortunate in former times.  
In all the lands from Lesbos to the south,  
where Macar ruled, and east to Phrygia,  
to the boundless Hellespont, in all these lands,  
old man, they say that you surpassed all men 400  
for wealth and children. But from the time  
you got disaster from the heavenly gods,  
man-killing battles round your city  
have never ceased. You must endure it all,  
without a constant weeping in your heart.  
You achieve nothing by grieving for your son.  
You won't bring him to life again, not before  
you'll have to suffer yet another evil."

Old godlike Priam then answered Achilles:

"Don't make me sit down on a chair, my lord,  
while Hector lies uncared for in your huts. 410  
But quickly give him back, so my own eyes  
can see him. And take the enormous ransom  
we've brought here for you. May it give you joy.  
And may you get back to your native land,  
since you've now let me live to see the sunlight."

With an angry look, swift-footed Achilles snapped at Priam:

"Old man, don't provoke me. I myself intend  
to give you Hector. Zeus sent me here  
a messenger, the mother who bore me,  
daughter of the Old Man of the Sea. 420  
And in my heart, Priam, I recognize -  
it's no secret to me - that some god  
led you here to the swift Achaean ships.  
No matter how young and strong, no living man  
would dare to make the trip to our encampment.  
He could not evade the sentries or push back  
our door bolts - that would not be easy.  
So don't agitate my grieving heart still more,  
or I might not spare even you, old man,  
though you're a suppliant here in my hut. 430  
I could transgress what Zeus has ordered."

Achilles spoke. The old man, afraid, obeyed him.  
Then Peleus' son sprang to the door, like a lion.  
Not alone - his two attendants went out with him.  
They freed the mules and horses from their harnesses,  
led in the herald, the old man's crier, sat him on a stool.

Then from the polished wagon they brought in  
that priceless ransom for Hector's head, leaving there  
two cloaks and a thickly woven tunic, so Achilles  
could wrap up the corpse before he gave it back  
for Priam to take home. Achilles then called out,  
ordering his servant women to wash the body,  
and then anoint it, after moving it away,  
so Priam wouldn't see his son, then, heart-stricken,  
be unable to contain his anger at the sight.  
Servants washed the corpse, anointed it with oil,  
and put a lovely cloak and tunic round it.  
Achilles himself lifted it and placed it on a bier.  
Then together he and his companions set it  
on the polished wagon. Achilles, with a groan,  
called to his dear companion:

"O Patroclus,  
don't be angry with me, if you learn,  
even in Hades' house, that I gave back  
godlike Hector to his dear father.  
He's brought to me a fitting ransom.  
I'll be giving you your full share of it,  
as is appropriate."

Godlike Achilles spoke,  
then went back once more into the hut and sat  
on the richly decorated chair he'd left  
by the opposite wall. Then he spoke to Priam:

"Old man, your son has been given back,  
as you requested. He's lying on a bier.  
You'll see him for yourself at day break,  
when you take him. We should think of eating.  
Later you can lament for your dear son,  
when you have taken him to Ilion,  
where you'll shed many tears for him."

When they'd satisfied their need for food and drink,  
then Priam, son of Dardanus, looked at Achilles,  
wondering at his size and beauty, like gazing  
face to face upon a god. Achilles looked at Priam,  
marveling at his royal appearance and the words he heard.  
Once they'd had their fill of looking at each other,  
the first to speak was the old man, godlike Priam:

"My lord, show me my bed now with all speed,  
so we may lie down and enjoy sweet sleep.  
For since your hands took my son's life away,  
my eyelids have not closed my eyes, not once.  
I always weep, brooding on my sorrows,  
my endless grief. I grovel in the dung  
inside my closed-in courtyard. Now I've eaten,  
tasted meat, and let myself drink gleaming wine.  
Before this, I'd eat nothing."

Priam spoke.

Achilles told his comrades and the servants  
to set beds out on his portico, laying on them  
fine purple rugs with blankets spread on top,  
placing above them wool-lined cloaks for clothing.  
Women slaves went from the hall with torches.  
Right away they spread out two beds, working quickly.  
Then swift-footed Achilles spoke to Priam:

490

"Come now, tell me - and speak truthfully -  
how many days do you require to bury  
godlike Hector, so I can stop that long  
and keep the troops in check?"

Old godlike Priam  
then said in answer to Achilles:

"If you're willing  
for me to give lord Hector a full burial,  
then, Achilles, as a personal favour,  
there is something you could do for me.  
You know how we're restricted to our city.  
It's a long way to the mountains to get wood.  
Besides, the Trojans are especially fearful.  
We'll mourn Hector for nine days in our home.  
On the tenth day we'll have his funeral.  
Then there'll be a banquet for the people.  
On the eleventh, we'll make his burial mound.  
The twelfth day, if we must, we'll go to war."

500

Swift-footed Achilles then said to Priam:

"All right, old Priam, things will be arranged  
as you request. I'll suspend the fighting  
for the length of time you've asked for."

510

As he said this, Achilles took the old man's wrist  
on his right hand, in case his heart was fearful.  
So by that house on the porch they lay down to sleep,  
Priam and his herald, both men of wisdom.  
Achilles slept in a corner of his well-built hut,  
with lovely Briseis stretched out there beside him.

Meanwhile, other gods and warrior charioteers,  
all conquered by sweet sleep, slept the whole night through.  
But slumber did not grip the Helper Hermes,  
as he considered in his heart what he might do  
to guide king Priam from the ships in secret,  
without the strong guard at the gate observing.  
So standing above Priam's head, he said to him:

520

"Old man, you're not expecting any harm,  
as you sleep like this among your enemies,  
since Achilles spared your life. Your dear son

is ransomed for that huge amount you paid.  
But if Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
or all Achaeans learn that you are here,  
those sons you've left behind will have to pay  
a ransom three times greater for your life." 530

Hermes spoke. At his words, the old man grew afraid.  
He woke up the herald. Hermes harnessed mules and horses,  
then guided them himself quickly through the camp,  
attracting no attention. But when they reached the ford  
across the swirling river Xanthus, immortal Zeus' child,  
Hermes left them and returned to high Olympus.

As Dawn spread her yellow robes over all the earth,  
the two men drove their horses inside the city,  
weeping and groaning. The mules pulled in the corpse. 540

*[Cassandra, a princess of Troy, sees Priam arriving and cries out to the whole city that Hector's corpse is coming back to Troy.]*

There in the city all were overcome with grief  
beyond anyone's control. Close to the gates,  
they met Priam bringing home the body.  
First Hector's dear wife and his noble mother,  
tearing their hair, ran to the sturdy wagon,  
trying to touch Hector's head. People crowded round,  
all weeping. They would have stayed there by the gates,  
shedding tears for Hector the entire day  
until the sun went down, but from the chariot  
the old man cried out to the crowd:

"Make way there - 550  
let the mules get through. There'll be time enough,  
once I've got him home, for everyone to weep."

At Priam's words, the crowd moved back, making room.  
The wagon pushed on through. Once they'd got him home,  
inside their great house, they laid him on a corded bed,  
then placed singers there beside him, to lead their songs.  
They sang a mournful funeral dirge. Then the women,  
began their wailing, led by white-armed Andromache,  
who held in her arms the head of man-killing Hector.

"My husband - you've lost your life so young, 560  
leaving me a widow in our home,  
with our son still an infant, the child  
born to you and me in our wretchedness.  
I don't think he'll grow up to adulthood.  
Before that, our city will all be destroyed.  
For you, who kept watch over us, are dead.  
You used to protect our city, keeping  
its noble wives and little children safe.  
Now, soon enough, they'll all be carried off  
in hollow ships. I'll be there among them. 570

And you, my child, you'll follow with me,  
to some place where you'll be put to work  
at menial tasks, slaving for a cruel master.  
Or else some Achaean man will grab your arm  
and throw you from the wall - a dreadful death -  
in his anger that Hector killed his brother,  
or his father, or his son. For Hector's hands  
made great numbers of Achaeans sink their teeth  
into the broad earth. In wretched warfare,  
your father was not gentle. So in our city  
they now weep for him. O Hector, what sorrow,  
what untold grief you've laid upon your parents.  
What painful sorrows will remain for me,  
especially for me. As you were dying,  
you didn't reach your hand out from the bed,  
or give me some final words of wisdom,  
something I could remember always,  
night and day, as I continue my lament."

580

Andromache said this in tears. The women all wailed with her.  
Then Hecuba took her turn in leading their laments:

590

"Hector, dearest by far of all my children,  
loved by the gods, as well, when you were living.  
Now, at your death, they still take care of you.  
When swift Achilles took my other sons,  
he'd ship them off across the boundless seas,  
to Samos, or Imbros, or foggy Lemnos.  
When his long-edged bronze took away your life,  
he dragged you many times around the mound  
for his comrade Patroclus, whom you killed.  
Yet even so, he could not revive him.  
Now you lie here in our house, fresh as dew,  
like someone whom Apollo of the silver bow  
has just come to and killed with gentle arrows."

600

As she spoke, Hecuba wept. She stirred them on  
to endless lamentation. Helen was the third  
to lead those women in their wailing:

"Hector - of all my husband's brothers,  
you're by far the dearest to my heart.  
My husband's godlike Alexander,  
who brought me here to Troy. I wish I'd died  
before that happened! This is the twentieth year  
since I went away and left my native land,  
but I've never heard a nasty word from you  
or an abusive speech. In fact, if anyone  
ever spoke rudely to me in the house -  
one of your brothers or sisters, some brother's  
well-dressed wife, or you mother - for your father  
always was so kind, as if he were my own -  
you'd speak out, persuading them to stop,  
using your gentleness, your soothing words.

610

620

Now I weep for you and for my wretched self,  
so sick at heart, for there's no one else  
in spacious Troy who's kind to me and friendly.  
They all look at me and shudder with disgust."

Helen spoke in tears. The huge crowd joined in their lament.  
Then old Priam addressed his people:

"You Trojans,  
you must fetch some wood here to the city.  
Don't let your hearts fear any ambush,  
some crafty Achaean trick. For Achilles,  
when he sent me back from the hollow ships, 630  
gave me his word they'd not harm us  
until the twelfth day dawns."

Priam finished.

The people hitched up mules and oxen to their wagons  
and then gathered before the city with all speed.

For nine days they brought in wood, an immense amount.

When the tenth dawn came, they brought brave Hector out,  
then, all in tears, laid his corpse on top the funeral pyre.

They set it alight. When rose-fingered Dawn came up,  
they gathered around that pyre of glorious Hector.

Once they'd all assembled there together, 640

first they doused the pyre with gleaming wine, every part  
that fire's strength had touched. His brothers and comrades  
collected Hector's ash-white bones, as they mourned him -  
heavy tears running down their cheeks - and placed them  
in a golden urn, wrapped in soft purple cloth.

They quickly set the urn down in a shallow grave,  
covered it with large stones set close together,

then hurried to pile up the mound, posting sentries  
on every side, in case well-armed Achaeans

attacked too soon. Once they'd piled up the mound, 650

they went back in, gathered together for a splendid feast,  
all in due order, in Priam's house, king raised by Zeus.

And thus they buried Hector, tamer of horses.

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## Glossary of People and Places

- **Achaeans**: collective name for the forces from Greece under Agamemnon, used interchangeably with the term **Argives** or **Danaans**.
- **Achilles**: leader of the Myrmidons, part of Achaean army, son of Peleus and Thetis, often referred to as "son of Peleus" or "descendant of Aeacus."
- **Aeneas**: Trojan warrior, leader of Dardanians, son of Anchises and Aphrodite.
- **Agamemnon**: king of Mycenae, son of Atreus, leader of Achaean forces, brother of Menelaus, commonly called "wide ruling."
- **Agenor**: son of Antenor, Trojan warrior.
- **Ajax**: leader of forces from Salamis, greatest Achaean warrior after Achilles, known as the great Ajax or greater Ajax, son of Telamon.
- **Alexander**: another name for **Paris**.

- **Andromache**: wife of Hector, daughter of Eëtion.
- **Antenor**: senior Trojan counselor.
- **Aphrodite**: goddess of erotic love, a supporter of the Trojans, divine daughter of Zeus and Hera.
- **Apollo**: divine son of Zeus and Leto, a supporter of the Trojans.
- **Ares**: son of Zeus, god of war, especially the destructive aspects, a supporter of the Trojans. **Argives**: see **Achaean**s.
- **Argos** (1): town in northern Peloponnese ruled by Diomedes.
- **Argos** (2): a large area ruled by Agamemnon.
- **Argos** (3): a general term for the homeland of Achaeans generally (i.e., mainland Greece and Peloponnese).
- **Artemis**: goddess, daughter of Zeus and Hera, sister of Apollo, supporter of the Trojans.
- **Astyanax**: son of Hector and Andromache, an infant, also called Scamandrius.
- **Athena**: daughter of Zeus, supporter of the Achaeans, commonly called "glittery eyed."
- **Automedon**: Achaean warrior.
- **Briseis**: daughter of Briseus, captive awarded to Achilles.
- **Calchas**: priest and interpreter of omens for Achaean army.
- **Chryseis**: young daughter of Chryses, captured by Achaeans.
- **Danaans**: see **Achaean**s.
- **Dardanians**: people from around Troy, led by Aeneas.
- **Deïphobus**: son of Priam, Trojan warrior.
- **Demeter**: goddess of grain and food generally. **Diomedes**: king of Argos, a younger warrior with the Achaeans.
- **Earthshaker**: common epithet for Poseidon.
- **Euryalus**: leader of troops from the Argolid, an Achaean warrior.
- **Eurybates**: one of the Achaean heralds.
- **Eurymedon**: Achaean warrior, attendant on Agamemnon.
- **Eurypylus**: leader of troops from Thessaly, in Achaean army.
- **Glaucus**: son of Hippolochus, leader of the Lycians (Trojan allies).
- **Hades**: brother of Zeus and Poseidon, god of the dead.
- **Hector**: leader of Trojan forces, son of Priam and Hecuba, often called "Hector of the shining helmet," or "man-killing Hector."
- **Hecuba**: wife of Priam, mother of Hector (and others).
- **Helen**: mortal child of Zeus, wife of Menelaus and later of Paris.
- **Hephaestus**: divine son of Zeus and Hera, artisan god, crippled in his legs, supporter of the Achaeans.
- **Hera**: divine wife and sister of Zeus, daughter of Cronos, frequently called "white armed" or "ox eyed," a supporter of the Achaeans.
- **Hermes**: son of Zeus, often called "killer of Argus" or "Messenger."
- **Ida**: a mountain near Troy.
- **Idaios**: a Trojan herald.
- **Idomeneus**: leader of Cretan forces, a senior commander in the Achaean forces.
- **Ilion**: another name for Troy. **Iris**: divine messenger of the gods.
- **Leto**: goddess mother of Apollo and Artemis.
- **Lycia/Lycians**: region of Asia Minor whose troops, led by Sarpedon and Glaucus, are allied with the Trojans.
- **Machaon**: leader of troops from parts of Thessaly, a healer in the Achaean army.
- **Meges**: son of Phyleus, leader of troops from Doulichium, part of the Achaean army.
- **Menelaus**: son of Atreus, brother of Agamemnon, first husband of Helen of Troy, king of Sparta, a major figure in Achaean leadership.
- **Meriones**: attendant on Idomeneus, part of the Cretan contingent in the Achaean forces.
- **Myrmidons**: troops from Thessaly under the command of Achilles.
- **Nestor**: king of Pylos, a senior warrior among Achaeans, called "the Geranian horseman."
- **Odysseus**: king of Ithaca, major warrior for the Achaean forces, commonly called "resilient" and "resourceful" and "cunning."
- **Olympus**: mountain in Greece where the major gods live.
- **Pandarus**: son of Lycaon, leader of troops from Zeleia, part of the Trojan forces.
- **Paris**: son of Priam and Hecuba, brother of Hector, abductor of Helen from Menelaus, also called **Alexander**.
- **Patroclus**: an Achaean warrior and special comrade of Achilles.

- **Phoebus:** see **Apollo**.
- **Phoenix:** old companion and tutor of Achilles, an Achaean warrior.
- **Phthia:** region in northern Greece, home of Achilles and his father Peleus.
- **Polydamas:** a Trojan warrior.
- **Poseidon:** major Olympian god (ruling the sea), brother of Zeus, commonly called "Earthshaker" or "Encircler of the Earth."
- **Priam:** king of Troy, husband of Hecuba, father of Hector, Paris, and numerous others.
- **Sarpedon:** son of Zeus and leader of the Lycians, Trojan allies.
- **Scaean Gates:** the major gates through the Trojan walls.
- **Scamander:** river outside Troy (also called the **Xanthus**), also the river god.
- **Strife:** goddess active in war, sister of Ares.
- **Talthybius:** one of the Achaean heralds.
- **Terror:** son of Ares, divine presence active in battle.
- **Teucer:** bastard son of Telamon and hence brother to the greater Ajax, an Achaean warrior noted for his skill with a bow.
- **Thetis:** divine sea nymph married to a mortal, Peleus, mother of Achilles.
- **Thrasymedes:** son of Nestor, an Achaean warrior.
- **Xanthus** (1): river in Lycia (Asia Minor).
- **Xanthus** (2): river outside Troy, also called the Scamander, also the river god.
- **Xanthus** (3): one of Achilles' horses.
- **Zeus:** most powerful of the gods, brother and husband of Hera, commonly called "son of Cronos," "cloud gatherer," "lord of the lightning bolt," "aegis-bearing."

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