

HOMER
THE ILIAD

Translated by

HERBERT JORDAN

Introduction by E. CHRISTIAN KOPFF

THE
ILIA D

OKLAHOMA SERIES IN CLASSICAL CULTURE

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H O M E R

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Translated by Herbert Jordan

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For John Walster Jordan
1982–1999

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This translation of Homer's *Iliad* is line-for-line, one line of English blank verse for each line of the original Greek. I undertook this project to supplement the small array of verse translations published in the last quarter of the twentieth century, none of which presents a line of English for each line of Greek. In an act of "translation inflation," the translators expanded the original by up to three thousand lines, which dilutes the immediacy of the original, one of its distinctive characteristics. Line inflation also makes it nearly impossible to compare a translation with the original. Here, the object is to capture the essence of Homer's individual lines, not to render the Greek literally.

I strive to promote an iambic pentameter pattern, but my ability to do so is limited by the twin priorities of line-for-line rendition and readability in English. With rare exceptions, no line varies from five stressed syllables (counting spondees as two), and none contains more than eleven syllables.

When a polysyllabic proper noun ends in "s," I form its possessive by adding only an apostrophe, which should not be read as adding a syllable or sound of any kind. For example, in the phrase "Peleus' son Achilles' anger," both names read the same as if there were no apostrophes.

The English line in iambic pentameter typically contains little more than half the syllables of the Greek line in dactylic hexameter. Hence, I do not render many words that appear in the original. For

the most part, omitted words are Greek particles, which often have no English equivalent, or frequently repeated patronyms and epithets, such as “white-armed” Hera.

Homer’s use of personal pronouns is often confusing if they are translated literally. Accordingly, in the English verses I frequently replace personal pronouns with the proper names to which they refer, and sometimes with a descriptive noun, such as “the Trojan.” I also liberally exchange various forms of proper names that Homer uses to identify the same person or place. “Agamemnon,” “Atreus’ son,” and “Atrides” may be interchanged, as may “Achilles” with “Peleus’ son,” “Trojan city” with “Ilium,” or “Achaean” with “Argive,” “Danaan,” and “Greek.” (Homer refers to the besiegers as Achaean, Argive, or Danaan, never as Greek. I use Achaean, Argive, or Greek, never Danaan.)

Correspondence between the Greek and English lines is close but imperfect. The word order of many Greek sentences does not work well in a literal English translation. For example, the Greek subject often falls after the verb, frequently on the next line of verse. As a result, I sometimes exchange parts of adjacent lines to promote clarity and readability. I sometimes move a personal pronoun in the dative or accusative case to the line containing the verb of which it is the object.

In diction and tone, I strive to follow principles articulated by Alexander Pope in the preface to his eighteenth-century rendition.

It is certain no literal translation can be just to an excellent original in a superior language: but it is a great mistake to imagine (as many have done) that a rash paraphrase can make amends for this general defect; which is no less in danger to lose the spirit of an ancient, by deviating into the modern manners of expression.

As I completed this translation, people too numerous to name gave me inspiration, guidance, and encouragement. The contribution of Randlett Walster Jordan, a careful reader and excellent writer, cannot be overstated. She provided the first line of defense against obscurity and reader confusion. No less important, when I needed guidance on English prosody, she steered me to Henry Taylor—a wonderful poet, a translator of Sophocles, and a professor of creative

writing at the graduate level. Over a five-year period, Henry read every line twice, during meetings with me in his office at American University, at a bookstore coffee lounge in Maine during his sabbatical, and at home in Bethesda after he retired. His comments and gentle criticism were—and remain—inaluable.

Anonymous readers recruited by the University of Oklahoma Press offered many helpful suggestions that improved the quality of the translation. Professor E. Christian Kopff—then anonymous—did an exceptionally careful job of reading and noting specific suggestions, all leading to salutary revisions. I am grateful, too, for the excellent, innovative introduction he has written.

The Press itself played an unwitting role by retaining in print Cunliffe's *Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*, Autenrieth's *Homeric Dictionary*, Pharr and Wright's *Homeric Greek*, and Owen and Goodspeed's *Homeric Vocabularies*, all of which I relied on when getting started.

Every part of this volume has benefited mightily from Jane Lyle's careful, conscientious copyediting. Irregularities, which the reader may perceive in punctuation or in the way I form and scan the possessive singular of proper nouns ending in "s," remain because of my choices, not because she overlooked them.

To my brother Jim, I owe thanks for hosting me in his Alexandria home during monthly meetings with Henry Taylor, for the many books he gave me relating to the translation, and for the helpful suggestions he made, particularly those concerning maritime matters he learned of while a naval officer.

My daughter Kate was the first member of my family to learn ancient Greek, while earning her undergraduate degree at St. John's College. I am proud to tread in her footsteps, and I appreciate her unflagging encouragement for this translation.

Earliest inspiration came from my long-deceased father, Herbert. When I was six, he sat on the foot of my bed and told me bedtime stories, including one about Achilles' pursuit of Hector around the walls of Troy. The story engaged me then and has continued to engage me ever since.

Herbert Jordan
Roxbury, New York
June 2007

INTRODUCTION

I

Near the beginning of Homer's *Odyssey*, a bard quiets an unruly audience by singing about the unhappy homecomings of Greek heroes who fought before Troy. Penelope, wife of the long-absent Odysseus, implores the bard to choose another theme for his lays. Listening to the tragic fates of other Greek warriors only serves to remind her that her own husband has not returned from Troy. Her teenage son, Telemachus, rebukes her with the first literary criticism in Greek literature. Let the bard follow his inspiration, he says: "Men prefer to praise that song which is the newest one they hear" (*Odyssey* 1.351–52). Nearly a millennium later Luke noted, "Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who live there would spend their free time in nothing but telling or hearing something new" (Acts 17:21). The modern reader responds with sympathy. How little things have changed! We feel that Telemachus and the Athenians of the Roman Empire would understand the appeal of the theme song of a successful 1992 presidential campaign: "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow. Yesterday's gone! Yesterday's gone!"

Yet Telemachus' statement is misleading, if not positively false, about the world of the Homeric epics. (It is perhaps not completely true of our world, either.) The Greeks of the age of Homer were fascinated by what was old, archaic, hard to remember. This was true of many aspects of their lives, and especially true of their favorite poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Most scholars date the creation of the

Iliad to the eighth century B.C., although others feel this may be off by a century or two. The eighth century was a time of explosive growth for the Greek world. For one thing, there were a lot more Greeks. For hundreds of years, the population of the Greek mainland had not changed much. Now, however, small family farms could not support the growing population. Greeks crowded into deserted cities whose walls had been built in the previous millennium, and they sailed the Mediterranean, founding new cities from the Black Sea to Marseilles.

All this activity, however, did not stop them from thinking about yesterday. On the Greek mainland, they started offering sacrifices and holding celebrations at tombs where the Greeks of the previous millennium had buried their leaders. Poets and artists did not use their craft to describe their contemporaries, who were opening up new seas and new homelands for trade and adventure. Rather they turned back to people and places that had been important hundreds of years earlier.

The Greek mainland was prosperous, urbanized, and even literate from roughly 1600 to 1200 B.C. Greek-speaking inhabitants built impressive walled cities and were wealthy enough to bury gold ornaments and bronze armor in the tombs of their leaders. They even conquered the island kingdom of Crete. In the twelfth century something happened, not just in Greece but all over the Near East. The ancient cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia became weaker and poorer. Hittites and Greeks deserted urban centers and moved back to family farms. Literacy disappeared from Greece. Life went on, of course. Men and women continued to farm and create pottery—and tell tales of the heroes who fought around Thebes on the Greek mainland and before Troy on the coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). For many modern scholars looking at the physical evidence, however, it was a Dark Age.

Some four centuries went by before Greek culture became urban and expansive again, during what scholars call the renaissance of the eighth century. It is important to remember that when Homer told of the heroic past in his poems, he was not ministering to the nostalgia of a sick and dying culture. He lived in a time of population growth, literary and artistic creativity, and international trade. Despite what Telemachus told his mother, the aristocrats of the

age, warriors and entrepreneurs, did not prefer to praise what was new. They held celebrations at the tombs of their ancestors and listened to stories about that distant world. They wanted to hear about Achilles and Odysseus.

The stories associated with these names had come down from the past. Homer did not have to invent them. The techniques of telling tales in poetic form were also traditional. For example, the verse form was dactylic hexameter: six sets of two metrical forms, one a long syllable followed by two short ones, the other two long syllables. Bards used ready-made linguistic segments called formulas to describe major figures and their characteristic traits (“fleet-footed Achilles,” “rosy-fingered Dawn,” etc.). The familiar verbal patterns made it easier for bards to compose and for audiences to follow their lays.

The formulaic character of Homer’s verse represents the greatest challenge to contemporary translators. After all, the characters and their fates are as traditional for us as they were for him. When, however, the great English critic Matthew Arnold wrote about “a rhythm like Homer’s, easy indeed, but mastering our ear with a fullness of power which is irresistible,” he did not appreciate that an indispensable part of this easy power comes from the verse’s traditional formulas, which structure the movement of the verse and prepare the listener for the meaning they convey.

The combination of formulaic poetic language and traditional verse is not available today as it was for Alexander Pope’s great *Iliad* translation (1715–20). Pope composed in a tradition that went back over a century to the Elizabethan age and John Sylvester’s translation of Du Bartas. The greatest event in the tradition was John Dryden’s rendering of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (1697), which served as both model and challenge to Pope’s *Iliad*. Dryden improved what his predecessors had created over generations, a formulaic poetic language structuring a powerful verse. Pope used this verse in verbally arresting ways that later poets cannot achieve, because they are composing outside this kind of tradition. The English formulas, however, are quite different from Homer’s. In addition, the iambic couplet is not as long as the Greek hexameter and usually stops short at the end of every other line (although Dryden and Pope worked to overcome this problem). Finally, Pope’s translation is much

longer than the *Iliad*, like most *Iliad* translations. The success of an epic comes from what it accomplishes over the long haul, so length has a significant aesthetic effect.

Among more recent translations, Richmond Lattimore's *Iliad* (1951) stays closest to the Greek. For example, he translates each line of Homer using only one line of English, and he avoids the traditional English iambic pentameter, employing instead a six-beat line. But, as Matthew Arnold complained of Francis Newman's translation, Lattimore "leaves us too much to do for his rhythm ourselves." Although Lattimore does not give more lines than Homer, he sometimes finds it necessary to use filler within the lines. This frustrates his desire to translate into "the plain English of today" (p. 55). When a warrior dies, "The reins pale with ivory dropped to the dust groundling" (5.583). Hector opens his heart to Andromache by saying, "As troubles me the thought of you" (6.454). Zeus tells Hera that she cares for the Greeks as though they were her children: "It must be then that the flowing-haired Achaians are born of your own generation" (18.358–59).

Lattimore's *Iliad* has been followed by a number of popular translations, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. The tendency has been to simplify the language and increase the number of lines. Herbert Jordan's *Iliad* follows the first trend by using contemporary English with an occasional nod to poetic diction. He avoids the second trend by translating only one line of English for each line of Greek. His meter is based on the traditional English iambic pentameter, but with many variations, licenses, and even trochaic and anapaestic lines. Composing in a five-beat line leads Jordan to omit most formulas, but he translates them sometimes in creative and inventive ways reminiscent of Christopher Logue's effective but hyper-modern *Iliad* versions. Jordan conveys the action and movement of the *Iliad* in contemporary language and a supple verse that is loyal to the traditions of English blank verse.

There used to be two movie critics on television whose most damning comment was "We have seen all this before." In the world of Homeric poetry, this was the highest praise. Of the characters, the stories, the formulas, the audience could say, "We have seen or heard all this before." They knew and treasured them as they knew and treasured the rising sun in the east and the evening breeze

blowing off the sea. The patterns were beautiful and meaningful, not because they were new and unexpected, but precisely because they continued or repeated, even renewed, what the audience already knew. Their power came—and still comes—not from surprise or shock, but from the anticipation of pleasure and pain known before and soon to be experienced again.

From his immersion in the poetic traditions that preserved the stories of the Greek heroes, Homer created something new. He knew the tradition from earlier bards who performed for live audiences by re-creating the legends of their ancestors (as the audiences believed) in a verse using formulas, traditional myths, and type-scenes to describe common activities like arming and fighting. Homer transformed this tradition in several ways. For one thing, the *Iliad* is too long to be performed on any one occasion. Compare the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with *Beowulf*, which can be performed in a few hours—after dinner, for instance, complete with a break in the middle. What did Homer think he was doing when he used a genre created for performance to compose a work too long to perform? Eventually there were festivals stretching over days for the performance of Homer's epics, such as the great Panathenaic festival in Athens, founded in the sixth century B.C. by the Athenian dictator Peisistratus. Because it is not obvious when, how, or even if the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* could have been performed before these great festivals existed, some scholars feel that the two poems could not have existed in anything like their present form until the sixth century.

Somehow connected to this problem is the question of how the Homeric epics came to be written down. Their style and genre belong to traditions of performance. We see this in the way epics are performed in other cultures and in the description of the bards in Homer's *Odyssey*, such as Phemius in Book 1 and Demodocus in Book 8. Homer's epics, however, survive because they were written down using an alphabetic script derived from the one used by Phoenician merchants in the early first millennium to record their bills of lading. We know that officials in sixth-century B.C. Athens used written copies of Homer's epics to ensure that performers did not diverge from the authorized text or delete passages. When literary scholarship was created in the third century B.C. by the great scholars of Alexandria in Egypt, they had access to the Athenian text

and many others from cities throughout the Greek world. In one sense, they created our text of Homer, but they felt that what they were doing was preserving the words of Homer as handed down in writing all over the Greek world.

One way to make sense of this situation is to posit that in the eighth century b.c., Homer took advantage of the technology of writing, recently borrowed from the Phoenicians, and revamped it to fit Greek needs. He used this technology to preserve traditional Greek myths and the technique of performing them. Because scholarship had not been invented, he did not produce critical editions. But he did tell tales of Troy and of the return from Troy of one Greek hero. Because he used writing, he could include much more than could be performed on any one occasion. Thus he preserved the old traditions, but in a form that itself was new and that inspired imitators. Ever since, literature has been caught between the world of performance and the abiding presence of the written record. Not only did Homer create a new standard for epic; he also set the stage for the birth of history and tragedy. Some find in what Homer created and preserved the origins of Western civilization itself. The emotional power and aesthetic appeal of the *Iliad* have their source in a great poet's use of a new technology to preserve old traditions. Literature would never be the same.

II

Because Greek audiences were familiar with the poet's verse, his characters, and their stories, he could start his poem with a brief introduction. The *Iliad* begins, as the Roman poet Horace described it, by proceeding *in medias res*, right into the heart of matters. The old priest Chryses offers ransom for his daughter to King Agamemnon. The Greek army applauds, because that is the way things are done. But Agamemnon rejects the ransom. He wants to keep his captured slave.

Old man, let me not find you by these ships,
either tarrying now or returning later.
The god's garland and staff will not avail you.
I will not free her till age overtakes her

in my Argive home, far from hers and yours,
after plying my loom and sharing my bed.
Go! Do not provoke me, and you leave unharmed! (1.26–32)

The priest obeys the angry king. The army's applause is not mentioned—this is not how things are done. Chryses turns to his patron god, Apollo. Unlike a Christian supplicant, he does not confess that he is a poor, miserable sinner in need of forgiveness and mercy. Instead, he reminds Apollo that he has offered many tithes to the god and built him a temple, and now he is asking that his contributions be repaid. The poet lays out the moral world of the *Iliad* briefly and clearly at the beginning of his poem. There are patrons and clients, human and divine. Good clients honor their patrons, and good patrons protect their clients, even at the expense of other people's clients. So Apollo sends a plague on the Greek army.

Agamemnon is not a good patron. He lets his clients, his soldiers, die because he dishonored the client of the god Apollo. He leaves it to others to protect his men. That finally is what Achilles does. He calls a meeting of the Greek leaders to discuss what to do. The appropriate source, the seer Calchas, tells them what they already know. Apollo, god of health and of sickness, has sent a plague on the army to punish Agamemnon for dishonoring his priest. Agamemnon must make recompense by returning Chryses' daughter without ransom and by making a large, expensive sacrifice to Apollo.

No one doubts the seer's words. Agamemnon must yield. But he will not tolerate the loss of his prize—a king must have a prize. Achilles' appeal that he be reasonable because all the booty has been distributed only hardens his heart. He announces that he will take the prize of another warrior to make up for his loss. Achilles, who called the meeting, is well aware whose prize Agamemnon will seize. Only the direct intervention of the goddess Athena keeps him from killing the king on the spot. The meeting breaks up, and Agamemnon returns his prize, makes his sacrifice, and then seizes Achilles' prize, the beautiful slave girl Briseis. Achilles appeals to his mother, the sea goddess Thetis, to use her influence with the supreme god, Zeus, to restore his honor. Thetis' appeal to Zeus has the same basis as Chryses' prayer: because Thetis has helped Zeus in the past, he owes her now. Zeus's assent provokes a quarrel with

his wife, Hera. Unlike the deadly serious quarrels between important humans, however, the wrangling of the gods soon turns to drinking, and before long they head off to bed.

Every part of this narrative—characters, story, and language—is traditional, but the parts are organized to present the audience with the moral underpinnings of the heroic world. Each person has a place, with obligations to those above and below. These obligations are not theoretical, but practical and concrete. Priests build temples and sacrifice. Gods send down plagues and change the course of battles. All of this happens to ensure that each figure receives appropriate honor. This is not a world of abstract rights and general moral principles, but of what the English philosopher F. H. Bradley called “my station and its duties” and rewards. These duties and rewards are different for each figure, from slave to supreme deity, but they exist and are publicly recognized. We know that the priest is right, because the army shouts its approval of his attempt to ransom his daughter. Morality is public and explicit.

In Book 12, Sarpedon, king of the Lycians, explains to his friend Glaucus why leaders risk their lives in battle:

Glaucus, why are you and I always honored
with full cups, meats and chairs at table’s head
in Lycia where people consider us gods?
Why do we possess lands on Xanthus’ banks,
fruitful orchards and bounteous wheat fields?
Because, come war, we fight at the Lycian front
and, shoulder to shoulder, confront battle’s blaze.
Then all the Lycians fighting behind us say:
“They who rule Lycia have earned their honors.” (12.310–18)

They fight because their people honor them with wealth, and at dinner with the best seats and best cuts. “So let us go, and take glory or give.” This is not a morality of internalized obligation and guilt, but of public recognition of honor and shame. In an even more famous scene in Book 6, Andromache urges her husband, Hector, not to return to fighting. Her parents and brothers are dead. Hector is all the family she has.

Have pity on us! Stay here on the wall
rather than widow me and orphan your son. (6.431–32)

In his response, Hector does not dwell on his personal feelings of guilt and duty:

I share your worries, wife, but my shame among
the Trojan people would be far too heavy
were I to avoid the war as would a coward. (6.441–43)

Andromache does not argue with him. The verdict of public opinion is always right.

Agamemnon, however, is unimpressed by public opinion. He wants his prize even when appropriate ransom is offered. As king and commander-in-chief, he must have a prize. The same problem arises in Book 23 when he attempts to compete with the other men in the funeral games. (Achilles solves the problem by offering Agamemnon prizes that please him and for which he does not have to compete with his own men.) His desire for recognition and respect that are public, explicit, and concrete does not represent a fundamental challenge to the system. But his failure to fulfill his duties to others creates a problem. By expecting rewards without fulfilling the concomitant duties, he provokes a response from Achilles that almost wrecks the system.

Achilles' challenge to epic morality is much more difficult to deal with than Agamemnon's selfishness. Recognizing in the removal of his prize a sign of disrespect and dishonor, he wants more than public recognition. When, in Book 9, the ambassadors come to his tent offering his prize and much more besides, he rejects them:

Besides, I hate like Hades' gates a man
who says one thing but hides the honest truth. (9.312–13)

Public recognition is not enough for Achilles. He wants true, sincere admiration. Agamemnon, however, is not offering that. He has been defeated and is ready to pay the price, but that price does not include sincere respect. Achilles understands this. Consequently,

after hearing Odysseus' long and careful speech—a speech fully within the moral world of Book 1—he announces his intent to leave for home. It takes all the eloquence of his old friend Phoenix to get him to postpone his decision for a day.

Only after he hears Ajax, his friend and peer, does Achilles decide to stay. Ajax lives within the moral world of Book 1, but not in the manipulative way of Odysseus. For Ajax, the world of gifts and public honor is valid and represents the respect that the Greek soldiers—"we who honored him above all other Greeks"—feel for Achilles. A family will accept a blood price for the death of a brother or son, but Achilles is bickering over a girl—and only one girl, at that! Strikingly, impressively, Achilles acknowledges that Ajax is right.

I will agree with all that you just said,
but my heart swells and boils whenever I
recall how Agamemnon publicly wronged me. (9.645–47)

The morality of the *Iliad* is based upon the public acknowledgment of honor. Achilles, however, has moved beyond this. He is, we would say, not only a hero, but an individual. Gifts and prizes are not enough. He demands sincere respect from others. He has this respect from Phoenix and Ajax and his fellow warriors, but the thought that Agamemnon is withholding it from him fills him with an anger he cannot control. So he sends the ambassadors away. When Achilles does return to battle, his decision is determined by the death of his close friend Patroclus. He will end up with all the prizes and booty he was promised, but by this point they are as meaningless to him as they were, for different reasons, in Book 9. Anger, though now directed at a different man, still controls him.

In the magnificent Book 24 that ends the *Iliad*, Achilles finally lets go of his anger, which he directed first at Agamemnon and then at Hector. He accepts the gifts brought by Priam to ransom the body of his son, Prince Hector. This does not, however, signal his return to the Iliadic morality of gifts and repayment. In part he accepts what his mother tells him, that the gods are displeased by his desecration of Hector's body. More personally, seeing Priam's grief, he realizes that his father, too, will someday mourn him as

Priam is mourning Hector. Agamemnon surrenders but, as his speech in Book 19.48–144 reveals, he never accepts responsibility for his behavior. He is confident that he deserves the honor he feels is due his position in life, but he does not understand that other people also have a right to their appropriate but different honor and recognition. Achilles understands sincere respect given on the basis of friendship, personal loyalty, and family. By the end he comes to understand that other people have friends and family, too, and that those relationships are just as real and important as the ones he enjoys. Learning that lesson fulfills his life more than all his victories and spoils.

III

Achilles stands at the moral center of the *Iliad*, but his centrality raises important questions. One question is why he disappears from Books 2–8. Another is why the *Iliad* ends with laments over the body of Hector, not with the death of Achilles.

The first problem strikes every reader of the poem. In Book 1, not only does Achilles set up the central narrative, but he is himself a vivid and intriguing figure. Then he disappears until Book 9. What is going on? C. S. Lewis wrote, “The Trojan War is not the subject of the *Iliad*. It is merely the background to a purely personal story.” If the poem as we have it becomes more than the story of Achilles’ personal tragedy, an *Achilleid*, and develops into the epic of Troy, an *Iliad*, the change takes place in Books 2–8.

In Book 2, after the dream sent by Zeus inspires Agamemnon to prepare his army for battle, there is a long and solemn roll call of the Greeks who set out for Troy. The Greek and Trojan armies are about to join battle in Book 3 when a truce is called so that the war can be settled by single combat between the two men with the most at stake, Menelaus and Paris. Helen points out the Greek leaders for Priam and memorably wonders why her brothers, Castor and Pollux, are not at Troy. (She thinks they are ashamed of her, but in fact they are dead.) A solemn agreement is reached that to the victor of the combat between husband and lover will go the spoils, Helen and much booty besides. Menelaus is winning when Aphrodite rescues her favorite, Paris, and takes him to his bedroom to

await Helen. Helen's attempt to rebel against the power of love ends miserably. She goes to bed with Paris at Aphrodite's orders. Each reader will have to decide whether Helen is a tragic heroine who tries to stand up to the amoral power of love or a weak and guilty figure unable to control her erotic urges, even while despising them.

In Book 4, Athena goes in disguise to the Trojan archer Pandarus (who will have a long literary future in the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare devoted to Troilus and Cressida). She persuades him to render the entire conflict moot by killing Menelaus as he rages furiously around the fields outside Troy. The goddess then protects Menelaus' life from Pandarus' arrow in a way that produces the first flesh wound in Western literature. The significance of the moment is marked by two beautiful similes, a mother brushing a fly away from her baby and a woman staining ivory with crimson dye (4.130–31, 141–45). Agamemnon solemnly calls on the gods to witness the Trojan treachery and proceeds with the war in the full assurance that justice will triumph. The Trojan War is not about a sordid instance of adultery, but about vengeance taken against perjury and dishonor.

I know this full well in my mind and heart:
the day will dawn when Ilium is destroyed
along with Priam and Priam's spear-wielding army. (4.163–65)

Book 1 presents the morality and politics of the *Iliad*, a world of patrons and clients both human and divine. Books 2–4 tell the audience what the poet thinks they need to know about the Trojan War, the background to the anger of Achilles. Audiences and readers have wanted to know more. The Homeric epics, after all, like all traditional oral poetry, are hewn out of a larger mythological stock. Perhaps Homer expected his audience to know these stories. Perhaps not. Some scholars have felt that a certain part of Greek mythology was created by later generations to explain problems, real or imaginary, in Homer. For example, after the seer Calchas gives Agamemnon the bad news about Chryseis in Book 1, Agamemnon vents his frustration on him:

Prophet of gloom! You never say anything good!
It always pleases you to prophesy ill. (1.106–107)

Some commentators have wondered whether this is a reference to the story of the Greek fleet that was trapped at Aulis in Greece by bad weather, until Calchas revealed that Artemis was holding the Greeks there to compel Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. (The most famous version of the story is in Aeschylus's tragedy *Agamemnon*.) The ancient Alexandrian commentators were quite explicit in denying the reference: "The poet does not even know the name of Iphigenia" and "does not know of the sacrifice of Iphigenia that appears in later writers." (In Book 9 Agamemnon mentioned that he has four daughters, one of whom is named Iphianassa.)

A more controversial example involves the beauty contest to win the apple inscribed "for the most beautiful," which is thrown by Eris, the goddess of Strife, into the wedding celebration of Peleus and Thetis. The contest is settled by the famous Judgment of Paris, which is mentioned only once in the *Iliad*. In Book 24, a plan for Hermes to steal the body of Hector, to protect it from being desecrated by Achilles, is approved by all the gods except Poseidon, Hera, and Athena:

Some urged the Argus-slayer to steal the body.
Most immortals favored theft, but not Hera,
not Poseidon, not the gleaming-eyed maid.
Those three nursed hatred for sacred Ilium,
Priam's people, too, because of Paris' foolish
affront when the goddesses vied in his courtyard
and he chose the one who stirred hot-blooded lust. (24.23–30)

Ancient commentators felt that these lines were not Homeric. They may have known manuscripts without them or the other reference to stealing Hector's body, 24.71–73, lines contradicted by the narrative that immediately follows. One commentator referred to the beginning of Book 4, where Hera reacts violently to Zeus's suggestion that Menelaus take Helen and return to Greece without sacking Troy. In exasperation, Zeus exclaims,

My dear, what is it that Priam or sons of Priam
have done, so foul that you are now determined
to see Ilium's high citadel sacked? (4.31–33)

The commentator noted reasonably, “The poet does not know of the strife about beauty. If he had known of the Judgment [of Paris], Zeus would not have spoken [these lines], because the reason [for the goddesses’ implacable wrath] would have been obvious.” Some modern scholars find the Judgment of Paris indispensable for understanding the divine dynamics of the poem and think that it is implied everywhere that the anger of Hera and Athena is mentioned. Others wonder why, if the Judgment of Paris is so important, it is mentioned explicitly so late and so fleetingly. No one has explained what the Apple of Strife and the Judgment of Paris have to do with Poseidon’s hostility to Troy. The problem disappears if the lines were added to the *Iliad*’s text from a later epic, such as the *Cypria*, where the story was invented to explain the wrath of Hera and Athena. We often use Homer to teach Greek mythology, but the *Iliad* was not created to do that.

IV

Books 5 and 6 show us Diomedes, who is a warrior as brave and successful as Achilles, but without Achilles’ moral complexity. For example, when he confronts Glaucus, a Lycian fighting for Troy, he discovers that they share a family connection: “our grandfathers were guest and host!” Without striking a blow, they exchange armor—a very lopsided exchange in favor of Diomedes—and go their separate ways (6.119–236).

Most of Book 6, however, is devoted to giving us a deeper insight into Hector, the greatest defender of Troy. He leaves the field of battle to find Paris and to order the women of Troy to pray for help. No prayer, however, can change the will of Athena. Hector confronts Paris in his bedroom with Helen and then goes to Troy’s main gate, the Scaean Gate, to return to battle. There he meets his wife, Andromache, and their infant son. It is one of the great scenes in world literature. Up to now, the relations of men and women have been premised on submission to the victor’s sword or Aphrodite’s arbitrary will. Here at last we see a true family. Andromache has lost her family to Achilles, who killed her father and seven brothers while her mother died of a broken heart. Hector is all the family she has. She begs him not to go to war—in vain. The

alternative is public shame, the emotion that will lead him to stay outside the walls of Troy and face Achilles in Book 22. In the Greek, he explains himself to his wife with the same words Agamemnon used in Book 4 (163–65). Homer is not interested in verbal innovation. The same lines, however, that betoken confidence in a just cause when they are spoken by Agamemnon in Book 4 reveal tragic insight when Hector speaks them in Book 6 (447–49). He knows that Troy will fall, but his people's catastrophe is not as terrible to him as the thought that after his death and the sack of Troy, his wife will be led away as a slave, and men will point her out as the wife of the greatest of Troy's heroes. Even in death and slavery, Hector and Andromache are public figures and their fates have public significance.

The personal touch follows. Forgetting that he is wearing his helmet, Hector tries to kiss his son. The helmet's plumage frightens the baby, who starts to cry. The parents laugh—laughter more tragically moving than many deaths—and Hector takes off his helmet. Praying, vainly, that his son may achieve fame in battle like his father, he then leaves his family. As he is about to enter battle, Paris shows up, introduced by a simile of a magnificent race horse (6.506–13). Hector cannot blame his brother, who is blessed or cursed by fortune with an endearing personality and looks that win him forgiveness no matter how often he lets his friends and family down. Forgetting his tragic knowledge, Hector begins to believe that victory is possible, and the two brothers enter the fray.

The long day ends with single combat between Ajax and Hector (Book 7). In Book 8, as Zeus begins to keep his promise to Thetis, the Greeks retreat before Hector and the Trojans. In Book 9, Agamemnon sends Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix to Achilles as ambassadors to win him back to fight for the Greeks.

Books 2–8 not only put Achilles' anger and humiliation into a wider context, they make the story of Achilles, the short *Achilleid*, into the story of Troy or Ilium, the *Iliad*. Homer did not invent most of the stories he tells in these books. On the contrary, they come from a series of epic stories about the beginning of the Trojan War. The Catalogue of Ships in Book 2 lists the heroes who set out for Troy, not those who survived until the tenth year. The right time for Priam to ask Helen for the names of the Greek heroes, or for a

single combat between Menelaus and Paris, is at the beginning of the war, not in its tenth year. Diomedes belongs to the epic tales about the wars fought around Thebes, which is a different mythological tradition from the legends of Troy. (The Theban saga is mentioned at *Iliad* 4.365–402 and 6.222–23.) Homer borrowed these incidents and figures from earlier epics and introduced them into his tale of Achilles to turn that from a story of personal humiliation and tragedy into a vision of the human condition.

V

How can a poem so intently devoted to war, warriors, and killing be described as a vision of the human condition, when life involves so much besides war? The human condition includes farming and hunting, religious celebrations, conflicts with nature, even legal disputes. Homer's distinctive use of similes allowed him to introduce them into his poem without destroying its artistic and ethical unity. For modern readers interested in Homer's originality, they are the parts of the poem most likely to have come from the poet and not from tradition. (See "Index of Significant Similes" at the end of this volume.)

Homer developed his similes out of traditional aspects of the bard's repertory. Short comparisons are part of both ordinary language and storytelling in every language and culture. Homer's similes, however, are different. They are long, going on line after line, developing the comparison far beyond what is needed to make the initial point. They are rarely about war, although there are memorable exceptions. Usually they are about farming, hunting, craftsmen (and women), weather, animals, almost the entire range of life outside of war and heroism. The craftsmen use iron tools, common in Homer's day, while in the narrative the poet is usually careful to mention that the warriors' weapons and armor are made of bronze, as they were in the second-millennium world of the Trojan War. Homer's similes do more than describe. They mark important points in the narrative, like the beginning of the Catalogue of Ships or the wounding of Menelaus. They are often found near the beginning and ending of books. Many scholars feel that the book divisions result from later scholarly editing or the needs of the book trade

and so do not reflect the intention of the monumental poet who created the *Iliad*. Even so, the divisions are usually rational and reasonable, and so it is not surprising that similes cluster around those points.

One example comes at the end of Book 8, after the Trojans under Zeus's inspiration have driven the Greeks back to their ships from the plain outside Troy. The poet places here a long simile of beautiful mountain weather to convey the joy and peace in Trojan hearts. Book 9, on the other hand, begins with similes of stormy weather to show the misery and confusion in the Greek ranks after their first real defeat in ten years.

Reflecting on tomorrow's battle, the Trojans
sat through the night among numberless fires.
As when stars near a new moon dot the night sky—
shining their brightest, piercing windless air—
and illuminate every headland lookout
as if the ether beneath heaven had split,
unveiling all the stars to amazed shepherds,
so then, between Xanthus' streams and Argive ships
Trojan fires blazed, casting their glow to Ilium.
A thousand fires dotted the plain, each ringed
by fifty warriors crouched in firelight.
Their horses quietly chewed barley and oats,
tethered beside the chariots, awaiting dawn. (8.555–65)

While Trojans tended their watch fires, Argives
sensed Panic, bone-chilling comrade of Flight,
and even the most valiant men wavered.
As when two winds, Zephyrus and Boreas,
blow in from Thrace, clashing, swirling together,
and ominous waves heave the fish-filled sea,
then crest, loading the beach with seaweed mounds,
so the heart in every Greek chest churned. (9.1–8)

The poet may have meant the two sets of similes to be experienced together, as I have printed them, not separated by a book division. In either case, the similarity of theme (weather) and the difference of mood (peaceful, stormy) are effective and meaningful.

Long similes are especially frequent in battle scenes. They organize the battle narratives. They emphasize important or meaningful confrontations. They provide a kind of respite, a memory of different possibilities, in the midst of fighting and death. War is the central theme of the *Iliad*, but Homer does not let us forget that there are other possibilities, for humans and for animals. War is not everything.

When Homer's characters make speeches, they love to tell stories from myth. Some, such as those of Nestor and Phoenix, are quite effective. Achilles is the one character who uses similes in his speeches on several occasions. A memorable example occurs when he meets Hector in Book 22. Hector suggests only one ground rule:

But let us pledge to the gods—who make the best
witnesses to any mortals' agreements—
that I will not defile your body if Zeus
should grant me power to finish your life.
After I strip that fine armor, Achilles,
I will surrender your corpse, and you do likewise. (22.254–59)

Achilles responds with language straight out of the world of the similes:

Hector, do not prattle about agreements.
As there are no pacts between lions and men—
who always mean each other only the worst—
nor meetings of minds between wolves and lambs,
so for us two there is no amity,
nor will there be truce till one of us falls
and sheds enough of his blood to glut Ares. (22.261–67)

The language is memorable and appropriate, of course, but it is the poet's language. Only Achilles seems aware of the world of similes that surrounds and pervades the poem's story.

Homer's vision of the human condition is never clearer than in his description of the Shield of Achilles. Arming scenes, including detailed descriptions of weapons and armor, are a standard part of the storytelling techniques of bards from almost every culture. Near the end of Book 18, after Hector has stripped Achilles' armor from

the corpse of Patroclus, Achilles' mother, Thetis, goes to the smithy god, Hephaestus, to ask for new armor for her son. The lengthy and detailed description of the shield Hephaestus forges for Achilles goes far beyond other descriptions of armor in Greek or other epic traditions (except those modeled on Homer, such as the Shield of Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 8). Consisting of five layers, it depicts a number of scenes "portrayed with matchless art" (18.482). Most striking, there is a city at war and a city at peace. Both war and peace are part of human life. In the city at peace, there are weddings and dances and other normal human activities, including a trial. Even in the city at peace, however, there is strife. In fact, there is death: the trial is for a murder.

In the market men gathered around a quarrel
between two rivals over the blood price
for a murdered man. One who claimed he had paid
told the crowd so, the other denied receipt.
They both agreed to let the people decide,
but the throng shouted support for each alike.
Heralds restrained the mass while elder men
took seats on a hallowed ring of polished stones,
passed among them a loud-voiced herald's staff
and one by one stood up to give their judgments.
In the ring's center were two talents of gold
to reward the man whose judgment proved most fair. (18.497–508)

One side is offering a blood price in recompense for a death, but the other side refuses it. The judges are about to speak. The one who delivers the best verdict will himself receive a prize of gold, presumably decided by the applause of the surrounding crowd. As elsewhere in Homer, rewards and punishments are public and concrete. Although the society is aristocratic, there is a very definite role for the voice of the people. Perhaps most important, the shield shows clearly that war, although real and important, is only part of life. The shield shows a world with sun and ocean and the many activities that make up human life. In giving its audience a vision of war that is more than acts of violence, the Shield of Achilles becomes a vision of the human condition.

VI

We have not explained why so many of the poem's most memorable scenes are about Hector, such as his meeting with his wife and son in Book 6. There are many deaths, but his fight with Achilles in Book 22 is the decisive one. After Priam and Achilles meet in Book 24, why does the poem end with three women's laments over Hector? In a poem with so many fascinating characters—the wily Odysseus, the brave but selfish Agamemnon, the beautiful, conflicted Helen, the emotional and human Patroclus, the angry, brooding Achilles—why do we always return to the loyal, dutiful family man?

There may not be a literary answer. Achilles, with his conflicts and passionate decisions, is at the center of the poem, but Hector is its heart. In him the city at war touches the city at peace. Achilles shows what a great poet can do when he pushes against the boundaries of his tradition by questioning its morality. Hector, however, is Homer's most fulfilled achievement. His words, his thoughts, his morality come from the tradition. In him we feel more than understand how rich and satisfying that tradition is, for literature and for life.

Homer is doubly a "traditional" poet. He stands at the end of a line of "oral" improvising bards with formulas, type-scenes, and traditional tales. By recording that tradition in written form, he transformed it and ended it. Homer is also, however, at the beginning of a tradition. Much Greek literature, lyric, tragic, and historical, was created in contrapuntal relationship with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The same is true of Latin literature, especially but not only Virgil's *Aeneid*. The Homeric poems continue to inspire poems and novels and movies: Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Derek Walcott's *Philoctetes*, Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy*. They have provoked translations from such poets as Chapman and Pope and Richmond Lattimore, as well as the one you hold in your hands. To read them with sympathy is to touch a lost tradition and to enter still-living ones. A reader can return to them again and again and find them as familiar as an old friend and as new as the latest fashion.

Maybe Telemachus was right, after all.

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T H E
I L I A D





BOOK 1

ACHILLES AND AGAMEMNON QUARREL

Sing, goddess, of Peleus' son Achilles' anger,
ruinous, that caused the Greeks untold ordeals,
consigned to Hades countless valiant souls,
heroes, and left their bodies prey for dogs
or feast for vultures. Zeus's will was done
from when those two first quarreled and split apart,
the king, Agamemnon, and matchless Achilles.

5

Which immortal god sowed that quarrel's seeds?
Zeus's son Apollo. Enraged at the king,
he riddled the camp with plague, and men were dying,
all because Agamemnon had scorned Chryses,
Apollo's priest, who approached the ships
bringing measureless ransom to free his daughter.
He held the garland that graced Apollo's head,
wrapped on a gold staff, and he begged the Greeks,
especially Atreus' sons, the two commanders:
"Sons of Atreus, and all you thick-greaved Achaeans,
may the gods who hold Olympus permit you
to plunder Priam's city and sail home safe,
but take this ransom, free my cherished child
and show respect for Zeus's son Apollo."

10

15

20

The assembled Argives shouted their wish
to honor the priest and take his splendid gifts,

but Agamemnon was deeply displeased
and dismissed the holy man with stern orders: 25
“Old man, let me not find you by these ships,
either tarrying now or returning later.
The god’s garland and staff will not avail you.
I will not free her till age overtakes her
in my Argive home, far from hers and yours, 30
after plying my loom and sharing my bed.
Go! Do not provoke me, and you leave unharmed!”

Frightened, the old priest obeyed the command
and walked silently by the roaring surf.
When he had gone a safe distance, he prayed 35
to lord Apollo, fair-haired Leto’s son:
“O god who wields a silver bow, shelters Chryse
and sacred Cilla, and governs Tenedos!
Lord of plagues, if ever I built you a shrine
or burned on your altar the fattened thighs 40
of goats and bulls, then grant this wish for me:
Let your arrows repay the Greeks for my tears!”
That was his prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard.
With angry heart he raced down Olympus’ heights,
his bow and quiver strapped across his shoulders. 45
The arrows shook and rattled during his furious,
leaping descent, fast as the fall of night.
He aimed shots toward the ships from far away,
and dreadful was the clang of his silver bow.
First he assailed mules and fast-running dogs, 50
then turned his lethal barbs on Argive men
till crowded funeral pyres blazed day and night.

For nine days his arrows riddled the camp,
and on the tenth Achilles called an assembly.
Hera had suggested that he do so, 55
for her pity grew as she watched Greeks die.
After all the men had gathered together
Peleus’ son Achilles stood and spoke:
“Son of Atreus, I say our army is beaten

and should go home, with luck escaping death. 60
War and plague have combined to defeat us.
Still, we should first consult a prophet or priest,
or yet a dream reader—Zeus authors dreams—
who may tell why Phoebus Apollo attacks,
whether he faults our prayers or sacrifices, 65
and whether burnt offerings, flawless lambs,
might induce him to spare the Greeks this plague.”

After Achilles took his seat, up stood
Achaea’s finest omen reader, Calchas,
who saw what is, what was and what would come, 70
and who had led the Argive ships to Troy
using his uncanny skill, Apollo’s gift.
Calchas hesitated a moment, then said:
“Zeus-loved Achilles, you would have me explain
the far-shooting archer Apollo’s anger, 75
and so I will, but only if you swear
that your powerful hands will protect me,
since I expect to anger a great man
who rules Argos and is the chief Greek here.
When a lesser man provokes a powerful king, 80
the king may suppress his anger at first,
but he will simmer and take revenge one day.
So tell me whether you will keep me safe.”

Fast-running Achilles answered the prophet:
“Take heart! Tell whatever insight you have, 85
Calchas, and I swear by Apollo—the god
who answers mortals’ prayers for prophecies—
that no one, while I live and see the earth,
will lay a heavy hand on you by these ships,
not even if you accuse Agamemnon, 90
who claims to be the most powerful Greek.”

The gifted seer then boldly spoke his mind:
“The god does not fault our prayers or sacrifice.
He faults Agamemnon’s affront to his priest

by refusing ransom to free the young woman. 95
That is why Phoebus causes this misery,
and he will continue to plague the Greeks
until they return the girl to her father,
without ransom, and make a sacrifice
at Chryse. Then he may fulfill our prayers." 100

That said, the prophet yielded, and up rose
Atreus' far-ruling son Agamemnon,
hateful, bitter fury blackening his heart,
his eyes tinted scarlet like coals of fire.
He glowered at the oracle and said: 105
"Prophet of gloom! You never say anything good!
It always pleases you to prophesy ill.
Besides, your prophecies never prove true.
Nonetheless, you have now told the Argives
that far-shooting Apollo is plaguing them 110
because I refused ransom for Chryses' daughter.
It is true that I would prefer to have her
in my house, even more than Clytemnaestra,
my lawful wife. No less than she, the girl
is beautiful, shapely, witty and skilled.
Yet I will give her back if that is required. 115
I want this army alive and safe, not dead.
But find me another trophy, or only I
will be without one, which would not be right.
You all will see that I give up my prize." 120

Peerless runner Achilles answered him:
"Atrides, glorious but above all greedy,
how could obliging Greeks give you anything?
We did not keep a common stock of booty.
We divided all the treasure we took 125
and it would not be fair to take any back,
so send her home for Apollo's sake, and Greeks
will compensate you three- or four-fold when Zeus
allows us to plunder Ilium's citadel."

- Answering that, prince Agamemnon said: 130
“Oh no! You may be illustrious, Achilles,
but your honey-coated words do not fool me.
While you keep your trophy, do you think that I
should give my own away and do without?
Yet if generous Greeks give me another, 135
a woman I like, I would think it fair,
but if they do not, I will seize one myself,
perhaps from Ajax, Odysseus or you,
and whoever it is will not be pleased.
But let us wait and consider this later. 140
Now we should drag a ship down to the sea,
gather a sacrifice and sailors to row.
When that is done, fair-cheeked Chryseis herself
shall go aboard, and a wise man will take charge,
Idomeneus, Odysseus or Ajax— 145
or you, Achilles, our most ferocious warrior—
and he will perform rites to quiet the god.”
- Achilles looked at him, scowled and replied:
“Well, now! You flaunt your shamelessness and greed!
For what end did we Greeks let you enlist us 150
to voyage here and battle hostile men?
Trojan warriors were not the reason I came
and fought. I have no score to settle with them.
They never invaded my homeland, Phthia,
or drove my oxen or horses away, 155
or burned crops, after making a hard journey
across echoing seas and shady mountains.
We all came here for your sake, shameless king,
dog-eyed king, to aid you and Menelaus,
but you do not think or care about us. 160
You even threaten to take my valor’s prize,
the woman the Greeks gave me as my reward.
I never received a prize like yours when we
attacked one of the towns neighboring Troy.
Even though all the hard, riskiest fighting 165

fell on my hands, when time came to divide,
your share was greater by far, and very little
wound up at the ships where I lay, war-weary.
I will sail for Phthia, since I would rather
take my ships home than stay here any longer
and win wealth for one who so dishonors me."

170

Chief warrior Agamemnon replied:

"Go, then, if that is your wish, and I will not
implore you to stay. There are others here
whose respect I enjoy, above all Zeus.

175

You are the most irksome of all the kings,
you and your love of ceaseless strife and war.
Your prowess is heaven's gift, undeserved.
Take your ships home and take your countrymen,
the Myrmidons. I do not care what you do
or how angry you are, but this I vow:
Just as Apollo will take Chryseis from me,
aboard my own ship manned by my comrades,
so I will lead the woman Briseis
from your lodge. That way you will learn
how superior I am, and others will fear
the consequences if they rival me."

180

185

The threat fanned Achilles' rage, and the heart
beneath his manly chest was torn two ways.

Should he draw the sword that hung by his thigh,
cross through the assembly and kill Atreus' son?

190

Or should he make the effort to quell his anger?
While Achilles struggled to make a choice,
slowly drawing his great blade, Athena came
from heaven, sent by the white-armed goddess Hera,

195

who loved and pitied both warriors alike.

Athena grasped Achilles' hair from behind,
visible only to him; no other saw her.

Achilles faltered as he turned and saw
the grim, brilliant eyes of Pallas Athena,
and when he found his voice he said to her:

200

"Daughter of storm-lord Zeus, why did you come?
Was it to see Agamemnon's arrogance?
Well, let me tell you what is about to happen:
his arrogance will now cost him his life!"

205

Immortal gleaming-eyed Athena said:
"I came to curb your anger, if you will listen.
The white-armed goddess Hera sent me from heaven,
as she pities and loves you both the same.
Come, then, rein in your rage. Do not draw the sword,
but lash him with any biting words you wish,
and let me predict what will come to pass:
he will offer you three times her worth one day.
For now you should obey me and hold off."

210

Fast-running Achilles replied to her:
"I am obliged to follow your word, goddess,
though I am still incensed. Obedience is wise
since gods listen to one who has obeyed."

215

The powerful hand on the silver hilt slid
the blade back in its sheath, as Achilles honored
Athena's command. She returned to Olympus
and the company of gods in Zeus's house.

220

Peleus' son now used his voice to attack,
his rage at Agamemnon unabated:
"Wine-sot, you have a dog's eyes and a doe's heart!
You never arm for war with the rest of our men,
or lay ambushes with the bravest Greeks,
our most daring. Too close to death for you.
You prefer to stay safely in the camps
and take the spoils of those who speak against you—
a robber of humiliated men.
You have insulted me for the last time,
and I will tell you what is to come and swear
by this staff which once bore branches and leaves
until the day it left its mountain stump,"

230

235

never more to grow after a bronze blade peeled
its foliage and bark. Now the kings of Achaea
hold it when they pass judgments by Zeus's laws.

This staff will signify my solemn promise:

One day Achaea's sons will yearn for Achilles,
and you will be hard-pressed and desperate,
but helpless, as under Hector's hand so many
are falling dead, and you will tear your heart,
sorry that you dishonored the best Greek fighter!"

240

Peleus' son threw the staff on the ground,
the gold-riveted staff, and then he sat,
watching Agamemnon boil, until Nestor
arose, the eloquent Pylian orator
whose tongue cascaded speech sweeter than honey.

245

Under his rule two generations of men
had been born, had grown to manhood and died
in sacred Pylos, and now he ruled a third.

250

He spoke and gave the Greeks well-meaning advice:
"Great sadness will blanket Achaea's lands,
but Priam and Priam's sons will be delighted
and all the other Trojan hearts will soar,
if word should spread that you two men have quarreled,
two of Achaea's best in counsel and war.

255

Now listen to me! You are both younger than I,
but long ago men far more mighty than you
were my comrades, and they never slighted me.

260

I have never since seen such men, nor will I,
heroes the likes of Pirithous and Dryas,
Caeneus, Exadius, godlike Polyphemus,
and Theseus, Aegeus' son, all like immortals,
the mightiest men ever bred on earth,
and those most mighty men fought the most mighty
beasts in their mountain lairs and slaughtered them.

265

To join those warriors I traveled from Pylos,
far overland, because they sent for me,
and I fought my hardest. Against such men none
who live on earth today would dare to fight.
They sought my counsel and took my advice.

270

Like them, you two should listen to me now.

275

Do not take Achilles' prize, Agamemnon,
but honor the Greek warriors' award to him.

And you, Achilles, avoid quarrels with kings,
since more than ordinary honor is due
a sceptered monarch that Zeus has glorified.

You are formidable, born of a goddess,
but he outranks you because he rules more people.

280

Atreus' son, arrest your fury, and I
will beg Achilles to do so. Remember,
he is the Greeks' bulwark when combat is fierce."

Far-ruling Agamemnon answered him:

285

"All that you say is surely right, old sir,
but Achilles wants to be above us all.

He would have power to rule everyone,
and I have no intention to submit.

Immortal gods may have made him a spearman,
but was it they who gave his mutinous mouth?"

290

Achilles interjected an ultimatum:

"I would surely be called a worthless coward
if I should yield and do whatever you say.

Give your commands to others, but not to me,
as henceforth I will no longer obey you.

295

But I will tell you this to bear in mind:
I will not fight over the girl—with you
or with your men who gave what you take back—
but as to the other plunder at my ships,
you shall take none away against my will.
If you should foolishly go there and try,
your blood will soon gurgle around my spear!"

300

After the two exchanged their violent words,
the Greek council beside the ships broke up.

305

Achilles walked back to his vessels and camp,
followed by Patroclus and Myrmidons.

Atreus' son had a ship dragged to the sea,
sent aboard twenty men and beasts to offer

Apollo, and last of all fair-cheeked Chryseis. 310
Wily Odysseus boarded as captain,
and they shoved off to sail their watery course.

Atreus' son told the army to wash for rites,
and they rinsed away their grime in the sea,
then offered Apollo burnt sacrifice 315
of bulls and goats beside the restless waves.
Coiling smoke carried the savor to heaven.

In the meantime Agamemnon did not
forget the vow he had made to Achilles,
so he spoke to Eurybates and Talthybius 320
who served him as both heralds and loyal aides:
“Make your way to the lodge of Peleus’ son,
seize the girl Briseis and lead her here.
If he should resist, I will take her myself,
leading more men, and he would regret that.” 325

He gave his aides that unwelcome command,
and they, hesitating, walked by the sea
until they reached the Myrmidon ships and camps.
They found Achilles near his ship and quarters,
seated, and he did not smile when he saw them. 330
Afraid, they bowed to show the king respect,
then stood without a word passing their lips,
but he knew what their mission was and said:
“Relax, heralds, gods’ and mortals’ couriers!
I do not blame you two, just Agamemnon 335
who sent you here after Briseis, the girl.
Patroclus, go bring the young woman out.
Give her to them, who will recall this day
to remind the blessed gods, mortal men,
and him who sent them here, when once again
need arises for me to ward off ruin. 340
Anger has seized control of his mind,
and he does not consider the days ahead
or how his men and ships will survive attack.”

Patroclus obeyed his beloved friend,
ushered beautiful Briseis from her quarters
and gave her up. The heralds retraced their steps
and she followed, although against her will.
Tearful, Achilles walked away from his men
and gazed at the hoary sea's trackless breadth. 345
He spread his arms and called his mother, Thetis:
"Mother, since you gave me only a brief life,
the Olympian ought to favor and honor me,
high-thundering Zeus, but now he does not.
Atreus' son, powerful Agamemnon, 355
has shamed me by making my woman his own."

He spoke through tears, and his regal mother heard
from the depths where she and her father dwelt.
At once she rose like mist above gray waves,
found and sat beside her still-weeping son,
gently caressed his head and softly spoke: 360
"Why do you weep, my child? Why are you sad?
Speak up! Tell me what is troubling you!"

Achilles heaved a deep groan and replied:
"Why must I tell things you already know? 365
We attacked Thebe, Eëtion's sacred city,
sacked it and carried all its plunder here.
Achaea's sons split it among themselves,
and Agamemnon chose beautiful Chryseis.
Then Chryses, far-shooting Apollo's priest,
approached the beached Achaean ships one day,
bringing immense ransom to free his daughter. 370
He carried the garland Apollo wears,
wrapped on a gold staff, and begged the Greeks,
especially Atreus' sons, the two commanders.
All the warriors shouted their approval,
to honor the priest and take the treasure he brought,
but Agamemnon would not give up the girl. 375
He threatened the priest and ordered him to go.
The old man went, resentful, and Apollo, 380

who loves him dearly, listened when he prayed.
He shot the Greeks with lethal shafts till men
fell dead in heaps. The god's arrows struck
throughout the whole Achaean camp, but a prophet
understood and explained Apollo's fury. 385

I argued that we should appease the god
but Atreus' son resented what I said
and challenged me with threats he has fulfilled.
The Greeks sent Chryseis aboard a fast ship
to Chryse with sacrifices for Apollo, 390
and Agamemnon's heralds just left my camp
with Briseis, a prize Achaea's sons gave me.
Mother, help your son if indeed you can!
Visit high Olympus and remind Zeus
how you once aided him when he had need. 395

Oftentimes in my father's halls I heard
about the day when Cronus' cloud-wrapped son
faced misery that you alone averted.
Three mighty Olympians schemed to overthrow him:
Hera, Pallas Athena and Poseidon. 400

You, goddess, daringly untied his bonds,
then called Uranus' hundred-handed son—
gods named him Briareus, but mortals call him
Aegaeon—whose strength outmatches even his father's.
Aegaeon sided with Zeus, who soon triumphed 405
because the scheming gods gave up, afraid.
Sit by him now, remind him. Clasp his knees
and see if he is willing to let the Trojans
drive the Greeks to the ships' sterns and the sea.
Then those who survive will resent their king, 410
Atreus' far-ruling son, because they will know
how foolish he was to wrong the best Achaean."

Thetis responded, eyes moistened like his:
"Ah, child, did I suffer birth pangs for this?
Surely, you deserve more than sorrow and tears 415
during what little remains of your brief life,
bounded by death's onrushing misery

ever since I bore you, star-crossed, in our halls.

So I will beseech thunder-loving Zeus

on snowy Olympus, hoping he will hear,

but you must be patient here by your ships.

420

Nurse your anger but stay out of the war.

Zeus is at Ocean's river with Ethiopians,

feasting, he and all the heaven-dwellers.

He will return to Olympus twelve days hence.

425

Then I will find him in his bronze-floored house,

clasp his knees and trust he will honor me."

She bade Achilles farewell and left him there,

his heart yearning for the shapely young woman

Agamemnon took. Odysseus, meantime,

430

reached Chryse's port, the sacrifice aboard.

After the crew sailed into the deep harbor

they dropped the sheet, stowed it inside the hull,

loosened the shrouds and slowly lowered the mast.

Taking the oars, they rowed ahead to a moorage

435

and cast stone anchors tied to the stern hawser.

The sailors disembarked at the sea's edge

and unloaded the offerings for Apollo.

Chryseis climbed from the ship that brought her home

and Odysseus led the girl to the altar.

440

He put her hand toward her father's and said:

"Chryses, far-ruling Agamemnon sent me

to bring your child and offer sacrifice

on the Greeks' behalf, to appease the god

who has afflicted them with misery."

445

Odysseus gave him her hand, and the priest embraced

his daughter while the oarsmen arranged the beasts

around the sacred altar one by one,

then washed their hands and scooped up barley grains.

Chryses lifted his arms and prayed aloud:

450

"O archer with silver bow, who shelters Chryse

and holy Cilla, and governs Tenedos!

Not long ago you listened when I prayed

and you made the Greek army pay for my sorrow.

Today I pray you grant another wish 455
and lift the deadly plague that scourges the Greeks!"

That was his prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard.
The Greeks then prayed, scattered the barley grains,
slit the animals' throats, stripped their skins,
cut off and covered their thighs with savory fat, 460
two layers thick, then consecrated the flesh.

The priest burned the thighs, wine-soaked, over split wood
while younger men waited with five-pronged forks.

After the thighs burned, the men tasted entrails,
then carved and spitted the other cuts of meat, 465
and roasted the pieces under watchful eyes.

Tasks finished, the company laid a banquet
and feasted, not a man without a share.

When all had quenched desire for food and drink,
youths tempered mirthful wine in mixing bowls 470
and passed the cups around. The men poured libations,
then danced the rest of the day to soothe Apollo.

Younger Achaeans sang melodious paeans
that pleased the attentive far-shooting god.

After the sun declined and darkness came 475
the Argives slumbered beside their ship's stern
until Dawn's crimson fingers first appeared.

Then they set the ship's course back to the Greek army,
while Apollo sent a favorable wind their way.

They righted the mast and spread the bleached sail. 480
A brisk aft breeze billowed the sheet till waves
gave way to the ship's stem as she picked up speed
and ran, piercing the swells along her route.

After they reached the sprawling Achaean camp, 485
they dragged the dusky ship from sea to land,
high on the beach, set sturdy props beneath her,
then dispersed, each to quarters beside his ship.

Meanwhile Achilles stayed by his fleet and fumed.
Peleus' fast-running, Zeus-descended son

did not attend any Achaean assembly, 490
nor did he fight. He languished, while deep inside
he yearned for battle, waiting day after day.

At length, when Dawn had risen a twelfth time,
the everlasting gods returned to Olympus,
Zeus in the lead. Thetis honored the vow 495
she gave her son. She rose through the sea's waves
in early morning and sped to the high heavens,
where she found Cronus' son sitting alone
on deep-furrowed Olympus' loftiest peak.
She knelt beside him and circled his knees 500
with her left arm while her right hand touched his beard.
She then entreated Zeus, son of Cronus:
"Father Zeus, if ever I came to your aid
by word or deed, grant me a wish today:
Honor my son, whose destiny all too soon 505
will come but whom Agamemnon the king
dishonored by taking away his prized reward.
Restore my child's honor, Olympian Zeus!
Give Troy the upper hand until the Greeks
grow desperate and exalt my son Achilles!" 510

The cloud-amasser Zeus did not respond
for a long while, so Thetis clasped his knees
a second time, clung tight and spoke again:
"Nod your head to show your solemn assent!
If you refuse I will know beyond doubt 515
that I am the least respected of all gods."

Perturbed, cloud-gathering Zeus replied:
"What you ask me to do will rouse the fury
of Hera, and her shrewish, carping mouth.
But no matter what I do, when gods assemble 520
she never fails to complain that I aid Troy,
so you slip away now, eluding her eye,
and I shall undertake to grant your wish.
To give assurance I will incline my head,

among immortals the sign of my most sacred
pledge, never lightly made, never revoked,
never unfulfilled—not if I give my nod.”

525

Cronus’ son nodded his ominous brow.
Celestial locks tumbled around his lordly
immortal head, and high Olympus quaked.

530

The pledge made, they parted and went their ways,
she to the depths, far from Olympus’ splendor,
he to his house, where all the immortals rose
from their seats to face their father, for none dared
sit while he entered. Everyone stood
until he sat on his throne. Hera was well
aware that he had met and conspired
with Thetis, old sea god Nereus’ daughter,
and she addressed a sharp complaint to Zeus:
“Which immortal did you plot with, you fox?
You customarily sneak away from me
to secretly plan, and afterward you
are silent about whatever you scheme.”

535

540

The father of gods and mortals replied:
“Hera, you should not harbor hopes to know
about all my plans, though you are my wife.
When I make a plan that is fit to disclose
you will know it before any god or mortal,
but when I choose to make a secret plan
you should not ask or seek to learn about that.”

545

550

Unperturbed, ox-eyed Hera answered him:
“Son of Cronus, what are you talking about?
Before today I have rarely inquired.
I kept quiet, no matter what you chose to plan,
but now my heart fears that Thetis has swayed
your will, the old sea god Nereus’ daughter.
Early this morning she knelt and clasped your knees.

555

I fear your nod guaranteed that Greek blood
shall spill at the ships to avenge her son."

Cloud-amassing Zeus responded to Hera: 560
"My dear, you are alert and overlook little,
but you can do nothing except lose my favor.
You would then find your predicament worse.
If I have done what you think, so will it be.
Now you obey my word and take a seat, 565
else all gods on Olympus could not prevent
the thrashing these invincible hands will give!"

Zeus's threat frightened regal ox-eyed Hera
and she sat down, spirited heart subdued.
The gods breathed easier then in Zeus's house, 570
and master craftsman Hephaestus spoke up,
hoping to spare his mother Hera harm:
"It will be a dismal turn of events
if you two start to wrangle over mortals
and lead us all to strife. Not even our banquets 575
would continue to bring the pleasure they do.
I understand my mother's complaint, but urge
that she make peace with my father Zeus, or else
he may lose his temper and spoil our feast.
The Olympian lightning-thrower might decide— 580
worst of all—to drive us out of our homes.
So you should stroke him, at least try soothing words.
Soon enough he will grow mellow again."

Hephaestus selected a two-handled chalice,
handed it to Hera and gave her advice: 585
"Cheer up, Mother, and overcome your anger
or, much as I love you, I may have to watch
as you are beaten, and I would then be helpless
because I no longer dare attack Zeus.
Once before when I rushed to assist you 590
he grabbed my foot and threw me out his door.

I fell all day till, as the sun sank low,
I dropped on Lemnos, my heart barely beating.
The Sintians nursed my injuries from that fall."

The white-armed goddess Hera smiled at Hephaestus 595
and as she smiled she took the cup her son offered.

Then he poured each god—starting on the left—
sweet nectar that he dipped from a gold jar.

Laughter resounded among the blessed gods
as they watched Hephaestus bustling through the halls. 600

All day long till the sun began to sink,
they feasted, and none lacked an equal share
or the sublime music of Apollo's lyre
accompanied by the Muses' voices singing.

After the setting sun's last beam had died, 605
the immortal gods dispersed and went to sleep
in elegant houses that skillful Hephaestus
once constructed using consummate art.

The lightning-thrower Zeus lay on the bed
he usually took when sweet sleep approached, 610
and Hera his wife lay down by his side.

BOOK 2

THE THOUSAND SHIPS

The men who fought in horsetail crests, and all gods
but Zeus, slept through the night. Sleep eluded him
while he pondered ways that Achilles' honor
might recover if Greek blood flowed at the ships.

In due time he devised a plan he liked:

5

Mislead Agamemnon by means of a dream.

So Zeus rose from his bed, sleepless, and spoke:

"Deceitful Dream, go to the fast Greek fleet,
the quarters of Atreus' son Agamemnon,
and repeat to him exactly this command:

10

Summon the long-haired Achaeans to arms
at once, for now is the time to take the streets
of Troy. Olympus is no longer divided.

All the deathless gods have at last acceded
to Hera's complaints. The Trojans face ruin."

15

The Dream set out the moment the words were spoken
and soon arrived at the swift Achaean ships
where he found Atreus' son Agamemnon
in his quarters gripped fast by ambrosial sleep.

The Dream assumed the likeness of Neleus' son,
Nestor, Agamemnon's favorite elder.

20

Resembling him, the vaporous Dream spoke:
"You sleep, son of Atreus, that masterful horseman.
A strategist should not slumber all night,

a man responsible for a whole army. 25
Listen, I carry a message from Zeus,
who pities and cares for you from far away.
Summon the long-haired Achaeans to arms
at once, for now is the time to take the streets
of Troy. Olympus is no longer divided. 30
All the deathless gods have at last acceded
to Hera's complaints. The Trojans face ruin
at Zeus's hands. Do not allow my words
to slip away when honey-sweet sleep departs."

The Dream vanished, and Agamemnon drowsed,
savoring events not yet to occur. 35
"Priam's city will fall today," he thought,
but Zeus did not plan that triumph so soon.
Indeed, he was about to unleash misery
of harsh combat on both Trojans and Greeks. 40
Agamemnon awoke in the Dream's thrall,
bolted upright and dressed in a soft tunic,
almost new, then his heaviest cloak.
He strapped sandals beneath anointed feet,
his silver-studded sword over a shoulder. 45
He took his forefathers' abiding scepter
and strode along the ships of bronze-armed Greeks.

As goddess Dawn emerged above Olympus,
light for Zeus and all the immortal gods,
Agamemnon bade his clear-voiced heralds
summon the Greek army to meet in assembly. 50
The heralds called, and men began to gather.

Meanwhile, distinguished elders sat in council
astern the ship of Nestor, Pylos' king,
and Agamemnon told them about the Dream: 55
"Hear this, friends! During my sleep a Dream came,
through the immortal night. Much like Nestor
he seemed in stature, physique, even face.
He stood above my head and spoke to me:

'You sleep, son of Atreus, that masterful horseman. 60
A strategist should not slumber all night,
a man responsible for a whole army.
Listen, I carry a message from Zeus,
who pities and cares for you from far away.
Summon the long-haired Achaeans to arms 65
at once, for now is the time to take the streets
of Troy. Olympus is no longer divided.
All the deathless gods have at last acceded
to Hera's complaints. The Trojans face ruin
at Zeus's hands. Remember my words.' That said, 70
he flew away, and sweet sleep released me.
So come! Let us call to arms Achaea's sons!
Yet before we do, let me test their resolve
by bidding them put oars to the ships and flee,
but you should all speak up to check their flight." 75

Agamemnon took his seat, and up rose
Nestor who reigned as lord of sandy Pylos.
He, emphatic, addressed the hushed kings:
"My friends, leaders and chiefs of the Argive force,
if any other Greek had described that dream 80
we would have branded it false and turned our backs,
but the man known as Achaea's best saw this,
so we should call Achaea's sons to arms!"

Nestor was first to march away from the council
and after him—the army's shepherd—came all 85
the sceptered kings, determined to rouse the troops.
As whirring swarms of honeybees pour
in a steady stream out of a hollow rock
to fly and cluster about springtime flowers,
some flying this direction, others that, 90
so Greek soldiers swarmed from the camps and ships,
hastening along the edge of the sea
to massive assembly where Zeus had sent Rumor,
ablaze, to goad the men. So they gathered there,
a churning crowd, and the earth beneath groaned 95

as men converged—so noisy it took nine
bull-voiced heralds to bring order and silence
so all could hear the Zeus-descended kings.
At length the nine led the men to their seats
and quieted them. Then prince Agamemnon
rose with the scepter Hephaestus had once made.

100

Hephaestus gave it to Cronus' son Zeus,
and Zeus to the Argus-slaying messenger,
Hermes, who gave it to horse-master Pelops,
and Pelops passed it on to his son Atreus.

105

Atreus left it to his brother Thyestes,
who left it for Agamemnon to hold,
ruler of all Argos and countless isles.

Scepter high, Agamemnon addressed the men:

"Honorable Greek warriors, Ares' cohorts,
Zeus ensnarled me in folly both profound
and cruel the day he nodded to promise me
the spoils of fortress Troy and safe return.

110

Now he has bared his grim deceit and bade me
return ashamed to Argos, many men lost.

115

Such is the will of all-powerful Zeus.

He has toppled the towers of untold cities,
and even more will fall to his boundless might.

Future generations will brand it disgraceful
that we, a Greek army of such great size,
fought hard and waged this war without success
against a smaller force, no end in sight.

120

If the Greeks and Trojans should so desire,
they might agree to tally up both sides
by gathering all the men who live in Troy
and organizing the Greeks in rows of ten.

125

If each Trojan then poured wine for a row,
many a row of ten would get no wine.

To that extent, I say, we Greeks outnumber
the men who inhabit Troy's walls, but allies
they have as well, a host of fighting spearmen
who have confounded me and will not let me
conquer, pillage and burn fortress Ilium.

130

Nine years have passed by now since Zeus's nod.
Our ships' timbers and ropes begin to rot,
while we but hope our wives and tender children
await us still inside our halls. Our task
for which we traveled here is unfulfilled.
So come, all of you should do as I say:
flee, sail to our cherished fatherlands,
for we will never take the streets of Troy!"

Agamemnon's speech ignited the spirits
of every man absent from the elders' council.
Their multitude rose like agitated waves
that fold the Icarian Sea when south and east winds
spring together from father Zeus's clouds,
or like a grain field that the west wind whips,
steadily bearing down till all ears nod.
So the entire assembly stirred and, shouting,
raced for the ships. Dust rose under their feet,
a high plume, and they exhorted each other
to grab the ships' rails and drag them to sea.
With shouts that reached the heavens they cleared the ways
and kicked down the vessels' props, thinking of home.

The Greeks would have defied fate and departed
if Hera had not warned Pallas Athena:
"Tireless daughter of aegis-keeping Zeus,
as matters stand, the Greeks are about to sail
the sea's broad back and return to their homes,
leaving Priam and his Trojans the prize,
Helen of Argos, a woman countless Greeks
have died for on alien Trojan soil.
So go at once among the bronze-clad men
and say whatever it takes to quiet their zeal
before they drag their crescent ships to the water."

Gleaming-eyed Athena did not hesitate.
Right then she bounded from Olympus' peaks,
quickly reaching the fast Achaean ships.

She found Odysseus—wise as Zeus himself—
standing beside his vessels but moving none
because sadness weighed on his heart and mind. 170
The gleaming-eyed goddess approached and said:
“Odysseus, Zeus-descended son of Laertes,
would even you head for family and home,
taking flight on your ship that bristles with oars, 175
leaving to Priam and his Trojans their prize,
Helen of Argos, the woman countless Greeks
have died for on alien Trojan soil?
Do not stand here! Go out among the men!
Say whatever it takes to calm them down 180
before they drag their crescent ships to the sea!”

Odysseus recognized the goddess' voice
and set off at a run, tossing his cloak
to an aide, Ithacan herald Eurybates.
Odysseus sped to Agamemnon Atrides, 185
who gave him the ageless patriarchal scepter.
Holding that, Odysseus raced to the ships.

Whenever he found a king or famous warrior
he stopped and calmed him using tempered words:
“My friend, do not appear a frightened coward! 190
Sit in assembly. Bid your men sit too.
You do not know the mind of Atreus' son.
He merely tests, and Greeks who fail will regret it.
Did we not all hear what he said in council?
If he is angered he will punish offenders. 195
The power of Zeus-descended kings is great,
and his glory stems from Zeus, who loves him.”

Whenever he found an unnerved soldier
he raised the scepter and spoke with mastery:
“Sit steady my friend! Hear the word of others
better than you who are unwarlike and timid,
counting for little in battle or council. 200
All the Achaeans here cannot be kings.

That would bring chaos. There must be one chief,
one king, who must be the man Cronus' son put
in charge of scepter and laws so he could rule." 205

Odysseus thus spurred them to reassemble
and men began to fall away from the ships,
yelling as loud as waves on boiling sea
that thunder as they crash on steep headland. 210

The men returned and sat, quiet in their seats,
all except Thersites, who ranted and railed,
his mind suffused with streams of disordered words—
irrational and odious to the kings.

He shouted anything to draw attention. 215
He was a disgrace among the Greeks at Troy.
Bowlegged and lame he was, and his shoulders
sagged in front of his chest. Atop his neck
there sat a pointed head with scraggly hair.

Achilles and Odysseus detested him, 220
deeming him worthless. Agamemnon often
berated him. For Thersites, all Greeks
held only hate and contempt in their hearts.
Now, he shouted complaints at Agamemnon:

"Son of Atreus, what more could you want now? 225
Your quarters brim with bronze and all the women
that you assembled there after we Greeks
gave them to you when we plundered a city.

Do you seek even more gold, brought to us
as ransom for Trojan princes' sons 230
that I or one of these other men would capture?
Or a new woman on whom to vent your lust

and keep all to yourself? It is not right
for you, a chief, to bring your men more danger.
For shame, my friends! Greek girls, no longer men! 235

Let us go home in our ships, leaving the man
and his prizes here at Troy, so he may see
that none of us cares the least whit for him.
Why he has slighted even our finest fighter,

Achilles, by taking his prize of honor. 240
Achilles held back, restraining his rage,
or you had voiced your last insult, Atrides!"

So Thersites upbraided the army's chief,
Agamemnon, but then Odysseus stood up,
scowled at the man and leveled a harsh reproach: 245

"Shrill-voiced would-be orator, Thersites,
silence! You alone have challenged the kings,
yet surely no man of lower worth than you
is here, of all who came with Atreus' sons.

So you had better not harangue the princes 250
or stir rebellion, or preach return to Argos.

None of us knows events that are yet to come,
whether we will return, or with what success.

You presume to revile our honored leader,
Agamemnon, because of gifts he received 255

from these Achaean warriors. Your tongue is sharp,
but let me tell you what is in store for you:

If I should hear you rant like this again,
Odysseus' head will no longer top his shoulders,
nor will he still be called Telemachus' father, 260
if I do not then strip away your clothes,
your cloak and tunic, right to your testicles,
and send you running in tears to the fast ships,
after the thorough drubbing that these men watch."

The scepter fell on Thersites' shoulders and spine 265
until he bent double and wept pain's tears.

A bloody welt rose and swelled on his back
as the golden staff struck. Chastened, he sat,
dazed and bewildered, wiping tearful eyes.

The assembled Greeks, derisive, laughed aloud. 270

One warrior glanced toward another and said:
"Odysseus has done so many worthy deeds,
proved wise in council and roused us all in war.
Today once again he has served us well
by putting a stop to that loud-mouthed swine

275

whose impudence will not be heard again
to criticize our kings with mutinous talk."

Centered among the men Odysseus stood,
scepter in hand, and gleaming-eyed Athena,
cast as a herald, bade them all be quiet
so even the farthest-seated Achaean sons
could hear Odysseus' words and weigh their wisdom.

280

Odysseus then delivered a stirring speech:
"Son of Atreus, some Greeks now seem to hope
you will become the most disgraced of men.

285

They want to disown the promise they made—
before we sailed from Argos' horse pastures—
that they would stay until the sack of Troy.
Now, as if they were widows or small children,
they whimper to one another about home.

290

They tire but will regret it if they leave.

A sailor away from home for just one month
may chafe on his rowing bench as furious storms
relentlessly whip tall waves on wintry seas.

We men are already in our ninth year
at Troy, so we do not fault those Achaeans
who grow impatient, but on the other hand
consider the shame if we return with nothing.

295

Take heart, my friends, and stay a while to learn
if Calchas' prophecy proves true or not.

300

You must recall it well, as all the Greeks
who have survived this war are witnesses
to that day at Aulis where the Achaean ships
had massed to bring ruin on Priam and Troy.

There, on the sacred altar by the spring
under the plane tree where sparkling waters welled,
we made generous sacrifice to the gods.

305

Then the great omen appeared: a red-backed snake,
shrieking, that the Olympian himself revealed.

It sprang from the altar into the plane tree
where a nest of young sparrows, recently hatched,
fluttered under the leaves of the top branches.

310

- They numbered eight, their mother made nine.
The snake gulped down the pitifully squawking young
while their mother flew round, stunned by her loss. 315
Next it whirled and seized one of her wings.
Then after it ate fledglings and mother too,
the god who sent it changed its shape again:
wily Cronus' son transformed it to stone.
- We stood stock still, aghast at what we had seen,
a dreadful portent during our ceremony, 320
but Calchas quickly pronounced his prophecy:
'Why have you fallen silent, long-haired Greeks?
Supreme counselor Zeus sent us this omen,
foretelling events whose fame will never die. 325
Just as the snake devoured the youthful birds,
eight, and the mother who hatched them made nine,
just so we will battle for nine long years
and in the tenth capture the streets of Troy.'
What Calchas foretold is now almost fulfilled. 330
So come, thick-greaved Greeks that you are, stay all—
till we have seized the storied city of Priam!"'
- A thunderous shout rose from the men, and ships
reverberated the roar of Greek war cries
as all assented to what Odysseus said. 335
Gerenian horseman Nestor was next to speak:
"It is sad to hear so many talk like children
who care nothing about the deeds of war.
Where have your brotherly oaths and compacts gone?
Our strategies now smolder in your fires 340
as do our libations that pledged loyalty.
We now fight only with words and get nowhere,
stalled, although we have been here long hard years.
Son of Atreus! Maintain your firm resolve
and lead the Greeks into decisive battle, 345
but leave to die by ones and twos those men,
the few who urge us to do what we shall not:
return to Argos now, before we learn
if Zeus's promise proves to be true or false.

- Remember, Cronus' almighty son nodded,350
the day the fast-cruising vessels set sail
from Argos bound to bring destruction on Troy.
In eastern skies he sent propitious lightning.
None of you should press for return home
before you have bedded some Trojan's wife355
and earned revenge for Helen's suffering and groans.
But if any should be bent on leaving here,
let him but lay his hands on a dark ship
and he shall be the next Greek to meet death.
You, king, hear another man's advice.360
Act upon counsel I will give you now:
Divide the men by tribes and those by clans,
so clans may support their clans and tribes their tribes.
If you take my advice and watch the army,365
you will see which of the chiefs and men are cowards
and which stand out, fighting hard for their own.
Thus you may learn if Troy stands by divine will
or by men's inept fighting and cowardice."
- Commander-in-chief Agamemnon replied:
"Once more, old man, your counsel is unsurpassed.370
By Zeus, Athena and Apollo! If only
I had ten such canny Greek advisers.
The army of Priam would bow today
and our hands would seize and plunder the city.
But frustration is what I get from Zeus,375
who sends me fruitless quarrels and rivalries,
even mine with Achilles over a girl.
My intemperate words started that fight.
If ever he and I unite again,
Trojan defeat and doom will be assured.380
Go now, eat food, ready yourselves for battle.
Each man should sharpen his spear, polish his shield,
offer his swift-footed team hearty grain,
inspect his chariot and set his mind for war.
We shall be locked in combat all day long.385
There will not be even a moment's pause

till darkness falls and quiets the warriors' fury.
Then sweat-soaked will be the armor round your chest,
weary the hand that grips your bloody spear
and lathered the team that drew your chariot. 390
But if I see any man avoid the fight,
malingering here at the ships, he will not
escape the dogs and vultures. So do I vow."

The army roared and erupted like waves
that Boreas crashes on a steep, sheer coast 395
or promontory where breakers never cease
as blast upon stormy blast drives them ashore.

The warriors then dispersed among the ships,
kindled fires in their camps and cooked their food.
Each sacrificed to one of the deathless gods, 400
praying to escape doom and the worst of war.
Agamemnon sacrificed a sleek bull—
fattened five years—to Cronus' powerful son,
after he summoned his most prominent men.
First he called Nestor, next king Idomeneus, 405
the son of Tydeus and both Ajaxes.
Sixth was Odysseus, wits like those of Zeus.
Menelaus came of his own accord—
he knew his brother's plans without being told.
The men surrounded the bull, barley in hand, 410
while lord Agamemnon offered a prayer:
"Most glorious Zeus, ether-dwelling, cloud-wrapped,
let the sun not set again and darkness come
till I have struck Priam's roof beams to earth,
set hungry fire that burns his gates to ashes 415
and pierced the tunic that covers Hector's chest
while legions of his comrades lie around him,
face down, grasping dusty earth in their teeth!"

Such was the prayer that Zeus would not fulfill.
He took the sacrifice but prolonged the strife. 420

When they had prayed and scattered the barley grains
they lifted the bull's head, slit its throat, flayed it,
cut off its thighs and covered them in fat,
two layers thick, then laid raw flesh on top.

They burned the thighs on a fire of dried split wood, 425
and held viscera over the blaze on forks.

After the thighs had burned, the kings savored entrails,
then carved off and spitted the rest of the meat,
roasted it till well done and set it aside.

Those tasks completed, they laid out a banquet 430
and feasted, none lacking an equal share.

When they had put away hunger and thirst,
Nestor, Gerenia's master horseman, spoke:
"Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon,
we should no longer tarry, nor any longer 435
postpone the hard task Zeus has ordained.
Come, order your heralds to call the Greeks
to arms and have them gather down at the ships,
and we as a group should go throughout the host,
the sooner to rouse a decisive battle." 440

Lord Agamemnon did not disagree.

He forthwith ordered his clear-voiced heralds
to summon the long-haired Greek army to battle.
They did, and all men gathered without delay.

Atreus' son and the Zeus-descended kings 445
marshaled the warriors. Athena was there,
waving the deathless, timeless, hallowed aegis,
each of its solid gold tassels fluttering,
each of them flawless and worth a hundred oxen.

With that aloft she rushed through the Greek force, 450
stirred them to war and roused in every chest
the courage needed to fight incessant battle.

Then war seemed sweeter to them than sailing home
that day to their forefathers' cherished lands.

As when wildfire consumes an entire forest 455
atop a tall peak, and the glow travels far,

so then the gleam of bronze on marching Greeks
shined through ether until it reached the heavens.

As when a flock of countless birds in flight—
cormorants, geese or swans with necks outstretched
where Cayster wanders through Asian meadows—
wheel this way and that to exercise their wings,
then, as they settle, cry till the meadows ring,
so from the ships and camps the tribes and clans
flocked on Scamander's delta where the earth
resounded from footfalls of horses and men.
In Scamander's flowery meadows stood Greeks
many as all the leaves and blossoms of spring.

Like the clouds of voracious, swarming flies
that flit and buzz in a shepherd's farmyard
during seasons when sweet milk wets his pails,
so numerous were the long-haired Greeks that day,
massed on the plain, resolved to fight and destroy.

As herdsmen who tend multiple flocks of goats
can sort them out after they mingle in pasture,
so the Greek chiefs marshaled and grouped the men
for battle, and in their midst was Agamemnon,
his head and face resembling thunderous Zeus,
his loins like Ares, his chest like Poseidon.
As when a herd of oxen submits to one,
a bull whose size and fury dominate,
so Zeus made Atreus' son preeminent,
distinguished even among famous heroes.

Tell me now, Muses who dwell on Olympus—
goddesses, my companions who are omniscient,
unlike me who know only what I have heard—
who were the captains and chiefs of that Greek force?
I could not possibly name the rank and file,
not even if I possessed ten mouths and tongues,

a voice that never tired, and lungs of bronze,
not unless you goddesses, Zeus's daughters,
called forth all the thousands who went to Troy.
I will name the captains and numbers of ships.

Boeotian chiefs were Peneleus, Leïtus,
Clonius, Arcesilaus and Prothoënor.

490

Boeotians came from Hyria and rocky Aulis,
Schoenus, Scolus and hilly Eteonus,
Thespia, Graea and spacious Mycalessus,
others from Harma, Eilysion and Erythrae,
others from Eleon, Peteon and Hyle,
Ocalea, Medeon's high-walled citadel,
Copae, Eutresis and Thisbe, famed for doves,
others still from Coronea and Haliartus.

500

Then there were those who held Plataea and Glisas,
those from the citadel Hypothebe,
and sacred Onchestus, Poseidon's shrine,
and those from Mideia, vineyard-covered Arne,
Nisa and sacred, isolated Anthedon.

505

They sailed in fifty ships, and aboard each
were one hundred twenty Boeotian youths.

510

The Minyans from Orchomenus and Aspledon
followed Ascalaphus and Ialmenus—
twins born in Actor's halls to Astyoche,
an honored maiden in her private chamber,
till lusty Ares stealthily seduced her.

515

The Minyan chiefs commanded thirty ships.

The Phocian chiefs were Schedius and Epistrophus,
two sons of brave Iphitus, Naubolus' son.
Phocians were there from Cyparissus, Pytho,
sacred Crisa, Daulis and Panopeus,
others from Hyampolis and Anemoria,
those who lived on holy Cephisus' shore,
and those who held its headwaters at Lilaea.

520

There were forty somber ships for them to board.
The chiefs organized the Phocians in ranks,
and they armed just to the Boeotians' left.

525

Oileus' swift son Ajax led the Locrians.
He was not a giant like Telamon's son Ajax
but more wiry. His chest armor was linen
and his spearmanship was second to none.

Locrians came from Opus, Calliarus, Cynus,
Bessa, Scarphe and handsome Augeae,
Thronion and Tarphe beside Boagrius' waters.
Ajax commanded a forty-ship flotilla,
Locrians, whose lands faced island Euboea.

530

535

The fury-breathing Abantes held Euboea:
Eretria, Chalcis, vineyard-rich Histiae,
seaside Cerinthus and fortress Dion.
Others held Carystus, and others Styra.
Their leader was Ares' scion Elephenor,
chief of all Abantes, Chalcedon's son,
and they stood with the chief, their hair clasped back,
warriors with ash spears held erect, impatient
to pierce armor worn on enemies' chests.
Elephenor captained forty dusky ships.

540

545

There were those who tended Athens' citadel,
Erechtheus' folk, the man Athena reared—
after the grain-generous earth had borne him—
and lodged in her own temple, built on a hill,
where to this day he receives lambs and bulls
from the city's youths as each new year arrives.

Peteus' son Menestheus led the Athenians.
No other mortal on earth was his equal
at marshaling chariots and shield-bearing warriors.
Only Nestor was close, but he was much older.

Menestheus captained a fleet of fifty ships.

550

555

Ajax led a dozen ships from Salamis
and anchored them where the ranks of Athens stood.

Then there were those from Argos, high-walled Tiryns,

Asine and Hermione by the deep bay,

560

Eionae, Troezen and vine-rich Epidaurus,

and Greek youths of Mases and island Aegina.

Battle-hardened Diomedes was their leader.

His aides were Sthenelus, son of Capaneus,

and the godlike warrior Euryalus,

565

son of Mecisteus, King Talaus' son.

Diomedes was commander-in-chief

of eighty ships carrying those Argives.

There were those from Mycenaë's citadel,

570

prosperous Corinth, well-located Cleonae,

and those who dwelt in Araethyria, Orniae

and Sicyon where Adrestus once was king,

those from Hyperesia, steep Gonoëssa,

Pellene, the region bordering Aegion,

and far-off Helice and Aegialus.

575

Agamemnon commanded their hundred ships,

and his were by far the most numerous men.

He armed himself in brilliant, ornate bronze,

and gloried that he was preeminent there,

supreme because he captained the most warriors.

580

Then there were those from Lacedaemon's dales,

Sparta, Pharis and Messe, known for its doves,

inhabitants of Brysiae, Augeae,

Amyclae and Helos, seaside citadel,

and those who lived near Laas and Oetylus.

585

Atreus' son Menelaus commanded them

and sixty ships. They armed in a place apart

where he, sure of their courage, walked among them

fanning their martial spirits. He was determined

to have revenge for his wife Helen's ordeals.

590

Residents of Pylos were there, Arene,

Thryon by Alpheus' shallow ford, Aepy,

also Cyparisseis, Amphigenia,

Pteleos, Helos and Dorion, where the Muses

once put an end to Thamyris' sweet music 595
after his stay with Oechalian king Eurytus.

Thamyris presumed to liken his odes
to those the Muses sang, Zeus's daughters.
They maimed his hands and struck him dumb, so his song
and once-sublime lyre tones were lost forever. 600

Gerenian Nestor captained the Pylian men
and no fewer than ninety hollow ships.

There were men from Arcadia, near Mount Cyllene
and Aepytus' tomb. Hand-to-hand combatants,
they hailed from Pheneos, Orchomenus' sheep lands, 605

Rhipe, Stratia, Enispe, swept by winds,
also Tegea, enchanting Mantinea,
Stymphalus and Parrhasia, far to the west.

Ancaeus' son Agapenor headed them
and sixty ships, in each of which were packed
Arcadian soldiers schooled in arts of war. 610

Lord Agamemnon had provided them
the vessels, so they could cross the wine-hued sea,
since they lived landlocked and had no use for ships.

Men came from the Elis region and Buprasion,
the distant towns Myrsimus and Hyrmine,
west of Alesion and the Olenian rock. 615

These men had four chiefs, and each commanded ten
fast-sailing ships, crowded with Epeans.

Two of the chiefs were Amphimachus and Thalpius,
sons of Eurytus—Actor's son—and Cteatus. 620

The third was Amarynceus' son Diores,
and the fourth Polyxeinus, like a god,
child of Agasthenes, Augeas' son.

Men from sacred Echinades and Dulichion—
islands that lie across the sea from Elis—
followed Ares' equivalent, Meges,
whose father, Zeus-loved horseman Phyleus, 625

feuded with his father and sailed to Dulichion.
They were enough for forty menacing ships.

630

Odysseus led the daring Cephaletians,
fighters from Ithaca and Neriton,
those who dwelt in Aegilips, Crostylia,
Zacynthus, warriors who lived on Samos,
and those who possessed the mainland opposite.
Odysseus, godlike in counsel, captained them
in all told a dozen crimson-prowed ships.

635

Andraemon's son Thoas led the Aetolians,
residents of Pleuron, Olenus, Pylene,
seaside Chalcis and rocky Calydon.
Oeneus' courageous sons no longer lived,
nor he himself, and Meleager was dead,
so Thoas was charged with ruling all Aetolians,
and they set sail with a forty-ship fleet.

640

Spear-famed Idomeneus captained the Cretans,
inhabitants of Cnossos and walled Gortyn,
Lyctus, Miletus, glittering Lycastus,
Phaestus and Rhytium, both pleasant to live in,
and others of the hundred cities on Crete.
Their chiefs were renowned spearman Idomeneus
and Meriones, a rival of deadly Ares.
The Cretan soldiers traveled in eighty ships.

645

650

Tlepolemus, a son of Heracles,
led from Rhodes nine ships of valiant warriors,
who inhabited all the island's three regions,
Lindus, Camirus and Ialyssus.
They followed spear-fighter Tlepolemus,
whom Astyochaea bore to Heracles.
He brought her from Selleis in Ephyra
after he razed countless cities of warriors.
Tlepolemus grew up in Heracles' halls

655

660

but then killed his father's beloved uncle,
Lycimnius, an aging heir of Ares.

Tlepolemus built ships, gathered his people
and took flight on the sea, threatened by fellow
sons and grandsons of mighty Heracles. 665

In time Tlepolemus wandered to Rhodes
where he founded three clans, each of which gained favor
in Zeus's eyes, ruler of gods and men,
and Cronus' son showered all three with wealth. 670

Nireus commanded three sleek ships from Syme,
Nireus, son of Aglaea by King Charopus,
Nireus, the handsomest man who went to Troy
of all Greek fighters except Achilles,
but Nireus was weak, with only a few men. 675

Warriors came from Nisyros, Crapathus, Casos,
Cos—Eurypylus' town—and Calydnae's isles.
Pheidippus and Antiphus commanded them,
children of Thessalus, Heracles' son,
and they set sail with thirty hollow ships. 680

Then there were all that came from Pelasgian Argos,
inhabitants of Alos, Alope, Trachis,
Phthia and Hellas, known for its fair women.
They were called Myrmidons, Hellenes or Achaeans.

Achilles commanded them and fifty vessels,
but they were no longer engaged in combat. 685
There was no one to take charge of their ranks
while fleet-footed Achilles lay at the ships,
bereft of the young woman, fair-haired Briseis,
whom he won from Lyrnessus through hard toil,
after he sacked Lyrnessus and walled Thebe
and laid low Mynes and Eristrophus, 690
sons of Euenus, a son of King Selepius.
He lay and longed for her, but soon would rise.

Men came from Phylace and Pyrasus,
Demeter's realm, and Iton, mother of flocks, 695

- seaside Antrone and grassy Pteleos.
Warlike Protesilaus was their chief,
while he lived, until his blood poured on the ground,
wife back in Phylace with tear-stained cheeks
and half-built house. A Dardanian man killed him
as he raced, the first Greek to alight at Troy.
His men missed him but did not lack a chief.
Podarces, offspring of Ares, took command,
a son of Iphiclus, Phylacus' son. 700
- He was a brother of bold Protesilaus,
younger. Protesilaus had been braver,
so while the warriors he had once led
did have a chief, they yearned for the better brother.
A fleet of forty ships accompanied them. 705
- Fighters who lived in Pherae by Lake Boebe,
Glyphae, Boebe and fortified Iolcus,
sailed eleven ships led by Admetus' son,
Eumelus, borne to Admetus by sublime
Alcestis, loveliest of Pelias' daughters. 715
- Men were there from Methone and Thaumacia,
Meliboea and rugged Olizon.
The skilled Bowman Philoctetes led them
and seven ships. On each ship fifty oarsmen
embarked, all of them deadly archer-warriors. 720
- But grave illness would claim Philoctetes,
and the Greeks would leave him on sacred Lemnos
wounded by a sea snake's venomous bite.
There he would suffer. He was still remembered
among the ships, Philoctetes the king. 725
- His men missed him but did not lack a chief—
Medon, Oileus' illegitimate son,
born by Rhene to city-razing Oileus.
- The men who held Tricca, Ithome's gorge,
and who possessed Oechalia, Eurytus' city,
followed two sons of Asclepius,
skilled healers Machaon and Podalirius,
and they had amassed thirty hollow ships. 730

Of those who kept Ormenus, Hyperia's spring,
Asterion and Titanus' snowy peaks,
Eurypylus was chief, Euaemon's son.
Forty dark ships sailed with him and his men.

735

There were residents of Argissa, Gyrtone,
gleaming Oloöson, Elone and Orthe.
Their chief was war-ready Polypoetes,
son of Pirithous, sired by immortal Zeus.
Hippodamia conceived Polypoetes
the day his father fought the shaggy centaurs
and drove them off Pelion to the Aethices.
Polypoetes led together with Leonteus,
a son of bold Caeneus, Coronus' son,
and with them sailed a squadron of forty ships.

740

Guneus commanded twenty-two ships from Cyphus,
on which were Enienes and Peraebians
who made their homes around wintry Dodona,
working the fertile banks of Titaressus,
which spills its sparkling waters into Peneus,
though they do not mingle with Peneus' eddies
but flow on the surface like olive oil,
because Peneus feeds the dreaded Styx.

750

755

Tenthredon's son Prothous led the Magnesians,
from regions around Peneus and leafy Pelion.
The fast runner Prothous commanded those men,
and they had assembled forty black ships.

Those were the leaders and chiefs of the Greek force,
but tell me, Muse, which were the best of all
horses and men that sailed with Atreus' sons?

760

The best horses were those of Pheres' grandson
Eumelus. As if they were birds they flew,
heights, color and markings exactly the same,

765

raised in Perea by silver-bowed Apollo,
mares that radiated the horror of Ares.

Far the best man, while Achilles fumed, was
Telamon's son Ajax. Achilles was better,
and his team of horses was easily best. 770
But he just sat by his seagoing ships,
outraged at the commander Agamemnon,
while on the beach that bordered the sea his men
threw practice spears and competed with discus
or bow. Not far from their chariots, their horses 775
grazed in wild wetland celery and clover.
Their masters' chariots idly rested, covered,
inside the camps. Absent their charioteers,
teams wandered here and there about their pasture.
Once in a while they galloped like wildfire, 780
and the ground shook as when Zeus's thunderbolts
had lashed the earth tight to secure Typhoeus
in that beast's reputed resting place, Arima.
So under the horses' feet the earth shuddered
as they flew rapidly over the plain. 785

Wind-footed Iris went as courier to Troy
with grim tidings from storm-cloud-master Zeus.
The people had gathered outside Priam's gates,
every Trojan, young and old alike.
Iris planted her swift feet before she spoke, 790
assuming the voice of Priam's son Polites,
a trusted fast runner, posted as lookout
high on the tomb of old Aesytes,
to watch in case the Greeks burst forth from the ships.
In his likeness fleet-footed Iris said: 795
“Old man, you still prefer to ramble on
as if there were peace, while certain war impends.
I have survived unnumbered battles of men,
but I have never seen a force such as theirs.
They are as many as leaves or grains of sand, 800

and they are crossing the plain toward the city.
Hector, I urge you above all to act.
Near the city are many of Priam's allies
who speak in the various tongues of far-flung mortals.
Tell each chief to address the men he heads,
then marshal his warriors and lead them to us."

805

Hector did not ignore the goddess' advice.
He stopped the meeting and rushed the men to arms.
All gates open, the army hastened out,
foot soldiers and thundering chariot fighters.

810

A lofty hill rises beyond the city,
far on the plain, precisely symmetrical,
that mortal men have given the name Batiae,
while deathless gods call it Myrine's marker.
The Trojans and their allies organized there.

815

The Trojan chief was bright-helmeted Hector,
Priam's son, and around him the most able
of warriors armed, impatient to use their spears.

Anchises' son was the chief of Dardanians,
Aeneas, a son that Aphrodite bore
after she and Anchises slept on Ida.
Aeneas shared command with sons of Antenor,
skillful Archelochus and Acamas.

820

The men who dwelt at Ida's foot in Zelea,
well-to-do men who drank Aesepus' waters,
came to Troy following Lycaon's son
Pandarus, whose bow was a gift from Apollo.

825

The men from Adrestia, those from Apaeus,
and those from Pityea and Mount Tereia,
followed Adrestus and linen-armored Amphius,
sons of Percotian Merops, who had the gift

830

of prophecy, and so forbade his sons
to fight in murderous war. But they failed
to obey and fateful death lured them to Troy.

The men who lived in Practius, Percote,
Abydos, Sestos and beautiful Arisbe
had Asius as their chief, Hurtacus' son,
Asius, brought from Arisbe by his horses—
long-legged chestnuts raised near the river Selleis.

Hippothous led the spear-trained Pelasgian clan
who had their homes in rich, fertile Larisa.
Hippothous co-commanded them with Pylaeus,
his brother, sons of Lethus, Teutamus' son.

Pirous and Acamas commanded Thracians,
the many that had crossed the Hellespont.

845

Chief of Ciconian spearmen was Euphemus,
son of Troezenus, son of Zeus-sprung Ceas.

Pyraechmes led the Paeonians with strung bows,
from distant Amydon on Axius' broad waters,
Axius, whose sparkling streams spread wide on the ground.

850

Pylaemenes captained the Paphlagonians—
raised in Enetia where mules breed in the wild—
and those who lived in Cytorus, Sesamus,
the famous homes along Parthenius' streams,
Cromna, Aegialus and steep Erythini.

855

Odius and Epistrophus led Halizonians
from far-off Alybe where silver abounds.
Mysians followed Chromis and Ennomus, a seer
whose clairvoyance did not avert black death.
He fell to the hand of Aeacus' grandson
in the river where countless Trojans died.

860

Phorcys and Ascanius were chiefs of Phrygians,
battle-ready, far from their homes in Ascania.
Antiphonus and Mesthles led the Maeonians,
sons of Talaemenes born by the lake Gyge,
chiefs of Maeones, reared in Tmolus' shadow.

865

Nastes was one chief of the strange-speaking Carians,
dwellers by high, leafy Phthiron, Miletus,
Maeander's streams and Mycale's tall peak.

Amphimachus was Nastes' co-commander,
Amphimachus and Nastes, Nomion's two sons.
Foolish Nastes carried gold to the war
but that did not save him from bloody slaughter,
among those that Aeacus' grandson killed
in the river, then took the Carian gold.

870

875

Sarpedon and Glaucus led the valiant Lycians,
far from Lycia on eddying Xanthus' banks.

BOOK 3

PARIS AND MENELAUS DUEL

After each warrior fell in behind his chief
the Trojan army marched screaming like birds—
cranes whose shrieks rise above the sky to heaven
when they escape winter's wearisome storms,
flying cacophonous over Ocean's streams
to where they find and slaughter Pygmy men
in vicious attacks the birds launch from the air.

5

The Greek forces marched quietly, breathing fury,
each man's heart steeled to support his comrades.

As when south wind pours fog on mountain peaks,
welcome to thieves but unwelcome to herdsmen
who cannot see as far as a man can throw,
so then thick clouds of dust rose underfoot
as teeming armies tramped over the plain.

10

When the opposing forces had closed and stopped,
handsome Paris stepped from the Trojan ranks,
a leopard's hide and strung bow on his back,
holding a sword and two bronze-headed lances
that he shook as he challenged the best Greek warrior
to fight him face to face till one lay dead.

15

20

When Menelaus learned of Paris' challenge
he wasted no time but raced to the front line,
pleased as a lion that chances upon a carcass,
remains of either a young deer or wild goat,
and hungrily devours it all despite
a circling pack of spirited dogs.

25

So Menelaus rejoiced when he saw Paris
strutting out front. The Spartan scented revenge
and leapt off his chariot deck, fully armed.

The moment Paris saw that Menelaus
had come to the foremost ranks, his heart pounded
and he slunk back to his men, evading death.
As when a man retreats from a snake he finds
in a mountain glen, tremors drain his strength
and pallor his cheeks while he backs step by step,
so then Paris hid in the Trojan ranks,
handsome but afraid of Atreus' son.

30

Hector's voice reeked of contempt as he said:
“Cowardly Paris, seducer, womanizer,
I wish you had died unwed, or not been born.
Either would have been better for Trojan people
than this disgrace of yours that all have seen.
Likely the long-haired Greeks now mock and jeer,
saying our champion may have a fine face
but has not a shred of valor or strength.
You know well it was your seagoing ships
and sailors that navigated the deep
and brought back not only a beautiful woman—
kin to warrior kings in her distant land—
but also ruin for your father, home and folk.
How could you shame yourself and delight our foes?
Could you not have faced up to Menelaus?
You do possess the man's ravishing wife.
Aphrodite's gifts will be no use to you
when mixed with dust, nor will your handsome face.”

35

40

45

50

55

The Trojans are too patient, or before now
they would have dressed you in a tunic of stone!"

Handsome Paris said to his brother Hector:

"You have rebuked me, not without cause,
yet your heart was always hard as an axe 60
that a man drives through timbers, a skilled man,
builder of ships, stronger for driving that blade.
Your heart is as dauntless, your tongue as sharp.
Do not complain of Aphrodite's gifts.
It is not your place to despise the gods' largesse, 65
none of which I would have but for heaven's will.
Now, if indeed you want to see me fight,
tell the Trojan and Greek armies to sit down.
Then, in between, let Menelaus and me
do battle for Helen and her rich possessions. 70
Whoever proves more mighty and prevails,
let him take home the woman with all her wealth,
then let the armies swear an oath of peace,
that we shall live in Troy while they set sail
for Argos' horse pastures and beautiful women." 75

Hector was elated to hear his brother.

He raced out front and gave the Trojans a sign,
holding his spear's center, till they sat down.
At that, the opposing Greeks bent and strung bows, 80
preparing to shoot arrows and throw stones,
till Agamemnon's loud command stopped them:
"Hold off, Argives! Do not attack them yet!
Their captain Hector is about to speak!"

The Greeks then lowered their bows, falling silent
as Hector stood between the two sides and called: 85
"Trojans and strong-greaved Greeks! Hear me repeat
what Paris said, the man who caused this war.
He proposed that the Trojan and Greek armies
lay down their arms on the ever-bounteous earth,

and that in between them he and Menelaus
90
fight over Helen and all her possessions.

Whoever proves the more mighty and wins
shall take the woman home with all her wealth.
The rest of you will swear an oath of peace."

After Hector finished, both armies were silent
95
till war-loving Menelaus spoke up:

"Now listen to me! I feel the most sorrow.
I thought this conflict would be settled sooner
for Trojans and Greeks. You all have endured much
in the wake of strife between Paris and me." 100

So whichever of us may now meet fate and death,
let him die, while the rest of you disengage.
Go fetch some lambs, one black, another white,
for Earth and Helios. Bring a third for Zeus.

Take them to Priam that he may strike the oath
himself, since none of his sons can be trusted,
and one might sabotage our oath to heaven.
Younger men often have impetuous minds
but old men move deliberately. They consider
both past and future so as to make wise choices." 105

The speech inspired Trojans and Greeks alike
to hope the war's misery had reached its end.
They drew their chariots up in rows, dismounted,
and, stripping their armor, laid it on the ground,
the two sides close, just a small field between. 115

Hector dispatched a pair of Trojan heralds
to fetch the lambs at once and summon Priam.
Argive chief Agamemnon sent Talthybius
back to the hollow ships for a Greek lamb
and Talthybius hastened to do the king's bidding. 120

Helen meanwhile received a visit from Iris,
disguised as one of Helen's sisters-in-law,
the wife of Antenor's son Helicaon:
Laodice, Priam's most beautiful daughter.

Iris found Helen before her loom, weaving
a dark cloth on which she depicted the ordeals
that horse-breaking Trojans and bronze-clad Greeks
had suffered at Ares' hands on her account.

Iris approached Helen and said to her:

"Come, dear girl, and see a wondrous event! 125

The horse-breaking Trojans and bronze-clad Greeks
until today have waged war on each other,
determined to fight all over the plain.

Now they avoid battle, seated and silent,
leaning on shields, spears planted nearby,
all but Paris and Ares-loved Menelaus.

They are about to fight a duel for you
and whoever wins will call you his wife."

135

When Helen heard that, her heart swelled with desire
for her former husband, family and city.

140

She snatched up a white cloth, veiled her face
and rushed from her chamber fighting back tears.
Behind her followed a pair of handmaids,
Aethre, Pittheus' daughter, and ox-eyed Clymene.
They soon came to where the Scaean Gates hung.

145

Circling Priam sat Panthous, Thymoetes,
Lampus, Clytius, war-bred Hicetaon,
Antenor and Ucalegon, both wise.

That council of elders at the Scaean Gates
was cheered by the war's pause. They were an assembly
of nobles but sounded like crickets in deep woods,
perching in trees and chirping with feeble voices.

150

Like those, the Trojan chiefs sat on the rampart,
but when they saw Helen appear on the wall,
they leaned and spoke to one another, saying:
"It is small wonder that Trojans and Greeks
have endured so much for her all these years,
since her face resembles that of a goddess.
But forget her looks, let her sail with the ships,
averting more grief for us and our youth."

155

160

So they would whisper, but Priam spoke to Helen:

"Come here, take a seat by me, dear child.

Observe your former husband's kin and friends.

To me, blame rests not on you but on the gods
who launched the cursed Greek attack on Troy.

165

So name for me that fearsome-looking warrior,
that Greek who is both large and powerful,
a full head taller than the men nearby.

These eyes of mine have never beheld such grandeur,
nor such authority. He must be a king."

170

Helen, like a goddess, responded to Priam:

"I honor and fear you, dear father-in-law.

Better that wretched death had found me before
I followed your son, abandoning home, kin,
near-grown daughter, and lifelong, helpful friends,

175

but death was not yet to come, just lonely tears.

I will answer the question you asked me.

That is Atreus' son, far-ruling Agamemnon,
worthy monarch and powerful spearman too.

He formerly was my brother-in-law."

180

The old man admired the Greek king and said:

"Ah, fortunate Atrides, born to good luck,
so many Greek youths pay allegiance to you.

Once I visited in vineyard-rich Phrygia
and saw multitudes of warriors on fast mounts,
armies of Otreus and Mygdon, like a god,
arrayed along Sangarius' two banks.

185

I was even counted among their allies
the day the Amazons came, equals of men.

The Phrygians were not so many as these Greeks."

190

Second the old man saw Odysseus and said:

"Now tell me, dear child, who that one is,
a head shorter than Agamemnon Atrides
but much broader in both shoulders and chest.

He laid his armor down on the fruitful earth

195

and ranges like a ram through warrior ranks.
Yes, I liken him to a thick-fleeced ram
passing among a giant flock of sheep."

Zeus-descended Helen replied to Priam:
"Laertes' son, Odysseus of countless skills,
raised on island Ithaca's rugged land,
master of every sort of trick and device." 200

Prudent Antenor faced Helen and spoke:
"Lady, what you have said of him is true.
Years ago Odysseus visited here,
with Menelaus, envoys on your account. 205
I hosted them both like friends in my halls
and came to know the qualities of each.
Whenever they joined a group of Trojan men,
all standing, Menelaus' shoulders towered,
but when they sat, Odysseus was more regal. 210
On the occasions when they spoke in public
Menelaus' speech was fluent indeed,
though brief and precise. He was not wordy
or long-winded despite his relative youth.
But when wily Odysseus rose to speak 215
he stood at first with eyes fixed on the ground
and moved his scepter neither forward nor back
but held it still as would a witless man.
You might have thought him sad or perhaps possessed,
but when the powerful voice rose from his chest 220
and spoke as strong as the worst blizzards of winter,
no other mortal would dare cross Odysseus
even though we had not admired his demeanor."

Third, the old king noticed Ajax and asked: 225
"Who is that Greek, colossal, doubtless mighty,
the greatest height and bulk of all Argives?"

Helen, goddess among women, replied:
"That one is Ajax, Achaea's immense bulwark.

- Beside him stands Cretan king Idomeneus among his Cretan chiefs gathered around. Menelaus was always an honored guest of Idomeneus when he would visit Crete. I also see a number of other Greeks that I recognize and could name for you, but two important chiefs I do not see, the horseman Castor and champion boxer Pollux, my brothers, born of the same mother as me. Either they did not sail from Lacedaemon, or if they did travel the seas to Troy they do not want to participate in battle, perhaps because they are ashamed of me." She did not know her brothers had been buried back in their Lacedaemonian fatherland. 230 235
- The heralds brought Priam offerings for the oath, two lambs and mirthful wine—fruit of the fields—in a goatskin bag, also a mixing bowl and golden cups that herald Idaeus held. Idaeus stood by Priam and urged him to act: "Arise, Laomedon's son, the chiefs of both armies, horse-training Trojans and bronze-armored Greeks, ask you to supervise an oath on the plain where Paris and Ares-loved Menelaus are about to duel over the woman. The victor will take her and all her wealth, but under a solemn oath of amity we will remain in Troy and they will sail for the horse pastures and fair women of Argos." 240 245 250 255
- The old man smiled and ordered his attendants to harness a team which they quickly did. Boarding the chariot, Priam held the reins. Antenor mounted and sat by his side, then sped the horses through the Scaean Gates. 260
- After they reached the Trojan and Greek armies they dismounted on the abundant earth, 265

then walked between the seated Trojans and Greeks.
High commander Agamemnon stood up,
canny Odysseus too. The honored heralds
set out the sacrifices. They mixed wine
in the bowl, then poured water on the kings' hands.

270

The son of Atreus drew the sharp knife
that he always kept by the sheath of his sword.
He cut fleece filaments from the lambs' foreheads
and the heralds passed bits to chiefs on both sides.

Then Agamemnon prayed, arms lifted skyward:

275

"Greatest, most glorious father Zeus on Ida,
and Helios who sees and hears all things,
and you rivers, and Earth, and those below—
who cause false-swearers mortals to pay a price—
may you all witness and safeguard our pact.

280

If Paris should take Menelaus' life
let him keep Helen and all her wealth,
but we will sail our ships across the seas.

If instead Menelaus should kill Paris,
Troy will hand over Helen, her belongings,
and compensation that will seem just to us
and generations of mortals yet unborn.

285

Should that be something Priam and Priam's sons
are not willing to pay if Paris dies,
then we will fight to avenge the fallen Greeks
and stay here until we have reached war's end."

290

He slit the lambs' throats with his ruthless blade

and laid the animals down to gasp and die,
their spirits gone, released by whetted metal.

Soldiers dipped cupfuls of wine from the bowl,
poured it out and beseeched the deathless gods.

295

Trojan or Greek alike could use these words:

"Most glorious Zeus, and other gods immortal,
whichever side may be first to break the oath,
let their brains instantly spill like this wine,
their children's too, and let their wives be slaves!"

300

Such were the prayers that Cronus' son ignored.

Dardanus' son Priam addressed the men:

"Listen to me, Trojans and strong-greaved Greeks!

I will leave and return to windswept Troy.

305

I do not have the fortitude to watch

a long-loved son battle with Menelaus,

though Zeus and all the deathless gods know now

which of the two has been fated to die."

The godlike man put the lambs in his chariot,

310

then climbed on himself, holding the reins taut

while Antenor climbed aboard by his side,

and they wheeled the team, heading for Ilium.

Odysseus and Priam's son Hector, together,

315

measured off a space on the plain and then

put lots in a bronze helmet that Hector shook

to decide who would be first to cast a spear.

The armies prayed, hands stretched up to the gods,

and any Trojan or Argive might say:

"O father Zeus, ruling from Ida, most glorious,

320

whichever of them caused both sides this toil,

grant that he die and enter Hades' realm,

then let us all honor the oath and be friends!"

So the men prayed while Hector shook the lots,

325

his eyes averted till Paris' lot jumped out.

Odysseus and Hector each returned to where

his armor, weapons and stamping horses waited,

but glittering bronze soon adorned the body

of Paris, silk-tressed Helen's husband now.

First he buckled a pair of greaves on his shins,

330

then added ankle guards, made of solid silver.

Next he covered his back and chest with a breastplate

that fit well, though borrowed from his brother Lycaon.

He hung from his shoulder a gold-studded sword,

bronze-edged, and a shield—heavy, broad and thick.

335

Atop his handsome head he strapped a helmet

with horsetail crest that bobbed as if alive,

and lastly he chose a spear to fit his hand.
Meanwhile Menelaus dressed in like armor.

After arming, the warriors faced each other
and marched to the space marked off between the armies,
so frightful to behold that wonder filled
all the horse-taming Trojans and strong-greaved Greeks.
Each man took a stand in the allotted space,
where each threatened the other, shaking a lance. 340
Paris threw a spear that drew a long shadow
and struck Menelaus' balanced round shield
but the point bent and failed to pierce the bronze
that clad the shield. Second to cast a spear
was Menelaus, who prayed to father Zeus:
"Grant me revenge, O Zeus, for the treachery
of Paris, and let him fall under my hand,
so future generations will hesitate
to betray a friendly, hospitable host." 350

With that, he brandished and threw a long spear
that struck the shield protecting Priam's son.
The sturdy point passed through the burnished bronze,
penetrated Paris' glittering breastplate
and sliced his tunic where it covered his flank.
But Paris dodged, barely eluding the dark. 360
Atreus' son drew his silver-studded sword
and swung it down on Paris' helmet's crest.
The blade shattered and fell to earth in pieces.
Eyes toward heaven, Menelaus exclaimed:
"Father Zeus, most malicious of all gods!
I thought to exact revenge for Paris' sins,
but now the sword I hold is smashed, and my spear
flew as if not aimed, missing his flesh." 365

He grabbed Paris' helmet where the plume attached,
started dragging the man toward the Greek army
and, as he did, strangled him by the strap 370

that passed under his chin to hold the helmet.
At that time Menelaus would have won glory,
but Zeus's daughter Aphrodite meddled
and sundered the strap, cut from thick oxhide. 375

Menelaus held only an empty helmet,
which he threw whirling toward the Greek army
where his trusted aides took charge of the prize.
Determined to kill Paris, the Spartan charged
but Aphrodite snatched the prince away, 380
shrouded in mist—easy for gods to do—
and set him down in his fragrant bedchamber.
She searched for Helen and soon found her
amid the Trojan women high on the rampart.
The goddess tugged at Helen's perfumed gown, 385
having assumed the form of an old woman,
a wool carder who lived in Lacedaemon
and whose loyalty to Helen knew no bounds.
In her likeness divine Aphrodite spoke:
"Go, dear, Paris bids you meet him at home. 390
He is stretched on the couch in your bedchamber,
handsome in fine raiment. You would not think
that he had been fighting—dancing perhaps,
and now resting his feet after the dance."

Helen listened and grew angry at first, 395
but when she noticed the goddess' pale neck,
her sparkling eyes, her irresistible breast,
she uttered Aphrodite's name and said:
"Goddess, why would you want to deceive me so?
Is there another prosperous city like Troy, 400
in Phrygia or Maeonia, where you will lead me
to meet some other mortal man you love
now that Menelaus has slaughtered Paris
and intends to take me home, wretch that I am?
Is that why you have come to me with your tricks? 405
You go to Paris! Put off divinity!
Never again set foot on high Olympus!
Watch over him and give him all your devotion
until he makes you his wife, or his slave!"

I will not go with you and shame myself
by sharing his bed. Trojan women may choose
to blame me, but it is I whose heart aches."

410

The goddess Aphrodite replied, furious:
"Silence wretch! Provoke me and I will forsake you,
hate you more than I have loved you till now.
I can arouse hatred of you on both sides,
and you would then be more wretched than ever!"
Helen, herself a daughter of Zeus, was frightened.
She gathered her radiant white gown and walked,
unnoticed, meekly following the goddess.

415

420

After the two arrived at Paris' house
his handmaidens busied about their jobs,
while his goddess-like wife entered the bedchamber.
Aphrodite selected a bench for her
and placed it on the floor opposite Paris.

425

Then storm lord Zeus's daughter Helen sat,
eyes averted, and chided her Trojan husband:
"You have returned, but how could you survive
a fight with Menelaus, my husband once?

You have often boasted that Menelaus
is weaker than you and less skilled with a spear,
so you might think that you should challenge him
to fight once more, man to man. Listen to me
and shun another fight with Menelaus
because if you two square off and duel again
you will meet a quick, foolhardy death."

430

435

Frowning at Helen's warning, Paris replied:
"Wife, do not scorn and belittle me like that!
That duel was Menelaus', thanks to Athena.
The next is mine; there are gods on our side, too.
Come, our thoughts should turn to bed and rapture,
for rarely has lust so overwhelmed me,
not since when you left Lacedaemon behind
and sailed with me aboard my seafaring ship

440

to Cranae's isle where passion melted us. 445
More than then I crave to make love with you now!"

He led the way to bed, she close at his heels.

While the lovers embraced in Paris' sheets,
Menelaus roamed the ranks like a wild beast,
hoping he would come upon Paris somewhere, 450
but none of the Trojan soldiers was able
to show Menelaus where Paris was hiding,
though none would have concealed him if they knew,
since all loathed him second only to death.

Agamemnon spoke to his enemies: 455
"Hear me, Trojans, Dardanians and your allies!
Menelaus has won the victory,
so now Argive Helen and all her riches
are ours, and you must give us recompense
that will seem just to generations unborn." 460
All the Argives cheered to show they agreed.

TROY BREACHES THE TRUCE

The immortals took places at Zeus's feet,
on his golden floor, and Hebe passed among them,
pouring nectar. They raised solid gold goblets,
toasted each other and gazed down on Troy.

Soon Cronus' son began to torment Hera, 5
nettling her with words he knew she would hate:
"Two goddesses are Menelaus' backers,
you, Argive Hera, and protectress Athena.
You perch here far away from him to watch
and cheer, but laughter-loving Aphrodite 10
stays close by Paris' side to ward off death.
Just now she foresaw his doom and rescued him.
The victory, though, went to Menelaus,
so we must consider what should happen now:
should we arouse still more violent battle
or should we make the two sides peaceful friends? 15
But if there is to be amicable peace
Priam's city and people shall stay, unharmed,
while Menelaus takes back Argive Helen."

After Zeus spoke, Athena and Hera muttered 20
from where they sat planning destruction of Troy.
Athena did not speak a word aloud
to show the ire she felt at Zeus her father,

but Hera could not check her anger and said:

"What do you mean, Cronus' most fearsome son? 25

Do you want to make my labors futile, waste

the sweat from my toil, my horses' fatigue,

all spent to ruin Priam, his sons and Trojans?

Do so if you must, but not all gods approve."

Tired of quarrel, cloud-gathering Zeus asked her: 30

"My dear, what is it that Priam or sons of Priam

have done, so foul that you are now determined

to see Ilium's high citadel sacked?

If you chose to enter the city's gates

you could devour, uncooked, Priam, Priam's sons 35

and all the Trojans, so appeasing your grudge.

Oh, do as you please, or hereafter strife

may flare between you and me because of them,

but I will tell you something to keep in mind.

Another day the utter sack of a city,

40

filled with mortals you love, will be my wish.

Do not oppose me then, but let it occur,

since I am yielding now against my will.

Beneath the sun and star-studded night sky

45

the cities of mortal men are scattered far,

but more than any I prize sacred Ilium

including Priam and his army with ash spears.

My Trojan altar has never lacked the feasts,

savory smoke and spilled wine that are our due."

Stately ox-eyed Hera replied to Zeus: 50

"Three cities are easily my favorites.

I speak of Mycenae, Argos and Sparta.

Waste all three if they should incur your hatred,

and I will not balk or stand in your way.

Even if I should want to protect them 55

I could not stop you since you have more power.

Still, it behooves you not to frustrate me

since you and I share the same immortal parent.

Devious Cronus fathered me to have honor

twofold, as both a daughter of his and wife
to you, the immortal gods' supreme lord.
So we ought to accommodate each other,
you and I, then all the gods will agree.
Now go ahead. Speak to Athena, send her
onto the Greek and Trojan battlefield
where she should make certain that Priam's army
is first to break the oath both sides have sworn." 60

The father of gods and men did not differ.
He barely paused before he addressed Athena:
"Go at once among the Trojans and Greeks.
See to it that Trojans, not Achaeans,
are first to break the pledge they all have made." 70

Even as he was speaking Athena rose
and bounded off Olympus' lofty peaks.
As when Cronus' son sends a shooting star—
omen for sailors, perhaps, or camped soldiers—
brilliant, generating a thousand sparks,
so then Pallas Athena streaked to earth.
When they saw her coming, wonder possessed
both strong-greaved Greeks and horse-breaking Trojans. 80
Many a man said to another nearby:
"It means either more grueling, painful war
will come, or both sides will enjoy the peace
of Zeus who dispenses war to mortal men."
So warriors mused, both Trojan and Greek. 85

Athena entered the Trojan force disguised
as Antenor's son, spearman Laodocus,
and scoured the ranks in search of Pandarus.
She found Lycaon's noble, valorous son
standing amid the stalwart warrior group
that had followed him from Aesepus' streams. 90
The disguised goddess approached him and said:
"Lycaon's son, take some advice from me.
Be bold! Shoot an arrow at Menelaus

and you will win glory among the Trojans,95
particularly Paris, a favored prince.

He will bestow generous gifts on you
when he sees Menelaus, Atreus' son,
dumped on a pyre, having fallen to your arrow.
So come now, train your bow on Menelaus!100
Beseech Lycian-born Apollo and promise
to sacrifice a hundred newborn lambs
after you return to holy Zelea."

Athena's urging subdued the mortal's wits.
He unlimbered his bow, once horns of a goat,105

born wild, that Pandarus himself had shot
as it descended rocky cliffs to its lair.

He struck its breast and it sprawled on the rocks.
He cut great horns—six palms long—from its head,
horns that a skilled craftsman joined end to end,110
then polished his work, adding golden tips,
one of which Pandarus now braced on the ground
to string the bow. Comrades hid him with shields
so no Greek could see him and interfere
before he shot Atreus' son Menelaus.115

Pandarus eyed his quiver and chose an arrow,
never used, a bearer of deadly pain.

He put the sharp-tipped missile on his string,
prayed to Lycian-born Apollo and promised
to sacrifice a hundred newborn lambs120
after he returned to holy Zelea.

He grasped the arrow's notch and drew it back
toward his chest till the barbs neared the bow.

When the horn had bent to circular shape
the bow groaned, the string sang and the shaft leaped,125
eager to sink its point in mortal flesh.

Menelaus' plight did not escape the gods,
least of all Zeus's plunder-winning daughter
who stepped forward to divert the sharp point.
She protected Menelaus as a mother130

might flick a fly from her child, sound asleep.
Athena steered the point to where his belt clasp—
gold—joined and his breastplate halves overlapped.
The bitter arrow struck the buckle square,
drove through that and the ornamented belt, 135
continued through the doubled layers of bronze
and inner shield that protected flesh from weapons,
the last barrier—even through that it went.
Only the tip touched the Spartan's skin,
but the wound instantly gushed dark red blood. 140
As when a woman dyes ivory crimson,
then carves red ornaments for horses' cheeks,
pieces that lie in her room, coveted
among horsemen but meant to be a king's,
trappings to honor a monarch and his team, 145
so then blood stained your thighs, Menelaus,
your wiry calves, your ankles, your sturdy feet.

Agamemnon, the high commander, shuddered
as he saw hot lifeblood flow from the wound.
Ares-beloved Menelaus shuddered as well 150
but when he saw the barbs outside his belt,
his heart quieted and he re-gathered his wits.
Lord Agamemnon spoke between heavy sighs,
clasping Menelaus' hand while soldiers moaned:
"Dear brother, I made a fateful pact that you 155
would stand before the Greeks and fight a Trojan,
but Trojans struck you despite our solemn oath.
The oath will not prove fruitless, nor the lambs' blood,
undiluted wine and pledge that we trusted,
for even though Zeus may delay our triumph, 160
triumph will come, bringing sweet revenge
on Trojan warriors, their children and wives.
I know this full well in my mind and heart:
the day will dawn when Ilium is destroyed
along with Priam and Priam's spear-wielding army. 165
Cronus' son Zeus, who rules aloft in ether,
himself will shake his dreadful aegis at them

to requite their treachery. Those things will be,
unless you leave me bereft, Menelaus,
having filled your measure of life and died.

170

In that case I would return to Argos, wretched,
as all Greeks would go to their fathers' lands.
We would leave here prizes for Troy to vaunt:
Helen and your bones, rotting underground,
your task in Troy never to be fulfilled.

175

An arrogant Trojan might someday say,
treading on glorious Menelaus' grave:
'Perhaps Agamemnon will thus ruin others,
just as he brought a Greek army here for nothing
and straggled home to his prized fatherland
with empty ships and without Menelaus.'

180

So they might say—let earth gape for me then!"

Menelaus, his face flushed, assured his brother:
"Take heart! Do not frighten the Argive army!
The arrow did not reach a fatal place.
My metal belt slowed it. Inside the belt
my leather apron and inner bronze shield held."

185

The prince Agamemnon replied to him:
"If only that be true, dear Menelaus!
A healer will inspect your wound and spread
a salve to relieve the worst of your pain."

190

He then addressed Talthybius, godlike herald:
"Talthybius, go quickly and get Machaon—
son of that most revered healer Asclepius—
to examine my brother Menelaus,
shot but not killed by a sharp-shooting archer,
Trojan or Lycian—his glory, our sorrow."

195

The herald heard and did not disobey.
He sped through the army of bronze-clad Greeks,
seeking heroic Machaon. He found him
standing in his formidable warrior ranks

200

who had followed him from horse-breeding Tricca.

Talthybius ran to Machaon and said:

"Son of Asclepius, Agamemnon calls you
to treat the Spartan leader Menelaus,
shot but not killed by a sharp-shooting archer,
Trojan or Lycian—his glory, our grief."

205

Machaon's healer's heart warmed to the mission
and he threaded his way through the Greek force.

When he arrived where bloodied Menelaus

210

was resting amid a troop of men, assembled
to form a ring, the healer stood in the center
and quickly drew the arrow out through the belt,
breaking the sharp barbs as he pulled it free.

Machaon gently removed the pierced girdle,
the leather apron and inner bronze shield.

215

When he found the wound where the arrowhead cut
he pressed out blood and selected a balm
to spread, one that Chiron had given his father.

While the Achaeans cared for Menelaus

220

a company of shield-guarded Trojans approached,
having fastened their armor, ready to fight.

You would not then have seen Agamemnon sleeping
or cowed or unwilling to challenge the Trojans,

no, he hastened to bring the battle on,

225

leaving his team and elegant bronze chariot
in the care of his long-trusted attendant,

a son of Ptolemaeus, Eurymedon,

with orders to keep them ready in case

fatigue should sap his strength while he marshaled soldiers.

230

The king then went on foot among the ranks.

When he saw Achaeans who yearned to fight

he sought to praise them and bolster their courage:

"Argives, do not relax your spirited valor!

Zeus will not reward the duplicity

235

of those who first acted against the oath.

Vultures will eat the Trojans' tender flesh!

The helpless Trojan children and cherished wives
will board our ships after we sack the city!"

But when he saw men reluctant to fight, 240
Agamemnon's anger rose and he rebuked them:
"Disgraceful Greeks! Have you no shame today?
Why do you stand there like bewildered fawns
that, after they race across a plain's expanse,
freeze immobile, no bravery in their hearts? 245
Like them you stand, timid, and want no fight.
Are you waiting for Trojans to near your ships
where they lie beached on the foamy sea's edge,
believing that Zeus will protect you there?"

As Agamemnon shored up his multitudes, 250
making his way through the host, he found the Cretans,
who had armed themselves around Idomeneus.
He paced in his front ranks like a wild boar,
while Meriones rallied the rearmost men.
Agamemnon smiled when he saw those two 255
and warmly saluted the Cretan chief:
"Idomeneus, I rate you above all Greeks
when it comes to war, and not only war
but also elders' feasts where lively wine
is mixed in bowls for our most honored men. 260
Even though most of the senior Argives
get only one portion, your cup is always full,
as is mine, so we drink whenever we want.
Now, on to battle where you have always shone!"

The Cretan king Idomeneus replied: 265
"Son of Atreus, I am your steadfast ally
as I promised I would be and gave my nod.
Go rouse other men of the Argive force
so we may fight at once. The oath is breached!
Ruin and slaughter of Trojans are now certain 270
to follow since they were first to break the pledge!"

Much heartened, the son of Atreus moved on
and as he walked he came upon the Ajaxes,
arming themselves among a crowd of soldiers.

As when a goatherd watches a dense cloud
that Zephyrus blows toward him across the sea,
and while still distant the cloud becomes pitch-black
as strong gales propel it over the deep
till he shivers and drives his goats to a cave,
so then around the Ajaxes hearty youths
prepared to battle in phalanxes, dense
and dark, shields all around, bristling spears.

Agamemnon was also pleased to see those men
and did not pause before praising the pair:

"Both Ajaxes! Leaders of bronze-clad Greeks!
There is no reason to prod the two of you
since you have already fired your men to fight.
If only Athena, Apollo and father Zeus
would put such spirit as yours in every chest,
then on this day the city of Priam would fall,
seized and thoroughly sacked by Greek hands."

He left them and sought others to exhort.
Next he encountered Pylian orator Nestor,
who spurred his men to fight, marshaling them
around Alastor, Chromius, Pelagon,

Haemon and Bias, the king, warden of hosts.
First he ranged rows of chariot fighters and teams,
then behind them a sea of valiant foot soldiers,
war's mainstay. In their midst Nestor placed cowards
where they could not avoid being swept to battle.

He commanded his forward charioteers
to keep a tight rein, not charge ahead too fast:
"None of you should overrate his horsemanship
and fight alone ahead of all the rest,
nor hold teams back, for that will bring defeat.
When you meet the enemy's chariot,
best to thrust your spear rather than throw and lose it.

In past times countless citadels have fallen
to men who used the tactics I have taught you."

So spoke the old man, long versed in warfare. 310

A grin broke on Agamemnon's face
as he applauded Nestor, Neleus' son:
"Old sir, if only the heart inside your breast
had powerful limbs to match, as once it did.
How I wish that some of your many years
belonged to another so you could be young." 315

Gerenia's master horseman answered the king:
"Son of Atreus, I too wish my body
were yet as it was when I killed Ereuthalion,
but the gods give us seasons to pass through.
Then I was young, now old age is my lot.
I will nonetheless be among my fighters
to give advice, a prerogative of years.
Others will carry the weapons and fight,
younger men than I who are sure of their strength." 320
325

The son of Atreus moved on, his heart cheered.
He came to where Peteus' son Menestheus
had gathered his Athenians, peerless at war cries,
and stationed nearby was wily Odysseus
with his company of valiant Cephallenians. 330
There was no war cry for Agamemnon to hear,
although the armies had begun to march
toward each other. These men seemed to be waiting
for some other Achaean brigades to come
and charge the Trojans, sparking deadly battle. 335
So Agamemnon criticized the chiefs
and leveled at them a severe reproach:
"Ah son of Peteus, Zeus-descended king,
and you, master of clever ruses and tricks,
why do you lay low, waiting for others?" 340
Better these men were in the frontmost ranks
to take a stand and face the battle's blaze.

You are first to answer my call to banquet,
when Greeks prepare their elder chiefs a feast.
You are quick to savor roasted meat and cups
of honeyed wine till you have had your fill,
but now you wait for ten battalions of Greeks
to take their weapons ahead of you and fight."

345

Odysseus frowned, glared at the king and said:
"What kind of speech flew out of your mouth, Atrides? 350
How could you think that we would slack when Greeks
bring sharp Ares to bear on Trojan horse-tamers?
Your concern will soon be answered when you see
Telemachus' father tangle with Trojans—
their front ranks. What you just said is nonsense!"

355

Agamemnon smiled at Odysseus and spoke,
retracting his barbs when he saw the anger:
"Zeus-sprung son of Laertes, canny Odysseus,
I should not give you commands or question you,
for I well know the heart inside your chest 360
supports me, and you know the same of mine.
Come, let us put reproachful words behind us,
and may the deathless gods set them to naught."

360

That said, he took his leave and sought out more.
He found Tydeus' son, brave Diomedes,
standing among his horses and sturdy chariots.
Sthenelus was with him, Capaneus' son.
Agamemnon took Diomedes to task
and delivered a lengthy diatribe:
"What's this, son of master horse-breaker Tydeus? 370
Why do you stand staring at battle lines?
It was not Tydeus' way to take up the rear,
no, he would battle far ahead of his comrades.
So say the men who saw him fight, though I
did not meet him. They say he surpassed all warriors.
Once, when between wars, he and Polynices
came to Mycenae as guests, to raise an army

365

370

375

that would attack the sacred Theban walls.
 They requested a troop of distinguished soldiers.
 The Mycenaeans were about to agree
 but Zeus's ill omens dissuaded them. 380

Those two with few men departed for Thebes
 and when they reached Asopus' carpets of reeds,
 they sent Tydeus ahead, as ambassador.

He discovered all the Cadmeans gathered
 at valiant Eteocles' palace to feast. 385

Tydeus was a stranger but nonetheless
 he challenged the whole Cadmean assembly.

He proposed contests of strength and won them all,
 easily, since Athena was there to help. 390

Resentful, Cadmeans raced ahead on horses
 and laid ambush as Tydeus returned to his men.

There were fifty Cadmeans with their chiefs,
 Haemon's son Maeon, the likes of a god,
 and Polyphontes, son of Autophon. 395

Tydeus dispatched them to untimely fates,
 killing them all but one that he let go.

Divine omens urged him to spare Maeon's life.
 Such was Aetolian Tydeus, but this son
 is not his match in war, though able in council." 400

Mighty Diomedes did not respond,
 ashamed that he had drawn the king's reproof,
 but glorious Capaneus' son boldly replied:
 "Atrides, do not say what you know is false.
 Both of us claim to be our fathers' betters. 405

We are the ones who took seven-gated Thebes
 with but a few men gathered beneath her wall,
 obedient to Zeus's signs and with his aid.

Our elders failed and their folly brought them death,
 so my father's honor does not rival mine." 410

But Diomedes frowned at Sthenelus and said:
 "Obey my command, friend, hold your tongue.
 I am not angry that lord Agamemnon

provokes the tough-greaved Achaeans to fight.
His efforts will breed glory the day we Greeks
lay waste the Trojans and seize sacred Ilium.
Think how shamed he would be if we were defeated.
So come, let us two steel our minds to valor."

415

Diomedes jumped off his chariot, armed,
and bronze on the king's chest clanged loud enough
to startle even a stout-hearted man.

420

As when wave after wave falls on a steep coast
before Zephyrus' relentless breeze,
and each wave rises and curls to form a crest
that breaks as it nears the shore, except at headlands
where the still-crested waves spew foamy brine,
so then Greek ranks strode one after another
to unrelenting war. The soldiers obeyed
their chiefs without sound, and silence belied
that a large Greek army was on the move,
but the army's quiet did not conceal
the glitter of highly polished bronze armor.

425

430

The Trojan army was like a fold of ewes
that jostle to release their pent-up milk,
bleating incessantly when they hear their lambs.
Such were the cries that rose from Troy's immense force,
cries that were not all of a single language
since men had come from lands of various tongues.

435

Ares spurred the Trojans, Athena the Greeks,
until both sides witnessed Fear, Terror and Strife—
murderous Ares' cousin and cohort—
small in stature when first she armed, but soon
her head touched the sky, feet still on the ground.
That day she spread indiscriminate war
till groans rose and redoubled from both armies.
When the two forces had closed the space between,
oxhide shields met, as did spears and furious men

440

445

in bronze breastplates. Metal skins on shields
struck one another and raised a frightful clamor.
Triumphant shouts mingled with painful cries
as some killed and others died till earth ran blood. 450
As when winter rivers pour down mountainsides
and meet to form a flood, joining the streams
that gush from headwaters through deep ravines,
the water's roar reaching shepherds in high hills,
so then tumultuous din rose as armies clashed. 455

Antilochus was first to take a Trojan—
Echepolus—out of Troy's forward ranks.
The spear struck the front of Echepolus' helmet.
The bronze point traveled from there to his brow 460
and on through the bone. Darkness covered his eyes
and he crashed like a tower amid the battle.
Elephenor saw him fall and grabbed his feet,
Chalcodon's son, spirited Abante chief,
then dragged him far enough aside so he could 465
strip his armor, but that effort was short-lived.
As Elephenor dragged, Agenor glimpsed
his ribs, exposed below his shield as he stooped.
A spear thrust there took the Abante's life.
His soul flew, but Trojans and Argives labored 470
above his body as if they were wolves
attacking each other, and man slaughtered man.

Telamonian Ajax killed Anthemion's son,
tall Simoisius, a young man whose mother
descended Ida to Simois' riverbanks 475
after a search for lost goats, and there gave birth,
hence his name Simoisius. His parents never
would get the honors their son owed them, his life
snuffed out when stalwart Ajax thrust a spear.
The spearhead entered Simoisius' chest, 480
on the right side, and the bronze point emerged
through his back. He toppled as would a poplar,
one that had grown in a marshy river bottom—

branchless except for dense growth at its crown—
until a carriage-builder's polished axe
felled it so he could fashion chariot wheels,
after the trunk had dried on the riverbank.
Like that, Anthemion's son Simoisius fell
to Zeus-sprung Ajax, provoking Antiphus
to throw a spear—Antiphus, Priam's son.
It missed Ajax, but Leucus, Odysseus' aide,
took the point in his groin as he dragged a body.
His grasp relaxed and he sank on the corpse.

Odysseus' blood raged when he saw Leucus fall.
He charged through the front lines in brilliant bronze,
stopped near his aide and cast a flashing spear,
then glared around. Frightened Trojans ran
to avoid the spear, but the cast was not wasted.
It hit Democoön, Priam's son out of wedlock,
who brought a fast team from Abydos to fight.
Odysseus' vengeful spearpoint struck Democoön,
his temple, and powered on through his head,
drawing a dark curtain over his eyes.
He fell and armor on his body rang.
At that the Trojans withdrew, led by Hector.
The Argives cheered, dragged their dead away,
then advanced again. Apollo grew furious
as he watched from Ilium's heights. He yelled:
“Rally, Trojans! Do not give up the field!
Achaeans are not made of stone or steel,
impervious to your flesh-butchered bronze!
Fair-haired Thetis' son Achilles is absent
today and nurses a grudge by his ships!”
So shouted the god while, on the Greek side,
Zeus's third-born child Athena inspired
the men wherever she saw them start to waver.

Fate overtook Diores, Amarynceus' son,
when a jagged boulder struck above his ankle,
the right shin. A Thracian chief had thrown it,

- Imbrasus' son Pirous, who came from Aenus. 520
The sharp rock severed the tendons and bone,
clean through, and Diores toppled backward
into dust, arms extended toward his comrades,
his soul about to escape. His assailant,
Pirous, thrust a spear beside his navel. 525
Diores' bowels spilled, his eyes turned dark.
- Aetolian Thoas cast a spear that hit Pirous,
square on the chest, and the point lodged in a lung.
Thoas raced up, retrieved his heavy spear
from Pirous' body, then drew his tapered sword, 530
thrust it through the man's belly and took his life.
He left the armor because there came a group
of Thracians, all brandishing long spears.
Large, strong and courageous as Thoas was,
they forced him to fall back, shaking his fist. 535
The two lay side by side, prone in dust,
one a bronze-clad Epean, the other Thracian,
both chiefs, and soon legions died nearby.
- That day's deeds would astonish any man
who, not himself wounded by ruthless bronze, 540
might roam observing—Athena as his guide
to hold his hand and turn missiles away—
for on that day numberless Trojans and Greeks
fell to the ground, one after another.

THE MIGHT OF DIOMEDES

Athena gave Tydeus' son Diomedes
transcendent strength, courage and stamina
so he could win immortal glory and fame.
On his helmet and shield she kindled fire
bright as Orion's dog, the dominant star 5
when freed from Ocean to cast its radiant beams.
Fire blazed that bright from his shoulders and head
while she spurred him to go where the worst fights raged.

Among the wealthy Trojan nobles was Dares,
Hephaestus' priest who had raised two sons, 10
Idaeus and Phegeus, both skillful fighters.
They saw Diomedes and rushed to face him:
the two aboard a chariot, he on foot.
After the warriors had closed the ground between,
Phegeus cast a spear that drew a long shadow. 15
It passed above Diomedes' right shoulder
but did not touch him. Next Diomedes threw
and the shaft did not leave his hand in vain.
It struck Phegeus' chest, he tumbled off
the chariot. Idaeus vaulted down 20
but did not dare attend to his slain brother,
and he himself could not have escaped black death
except that Hephaestus cloaked him in safe night
to spare the aged priest from mourning two.

Tydeus' inspired son took charge of their team
and ordered aides to lead it back to the ships. 25

When the bravest Trojans saw Dares' sons,
one dead near their chariot, the other vanished,
they vowed revenge, but gleaming-eyed Athena
took Ares' violent hand and said to him: 30

"Ares, wall-smashing, bloodstained scourge of mortals,
shall we not now leave the Trojans and Greeks
to fight so father Zeus may allot the glory?
We should let him decide and avoid his wrath."

With that, she led Ares far from the field
and seated him beside Scamander's currents. 35

As the Argives advanced a Trojan fell
to each king. First, chief warrior Agamemnon
struck Halizonian Odius, wheeling his team
to flee, and the spear stuck in his back
between the shoulders, then emerged from his chest. 40

His bronze armor clanged as he plunged to earth.

Idomeneus killed Maeonian Phaestus,
Borus' son, who came from fertile Tarne.

The renowned Cretan monarch's deadly spear
struck Phaestus, boarding his chariot, near a shoulder. 45
Dreaded darkness claimed him as he collapsed.
Idomeneus' comrades peeled his bloody armor.

Strophius' son Scamandrius, a skilled hunter,
fell victim to Menelaus' spear-thrust. 50

Years before, Artemis had taught Scamandrius
to hunt all beasts that inhabit mountain woods,
but the archer goddess did not help him now,
nor did the bowmanship that he had mastered,
not when the son of Atreus, Menelaus, 55
drove a spear in his back as he turned to run,
drove it between the shoulders and out the chest.
His armor clattered as he fell on his face.

Meriones killed Phereclus, son of Tecton,
Harmon's son who became a gifted craftsman
because Pallas Athena favored him. 60

He built Paris the group of graceful ships
that came to be the ruin of all Trojans,
including Tecton, who could not foresee fate.

Meriones chased Phereclus, overtook him
and speared him in the right buttock. From there,
the point sped past the bone into the bladder.
He groaned and fell to his knees as death drew near. 65

Meges killed Pedaeus, Antenor's son,
born out of wedlock, but Theano raised him
like one of her own children to please her husband. 70
Now Phyleus' son Meges chased down Pedaeus
and speared the double tendon below his helmet.
The point sliced under the tongue and through the teeth.
He toppled in dust, jaw clenched on cold bronze. 75

The next Trojan to die was splendid Hypsenor,
son of Scamander's priest Dolopion,
a man whose people revered him like a god.
Euaemon's glorious son Eurypylus
pursued Hypsenor and bedded in his shoulder
a sword's blade that chopped clean a muscular arm. 80
Hypsenor's arm fell on the plain as his eyes
succumbed to relentless fate and death's dark.

So they fought all over the battlefield.
You might have thought, "Which side is Tydeus' son on?
Does he fight for the Trojan force or Greek?" 85
He covered the plain like a river swollen
with winter rains that rapidly crumbles dikes,
useless to hold back the surging floodwaters,
and equally useless are walls around fertile vineyards,
when Zeus releases a deluge strong enough
to tear down every work of man in its path. 90

So then Tydeus' son stormed through phalanxes
teeming with Trojan warriors, and none withstood.

When Lycaon's son Pandarus saw Diomedes
ranging across the plain and scattering legions,
he drew his stiff bow to an arc, took aim,
then loosed a shaft that flew to the Greek's right shoulder.
The bitter point struck and pierced the bronze breastplate,
then passed far enough that blood spattered the armor. 95

At sight of blood Pandarus cried, elated:
"Rally now, valiant horse-mastering Trojans!
The best of Greeks is hit! And not likely
to survive the sharp barb, since certain it is
that Zeus's archer son guided my shot!" 100

The arrow did not subdue Diomedes.
He headed to where the teams and chariots waited
and said to Sthenelus, Capaneus' son:
"Son of Capaneus, my friend, get off your chariot,
come pull this arrowhead out of my shoulder." 105

Sthenelus jumped from his chariot deck
and drew the arrow from Diomedes' flesh,
allowing blood to soak through his cloth tunic.
The great warrior then offered a prayer:
"Tireless daughter of Zeus, the aegis-keeper,
if once you loved my father and backed him
in fierce battle, do so for me now, Athena.
Grant me to come within spear's reach of the man
who shot me, then boasted, and I do not think
that he will see the sun's light any longer." 115

The goddess heard Diomedes' behest.
She more than restored his limbs' agility,
then stood at her favorite's side and said:
"Diomedes, do not hesitate to fight!
I gave your arms and legs your father's strength,
unstoppable, just like that of horseman Tydeus. 120

125

I have cleared the mist from your eyes as well,
so you can recognize gods in disguise.
If any immortal god should challenge you,
do not presume to battle against heaven—
unless it is Zeus's daughter Aphrodite.
If she appears go ahead and attack her!"

130

With that, gleaming-eyed Athena withdrew
and Tydeus' son again joined the front ranks.
He had never lacked spirit to fight Trojans,
but now his fury tripled, as in a lion
that a remote herdsman of woolly-fleeced sheep
has wounded after the beast jumped his fence.
The lion's strength swells till the man cannot keep him
away from the flock, so they take flight in terror
and he drops them one on another in heaps,
then hurdles safely out of the tall pen.
Inflamed like him, Diomedes met Trojans.

135

He killed Astynous and lord Hypiron.
His spearpoint struck the first above a nipple.
His sword fell on the second's collarbone,
separating shoulder from neck and back.
He left them to charge Abas and Polyidus,
sons of old Eurydamas, the dream reader.
The old man had failed to read their dreams and warn
that merciless Diomedes would slay both.
Next fell Xanthus and Thoön, Phaenops' two sons,
both just grown to manhood. Their aged father
had no other son to inherit his wealth.
On that day Diomedes freed their souls.
For their father, misery, mourning and grief
were sowed since they could never return alive.
More distant kinsmen would divide his riches.

140

145

Diomedes then slew two sons of Priam,
Chromius and Echemmon, in the same chariot.
As when a lion among oxen snaps the neck

150

155

160

of a calf, even a bull, grazing near woods,
so easily the son of Tydeus killed
those two chariot riders, then stripped their armor
and gave aides the team to drive to the ships.

165

Aeneas watched Diomedes thin Troy's ranks.
The Trojan ally drove the spear-bristling field
in hopes he might chance upon Pandarus.
He did at length encounter Lycaon's son,
stood before the Bowman and chided him: 170
"Pandarus, where are your bow, your winged arrows?
In archery you have no rival here,
and no man in Lycia boasts to be better.
Come, raise your hands to Zeus, then shoot that man,
the powerful one that causes grievous loss 175
as he buckles so many Trojan knees.
I hope he is not a god, angry at Troy
for scanty tribute. Gods' wrath can be this harsh."

Lycaon's glorious son said in response:
"Aeneas, bronze-armed Trojan counselor, 180
I make him to be the daring son of Tydeus.
I recognize his visored helmet, his shield,
his team, but it might be a disguised immortal.
Even if he is the mortal, Tydeus' son,
he fights assisted by one of the gods 185
who stands nearby, body cloaked in mist,
and turns aside missiles that threaten the Greek.
I already shot at him and hit a shoulder,
his right shoulder, piercing his breastplate there.
I thought he was surely on his way to Hades
but he survived, so at least one god hates us. 190
I have no team, no chariot to mount and drive,
though Lycaon's halls contain eleven chariots,
newly built, handsome, covered with cloths.
For each, not far away, a yoke of horses
stands idle, munching white barley and oats. 195
Among the things the old warrior Lycaon

advised me before I left his palace halls,
he told me to take along chariots and teams
so I could lead Trojans on the battlefield. 200
I should have obeyed him, but I did not.
I thought there might not be food for my horses
with so many others coming here to graze,
so I left them behind and came on foot,
with only my bow. But that should not be scorned, 205
as I have already shot two of their best,
the sons of Atreus and Tydeus.
They bled but both survived, all the more furious.
So my bow, hung on its peg, was ill-starred
the day I took it down for fabled Troy 210
where I brought my men as a favor to Hector.
Should the day come when I return to set eyes
on my fatherland, wife and high-roofed house,
may some stranger quickly cut off my head
if I do not throw this bow in red fire 215
to warm my hands, for it has served me poorly."

The Trojan chief Aeneas faced him and said:
"Do not speak so. It will not be as it was,
now that we two will join, mounted against him,
and test his mettle against our hostile arms. 220
Come climb aboard my chariot, that you may see
how these Trojan horses master the field
by deft maneuvers here and there, or flight,
so we will be safe even if once again
Zeus should give glory to Diomedes. 225
Now here are the team's glossy reins and whip
for you to hold so I can dismount to duel—
or you may fight the Greek and leave me the team."

Lycaon's splendid son replied to that:
"Keep the reins of the team yourself, Aeneas. 230
They will sprint fast for their accustomed master
if we should have to escape Tydeus' son.
With me at the reins they might hesitate

to leave the plain, for want of your hand and voice.
Tydeus' high-spirited son might catch
and kill us both, then drive your horses away.
No, you should drive your chariot and team
while I challenge the Greek with this bronze spear."

235

That said, the two mounted the ready chariot
and drove the horses hard toward Diomedes.
Capaneus' son Sthenelus saw them coming
and he hastened to caution the Greek hero:
"My friend Diomedes, heir of Tydeus,
I see two stalwart warriors who want to fight you,
men of uncommon might: the expert archer,
Pandarus, who claims to be Lycaon's son,
and Aeneas, son of fortunate Anchises,
a mortal who made Aphrodite a mother.
Come, let us draw the team back and no longer
remain at the front where you may lose your life."

240

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250

Mighty Diomedes shot him a frown and said:
"No talk of retreat. I will not do that.
It is not my way to run from any fight,
or shrink back. My courage is as firm as ever.
I decline to ride but, just as I am,
I will stand. Athena will not let me die.
Their team will not carry them both away
although one of the two may escape alive.
Now let me tell you what I want you to do.
If my mentor Athena grants me the glory
to kill them both, tether this pair of horses
right here, by tying the reins to the chariot rim,
then set your mind on grabbing Aeneas' team.
Drive it away from Troy straight to the Greeks.
That team are part of Tros's breed that Zeus
gave Tros when Zeus took Ganymede—the finest
two stallions under Helios and Dawn.
Warrior chief Anchises stole the breed
by sneaking mares to Laomedon's stallions.

255

260

265

The mares bore Anchises a stock of six. 270
Four he kept for himself and raised in his stable,
but two he gave Aeneas, spreader of rout.
Glory is ours if we capture that team!"

In such a way the pair of Argives mused
while the two Trojan warriors rapidly closed. 275
Lycaon's son spoke first, to Diomedes:
"Fierce-hearted, worthy son of fiery Tydeus!
Although my arrowhead did not subdue you,
now I will try my spear and pray to succeed!"

He shook then threw a spear that trailed a long shadow. 280
It hit Diomedes' shield, then on through that
the bronze point flew, almost reaching his breastplate.
Lycaon's son gave an excited shout:
"Your flank is hit! I do not believe
you will stand long! You have given me great glory!" 285

Unaffected by fright, Tydeus' son replied:
"You missed. As for you two I do not plan
to rest until one if not both have fallen
and bled enough to sate warmonger Ares!"

He threw at Pandarus. Athena led the spear
below his eye and nose and through his teeth. 290
The ruthless bronze sliced his tongue from its root;
the point emerged from the back of his head.
He fell, brightly polished armor clanging
around his body. The team veered to one side,
and Pandarus' spirit departed him there. 295

Aeneas jumped down, grasping his shield and spear,
fearful that Greeks might drag the body away.
He paced near the corpse like a wary lion,
brandishing his spear and circular shield,
ready to kill any who might approach. 300
Diomedes stooped and lifted a boulder,

a heavy stone that no two men could move,
men of today, but he easily hefted
then threw it, and hit Aeneas where the thigh bone
turns in the socket to form the hip joint. 305

The jagged rock crushed the joint, cut both front tendons
and tore away flesh. The hero Aeneas
fell to his knees, bracing sturdy arms
on the ground, as black night swirled in his eyes. 310

Lord Aeneas would then and there have died
but for Aphrodite's ever-alert gaze,
mother who bore him to cattleman Anchises.
She wrapped her milky arms around her son
and covered him in her radiant gown's folds,
impervious to spears, lest one of the Greeks
might drive bronze in his chest to finish his life.
She lifted him and carried him off the field. 315

Capaneus' worthy son did not forget
the task that Diomedes had prescribed,
so he quickly tethered his own prancing horses
outside the crush, tying the reins to the rim,
raced to Aeneas' horses—whose manes bristled—
and drove the pair among the strong-greaved Greeks.
Once there, he chose Deïpylus—his best-loved,
long-time friend since they were boys growing up—
to drive them to the ships. Then Sthenelus
returned to his chariot, untied the reins
and drove the team in search of Diomedes. 325

Diomedes assaulted Aphrodite,
seeing that she was a craven goddess, not
one of those who act as mortal warriors' chiefs,
like Athena or Enyo, sacker of cities.
When he overtook the goddess in the melee,
the bold-spirited son of Tydeus thrust 330
and his spear touched the underside of her wrist,
a vulnerable place. The point breached her skin—
beneath the ambrosial gown the Graces had made—

near the hand, releasing the immortal fluid,
ichor, that flows inside the blessed gods. 340
Since they do not eat bread or drink red wine,
those who are called immortals have no blood.
Aphrodite screamed and let go her son,
but Phoebus Apollo kept him secure,
concealed in a dark cloud, so none of the Greeks
could force bronze in his chest and snuff his life. 345
Diomedes shouted to Aphrodite:
“Daughter of Zeus, stay off the battlefield!
Be content to lead weak women astray!
If you meddle here again I vow that you
will learn to fear even a mention of war!” 350

The goddess shrank from the Greek warrior, distraught.
Iris came and led her out of the turmoil,
twisted with pain, her gorgeous skin blood-smeared.
Near the west side of the field they found Ares, 355
mist-cloaked, leaning on a spear by his horses.
Aphrodite knelt in front of her brother
and begged for his team, a pair that wore gold headbands:
“Dear brother, grant us your team to carry me
so I may reach Olympus, home of the gods. 360
I am suffering. A mortal wounded me,
Tydeus’ son, who would fight even father Zeus!”

Ares lent his team, gold frontlets in place.
Aphrodite mounted, sick at heart,
Iris beside her, grasping the reins. 365
The pair of horses, more than willing, flew
till they reached steep Olympus, the immortals’ home.
Swift, wind-footed Iris reined them in,
unharnessed them and offered ambrosial feed.

Aphrodite fell at the knees of Dione,
who wrapped her daughter in loving embrace,
caressed her gently and asked what happened:
“Which of the heaven-dwellers did this to you,

as if you had committed notorious sin?"

Without her usual mirth, Aphrodite said:

375

"Tydeus' son Diomedes wounded me
because I rescued my cherished son from him,
Aeneas, to me the dearest man on earth.

No more is the war just between Greeks and Trojans.

The Greeks are fighting us, the immortal gods!"

380

Dione, gem among goddesses, answered:

"Take heart, my child, and stand up to your grief.

Many of those who live here on Olympus
have once felt the torment of mortal man.

"Ares endured when Otus and Ephialtes,

385

Aloeus' sons, tied him in steely bonds.

For thirteen months he stayed bound in a bronze jar.

Ares' battle frenzy would then have ended,

but Aloeus' sons' stepmother, Eriboea,

called in Hermes who crept near Ares and freed him,

390

worn, feeble, after long cruel bondage.

"Hera endured when mighty Heracles

shot a three-barbed arrow into her breast,

causing her pain that had no remedy.

"Giant Hades endured a painful arrow

395

which the same son of aegis-keeping Zeus

shot through the dread gates of the underworld.

Hades climbed Olympus to Zeus's halls,

agony every step, the arrowhead

sunk deep in his shoulder close to his heart.

400

Paean spread the wound with balm to numb pain,

and the gash near Hades' deathless heart healed.

Mortal Heracles was unconcerned that he

and his bow assailed the gods who hold Olympus.

"So now Athena inspires Diomedes,

405

her dupe whose mind does not perceive the fact

that one who fights with gods does not live long,
nor will he have children to call him father
when he returns home after combat ends.

The son of Tydeus is mighty, yes, but he
may enter a fight with one even more mighty.

Then Adrestus' daughter Aegialia
would rouse her closest servants from sleep and wail
to mourn a warrior's death, the best of Greeks,
her husband, formidable Diomedes."

410

415

Dione then cleaned her daughter's arm of ichor,
the wound healed, and Aphrodite grew calm.

Athena and Hera had watched and now,
sarcastic, sought to rile Cronus' son Zeus.

The gleaming-eyed goddess was first to speak:
"Father Zeus, will you be angry at this tale?

Your darling daughter has beguiled a Greek wife
to join the Trojans that she so adores,
and it seems that while she caressed the Greek woman,
she scratched her slender hand on a gold brooch."

420

425

The father of gods and mortals smiled at her,
then summoned radiant Aphrodite and said:
"My child, the battlefield is not in your sphere,
so you keep to your realm, passionate love,
and let Athena and Ares deal with wars."

430

During that parley of immortal gods,
Diomedes gave his cry and charged Aeneas—
now guarded by Apollo's deathless hand.

Diomedes ignored the god and sought
to kill Aeneas and strip away his armor.

Three times he lunged, determined to kill the Trojan;
three times he struck Apollo's brilliant shield.

When he defied the god and charged a fourth time,
Apollo's dreadful, deafening voice responded:

"Son of Tydeus, learn that you should never
compete with gods since our races do not compare,

435

440

you men and we ageless gods who walk the earth."
Diomedes withdrew a few paces
rather than face divine Apollo's wrath.

Apollo moved Aeneas off the field,
to Pergamus where Trojans maintained his temple. 445
There Leto and Artemis took Aeneas
to inner chambers, healed and strengthened him.
Apollo meantime created a phantom,
Aeneas' likeness in both stature and armor. 450
Around that illusion Trojans and Greeks
slashed at each others' chests behind oxhide shields—
rounded, with leather fringes fluttering.

Apollo found his brother and complained:
"Ares, bloodstained scourge of mortals' cities,
should you not take that man out of the war, 455
Tydeus' son, who would fight even father Zeus?
Just now he wounded Aphrodite's hand
and then, as if immortal, attacked me!"

Apollo waited high on Pergamus 460
while Ares set out to invigorate Trojans,
disguised as Thracian chief Acamas.
He called Zeus-descended Priam's sons:
"O sons of Priam, lineage of father Zeus,
will you allow the Greeks to slaughter our men 465
until the fight reaches the gates of Troy?
There lies a man whose honor rivals Hector's,
Aeneas, bold-hearted Anchises' son.
Come! Let us carry our comrade to a safe place!"

The speech aroused the spirit in each man, 470
and stirred Sarpedon to criticize Hector:
"Hector, where is the fury you once displayed?
You said you could protect Troy without allies,
just you, your brothers and sisters' husbands,
but I see none for none of them is here. 475

No, they cower like dogs around a lion
while we are in battle, those who came to help,
men such as I, who traveled a long journey
from distant Lycia beside Xanthus' eddies
where I took leave of my wife and tiny son
who wait in my kingdom, longing for me.

480

I stayed for you, led the Lycian men
and fought, although nothing of mine is here
that Greeks could either carry or lead away.

But you hold back. You do not order your brothers
to stand on the field and defend their wives.

485

Wake up! Or you will all be like netted fish
and become your enemies' slaughter or captives
when soon enough they sack your citadel.

That should be on your mind both day and night,
and you should beseech your far-famed allies
to stand—with you—so you may avert disaster."

490

Sarpedon's blunt warning stung Hector's pride.
He sprang from his chariot, armor on,
then paced among his men shaking two spears
and wakened their will to fight murderous battle.

495

They rallied and took a stand opposing the Greeks
who did not retreat but held fast their ground.
As when wind blows chaff in the threshing rooms
during winnowing season when blond Demeter
has stirred breezes to separate grain from husks
till flying debris coats the room, so Greeks
grew white from clouds of dust that billowed above
and reached the sky, raised by pounding hoofs.

500

Chariot drivers whirled and armies clashed
against each other with all their might, in darkness
that Ares deepened to help the Trojan fighters
attack from all sides. Thus Ares obeyed
Phoebus Apollo who had prompted him
to spur the Trojans after he saw Athena,
Achaea's protectress, leaving the field.

505

Soon Aeneas left Apollo's sanctuary,

510

his hero's heart, strength and fury restored.
He hurried back to his comrades, who cheered
when they saw him alive, body unscathed,
spirits high. He had no time to explain
because three gods had ignited fierce battle—
Apollo, Ares and insatiable Strife.

515

The Ajaxes, Odysseus and Diomedes
exhorted their men to fight. Soon the Greeks
had shed all fear of Trojan numbers and war cries.
They stood as fast as thunderheads that Zeus
rears on highest peaks during a calm,
motionless while Boreas sleeps, he and his fellow
sacred winds who could disperse the dark clouds
by dint of blast upon whistling blast.
Steady as that, the Greeks awaited Trojans.

520

525

The son of Atreus instructed his ranks:
“Be men, my friends! Fill your hearts with valor!
Look out for each other during battle’s chaos,
and you will more likely be safe than killed,
but there will be no safety for him who runs.”

530

He cast a spear that hit the frontmost Trojan,
Aeneas’ courageous aide Deïcoön,
Pergasus’ boy, valued like Priam’s sons
since he was always quick to fight out front.
Now Agamemnon’s spear flew to his shield
which failed to hinder the point’s deadly flight,
through his belt, on to his lower belly.
He crumpled, and armor clanged as he dropped.

535

540

Meanwhile Aeneas killed two of the best Greeks,
Orsilochus and Crethon, Diocles’ sons,
brothers whose father dwelt within Phera’s walls,
a wealthy man descended from a river,
broad Alpheus, who flows across the earth from Pylos
and who sired Orsilochus, lord of legions.

545

He in turn fathered valiant Diocles,
then Diocles fathered a pair of sons,
Orsilochus and Crethon, both skilled fighters.

Wearing youth's bloom on a dark ship, those two
had sailed with the Greek force to Troy's horse pastures,
and fought for the honor of Atreus' sons,
till death's finality eclipsed them both.

As when two ravenous young mountain lions—
whose mother reared them in dense woodland thickets—
pounce together on fattened oxen or sheep,
about to slaughter all the herdsmen's stock
till they grab their weapons and slay the pair,
so then Aeneas' spear killed those two brothers
and each toppled to earth like a felled fir.

560

Menelaus winced when he saw them fall.
He crossed the front ranks, helmet aglow,
waving two spears. Ares fanned his fury
in hopes that he would die at Aeneas' hand.

Nestor's son Antilochus watched the Spartan,
grew concerned for the king and raced to his side
lest the man for whose honor they fought be killed.
With spears gripped in their hands the two Argives
advanced together, both burning to fight,
the youth shoulder to shoulder with Atreus' son.
Aeneas withdrew—deft warrior though he was—
after he saw the two men head his way,
so they dragged the young brothers back to the Greeks
and turned the hapless pair over to comrades.

565

570

The brace of warriors rejoined their front ranks
where they met Trojan ally Pylaemenes,
valorous chief of Paphlagonian fighters.

The spear-famed son of Atreus, Menelaus,
impaled him just below the collarbone
while Antilochus struck his driver, Mydon,
Atymnius' son, as he turned the team to fly,
struck him mid-arm with a stone heavy enough

575

580

- to free the ivory-studded reins from his grasp.
The youth then drove his sword through Mydon's temple.
Mydon fell from the ornate chariot, gasping. 585
His head and shoulders plummeted into sand,
deep, loose, sandy soil where he remained planted
until his team returned and knocked him down,
young Antilochus now holding the reins.
- Hector saw the twosome's exploits and charged 590
with a troop of Trojan warriors, all screaming.
Ares led them, he and goddess Enyo,
accompanied by battle's rampant Chaos.
Ares brandished his frightful giant spear,
sometimes ahead of Hector, sometimes behind. 595
- At that sight even Diomedes quailed.
As when a solitary wanderer
steps back from a fast stream that roars to a bay,
startled when he sees the violent froth,
so Tydeus' son drew back and said to the Greeks: 600
"My friends, we have all admired Hector's skill
and seen him to be a valiant spear-fighter,
always protected by one god or another,
but now by Ares himself in mortal guise.
So let us keep our faces toward the Trojans 605
but withdraw or we will wind up fighting gods!"
- While he was speaking the Trojans approached.
Hector killed two resourceful Greek warriors
in one chariot, Menesthes and Anchialus.
Ajax Telamon hated to see them fall. 610
He planted his wide feet and threw a spear
that hit Selagus' son, Amphius of Paesus,
a wealthy, landed man that destiny
brought to Priam and his sons among the allies.
Now brawny Ajax struck him at the waist; 615
the lethal point plunged through his abdomen.

He crashed to the ground and Ajax rushed forward,
after his armor, but Trojans loosed missiles
till spear upon bronze spear pelted the Greek's shield.
He braced a foot on the corpse and pulled his weapon
free but he could not stay for the fine armor
under the weapons' relentless barrage.

He feared the Trojan attackers might surround him—
brave warriors making a circle of spears—
so, respected and mighty though he was,
he gave ground, letting the Trojans advance.

620

In such a way the two sides locked in battle.

Heracles' powerful son, Tlepolemus,
approached Sarpedon, steered by ironic fate.
When the space had narrowed between the pair—
grandson and son of cloud-amassing Zeus—
Tlepolemus addressed the man he faced:

"Sarpedon, Lycian leader, what causes you
to cringe here as if ignorant of war?

They lie who say that you are Zeus's stock,
for you do not compare with the many men
that Zeus sired among mortals in olden times.

They say that one was mighty Heracles,
my own unshakable, lion-hearted father
who once came here to get Laomedon's horses.

With only a few comrades in six ships,
he plundered Troy and desolated its streets.
But you have a frail heart, so your men will die.

You yourself will give no succor to Troy,
far from Lycia, since you have little strength
and will pass through Hades' gates vanquished by me."

630

635

640

645

Lycian chief Sarpedon answered him:
"Tlepolemus, Heracles laid Ilium waste
because of Laomedon's foolish mistake—
rewarding Heracles' worthy deeds with insults
instead of the horses he had come to get.

650

I think that you will now encounter death,
felled by the point of the spear in my hand.
You will give me glory and Hades your soul!"

Each warrior lifted and aimed an ash spear. 655

At the same instant, a long-handled lance
flew from each man, and one of them reached a neck:
Sarpedon's spear. Its deadly point ran through
and black night eclipsed Tlepolemus' eyes.

His spear, meantime, flew to Sarpedon's left thigh, 660
where its speeding tip drove into the flesh,
but Zeus diverted it so it just grazed bone.

Comrades of Sarpedon—a mortal but half god—
shouldered him out of the fray, the heavy spear
dragging behind. His men did not take time 665
to pull the weapon from his wounded thigh
because of their haste to get him off the field.

On the other side, Odysseus watched comrades
taking Tlepolemus from where he lay dead,
and his valorous spirit boiled and surged 670
as he pondered the best way to react.

Should he chase the son of thunderous Zeus
or slaughter instead a host of Lycian soldiers?
Since it was not Odysseus' destiny
to kill Sarpedon, Zeus's mighty son, 675

Athena nudged him toward the Lycian soldiers.
There he killed Coeranus, Alastor, Chromius,
Alcander, Noëmon, Prytanis and Halius.

Even more Lycians would then have died
but for the sharp eye of Hector, whose helmet 680
flashed as he hastened through the frontmost ranks.
He stirred fear among Greeks and kindled hope
in Zeus's son Sarpedon who said to him:
"Hector, do not leave me for Greeks to prey on.
Drive them away, then allow me to dwell 685

in your city, for it is not my fate
to regain my beloved fatherland
and relish my soft wife or baby boy."

Hector did not answer Sarpedon's plea
but dashed past him, determined, impatient
to strike his foes and end many Greek lives.
Heroic Sarpedon's comrades carried him
to Zeus's flourishing oak, laid him down
and drew the ash-handled spear out of his leg.
Pelagon did that, his favorite aide.

690

Sarpedon's soul then fled and mist dimmed his eyes—
but a sudden blast of Boreas brought him back,
breathing new life into his weakened heart.

695

Pressed by both Hector and Ares, the Greeks
neither turned their faces toward their ships
nor advanced to fight, but retreated backward,
after they heard that Ares led the Trojans.

700

Who then was first and who the last to fall
under Priam's son Hector and brazen Ares?
Teuthras, Orestes—skilled with a horse whip—,
spearman Trechus, Aetolian Oenomaus,
Oenops' son Helenus, and Oresbius
who oversaw great wealth in Hyle and lived
on Lake Cephisus' shores beside his peers,
Boeotians who held the most fertile lands.

705

When Hera, the white-armed goddess, beheld
Achaeans slaughtered in unfair combat,
not a moment passed till she addressed Athena:
"It goes badly, Protectress, daughter of Zeus.
False will be our promise to Menelaus
that he would go home having plundered Troy—
if we let Ares fight as now he does.
So come, let us two show our battle skills."

710

715

Gleaming-eyed goddess Athena approved.
Hera harnessed her team in gold headbands,
Hera, Cronus' daughter, the first-born goddess. 720
Hebe rolled forward a chariot whose wheels
each had eight bronze spokes from an iron axle,
and each a golden felloe around which ran
a bronze tread, all marvelous to behold. 725
The hub on either side was solid silver,
the seat woven of gold and silver straps,
stretched tight, and two bronze rims bounded the deck.
The shaft was silver, and at its end Hebe
had fastened a golden yoke with two breast bands,
also gold. Hera guided her fast team 730
under the yoke, both horses ready for war.

Athena, aegis-keeping Zeus's daughter,
dropped her supple robe on her father's floor,
a robe that she had made with her own hands. 735
She dressed in cloud-amassing Zeus's tunic,
then the armor worn in dolorous war.
Round her shoulders she draped the tasseled aegis,
dreadful Terror suffused through every part.
On it were Strife, Force, dispiriting Flight 740
and a snarling monster's head, one of the Gorgons,
a frightful omen of Zeus, the aegis' guardian.
Over her head Athena placed a helmet,
gold, a hundred cities' soldiers carved around it.
She mounted the bright chariot and grasped a spear, 745
heavy, strong, with which she could level armies
if they should anger mighty Zeus's daughter.

Hera touched her whip to the horses' backs.
Heaven's gates swung open, kept by the Hours,
wardens of steep Olympus and all the skies,
who cause dense clouds to form or fall away. 750
The goddesses drove the horses through those gates.
They found Cronus' son apart from the other gods
on one of furrowed Olympus' highest peaks.

There the white-armed goddess halted her team
and asked leave for the goddesses to fight:
“Father Zeus, do you not wince at Ares’ deeds,
the way he fells so much of Achaea’s army,
causing me grief that I do not deserve,
while pleasing Aphrodite and Apollo
who unleashed his frenzy that knows no law?
Will you be angry at me, father Zeus,
if we two drive Ares out of the war?”

The cloud-gatherer Zeus answered his wife:
“By all means let Athena lay him waste!
She always loves a chance to torment Ares!”

The white-armed goddess did not hesitate.
She lashed the willing horses, which quickly flew
between the starry heavens and solid earth.
As far as a man’s eyes can pierce the air,
as he sits on a cliff scanning the sea,
so far the horses traveled with each bound.
When they reached the Troad at the two rivers,
where Simois’ streams join those of Scamander,
the elder goddess stopped the horses there,
unhitched the chariot and spread a dense mist
while Simois gave the horses ambrosial feed.

The goddesses took to the air like wild doves,
impatient to bring the Greek warriors aid.
When they reached the place where the bravest fighters
had retreated, near powerful Diomedes,
hemmed in like so many flesh-devouring lions
or wild boars, whose strength remains undiminished,
the white-armed goddess Hera stopped and shouted,
her form and tone resembling bronze-voiced Stentor,
who could shout as loud as fifty men combined:
“For shame Argives, you look strong but act weak.
While Achilles yet remained in this war,
the Trojans never ventured from their gates

because they feared Achilles' dreaded lance. 790
Now they come far from Troy and threaten our ships."
Hera's reproach lit fire in every heart.

Bright-eyed Athena prodded Diomedes
after she found the king beside his chariot,
soothing the wound where Pandarus' arrow struck. 795
The wound burned from sweat beneath the wide strap
supporting his shield, and Diomedes struggled
to lift the strap and wipe off bloody sweat.
The goddess grasped his horses' yoke and said:
"Tydeus fathered a son not much like Tydeus. 800
He was smaller than you, but he was a fighter,
even when I forbade him to do battle,
or show off, such as the day the Greeks sent him
as ambassador to the Theban Cadmeans.
I told him to relax and feast in their palace,
but he carried that bold heart he always had
and challenged the Cadmean youths. He beat them all
with little effort and the assistance I gave.
So would I stand by you as your protectress.
I hoped you would fight Trojans without pause 810
but your strength has yielded to battle's fatigue,
or cowardice, so you likely are not
a son of Tydeus, the fighting son of Oeneus."

Mighty Diomedes replied to her:
"I know you, goddess, the aegis-keeper's daughter,
so I will be forthright, concealing nothing. 815
I did not pause because of fear or fatigue,
but I remember the time when you commanded
that I not fight against the blessed gods
except, you added then, if Aphrodite
should enter the war, that one I could attack. 820
I withdrew to follow your word, and I told
these warriors around me to fall back here
after I saw Ares leading the Trojans."

The gleaming-eyed goddess replied to him: 825
"You please me, Diomedes, Tydeus' son,
so you need have no fear of Ares or any
immortal because I will be at your side.

Come now, drive your horses toward Ares.
Strike without scruple or respect for him— 830
a frenzied two-faced pest since he was born.
Just recently he promised Hera and me
to fight against Trojans, sparing the Greeks,
but now he has forgotten and sides with Troy."

She guided Sthenelus off the chariot, 835
a gentle touch, and he quickly complied.
She climbed aboard at Diomedes' side,
the fiery goddess. The oak axle groaned
when her weight combined with that of the great warrior.
Pallas Athena took the reins and whip 840
then drove the team directly in front of Ares
who had just slain the giant Periphas,
Aetolia's champion warrior, Ochesius' son.
Ares killed him, unaware of Athena
who wore a cap that made her invisible. 845

When murderous Ares noticed Diomedes
he abandoned Periphas' bulky corpse
where it had fallen prone, its soul departed.
The war god headed straight toward the Greek.
When the two warriors came within range, 850
Ares threw a spear over harness and yoke,
a bronze spear intended to take a life,
but gleaming-eyed Athena grabbed the weapon,
shunting the point, useless, wide of the chariot,
so then came Diomedes' turn to cast 855
a spear, whose point Pallas Athena steered
to the belt buckled around Ares' flank
where it wounded him, slashing immortal flesh,
but she withdrew the point when Ares howled

as loud as the joined shouts of nine or ten thousand
mortals arrayed on a battlefield.
Greeks and Trojans alike halted, trembling
at war-gluttonous Ares' thundering voice.

As when dark mist rises against white cloud banks,
a mist that violent, hot winds have raised, 860
so then Ares appeared to Diomedes
as the god rose to heaven amid the clouds.
Ares soon reached Olympus, the gods' abode,
where he sat, stricken and sad, by Cronus' son.
He showed his wound's flow of immortal fluid. 865
The god of war moaned, complaining to Zeus:
"Are you not troubled by what she did to me?
We gods always endure our worst ordeals
because of each other's schemes to please mortals,
and on account of you who begat that daughter 875
disastrous, who loves to hatch unseemly plots.
All of the other gods here on Olympus
obey your word and treat you with respect,
but you overlook whatever she does
because you are both her mother and father. 880
Why, she just now inspired the son of Tydeus,
Diomedes, to battle deathless gods!
Earlier he wounded Aphrodite's wrist.
Now he has assailed and hurt even me,
but I retreated here, or for a long time 885
I would have languished among the corpse heaps,
enfeebled by Diomedes' spear-thrusts."

The cloud-gatherer frowned at him and said:
"Do not sit here by me and whine, you scoundrel,
to me the most odious Olympian god, 890
with your constant love of strife, battles and wars.
Your mother's rage at you can hardly be checked—
though I have talked to her, trying to quiet her—
so I would predict that she has caused your trial.
Still, not much longer should you suffer this pain. 895

She bore you to me, so you are my son.
If another god's son had acted like you
I would have driven him away long ago."

Zeus then ordered Paean to treat his child
so Paean spread the wound with pain-killing salve 900
that healed it—quickly since Ares was not mortal.
As when fig juice is poured in a pail of milk,
the milk curdles instantly if it is stirred,
so quickly the salve healed Ares' wounded flank.
Then Hebe bathed him, dressed him in fresh clothes 905
and seated him by Zeus, radiating glory.

The goddesses returned to Zeus's halls,
Argive Hera and protectress Athena,
once their feats had ended Ares' rampage.

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

The gods left the warring men to themselves,
and war surged back and forth across the plain
as spear rivaled bronze-pointed spear on lands
between the rivers Xanthus and Simois.

Ajax Telamon, Argive bulwark, was next
to thin the Trojan ranks. His comrades cheered
when he took down the best Thracian fighter,
Eussorus' son Acamas, tall and strong.
Ajax struck his helmet near where the crest rose.
The bronze spearhead pierced the Thracian's brow,
then his skull, and darkness covered his eyes.

5

10

With a roar Diomedes killed Axylus,
Teuthras' son from Arisbe's fertile lands.
Axylus was rich. He made many friends,
hosting travelers on the road where he lived,
but none of them could ward off wretched death
or slow Diomedes, who took two lives,
Axylus' and his charioteer Calesius'.
Their souls entered the underworld together.
Euryalus killed Dresus, Opheltius,
then the twins Aesepus and Pedasus,
naiad Abarbarea's sons by Bucolion,
in turn a son of proud Laomedon,

15

20

though his mother's identity was secret.
The naiad and Bucolion lay near his flocks, 25
after which she gave him the pair of boys
whose spirits and strong limbs Mecisteus' son
released that day, and he stripped their armor.

Polypoetes laid Astyalus low.
Odysseus killed Percotian Pidyes, 30
a fast spear-thrust. Teucer took Aretaon.
Ablerus felt the spear of Antilochus.
Agamemnon Atrides downed Elatus
who had lived on Satniois' stream bank.
Boeotian chief Leïtus killed Phylacus, 35
in flight, and Euryppylus speared Melanthius.

Menelaus, famed for war cries, took Adrestus
alive, after his team ran out of control
and tripped in tamarisk stems. The trim chariot's
wood pole splintered, freeing horses that raced 40
toward Ilium behind others that fled, panicked.
Adrestus tumbled beside his chariot's wheel,
his face in dust, and standing there beside him
was Atreus' son Menelaus, spear in hand.
Adrestus clasped the Spartan's knees and begged: 45
"Son of Atreus, take ransom but not my life!
My wealthy father has stored away treasure
including fine wrought iron, bronze and gold.
His generous gifts will well reward you
if he hears that I am alive at the Greek ships." 50

The ransom offer convinced Menelaus.
He would then have given comrades his captive
to be confined near the ships, but Agamemnon
came running, blocked the way and shouted at him:
"O brother, Menelaus, why would you spare 55
this man? Have Trojans done you any good?
I say not one of them should escape death
at our hands. Not even one still in the womb,

a child unborn, should survive. No, all people
of Troy must perish, unmourned, leaving no trace."

60

The warrior's words changed his brother's mind.
With the back of his hand he pushed Adrestus
aside, and far-ruling Agamemnon
struck him dead, a thrust deep in the flank,
then, foot on the Trojan corpse, withdrew the spear.

65

At the top of his voice Nestor commanded:
"My friends, Greek warriors, Ares' comrades,
do not pause now to gather armor as spoils,
thinking to have more prizes back at your ships.
Concentrate on killing till battle's end.
Then you may plunder the corpses we have slain."

70

Nestor's advice steeled the heart in each chest.
Under Argive pressure, the Trojans soon
would have fled to Ilium, valorless, beaten,
had not Aeneas and Hector listened to
Priam's son Helenus, a clairvoyant prophet:
"Aeneas and Hector, who shoulder burdens
for every Trojan and Lycian, because you
are our best men in both council and war,
stop here, hold the army outside the gates.

75

Make stirring speeches that keep them from running
to fall in their wives' arms and prosper our foes.
Inspire and encourage all of your ranks,
that we may stand fast, battling Greeks,
since battle we must, however worn we are.

80

Then you, Hector, enter the city and tell
our mother, yours and mine, to gather the old women
at bright-eyed Athena's shrine atop Ilium.
Instruct her to unbolt the sacred gates
and take the robe that she considers the finest
there is in the palace, her favorite,
to lay upon fair-haired Athena's knees.
Have her promise that we will sacrifice

85

90

a dozen yearling bulls if Athena pities
our town, the Trojan wives, our helpless children,
and drives Tydeus' son away from Ilium's wall. 95
That maddened spearman has routed our army.
I must say he is the mightiest Greek.
We did not fear even Achilles as much,
whose mother is a goddess. Diomedes
is frenzied, and no one can rival his fury." 100

Hector did not ignore his brother's advice.
Fully armed, he jumped from chariot to ground,
brandished a pair of spears throughout the army,
exhorted the men and waked ardor for war. 105
The Trojans rallied and stood facing the Greeks
who then stopped their advance, slowing the slaughter.
They thought an immortal god from starry heaven
had come and sparked the rally to save Troy.
Hector shouted so all his men could hear: 110
"Brave Trojans, and allies come from afar,
be men, my friends, keep up this show of valor
while I go now to our elders in Ilium,
the counselors. I must tell them and our wives
to beseech the gods, promising hecatombs." 115

Hector finished speaking, then walked away,
backs of his heels and neck slapping the hide
and outer rim of his tall studded shield.

Hippolochus' son, Glaucus, and Diomedes
met between the two hosts, ready to duel. 120
After the men narrowed the space between
Diomedes broke the silence and said:
"Whose son are you to be so brave a warrior?
I have not seen you on this battlefield
but now you come out front, far from your cohorts, 125
daring to stay and await my long spear.
Bereaved are children of men who face me.
But if you are one of the gods from above

I will not fight a heaven-dwelling immortal.
Even mighty Lycurgus, Dryas' son,
did not live long after he strove with heaven. 130
One day he chased infant Dionysus' nurses
down from holy Nysa's slope, and they
abandoned their sacred wands when Lycurgus
thrashed them with a goad. Dionysus fled
into the sea, where Thetis gave him her breast,
calming fears the powerful mortal had stirred.
But that man had riled the gods who live at ease,
so Zeus struck him blind. He did not survive
for long, because all the gods abandoned him. 140
So I do not want to fight the blessed gods,
but if you are mortal and eat the fields' fruits,
step closer so you may soon meet your life's end!"

Hippolochus' glorious son replied:
"Bold son of Tydeus, why ask who I am?
Clans of men are like foliage on trees. 145
Wind scatters leaves on the ground, yet the forest
prospers and leafs again when spring returns.
In like manner the stock of men survives.
But since you have inquired and want to hear
about my lineage, well-known among men,
begin at a town in Argos, Ephyra, 150
Sysiphus' home. He was the bravest mortal,
Sysiphus, Aeolus' son, who sired Glaucus.
Glaucus fathered famous Bellerophon
whose manly form and spirit the gods bestowed,
but jealous king Proetus devised a plot
to banish Bellerophon. Proetus enjoyed
support of Cronus' son behind his scepter. 155
Antea, Proetus' wife, craved Bellerophon
for lusty tryst with her, but she could not
seduce noble Bellerophon's upright heart,
so she contrived a lie to Proetus and said:
'O Proetus, you must kill Bellerophon!
He tried to rape me when I spurned his advances!' 160
165

Rage consumed the king when he heard that lie
but he was too timid to kill the man himself
so he sent him to Lycia with a request—
carved on a board in code—that he be killed.

He bade him show Antea's father the board.

170

Bellerophon set out, guided by gods,
and when he reached the banks of Xanthus' streams,
Antea's father, the king, honored him,
hosted him nine days, sacrificed nine bulls.

When Dawn extended rosy fingers a tenth time
the king inquired if he might see the message
the visitor had brought from his son-in-law.

175

After the king saw Proetus' lethal command,
he first ordered his guest to kill Chimaera,
a monster born of divine stock, not mortal,
forepart a lion, tail a snake, goat's head between,
all three dreadful, all breathing hot red fire.

180

Yet he killed her, aided by heaven's omens.

Next he had to fight the Solymi tribe
and said it was the fiercest fight of his life.

185

Third he fought and slew Amazons, men's equals.

As he returned from that, the king schemed anew.

He selected the best men in all Lycia
to lay an ambush, but none returned alive.

Valiant Bellerophon slaughtered the lot.

190

The king then sensed Bellerophon's godly stock,
changed course, gave Bellerophon another daughter
and honored him with a gift of half the kingdom.

The Lycians granted the richest private lands
for him to live on, beautiful orchards and fields.

195

The king's daughter bore Bellerophon three children,
Hippolochus, Laodamia and Isander.

The counselor Zeus slept with Laodamia
and she gave birth to bronze-helmeted Sarpedon.

But Bellerophon's arrogance angered heaven,
so he wandered the Alean Plain alone,
shunned the paths of men and consumed his own soul.
War-insatiate Ares killed his son,

200

Isander, in battle against the Solymi.
Artemis in a rage killed Laodamia. 205
Hippolochus fathered me and I claim his stock.
He sent me here to Troy and he told me
I should strive to excel on the battlefield
lest I disgrace our fathers' lineage, the finest
ever to spring from Lycia or Ephyra.
So that is the blood heritage I claim." 210

Diomedes held his war cry and smiled.
He planted his spear's point in the fecund earth
and spoke kindly to Lycian chief Glaucus:
"You are son of a guest my grandfather hosted! 215
Once, years ago, noble Bellerophon
stayed twenty days as guest in Oeneus' halls,
then guest and host exchanged two splendid gifts:
Oeneus presented a glossy red belt,
Bellerophon a two-handled gold cup 220
that I left in my halls when I came here.
I do not recall Tydeus, as I was just born
when he fell with the Argive force at Thebes.
From now on I am your cordial host in Argos
and you will host me in Lycia some day. 225
We should avoid each other's spears in battle.
There are ranks of other Trojans and allies
for me to kill when heaven lets me meet them,
and Greek legions for you to kill if you can.
Let us exchange armor so all the men 230
will know our grandfathers were guest and host!"

At once the two warriors jumped from their chariots
and clasped hands to signify their new friendship.
Cronus' son Zeus suspended Glaucus' senses
so he would accept the exchange: his armor, 235
gold, worth a hundred oxen, for bronze worth nine.

When Hector reached the oak by the Scaean Gates
Trojan wives and daughters crowded around

to ask about their kinsmen, children, brothers
and husbands. He told them to implore the gods,
each god in turn, or countless sorrows loomed.

240

Then he moved on to Priam's stately palace,
bordered by elegant stone colonnades.

There were no fewer than fifty smooth stone chambers,
each adjoining another, in which the sons
of Priam slept with wives they had wooed and won.
On the courtyard's other side, Priam's daughters
had twelve roofed chambers of fine polished stone,
built close together, where the sons-in-law
of Priam slept with their honored, royal wives.

245

When Hector neared the palace he met his mother
and her loveliest daughter, Laodice.

She pressed his hand between her two and said:
"My child, why did you leave the battlefield?

Perhaps Achaea's sons have worn you down
enough so now your heart has steered you home
to raise your arms toward Zeus from Ilium's heights.

255

Let me then bring you a jar of honeyed wine
that you may pour to Zeus and all immortals,
then drink some yourself and take its benefit.

260

Wine revives the vigor of weary men.
Your strength has been spent protecting our people."

Tall, bright-helmeted Hector answered her:
"Honored mother, I will drink no mellow wine,
which might dull my wits and temper my valor.
Nor will these unwashed hands pour Zeus libation,
nor would I dare beseech the son of Cronus
while spattered as I am with blood and gore.
But you must now go to Athena's shrine
with all the elder women, burnt offerings,
and the robe that you consider the finest
there is in the palace, your favorite.
Place the robe on fair-haired Athena's knees.
Vow that in her shrine we shall sacrifice

265

270

twelve yearling bulls if she will only pity 275
 our town, the Trojan wives, their helpless children,
 and drive Tydeus' son away from Ilium's wall,
 a maddened spearman, forceful sower of rout.
 While you go to Pillager Athena's shrine
 I will visit Paris and call him to arms. 280
 If he will not obey me, then may earth
 open for him. On his account Zeus brought anguish
 to Trojans, generous Priam and his children,
 so if I see Paris descend to Hades
 I will smile a moment despite these ordeals." 285

At once Hecuba gathered her handmaids
 in the palace hall. They summoned the wives
 while she rushed to the fragrant private chamber
 that housed her robes, intricate works of women,
 Sidonian women that handsome Paris 290
 had brought from Phoenicia across the wide seas,
 the same voyage that brought Helen to Troy.
 Hecuba chose a robe to give Athena,
 the grandest, most elaborate and beautiful,
 lying beneath her others, bright as a star. 295
 She and the elder wives then hastened away.

When they reached the heights and Athena's shrine,
 comely Theano opened the gates for them,
 wife of horseman Antenor, Cisseus' daughter
 that Trojan women had made Athena's priestess. 300
 The other women lifted their hands and voices
 while Theano alone carried the robe,
 arranged it on fair-haired Athena's knees,
 and offered prayer to mighty Zeus's daughter:
 "Revered goddess Athena, savior of cities, 305
 let Diomedes' spear be smashed, and let him
 fall on his face before the Scaean Gates.
 Here in your temple we will sacrifice
 twelve yearling bulls if you will only pity
 our town, the Trojan wives and helpless children!" 310

Pallas Athena heard but ignored the prayer.

While the women entreated Zeus's daughter
Hector hurried away to Paris' house,
a stately home he had built using the most skilled
craftsmen he could find in the fertile Troad.

315

They built him a central hall, chamber and courtyard,
near Hector and Priam, high in the citadel.

Zeus-loved Hector entered, and in his hand
was a spear twice his height. On the shaft's tip gleamed
a bronze head secured by a golden ring.

320

He found Paris admiring his ornate armor—
his breastplate, his shield—and hefting his curved bow.
Helen was near, among her servant maids,
supervising the women's handiwork.

When Hector saw Paris he burst into words:

325

"Brother, you do not feel the fury you should.
Our armies die outside Ilium's walls
on account of you. Battles and war cries
flare all around. You would condemn another
if you saw him avoiding the trials of war.
So up! Or all too soon our city burns!"

330

Handsome Paris turned to his brother and said:
"There is some basis for your reproach, Hector,
so I will answer, and you should hear me out.

I have not stayed here, indifferent to Troy's people;

335

I felt a need to be immersed in regret.

But now even my wife has chided me
and urged me to fight, so I am convinced
that I should. Victory often shifts sides.

So wait here while I put my armor on,
or go ahead and I will catch up to you."

340

Hector stood silent, his bright helmet gleamed,
and Helen spoke to him, her voice lowered:
"My brother-in-law, wretched dog that I am,

- if only a strong whirlwind had arisen 345
the day when I was born and carried me off
to mountains or, better, the frothy sea,
and waves had swept me under, rather than this.
But since the gods contrived these difficulties
I wish I were the wife of a nobler man, 350
more sensitive to his fellows' contempt.
Paris is mercurial. He always
will be, and he must pay a price for that.
Here now, come sit down a while on this bench,
brother-in-law. You bear the brunt of toil 355
caused by me, a bitch, and Paris' folly,
we of ruinous destiny that long hence
will be a subject of mortal men's song."
- Towering Hector responded to her:
"Do not encourage me to sit, kind Helen. 360
My heart urges me to rush back and aid
the Trojan men who badly need their leader.
You should prod Paris to hurry and arm
so he can join me when I leave the city.
I will go home now, that I may see 365
my little son, beloved wife and house servants.
I know not whether I will return to them
or whether the gods will fell me by Greek hands."
- Hector turned on his heel and ran, helmet shining.
He soon arrived at his tall, pleasant house 370
but he did not find Andromache there.
She, their baby and her long-robed handmaids
had joined the women lamenting on the rampart.
When Hector did not find his wife at home
he stood at the threshold and called the house servants: 375
"Come to me, maids! Tell me what you know
about where Andromache may have gone.
Perhaps to one of my brothers' wives, or sisters,
or did she climb to Athena's high shrine
where Trojan women entreat the august goddess?" 380

The housekeeper stepped forward to answer him:
“Hector, I will tell you all that we know.
She is not with your brothers’ wives, or sisters,
nor did she climb to Athena’s high shrine
where Trojan women beseech that dreaded goddess.

385

No, she went to the wall because she heard
the Trojan men are worn, the Greeks advancing.
She went toward the rampart in great haste,
as if possessed, with your son and his nurse.”

When Hector heard he turned and sped away,
back through the streets, the same way he had come.

390

He crossed the city’s expanse, reached the gates,
the Scaean, and almost passed through to the plain
when down from the wall ran his beautiful wife,
Andromache, daughter of bold Eëtion,

395

who had dwelt at wooded mount Placus’ foot
in Thebe where he was lord of all Cilicians.

Hector made Eëtion’s daughter his bride.

She faced him now while near her waited the nurse,
a playful infant boy clasped at her breast,

400

Hector’s treasured son, his brilliant star.

Hector called him Scamandrius, other Trojans
Astyanax since his father guarded Ilium.

When Hector saw his boy he broke into smiles.

Andromache wiped her eyes, moved closer to Hector,
squeezed his hand softly in hers and spoke to him:

405

“Your fury will be your death. You do not care
for your son or hapless wife, all but widowed
because the Argives soon will end your days.

After then it will be just as well if I,

410

bereft of you, enter the earth. For me,
when you are dead, there will be no solace,
only grief. I have no father or mother.

Half-divine Achilles struck my father down
and sacked the Cilicians’ well-placed city,
high-gated Thebe. Although he killed Eëtion,
he respected him and did not strip his armor,

415

- no, he burned the corpse with its armor on,
then heaped a monument, near which mountain nymphs,
the aegis-keeper's daughters, nurture doves. 420
- I had seven brothers in those palace halls
and each went down to Hades the same day.
Fast-running Achilles killed all my brothers,
all our lumbering oxen and chalky sheep.
- He brought my mother, a queen among her folk,
to the ships, where he kept his other plunder
but then released her in return for ransom.
Artemis shot her dead in my father's palace.
- So, Hector, to me you are father, mother
and brother, as well as my stalwart lover. 430
- Have pity on us! Stay here on the wall
rather than widow me and orphan your son.
Station your men at the wild fig where Ilium
is most vulnerable, its wall least high.
- Three times already their best have tried to scale it,
the two Ajaxes, Cretan Idomeneus,
Atreus' two sons and valiant Diomedes.
Either a keen oracle told them the place,
or their own instincts might have led the way." 435
- Hector, tall in his bright helmet, replied: 440
"I share your worries, wife, but my shame among
the Trojan people would be far too heavy
were I to avoid the war as would a coward.
My heart recoils, for I was raised to be brave
and always to fight among the forward Trojans,
winning fame for myself and my father too. 445
Yet deep in my soul I know, without doubt,
the day will come when sacred Ilium falls,
also Priam and his army with ash spears.
I am not so much concerned for Trojan folk,
nor even for Priam or Hecuba,
or the legion of my brave brothers who
may fall in dust under enemy blows,
as I am for you, that some bronze-armored Greek

will steal your freedom and lead you away, weeping. 455
Then you will weave another's loom in Argos
and haul Hyperia's spring water, or Messeïs',
miserable, without hope of release.
Someone who sees your tears falling may say:
'That one was Hector's wife. He fought the best
of all the Trojans when Greeks warred at Ilium.' 460
So they may say, stirring anew your sadness
that there is no such man to set you free.
Let me be dead under a mound of earth
rather than hear you cry when dragged away!" 465

Brilliant Hector then reached for his son,
but the infant turned back to his nurse's breast,
howling, stunned by his warrior father's appearance,
afraid of the glaring bronze, the horse's tail
that nodded restlessly atop his helmet. 470
The frightened boy's father and mother smiled,
then Hector pulled the helmet off his head
and set it aside, gleaming, on the ground.
He held his son in his arms and gently kissed him,
then spoke a prayer to Zeus and all immortals: 475
"O Zeus! All you gods! Let him become
distinguished among Trojans, just as I am,
as strong, as brave, so that he may rule Ilium
and cause people to say, 'He outshines his father,'
when he returns from war with bloodstained armor
from men he has slain, making his mother proud!" 480

Hector laid his son in Andromache's arms
and she drew the boy to her fragrant breast,
then wept, then tried a smile. Hector was moved,
caressed her with a gentle hand and said: 485
"My love, let not your heart ache so for me.
No man sends another to Hades against fate,
but no man can escape the destiny
assigned at birth, neither the craven nor bold.

Go home, now, attend to tasks that are yours, 490
your shuttle, your loom, and supervise your maids
at work, but trust martial affairs to men,
to me above all others who fight for Ilium."

Glorious Hector then retrieved his helmet, 495
topped by the horse's tail, as his wife went home
with brimming eyes that glanced back time and again.
Before long, she reached the spacious house
where she and Hector lived. Inside she met
her maids and all began doleful lament.
In Hector's house they mourned him while yet he lived 500
because they did not think he would return,
escaping from Achaean fury and hands.

Paris did not linger under his high roof.
Once dressed in his ornamented bronze armor,
he hastened through the city on quickened feet. 505
As when a stabled stallion, fed on oats,
snaps his tether, races across flat land,
plunges into familiar river waters,
then holds his head high, triumphant, his mane
streaming behind his neck to proclaim his splendor, 510
as fast legs speed him to where the fillies graze,
so Priam's son Paris strode from Pergamus' heights
in armor that shined as bright as the sun.
He laughed while he rapidly passed, and soon
he came upon Hector who was about 515
to leave the wall where he had talked with his wife.
Paris, resembling a god, was first to speak:
"Brother, have I delayed your departure
by failing to come as fast as you asked?"
Bright-helmeted Hector replied to him: 520
"Brother, there is no man who rivals you
in battle, or slight your feats when you show valor,
but you have chosen to avoid this war.
I was pained whenever I heard you scorned

among the Trojans who fight on your account.
Let us go. We shall make amends if Zeus
and the everlasting heaven-dwellers grant
that we can fill our wine bowls, safe in our halls,
after we drive the Greeks away from Troy!"

525

HECTOR AND AJAX DUEL

Hector left at a run through the Scaean Gates,
his brother Paris racing just behind,
both men eager to reach the front and fight.
As when an immortal god provides a breeze
to sailors after a long struggle with oars,
thrashing the sea, at last the men relax,
so Trojan warriors welcomed the two brothers.

5

Paris promptly killed Areithous' son
Menesthius of Arne, a man the club-fighter
Areithous sired with Phylomedusa.

10

Then Hector's deadly spearpoint struck Eioneus,
his neck below the visor. His limbs sagged.
Lycian chief Glaucus, Hippolochus' son,
waded into battle and speared Iphinous,
Dexius' son, as he jumped on his chariot.
He fell to earth, dead, spear in a shoulder.

15

As soon as Athena's brilliant eyes saw
how many Greeks were falling in combat
she rose and bounded from Olympus' peaks
to sacred Ilium where she met Apollo
whose heart willed Trojan triumph despite her.
The two met face to face beside the oak
and Zeus's son Apollo was first to speak:

20

"Daughter of Zeus, what has again stirred you
to leave Olympus and bring your passion here? 25
Perhaps you would turn war's tide to favor Greeks
since you do not care if Trojans are slaughtered,
but listen to what I will now propose:
let us together bring the war to a halt,
for today. Later they may fight till the end 30
of Ilium because the deepest desire
that you and Hera have is to see Troy sacked."

Athena's eyes flashed as she answered him:
"Let it be so. I myself had the same thought
when I descended Olympus toward these mortals, 35
but how do you propose to halt the battle?"

Zeus's son, lord Apollo, answered her:
"We should now channel Hector's martial fury
so he will challenge a single Greek warrior
to face and duel him in lethal combat. 40
Then let the bronze-armed Greeks accept the challenge
and field a champion to fight Hector alone."

The gleaming-eyed goddess did not disagree.
In Priam's son Helenus' mind she sparked
a plan designed to accomplish the gods' goal, 45
and he confronted Hector, counseling him:
"Hector, Priam's son, wise as a god,
listen to me now, since I am your brother:
have all the Greek and Trojan warriors sit,
then you challenge whichever Greek is their best 50
to face and duel you in lethal combat.
It is not your destiny to die today.
So I heard directly from deathless gods."

Hector approved what his brother proposed.
He stepped forward and blocked the Trojan advance,
raising his spear, telling the men to sit. 55
Then Agamemnon bade the Greeks sit, too.

Even Athena and Apollo sat,
disguised as two somber vultures, perched
high in the aegis-keeper Zeus's oak 60
where they could observe the men seated in ranks
that bristled with shields, helmets and ash spears.
As ripples cover the sea when Zephyrus
ends a calm, till growing waves darken the water,
so then the Trojan and Greek legions darkened
the plain as Hector stood between them to speak:
"Hear me, Trojans and strong-greaved Achaeans,
so I may tell you what I now propose!
High-ruling Zeus did not let our truce endure,
but instead ordained misery for both sides 70
till you Greeks either take the walls of Troy
or die beside the ships that brought you here.
Among you are Achaea's finest men.
My heart has told me to fight one of them,
so let one meet me here alone as your champion.
With Zeus as our witness I propose this: 75
if your champion's weapon should end my life
let him take my armor back to your ships
but give my body up to receive the fire
that Trojan people owe me when I am dead.
But if Apollo grants me to cut him down 80
I will take his armor back to sacred Ilium
and hang it at the door of Apollo's shrine.
Then I will return his corpse to your fleet
in order that you Greeks may perform his rites
and build a monument on the Hellespont, 85
so men of future generations will say,
as their ships travel the wine-colored seas:
'Yonder monument stands for a man long dead
that glorious Hector once bested and killed.'
So they will say, and my fame will never die." 90

The Greek men listened and all remained silent,
afraid to take, ashamed to refuse the challenge.
After a time Menelaus rose and spoke,

fuming inside as he rebuked the Greeks: 95
“Empty boasters you are, women not men!
What a miserable disgrace it will be
if no Achaean stands against Hector now.
May all of you return to earth and water,
you who sit there with no spirit or honor! 100
I myself will arm. After all, the outcome
will be determined by immortal gods!”

That said, he put his splendid armor on.
For you, Menelaus, death would then have come
from Hector’s hand, much mightier than yours,
but kings of Achaea jumped up to object. 105
The far-ruling king Agamemnon himself
seized your right hand in his and quietly said:
“Menelaus, there is nothing to gain
from such folly. Angry as you may be,
do not offer to fight a superior man, 110
Priam’s son, Hector, feared by everyone else.
Even Achilles avoided fighting Hector
and Achilles’ might exceeds yours by far.
Take a seat among your troop of comrades.
Let the Argives select another champion. 115
No matter how fearless or hungry for war,
even he will need rest if he should leave
this battleground and deadly duel alive.”

The warrior’s words changed his brother’s mind 120
so he accepted Agamemnon’s advice.
Aides helped Menelaus remove his armor,
while Nestor rose among the Greeks and spoke:
“This is a sad day for the lands of Achaea!
I can almost hear old horseman Peleus groaning,
that bold Myrmidon statesman and orator. 125
Once I delighted him in his house by telling
the stock and lineage of all Achaean men.
If he should hear how Hector cows you all
he would lift his arms toward the immortals 130

and pray that his soul leave his limbs for Hades.
Father Zeus, Athena, Apollo! If only
I were as young today as when we fought—
we Pylians—against the spear-wielding Arcadians
around Iardanus' streams near Pheia's walls. 135

A champion rose among them, Ereuthalion,
wearing the armor of Areithous,
a powerful man they called the club-fighter,
given that name by women and men alike
because, rather than fight with spear or bow,
he used an iron club to destroy legions. 140

Lycurgus killed him by trickery, not strength,
in a narrow ravine so cramped the club
was useless, and before Areithous knew it,
Lycurgus speared his midriff, let him drop,
then took his armor, once a gift from Ares. 145

Lycurgus wore it afterward in wars
until he had grown old in his palace halls,
whereupon he gave it to Ereuthalion
who wore it that day when he challenged our best. 150

All trembled with fear but me, and not one dared,
but my own heart emboldened me to fight
even though I was the youngest man present,
so I fought and Athena gave me the honor
to kill that tallest, most mighty of men. 155

His lifeless limbs sprawled wide over the ground.
If only I were still young, my strength intact,
I would rush to face Hector in combat,
but among all you stalwart men of Achaea
not one is willing to rise and fight the Trojan!" 160

Nine men rose after the old man's rebuke.
First to stand was chief warrior Agamemnon,
then Tydeus' mighty son Diomedes,
then the two Ajaxes, valorous both,
next Idomeneus, also his lieutenant 165

Meriones, murderous Ares' equal,
then Eurypylus, Euaemon's fine son,

Andraemon's son Thoas and godlike Odysseus.
Each of the nine now wanted to duel Hector,
and again persuasive horseman Nestor spoke:
"Let us shake lots and see which man's is drawn.
Whoever it is will champion the Greek army
and he will make his heart proud if he survives
the blaze of this grueling head-on combat."

170

Each of the nine warriors marked a stone
then tossed it into Agamemnon's helmet.
The other soldiers lifted their hands in prayer
and each man might say as he gazed at heaven:
"Give us Ajax, father Zeus, or Tydeus' son,
or even the king of gold-rich Mycenae!"

175

180

The men prayed, Gerenian Nestor shook
until a wished-for stone fell out of the helmet:
Ajax's. A herald took it through the host,
showing it to each of the nine volunteers
but none knew it and each denied it was his
until at last the herald reached the man
who had tossed it in the helmet, Ajax.
He held out a hand, the herald gave the stone,
Ajax recognized his mark and rejoiced.
He let the stone fall at his feet while saying:
"Ah, friends, I won the honor and I am glad!
Victory over Hector will be mine!
Now, while I am dressing in battle armor
you should pray to supreme Zeus, Cronus' son.
Pray silently, lest the Trojans might hear—
or openly since we have no fear of them.
When I resist no man can win by force—
or talent since I remember all the skills
I learned in Salamis where I was raised."

185

190

195

The soldiers then prayed to Cronus' son Zeus,
gazing skyward, and any one might say:
"O most exalted Zeus who rules from Ida,

200

grant Ajax the victory and the glory,
but if you also have concern for Hector
then give equal power, like glory to each!"

205

While the men prayed Ajax put on his armor.
After he had clothed his body in bronze
he sped away looking like giant Ares
when he does battle in wars of men that Zeus
has joined in furious, life-devouring combat.
Achaea's mainstay stood as tall as the war god,
a grin on his weathered face. His heavy feet
took long strides, and he brandished a longer spear.
At sight of Ajax the Greeks' spirits took wing
but trembles weakened every Trojan's knees.

210

Hector's heart pounded inside his ribs,
though there was no way to withdraw and rejoin
his men since he himself had offered the challenge.

Ajax approached behind his tower-like shield,
bronze on oxhide, that Tychius labored to make,
the finest leatherworker, who dwelt in Hyle.

220

Tychius gave the shield seven layers of hide,
from sleek bulls, and an eighth layer of bronze.

Telamon's son held it before his chest,
stopped close to Hector and ventured a boast:

225

"Hector, you are about to see the kind
of prowess we have among the better Greeks,
even without lion-hearted Achilles.

He lingers back at his fleet of seagoing ships
and rages at Agamemnon Atrides,
but we have others who can deal with you,
many others, so let this duel begin!"

230

Hector, tall in his bright helmet, replied:
"Ajax, Telamon's son, descended from Zeus,
do not treat me as if I were a child
or woman who knows not the methods of war.
I am well schooled in war and slaughter of men.
On either right or left I can hold the ox's

235

parched hide, so I have stamina for long battle.
I know how to control and fight with fast horses,
or to dance with deadly Ares on foot.
As such a man, I will not come at you
by stealth, but head-on with intent to kill!"

240

A long shadow followed his spear as it flew
and hit Ajax's shield of seven hides
on its outer surface—hammered bronze.

245

It pierced the metal and layers of leather
till the seventh and final oxhide held.

Another shadow followed Ajax's spear
which struck the circular shield in Hector's hand.

250

The heavy spear plunged through the lustrous shield,
then tore through Hector's elegant breastplate
and punctured the cloth tunic beside his flank,
but Hector dodged enough to elude black death.

The two warriors retrieved their spears
and fell on each other like ravenous lions
or wild boars that have attained peak strength.

255

Hector's spear struck Ajax's shield dead center
but the bronze layer held, bending the spear's tip.

Next Ajax's spear met Hector's shield, and the point
passed right through, determined to reach the man.

260

It grazed his neck, releasing a spurt of blood,
but the wound was not enough to stop Hector.

He stepped back, reached down, lifted a rock
that lay on the plain, black, jagged, huge,
then threw it at Ajax's seven-hide shield,

265

where the boss rose in the center. Bronze screeched.

Ajax then lifted a far larger boulder,
summoned all his power, whirled and flung.

The rock slammed Hector's shield like a millstone,
and Hector collapsed, sprawled flat on his back,
shield held close, but Apollo revived him.

270

Then the pair would have hacked each other with swords
had not two heralds—envoys of Zeus and men—
arrived, one each from the Trojan and Greek sides,

275

Idaeus and Talthybius, both prudent.
They held staffs between the fighters while Idaeus
spoke, a herald known for his common sense:
"Young men, you should battle no longer today.
Cloud-amassing Zeus loves you both alike,
two superior warriors as we all have seen,
but dark falls now, and the wise yield to night." 280

Only Telamon's son Ajax replied:
"Idaeus, let Hector speak to your concern.
It was he who challenged our best to duel.
Let him quit first. I will follow his lead." 285

Tall, bright-helmeted Hector addressed the Greek:
"Ajax, a god gave you stature and strength,
wisdom too, making you the best Greek spearman.
Let us refrain from more of this combat,
today, but fight another time till gods
grant victory to one or the other of us.
Night has come now. Wise men submit to dark,
so you go celebrate with Greeks at the ships,
especially your kinsmen, your close comrades,
while I return to Priam's splendid city,
bringing cheer to Trojan men and the women
who gathered to beseech heaven for me.
Let us, you and I, make each other a gift
so that future generations may say:
'They met and fought a duel almost to the death,
then traded gifts and walked away as friends.'" 295
300

He gave Ajax his silver-studded sword,
the sheath that held it, and its fine-tooled strap.
Ajax gave Hector his belt, bright red,
Then the two parted, one to the Greek host,
one to anxious Trojan ranks, who breathed relief
when they saw him approach—alive, unhurt
by Ajax's furious powerful hands.
Once sure he would die, they now led him to Ilium. 305
310

On the other side, proud Greeks led Ajax
to Agamemnon, cheered by his victory.

When they arrived in Agamemnon's camp
the son of Atreus sacrificed a bull
to Cronus' son, a bull fattened five years.

315

Greeks promptly flayed and dismembered the beast,
then cut it in small pieces, slid them on skewers,
cooked them till done and drew all from the fire.

That job finished, they made ready a banquet,
then feasted, none lacking an equal share,
but Ajax got the chine, a gift of honor
from Atreus' son, wide-ruling Agamemnon.

320

When the men had banished hunger and thirst
their eldest voiced a plan, breaking the silence,
a man whose counsel had never failed before.

325

Now Nestor gave his thoughtful advice again:
"Sons of Atreus, all you worthy Achaeans!

Numberless long-haired Greek warriors have died.

Along Scamander's banks their blood still flows,
spilled by Ares, who sent their souls to Hades.

330

It would be well to pause the war come Dawn,
gather our fallen bodies, carting them here
by oxen and mules, so our dead can burn
beside our ships, all but the bones for their children
to keep when we return to our fatherlands.

335

Let us heap over the pyre a single marker,
tall, in front of which let us then construct
a high wall to protect our ships and ourselves.

Let us fit in the wall several tight gates,
wide enough that chariots can pass.

340

Just outside the wall let us dig a deep trench
to stop horses and soldiers who may approach
if ever the Trojans bring the war to us."

Nestor's plan drew support from all the kings.

Meanwhile on Ilium's heights the Trojans gathered,
worn and exhausted, outside Priam's doors,
where first to speak was sensible Antenor:

345

"Hear me, Trojans, Dardanians and allies!
Let me tell what my heart has bid me say!
We should turn Helen with all her possessions
over to Atreus' sons. The solemn oath
is shattered. We broke it so ruin is sure
to follow unless we do as I propose."

350

When Antenor returned to his seat, up stood
dashing Paris, husband of fair-haired Helen,
and responded to Antenor's proposal:
"Antenor, I no longer like your counsel.
I am sure you could give better advice,
but if you truly believe what you just said
the immortal gods have taken your senses.
Now, I may as well inform all the Trojans
that I refuse to give away the woman,
but I am willing to give up her possessions
that I brought from Argos, plus more of my own."

355

360

Paris sat down after he spoke, and then rose
his father, Dardanus' scion, godlike in council,
who addressed his people, a thoughtful speech:
"Now hear me, Trojans, Dardans and allies!
Let me disclose what I think we should do.
Have your dinners as usual now at home,
but first station sentries who will stay alert.
Toward dawn Idaeus should go to the ships.
He should tell Menelaus and Agamemnon
the offer of Paris who started this war.
Let him also propose that, if they are willing,
both sides pause the dreadful war until the dead
have burned. Then we shall fight if we must till heaven
grants victory to one or the other side."

365

370

375

The listening Trojans gladly obeyed.
They dispersed to their homes and ate their dinners.
Toward dawn Idaeus walked to the ships,
where he found the Greek army holding council

380

astern of Agamemnon's vessel, and there
the herald stopped in their midst to announce:

"Sons of Atreus, all you finest Achaeans! 385

Priam and his Trojan nobles sent me
to tell you—in case you will hear me out—
the offer of Paris, who caused this war.

Helen's possessions, which Paris' spacious ship
carried to Troy—would he had died before then—
are yours to take, plus more of his own,
but glorious Menelaus' former wife
will stay—though most Trojans want her to go.

My people also inquire if you are willing
to pause this frightful war so that the dead
may burn. Then if we must we shall fight till heaven
grants victory to one or the other side." 395

Idaeus finished and the Greeks sat silent
for a long time until Diomedes spoke:
"No one should take from Paris any possession,
even Helen. A fool would realize
the noose of death has tightened around Troy." 400

Achaea's sons shouted to show they agreed
with what horse-breaking Diomedes said.

Lord Agamemnon then addressed the herald: 405
"Idaeus, you have heard the Greeks' reply.
Their decision pleases me as well,
but we do not oppose burning the corpses
for no one can begrudge the dead their fire.
A speedy pyre is the dead warrior's due,
so let Hera's husband Zeus witness my pledge." 410

With that he raised his scepter to all the gods,
while Idaeus retraced his steps to Ilium.
Trojans and Dardanians sat in assembly,
all gathered again, waiting for his return.
When Idaeus arrived he spoke his message 415

so all could hear. Then some men hurried out
to collect corpses and others gathered wood.

Argives streamed away from the sea and beached galleys,
some searching for bodies, others for fuel.

420

As Helios lit the fields anew, rising
out of Ocean's deep-flowing currents
and up the sky, the two armies converged
to identify the corpses, a grim task.

They brought water and wiped away the gore,
then sorrowfully lifted the dead to wagons.

425

Priam forbade weeping, so silent Trojans,
inwardly aching, heaped bodies on their pyre,
watched flames consume them and returned to Ilium.

On the other side, meantime, the Argives,
equally pained, loaded their pyre with corpses.
When all had burned they returned to their ships.

430

In early twilight, before Dawn arose,
a company of Greeks gathered at the ashes
and covered them with a single funeral mound,
rising above the plain. Greeks then built a wall
with tall ramparts to shield both ships and men.
They constructed heavy, tight-fitting gates
wide enough for a chariot to pass.

435

Along the wall's outside they dug a ditch,
deep, wide, and in it bedded sharpened stakes.

440

While busy Greeks were winding up their tasks
the gods seated by thunderbolt-hurling Zeus
studied these massive works of bronze-clad men,
and the earth-shaker Poseidon spoke first:
"Father Zeus, does the broad earth hold no man
who subordinates his plans to us immortals?
Have you not noticed that the neglectful Greeks
have made a wall and deep ditch at their ships
while offering us gods no sacrifice?"

445

450

The fame of these works will spread as far as Dawn
and men will forget what Apollo and I
labored to build for warrior Laomedon."

The cloud-gatherer Zeus sighed and rejoined:
"Broad-chested earth-shaker, what do you mean? 455
The Argive works could threaten another god,
one who lacks your uncommon fury and strength,
but yours is the fame that will spread like Dawn.
See here, a day will come when all the Greeks
have sailed their ships to the fair land of their fathers. 460
Then you will crumble their wall into the sea,
cover the shoreline anew with deep sand,
and so the proud Greek wall will disappear."

While the immortals were conversing thus,
the sun sank and the Greeks finished their work. 465
They slaughtered oxen, then dined in their camps.
Offshore lay galleys from Lemnos, wine-laden,
bountiful gift of Jason's son Euneus,
whom Jason fathered with Hypsipyle.
For the private use of Atreus' two sons, 470
he sent fortified wine, a thousand jars,
but most Greeks traded for ordinary drink.
Some warriors traded bronze, others iron,
others cured oxhides, others living oxen,
still others female slaves. A banquet laid, 475
long into the night the Achaean army
feasted, as did Trojans and allies in Ilium,
though in the dark Zeus plotted ruin for them,
loosing ominous thunder. Fearful, pale,
they poured wine on the ground and not one dared 480
to drink till he had spilled libation to Zeus.
At length all men lay down and took sleep's gift.

THE TIDE TURNS AGAINST THE GREEKS

When Dawn spread her saffron robe above the earth,
Zeus brandished a thunderbolt and assembled the gods
on deep-furrowed Olympus' topmost peak
where every god listened as he declared:

"Hear me, now, all you gods and goddesses,
as I announce what I expect of you.

5

No immortal, whether female or male,
should attempt to thwart my will. You all must
acquiesce so I may attain my goals.

If I happen to catch one of you choosing

10

to aid either side, Trojan or Greek,

I will drive you off Olympus in shame
then cast you down to hazy Tartarus,

far away where earth's chasms are most deep,

15

where the thresholds are bronze, the gates iron,

as far below Hades as earth is below heaven.

Then you will see how my might exceeds yours.

Or challenge me now so every god may learn!

Suspend from heaven chains forged of strong gold,
then all you gods and goddesses pull your hardest.

20

No matter how you toil, you will be unable
to drag your master Zeus from heaven's vault.

On the other hand if I should choose to tug
I could drag earth itself, even the seas.

I could bind that chain around Olympus' peak,

25

hanging earth and all her seas in the air.
So great is the difference between you and me."

Zeus's deathless listeners remained silent,
dumbstruck by the frightful threats he had made.

Breaking the stillness goddess Athena spoke: 30

"Our father, most exalted son of Cronus,
how well we know your invincible strength,
but still some of us do pity the Greeks
who may fulfill a dismal fate and perish.

We will sit out the war as you command, 35
but if needed we may give the Greeks advice
so not all will die because of your wrath."

The cloud-gatherer Zeus smiled and replied:
"Cheer up, dear third-born child. I did not, just now,
voice all of my thoughts, and I will be gentle with you." 40

Zeus hitched up a team that had bright bronze hoofs,
fast-moving legs, and flowing golden manes.

He clothed his own body in gold, took a whip
of woven gold, then climbed aboard his chariot.

At a single lash stroke the two horses flew 45
between the star-sprinkled heavens and earth
where they reached spring-laced Ida, mother of beasts.
On Ida's peak, Gargarus, Zeus's domain,
the father of gods and men halted his team,
unharnessed and blanketed them in dense mist. 50
Radiating glory, he sat atop the peak
to watch the Trojan city and Greek ships.

The Greek warriors ate their morning meal,
quickly strapped on armor, then left the camps.

At the same time Trojans armed throughout Ilium. 55
They were fewer but no less resolved to fight,
protecting their threatened children and wives.
All gates opened, the army trotted out,
every foot soldier and charioteer.

When the two forces collided on the plain
they clashed with shields, spears and fury of warriors
armed in bronze. Columns of studded shields
clanged together, almost drowning out
the human sounds of exultation and groan—
of killers and men whose blood reddened the ground. 60

While Dawn was still brightening sacred day,
missiles felled many a man on each side
but when Helios had climbed the sky to his zenith,
the father made ready his golden balance.
On each pan he placed a portent of doom, 70
one side for the Trojans, one for the Greeks.
When he lifted the scale the Greek side dropped.
The Greeks' fate sank toward the bountiful earth
while that of the Trojans rose toward heaven.
Zeus thundered from Ida's peak and sent a blaze
of lightning flashing toward the Greeks, who watched,
terrified, till dread turned each of them white. 75

Idomeneus dared not stay, nor Agamemnon,
nor did the two Ajaxes, Ares' comrades.
Achaea's warder alone remained, Nestor,
one of his three horses hit by an arrow 80
that Helen's princely husband Paris shot
in the place where the animal's mane began
at the base of the skull, the most lethal wound.
The horse reared, screaming, arrowhead in his brain,
then fell and rolled. His teammates were terrified
till Nestor cut the unhurt horses loose
with his sword, but as he did Hector's team
and bold charioteer came bearing down. 85
Hector then would have stilled the old man's life
had not Diomedes spotted the Greek.
He shouted as loud as he could for Odysseus:
"Odysseus, Zeus-descended son of Laertes,
do not flee with your tail turned like a coward!
Watch out or you may feel a spear in your back! 90
95

Come! Let us drive that lunatic off Nestor!"
Odysseus did not hear Diomedes' call
because he had already reached the Greek ships.

Tydeus' son strode to the front ranks alone,
stood by the team of Neleus' aging son 100
and spoke to him, urgently, concerned:
"Old man, these younger ones would test you in battle
but your strength has faded as years add up,
your horses are slower, your comrades gone.
So come, climb on my chariot and see 105
how these Trojan horses master the plain,
whether they dart to chase or run to escape.
I took them from Aeneas, spreader of panic.
Let aides care for your team while you and I
drive these two on the Trojans so that Hector 110
may know a spear's fury when I hold it!"

The expert horseman Nestor was not unwilling,
so he handed his team over to aides,
strong Sthenelus and gentle Eurymedon,
then joined Diomedes on his chariot. 115
Nestor took the glossy reins in one hand,
lashed the team with the other, and soon neared Hector.
The son of Tydeus promptly launched a spear
that missed Hector but not his chariot driver,
Eniopeus, Thebaeus' worthy son, 120
struck deep in the chest as he worked the reins.
He fell from the deck, the team drove over him.
Then and there his vigor and soul departed.
Grief for his comrade flooded Hector's heart
yet, sorrowful though he was, he left him there 125
and sought another driver. Not for long
was his team driverless, as Hector soon found
Archeptolemus, Iphitus' valiant son,
who climbed aboard, taking charge of the horses.

The Trojans would then have suffered a grave loss
and fled to Ilium like so many lambs, 130

but the father of gods and men intervened.
He thundered and hurled a bolt of bright lightning
that grounded before Diomedes' horses.

Noxious burning sulphur fumes arose. 135

The frightened horses shied against the yoke.
The waxy reins escaped Nestor's skillful hands
and he, heart trembling, said to Diomedes:
"Son of Tydeus, let us turn the team and run!
You know that we have no defense against Zeus,
who is giving glory to yonder man
today—perhaps to us another time,
but no man alive can frustrate Zeus's will,
for his might far exceeds that of any mortal."

Answering Nestor Diomedes said: 145

"The things you say, old man, are surely true,
but nonetheless pain my heart and my soul,
for Hector is sure to brag among the Trojans:
'The son of Tydeus ran from me to his ships.'
So he will boast, and then may earth swallow me." 150

Nestor, still driving the team ahead, replied:
"Son of fierce-hearted Tydeus, you speak nonsense!
Even if Hector should call you a coward
the Trojans and Dardans will not believe it,
nor will the wives of all the valiant warriors,
vigorous husbands you have laid in dust." 155

That said, the old man turned the strong-hoofed team
back through the fray, as Hector and Trojan warriors
shouted, pouring on missiles that promised pain.

Tall, bright-helmeted Hector strained his voice: 160
"Son of Tydeus! The Greeks have honored you
with privileged seat, choice cuts and full cups.
No more! Now they will treat you like a woman!
Slink off, coward! I will never withdraw,
nor you climb our wall. Not one Trojan woman
will board your ships before I hand you your fate!" 165

Hector's mockery tempted Tydeus' son
to wheel his team, face the Trojan and fight.
Three times his valiant heart wrestled his mind.
Three times Zeus sent thunder from Ida's peak,
his sign to Trojans that victory's tide would swell. 170
Hector bellowed at the top of his lungs:
"Trojans, Lycians and close-fighting Dardanians!
Be men, my friends! Call up your valorous zeal!
Zeus nodded his head to guarantee me
great glory and victory over Achaeans. 175
The arrogant fools have built themselves a wall
that will be worthless against my assault.
Trojan teams will easily leap their ditch.
Then, when I have come near the wooden vessels,
do not forget to bring me crackling fire. 180
I will burn the fleet and slaughter the men
while smoke confuses them beside their ships."

Hector then turned to his horses and said:
"Xanthus, Podargus, Aethon and sleek Lampus! 185
Repay the care you received during the days
when Eëtion's daughter Andromache
brought mellow grain and placed it where you could eat,
with tempered wine to drink if you should choose.
She often tended you before she fed me! 190
Run hard for me so I may seize a prize,
Nestor's shield, whose renown extends to heaven
because it is pure gold, even the handles.
I will also take from Diomedes' shoulders
the splendid breastplate that Hephaestus forged. 195
If we can kill those two I think the rest
will board their ships and sail when night falls."
Hector's exuberance so annoyed Hera
that she trembled, causing Olympus to quake.
She approached her brother Poseidon and said:
"O broad-chested earth-shaker, are you not
sorrowful to see the Achaeans destroyed?
At Helice and Aegae they brought you gifts,

abundant, fine. You must want the Greeks to win.
If all of us who back their cause should choose
to thwart the Trojans and thunderous Zeus,
he would just sit alone on Ida and pout." 205

The powerful earth-shaker disagreed:
"Hera, what irresponsible things you say!
I have no heart to obstruct Cronus' son,
even if others joined me. He is too strong." 210

While the two gods conversed with one another
the space between the Argive fleet and wall
grew filled with horses and shield-carrying men,
men that a mortal, Ares' equal, had routed—
Priam's son Hector after Zeus gave him glory. 215
Hector would then have set the ships afire
had not Hera encouraged Agamemnon
to take quick action and hearten his men.
He raced along the Greek vessels and camps,
sturdy hands holding a regal purple cloak. 220
He stopped by Odysseus' capacious ship,
lying mid-fleet. From there a voice could reach
the camps of both Telamon's son Ajax
and Achilles—the outer bounds of the ships.
The Greeks entrusted their flanks to those two. 225

Agamemnon's voice carried throughout the army:
"For shame, Greeks! Disgraceful, for all your talk!
What happened to your claims of bravery
when you were mouthing idle boasts in Lemnos—
while eating plenty of roasted straight-horned oxen
and drinking bowl after brimful wine-bowl—
that you would each face one or two hundred Trojans?
Yet now we are all no match for even one,
Hector, who soon enough will burn our fleet. 230
Father Zeus! Was there ever another great king
whom you blinded to folly and robbed of glory?
I did not overlook any of your altars 235

during my hazardous voyage to Ilium.
I burned oxen's fat thighs on every one
so as to hasten Troy's defeat and sack.

240

By now, Zeus, I am down to a single prayer:
allow these men to take flight and escape,
do not let Trojan warriors slaughter the Greeks!"

Agamemnon's falling tears moved the father
to nod—his pledge the Greeks would not all die.
He dispatched the most prophetic bird, an eagle,
claws gripping the fawn of a fleet-footed doe.

245

The bird dropped the fawn beside Zeus's altar,
where Greeks made sacrifices to the god.

250

After they saw the eagle Zeus had sent
their spirits rose and they counterattacked.

Not one of all the countless Argive fighters
was quicker than Diomedes to drive his team
across the ditch, facing the enemy.

255

The first Trojan he killed was the warrior
Agelaus, turning his horses to fly.
Diomedes planted a spear in his back,
between the shoulders, drove it out his chest.
He toppled off his chariot, armor clanging.

260

Behind Diomedes rushed Atreus' two sons,
the valiant Ajaxes on their heels.

Next charged Idomeneus with his lieutenant
Meriones, murderous Ares' peer,
then Eurypylus, Euaemon's stalwart son.

265

The ninth man was Teucer, bow strung tight.
He stayed behind Ajax Telamon's oxhide.
Ajax guarded Teucer until the archer
could choose a target and step out to shoot.
Every man he chose fell, losing his life,
while Teucer ran—like a child to its mother—
back to his brother Ajax's great shield.

270

Who were among the Trojans that Teucer killed?

Ormenus, Orsilochus, Ophelester,

Daetor, Lycophontes, Melanippus,

275

Chromius and Polyaemon's son Amopaon,

all felled in a row on the fruitful earth.

Agamemnon watched, delighted to see

how Teucer's shafts dropped Trojan upon Trojan,

so the monarch singled him out for praise:

280

"Teucer, dear friend, Telamon's son, chief of hosts,

shots like those will make you a hero to Greeks

including the father who nurtured you

in his halls although you are his natural child.

You send honor to him, far off as he is.

285

Now let me make a promise I will keep:

if aegis-keeping Zeus and Athena grant

that I may sack Ilium's wealthy citadel,

I will give you—before all but myself—prizes,

like tripods, or a chariot and team,

290

or a woman who will visit your bed."

The archer Teucer answered Agamemnon:

"I spur myself, glorious Atrides, so you

need not. While I am able I will never

slow down. Since we started this drive toward Ilium

295

I have chosen targets to kill with my bow.

I have released eight arrows with long barbs

and each plunged in a warrior youth's flesh.

Still, I have not managed to shoot that mad dog."

Teucer drew and let another shaft fly,

300

aimed at Hector, the man he yearned to hit.

It missed Hector but struck Gorgythion,

one of Priam's noble, favored sons,

born to a wife that Priam brought from Aesyme,

lovely Castianeira, shaped like a goddess.

305

As when a garden poppy's ripe seed-head

bows to the sudden weight of summer rains,

- so then Gorgythion's heavy helmet sagged.
Teucer's bowstring launched yet another shaft
straight for Hector, the archer intent on killing. 310
Apollo steered it so that it missed the prince
but his fresh charioteer, Archeptolemus,
took the point in his chest beside a nipple.
The Trojan tumbled under the horses' hoofs
where strength and spirit abandoned his corpse. 315
Grief for his charioteer stabbed Hector's heart
but he gritted his teeth and left his comrade.
He called his nearby brother Cebriones
to take the reins, and Cebriones obeyed.
Hector jumped down from the chariot's deck, 320
shouting wildly, picked up a heavy stone
and made for Teucer, determined to strike back.
The archer pulled another shaft from his quiver
and fit its notch to his deadly bowstring,
but as he drew to where the collarbone parts 325
a man's chest from his neck—a vulnerable place—
Hector struck right there with the jagged rock.
The string snapped and the archer's hand grew numb.
He fell to his knees, letting the bow drop.
Ajax did not neglect his fallen brother, 330
but quickly placed his great shield to protect him.
Two trusted comrades reached beneath the shield—
Alastor and Echius' son Mecisteus—
lifted Teucer and took him back to the ships.
- The Olympian set Trojans' zeal ablaze 335
and they herded the Greeks to the deep ditch.
Hector was out front, divine might infused.
Much like a hound chasing a lion or boar,
when the dog nips his quarry's fast-fleeing heels—
hips and thighs, too, if it should pause for breath— 340
so Hector harassed and drove the long-haired Greeks,
killing the rearmost, one by one as they fled.
When they had clambered through the ditch and stakes—
the Greeks who were not among the slaughtered—
they stopped, waiting alongside their fleet, 345

men calling to each other and the gods,
arms uplifted as each desperately prayed,
while Hector wheeled his horses back and forth,
his face like a Gorgon or Ares himself.

The sight filled the white-armed goddess with pity
and after watching she addressed Athena:

"Daughter of Zeus, do the two of us no longer
care if Greeks are slaughtered, as once we did?
They face a grisly fate, thrashed and destroyed
by one man whose rampage is too much for me,
Priam's son Hector, who will not relent."

350

355

The gleaming-eyed goddess Athena replied:
"I wish that furious man would lose his life,
subdued on Trojan soil by Greek warriors!"

But my father does not care how I feel.

360

He always offends me and thwarts my will.

He has forgotten all the times I rescued
his son when Eurystheus' trials had worn him down.

If Heracles wept, I was the one that Zeus
sent away from heaven to protect his boy.

365

If only I had known what I know now,
when Eurystheus sent Heracles below
to fetch Hades' dreaded dog from the gloom,
I would not have saved him from Styx's fast current.

Now Zeus ignores me. He has bowed to Thetis
who kissed his knees, took his beard in her hand
and begged him bring honor upon her child.

370

Zeus will call me his bright-eyed darling again
but as for now, get a team ready to drive
while I head for aegis-keeper Zeus's halls
where I will dress in armor so we may learn
whether Priam's son, bright-helmeted Hector,
is pleased to see us among the warring ranks,
or whether vultures and dogs will gorge on Trojan
muscle and fat that we fell near the ships!"

375

380

White-armed goddess Hera quickly obeyed.
She harnessed a team of horses in gold frontlets,

Hera, the first-born goddess, Cronus' child.
Athena, aegis-keeping Zeus's daughter,
slid to her father's floor the supple robe
that her immortal hands had labored to make. 385
She dressed in cloud-gathering Zeus's tunic,
then the armor she wore in doleful war.
She mounted the bright chariot and grasped a spear,
heavy, strong, with which she could level legions
if they should anger mighty Zeus's daughter. 390
Hera then touched her whip to the horses' backs.
Heaven's gates swung open, kept by the Hours,
wardens of steep Olympus and all the skies,
who cause dense clouds to form or fall away. 395
The goddesses drove the horses through those gates.

Father Zeus, watching from Ida, grew livid
and roused Iris, his gold-winged messenger:
"Iris, stop them before they confront me,
for it would not be pleasant if we should clash. 400
Let me announce for them how it would turn out.
I would cripple their horses in the traces,
throw the goddesses off, then smash the chariot,
and not until ten years had come and gone
will wounds that my thunderbolt caused be healed. 405
By that Athena would know she fought her father,
but I am not quite so angry at Hera
since it is her custom to flout my will."

The gale-footed messenger Iris set out,
flying from Ida's peak to fulfill her mission. 410
At furrowed Olympus' outermost gates
she stopped the pair and told them what Zeus had said:
"Where do you race? Why the furious hearts?
Cronus' son will not let you aid the Greeks.
He has promised to accomplish this threat: 415
he will cripple your horses in their traces,
throw you both out of this chariot, then smash it,
and not until ten years have come and gone

will wounds that his thunderbolt caused be healed.
Thus would Athena know she fought her father,
but Zeus is not quite so angry at Hera
since it is her custom to flout his will.
But it will go badly for you, Athena,
if you dare raise a spear at mighty Zeus."

420

Swift-footed Iris then vaulted away
while Hera, despondent, addressed Athena:
"Sadly, daughter of Zeus, I can no longer
agree to defy Zeus for mortals' sake.
Some of them will perish, others will live,
however it happens. We must leave Zeus
to judge the Trojans and Greeks as he sees fit."

425

430

Having said that, she turned the chariot back
to where the Hours unhitched the fair-maned horses,
tied them beside an ambrosia manger,
and propped the chariot's shaft against a wall.
The two goddesses sank on golden couches,
heavy-hearted among the other gods.

435

Zeus drove his chariot off Ida'a peak
and sped to Olympus where the gods were gathered.
The illustrious earth-shaker released the horses,
covered the chariot with linen and stowed it.
Far-thundering Zeus walked to his golden throne
and each footfall caused Olympus to shudder.
A safe distance from Zeus, Athena and Hera
were sitting. Neither goddess spoke to him,
but he knew what they were thinking and said:
"Why are Athena and Hera so quiet?
You are not tired from winning glory in battle
against the Trojans that you dislike so much.
You knew that my might and invincible hands
could not be checked even by all the gods.
You two succumbed to tremors in your limbs
before you came near the war and its trials.

440

445

450

Now I will frankly tell you this simple truth:
if you had felt my thunderbolt you would not
now be here on Olympus, the immortals' home."

455

Athena and Hera fumed inwardly,
as they sat together wishing Troy would fall.
Athena was still, did not voice a word,
angry but stung by her father's rebuke. 460
Hera could not restrain herself and said:
"What pointless talk, fearsome son of Cronus!
We know quite well how strong and tireless you are
but nonetheless we grieve for the Greek spearmen
who may die fulfilling a dismal fate. 465
So while we will sit out the war as you ask,
we will continue to advise the Greeks
so all do not perish because of your wrath."

The cloud-amasser Zeus said in reply:
"When Dawn sheds light on me tomorrow morning, 470
your ox-like eyes, Hera, may want to watch
as I devastate the Achaean army.
Mighty Hector will not relent from war
until he stirs Peleus' son to leave his ships,
the day the armies fight at the ships' sterns, 475
their bloody combat over fallen Patroclus.
That is my will. I do not care if you
object and wander sulking past the bounds
of earth and seas, where Iapetus and Cronus
are exiled with never a gleam from Helios,
never a pleasant breeze: Tartarus' depths. 480
Even if you should roam there I would not
be moved, since I consider you a nuisance."

White-armed Hera did not answer her husband.

The sun's final ray sank beneath Ocean's surface
and black night covered the grain-giving land. 485
The Trojans regretted day's end, but the Greeks

- had prayed time and again for darkness to come.
Hector assembled the Trojans and allies
near the river's eddies, away from the ships,
in a field where the corpses had been cleared. 490
- The men dismounted, stood on the ground and listened
as Zeus-loved Hector addressed them while waving
a ten-foot spear. At the shaft's end there gleamed
a bronze head secured by an iron ring. 495
- He brandished that spear while he spoke to his men:
"Attention, Trojans, Dardanians and allies!
By now we might have destroyed the ships and Greeks,
and could enter windswept Ilium triumphant,
but darkness falls too soon as if to protect 500
the Achaeans and their crafts on the beach,
for we must now respect the dark of night.
Let us prepare dinners, after our teams
are unhitched from their chariots and fed.
Fetch from the city fat oxen and sheep. 505
- Bring also drink from your stores of honeyed wine,
bring bread from your halls. Gather enough wood
so that through the dark until Dawn's first glow
we may burn fires that illumine even heaven,
lest under night's cover the long-haired Greeks 510
might sneak away, sailing the sea's broad back.
They will not board their ships without a fight.
Some who escape will digest bronze at home,
having been hit by Trojan arrow or lance
as they climbed aboard. Henceforth men will fear 515
to set Ares upon the horse-taming Trojans.
Heralds, go! Carry my orders through the city!
Let our blossoming boys and gray-haired men
station themselves all around the ramparts.
Let girls and women remain in their homes, 520
burning bright fires. Let sentinels be placed
in case of a raid while we are camped afield.
All Trojans should do the things I command.
That will be enough of my counsel for now
but I will address you again as Dawn appears. 525

I hope—I pray—that Zeus and all the gods
will drive those deadly curs away from Troy,
them whose sinister fleet the fates brought here.
So let us watch over ourselves through the night.

At morning's earliest gleam we shall arm
and waken Ares behind the hollow ships.

530

Then I shall find out whether Diomedes
will drive me from the fleet, or whether I
will take his bloodied armor off his corpse.

Tomorrow will show his worth against my spear.

535

He may win, but I foresee him in the front ranks,
stricken prone among many dead comrades
while Helios mounts the sky. Thus will I
become ageless and deathless for all time,
honored the same as Apollo and Athena,

540

after tomorrow brings Argive defeat!"

The Trojan ranks applauded when Hector finished.
They took the sweaty yoke pads off their horses
and tethered each animal by its chariot.

They then led fat oxen and sheep from Ilium,
carried honeyed wine they had stored away,
brought bread from their halls, gathered wood to burn
and offered the gods generous sacrifice.

545

Wind carried burnt flesh's savor to heaven,
but some immortal gods did not partake.

550

They chose to forgo because they detested Troy,
Priam and Priam's legions armed with ash spears.

Reflecting on tomorrow's battle, the Trojans
sat through the night among numberless fires.
As when stars near a new moon dot the night sky—
shining their brightest, piercing windless air—
and illuminate every headland lookout
as if the ether beneath heaven had split,
unveiling all the stars to amazed shepherds,
so then, between Xanthus' streams and Argive ships

555

560

Trojan fires blazed, casting their glow to Ilium.
A thousand fires dotted the plain, each ringed
by fifty warriors crouched in firelight.
Their horses quietly chewed barley and oats,
tethered beside the chariots, awaiting dawn.

565

GREEK CHIEFS IMPLORÉ ACHILLES

While Trojans tended their watch fires, Argives sensed Panic, bone-chilling comrade of Flight, and even the most valiant men wavered.

As when two winds, Zephyrus and Boreas, blow in from Thrace, clashing, swirling together, and ominous waves heave the fish-filled sea, then crest, loading the beach with seaweed mounds, so the heart in every Greek chest churned. 5

Agamemnon's spirits sank, abject, and he told his clear-voiced heralds to seek out all Argive chiefs and proclaim an assembly, to meet immediately by the front lines. 10

The men sat heavy-hearted as Agamemnon rose and shed tears like a dark-water spring whose rivulets seep from a cliff's sheer face. 15

Between sighs he addressed this speech to the kings:
"Ah friends, leaders and chiefs of the Argive force,
Cronus' son Zeus lured me here by deceit
the day he gave his nod and promised me
that I would bring Troy's plunder home to Achaea.
He has retracted that vow, forcing us
to go home dishonored, many men lost.
That has become almighty Zeus's will, 20

though he has destroyed countless other cities
and could surely wield his power to fell more.
Now then, every Greek should do as I say.
Steer to our fatherlands aboard our ships
since we will never walk the streets of Troy."

25

Agamemnon's listeners remained hushed.
They sat wistful and silent a long time
till Diomedes eventually spoke:
"Atrides, I will be first to dispute you—
my right under custom of our assemblies.
You have impugned my valor before these men,
implying that I lack courage to hold out.
Greeks both young and old should resent such insult.
When it comes to you Zeus's mind is divided.
He gave you the scepter, hence respect,
but did not use his power to give you courage.
What could possess you to think Achaea's sons
are valorless and meek as you imply?
If you have convinced yourself to go home,
by all means go! You know the way. Your ships
lie there, the many that you brought from Mycenae.
But other Achaeans will remain here longer
until we plunder Troy, even if your men
should board ship and flee to their fatherland.
Sthenelus and I will fight till the end
of Ilium, the goal a god sent us to reach."

35

40

45

The sons of Achaea broke into applause
in admiration of what Diomedes said.
Then horseman Nestor rose among them to speak:
"Son of Tydeus, you are mighty in battle
and you are best in council of all your age.
There is no Greek who would belittle your words,
or contest them, yet there is more to be said.
You are young enough to be my son,
even my last born, yet you wisely counseled
the Argive kings, and what you said was meet.

50

55

But now I, who presume upon being elder, 60
will say what little remains. Let no man
disregard my words, not even Agamemnon.
Lawless, homeless and brotherless is he
who causes conflict among his own people.
So let us now respect the darkness of night 65
and ready dinners to eat. Then let sentries
stand guard at the ditch we dug outside our wall.
All our young men should be there, and meanwhile
you, high king Atrides, act like a leader!
It befits you to give the elders a feast. 70
Your camps overflow with wine that Greek vessels
daily ferry across the sea from Thrace.
You should be the host since many pay you homage.
During the feast obey whichever king
devises what we so badly need: a plan, 75
both wise and bold. Enemies camp near our ships,
burning a thousand menacing watch fires.
Tonight determines whether we hold this beachhead."

The men paid close attention and obeyed.
Armed sentries mustered, then marched outside the gates, 80
captained by Nestor's son Thrasymedes,
Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, sons of Ares,
Meriones, Aphareus, Deipyrus
and Lycomedes, Creon's manly son.
Behind each of the seven sentry leaders 85
a hundred younger men marched, spears in hand.
The sentries halted halfway across the ditch,
kindled fires and sat in firelight to eat.
Atreus' son led selected elder men
to his camp where he offered a splendid feast. 90
The men savored all pleasures set before them.
When desire for food and drink had faded
the first among them to propose a plan
was Nestor, whose counsel had never failed.
He now addressed the elders thoughtfully: 95
"Son of Atreus, most glorious king Agamemnon,

I speak first but obey you, who have so many
under your rule, and Zeus entrusted to you
the scepter and laws, so that you may lead.
Hence you ought to listen, as well as talk,
and give ear to one whose heart commands him
to speak, though only you can effect his counsel.
So I will tell you what I think is best.
No other man has devised counsel better
than what I have advocated for some time,
Zeus-sprung king, since the quarrel over Briseis
when your men went to Achilles' camp and took her
without our support. Indeed, I myself
spoke against it uselessly. Your proud heart
prevailed, so you disrespected our best man,
honored among gods, and took his prize, but now
we must consider how to reconcile,
perhaps apologize or offer gifts."

Chief warrior Agamemnon answered Nestor:
"Old sir, nothing you say about me is false.
I do not deny my folly. That man alone
is worth several armies. Zeus loves him
and now destroys our ranks to swell his honor.
Reckless anger and passion blinded me
but now I propose gifts to make amends.
Let me tell you what I will give Achilles:
ten talents of gold, seven new tripods,
twenty burnished kettles, a dozen horses
bred for racing. Their feet will win choice prizes.
Achilles will never lack fruitful lands
or lustrous objects made of coveted gold,
thanks to all the races those teams will win.
I will also give him seven skilled women
from Lesbos. After he took that island
they were my spoil and are the fairest females.
I will give them, also the woman I took,
Briseus' daughter. I will swear an oath
that I never slept or made love with her

as men and women ordinarily do.

I will give all those things right now, then if
immortals allow us to plunder Ilium,
he may fill his vessel with gold and bronze.
When Argive warriors divide the spoils
he will be the first to choose women—twenty—
the most beautiful after Argive Helen.

135

Then, on return to Argos' fertile lands
I will honor him as I do Orestes,
the son I reared to manhood and great wealth.
Three fine daughters remain inside my palace,
Laodice, Chrysothemis, Iphianassa.

140

He may choose his favorite to take away
to Peleus' home, and I will give a dowry
such as no man ever gave with his daughter:
I will give seven well-placed citadels,

145

Enope, grassy Hire, Cardamile,
sacred Phera, Anthea's waving meadows,
lovely Aepea and vine-rich Pedasus,
all near sandy Pylos, close to the sea.

150

Each contains men whose herds and flocks abound.

Those men will pay him tribute due a god
and will carry out laws made under his scepter.

155

I will give all those things to assuage his anger.
Hades alone would prefer to rage on,
implacable, the most detested immortal.

Achilles should respect me, a higher king,
a king who has lived much longer than he."

160

Nestor responded to the high commander:
"Atreus' most glorious son, Agamemnon,
no one would scorn the gifts you offer Achilles,
so let us quickly have our delegates

165

visit Peleus' son's vessels and camps.

I will select the men, who should all consent.

The leader shall be Phoenix, whom Zeus loves,
then shrewd Odysseus, the taller Ajax,
and heralds Odius and Eurybates.

170

Now we should wash our hands and remain silent
while we spill wine, praying that Zeus takes pity."

The chosen men approved what Nestor had said
and let heralds bring water to rinse their hands.

175

Then younger warriors filled flagons with wine,
a brimming cup for each of the envoys.

After they poured libations they drank the rest,
then left Agamemnon Atrides' camp.

As the men left, Nestor encouraged them—
fixing his eyes on each, but mostly Odysseus—
to do their best and sway the son of Peleus.

180

The envoys walked beside the boisterous sea,
beseeching the god who grasps and shakes the earth
to let them persuade Aeacus' grandson.

Soon they reached the Myrmidon ships and camps.

185

They found their man relaxed, playing a lyre,
beautifully wrought with a bright silver bridge,
a prize he won when he took Eëtion's city.

He plucked the lyre and sang of famous warriors.

Silent, Patroclus sat opposite him,

190

listening while Achilles finished his song.

The party stepped forward, Odysseus first,
and stood before Achilles. He rose, surprised,
lyre in hand, then started toward his guests.

Patroclus rose, too, when he saw the men.

195

The fastest Greek runner greeted them warmly:

"Welcome, friends! You must have serious need.

Despite my anger, you are my best-loved Greeks."

Achilles led his visitors farther in
and offered them red-draped couches as seats.

200

He spoke to Patroclus waiting nearby:

"Menoetius' son, bring out a larger bowl,
mix livelier wine, polish a cup for each
of these friends who are welcome under my roof."

Patroclus followed Achilles' commands.

205

He set beside the fire a large meat board

on which he placed back cuts of sheep and goats,
then the rack of a hog, fat, fully grown.
Automedon held the meat. Achilles carved,
spearing the chunks he cut on long spits. 210
Menoetius' son had built a crackling blaze.
After the flames died and the fire burned low,
Achilles arranged the spits above the coals,
using the sea's briny gift to season the meat.
As pieces were cooked, he spread them on platters. 215
Patroclus handed bread around the table,
in baskets, but Achilles dealt out the meat,
then seated himself opposite Odysseus
against a wall. He ordered a burnt offering,
and faithful Patroclus cast meat on the embers. 220
The men welcomed the mouth-watering fare.
When they had dispatched all hunger and thirst,
Ajax nodded at Phoenix. Odysseus noticed,
filled his cup with wine and toasted Achilles:
"Hail Achilles! We have not lacked a fine feast 225
either in Agamemnon Atrides' camp
or in your lodge now—a truly splendid banquet.
But these men and I did not come here to feast,
Zeus-descended warrior. Tomorrow's ruin
is our concern. We doubt that we can save 230
our ships unless you join us in defense.
Trojans are camped too near our ships and wall,
they with their allies who have come to fight us.
They burn a thousand fires and do not expect
to stop their advance till they destroy the fleet. 235
Zeus sent them an omen in eastern skies—
lightning—and might expanded Hector's chest.
Hector trusts Zeus and has become indifferent
to lesser gods. The man is near insane.
He prays that holy Dawn will soon appear 240
because he expects to hack off our ships' prows,
burn the hulls to ashes, and as for the Greeks,
bewildered by smoke, he will slaughter us.
I deeply fear that heaven will fulfill

- his boastful threats, and that our fate will be
to die at Troy, far from Argos' horse pastures. 245
Come! If you care about Achaea's sons,
worn as they are, fight off the Trojan onslaught!
There will be no cure if it should happen, no means
to remedy the loss, so now, tonight, 250
you should resolve to prevent the black day.
Remember what your father Peleus said
when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon:
'Goddesses Athena and Hera may give
you power, but only you can make certain
your heart is kind. Be magnanimous. 255
If you avoid pointless quarrels you will earn
the Greeks' respect, old and youthful alike.'
Perhaps you have forgotten Peleus' advice.
Let go your stubborn anger! Agamemnon 260
has offered gifts worth more than the grudge you keep.
If you will hear me out I will describe
the treasures Agamemnon has promised you:
ten talents of gold, seven new tripods,
twenty burnished kettles, a dozen horses 265
bred for racing. Their feet will win choice prizes.
You as their owner will never lack rich lands
or lustrous objects made of coveted gold,
thanks to all the races those teams will win.
He will also give you seven skilled women 270
from Lesbos. After you conquered that island
they were his spoil and are the fairest females.
He will give those, also the woman he took,
Briseus' daughter. He will swear an oath
that he never slept or made love with her 275
as men and women ordinarily do.
He will give all those things right now, then if
the immortal gods permit us to plunder Ilium,
you may fill your vessel with gold and bronze.
When Argive warriors divide the spoils 280
you will be the first to choose women—twenty—
the most beautiful after Argive Helen.

When he returns to Argos' fertile lands
he will honor you as he does Orestes,
the son he reared to manhood and great wealth. 285
Three fine daughters remain inside his palace,
Laodice, Chrysothemis, Iphianassa.
You may choose your favorite to take with you
to Peleus' home, and he will give a dowry
such as no man ever gave with his daughter. 290
He will give seven well-placed citadels,
Enope, grassy Hire, Cardamile,
sacred Phera, Anthea's waving meadows,
lovely Aepea and vine-rich Pedasus,
all near sandy Pylos, close to the sea. 295
Each contains men whose herds and flocks abound.
Those men will pay you tribute due a god
and will carry out laws made under your scepter.
He will give all those things to placate your rage.
But if your heart is set on hating him 300
despite his gifts, the many other Greeks
merit your pity. As though you were a god,
they will honor you and the glory you win
when you kill Hector, sure to approach you,
frenzied, confident that he has no match 305
among all the Achaeans our ships brought here."

Fast-running Achilles replied at length:
"Zeus-sprung Laertes' son, cagy Odysseus,
I must forthrightly deny your request,
declaring what my position will be, 310
so your comrades will not stand up and harp.
Besides, I hate like Hades' gates a man
who says one thing but hides the honest truth.
So I will tell you what is on my mind.
I do not plan to obey Agamemnon 315
or any Achaean, since I no longer want
to fight hostile men as I have these years.
Fate is the same whether one fights or no.
The coward's reward is the same as the hero's.

- Death awaits both the diligent and lazy. 320
I have little to show for all my struggles,
often risking my life to wage fruitless war.
Consider a bird that brings her unfledged young
all that her beak can catch. She receives no thanks.
So I have kept watch many sleepless nights 325
and spent as many days in bloody strife
against men who fight to protect their women.
With my ships I have laid waste a dozen cities
near Troy, another eleven on foot.
I seized fabulous treasure from each city
and brought it all back here to Agamemnon, 330
Atrides, who waited safely near his ships.
He kept most himself and shared very little.
He gave each of the noblest kings a prize.
All retain their prizes—except me. 335
He seized mine, kept her, the wife I slept by
and cherished. What reason is there to fight Trojans?
Why did he gather and bring this army here?
Was it not on account of fair-haired Helen?
Are there only two mortals who love their wives, 340
Atreus' sons? Many honorable men
would love and protect their wives just as I did,
even though she was spoil that my lance won.
Now that he has seized her and dishonored me,
he should not waste his efforts. I will not bend. 345
So then, Odysseus, you, the other kings
and he had better devise a different plan.
Without me he has labored mightily
to build a wall around which he dug a ditch,
deep and wide, armed with bristling sharp stakes, 350
but murderous Hector's onslaught will roll
over that. During the years while I fought,
Hector never ventured far from his walls,
just to the oak outside the Scaean Gates.
But one day he lingered and barely escaped me. 355
Now I no longer want to challenge Hector,
so I will sacrifice to heaven come Dawn,

drag my ships to the sea and load them up.
Then if you look, you will be able to see,
very early, the fish-filled Hellespont
and my cheerful oarsmen rowing their ships. 360

If the earth-shaker should give us good weather,
I will make fertile Phthia the third day.
There is much still there that I left behind,
in addition to the gold, ruddy bronze, 365
gray iron and shapely, slim-waisted women
that I will take now. What Agamemnon gave,
Agamemnon arrogantly took back.

Repeat to him all that I have declared,
in public, so other men may be forewarned
in case he tries to dupe another Greek, 370
unscrupulous as he is. He would not dare
look me in the eye, although he has no shame.
I will not join him in counsel or action.

He cheated and degraded me, and yet
he cajoles me. Enough of him! Let him drift
for fate to find, since Zeus has stolen his senses. 375

He is worthless and I reject his bribes.
I would also reject ten or twenty times
as much if he should manage to get it somewhere,
even Orchomenus' wealth, or that of Thebes, 380

Egypt, where earth's richest treasure is walled up
behind a hundred gates, each with two hundred
guards who burst out driving chariots and teams.
If he gave gifts countless as grains of sand 385

I would not do what Agamemnon wants
until he has repaid my grief full measure.
I will not marry any daughter of his.
Even if she had beauty like Aphrodite's
and skills that equaled gleaming-eyed Athena's, 390

I would not wed her. Let her take another,
someone more kingly and more like her father.
If heaven should permit that I get home,
old Peleus himself will find me a wife.
Hellas and Phthia have abundant women, 395

some daughters of chiefs who defend their cities.

I may choose one of them to share my bed.

Often, while here so long, I have felt the urge
to woo and wed a lifelong wife and bedmate,
then savor the wealth that Peleus has amassed.

400

I consider my life to be worth more

than plunder of Ilium's crowded citadel—
which was at peace till Achaea's sons arrived—
more even than held inside the marble walls
of Phoebus Apollo in rocky Pytho.

405

A man may take oxen and sheep as spoils,
and he may take tripods or chestnut horses,
but no man can regain his life by plunder,
or any means, once he has breathed his last.

My mother, the goddess Thetis, told me
that fate offers me two pathways to death:
if I stay and fight around the Trojan city,
I will die soon but my fame will never die,

410

yet if I return home to my fatherland
I will forfeit glory, but gain long life

415

and not encounter death till many years pass.

I am convinced that you and your men, too,
should sail home, because you will not see the end
of lofty Ilium. Far-thundering Zeus

will shelter her while your armies perish.

420

Now then, noblest Achaeans, you must go
deliver your report—your duty as elders—
so that others may form a strategy
to rescue themselves, the ships and the Greek soldiers
that line the shore, since your present plan is useless

425

as a way to defend, because of my anger.

But Phoenix may stay here with us, sleep,
board my ship and sail for our fatherland
tomorrow, if he should choose to go there."

Achilles' speech left his visitors silent,
stunned by how firmly he denied their request.
After long stillness old Phoenix spoke out,

430

eyes moist because he feared the worst for the Greek fleet:
“Achilles, if going home is what your heart
commands—and you will not first save the ships
from Hector’s fire because you are still angry—435
I could not remain here and watch you go.
Your father Peleus assigned you as my charge
when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon.
You were a child who knew nothing of war
or councils where warriors show wisdom and polish.440
Peleus sent me to teach the skills you needed
to be a man of both action and words.
So I am not disposed to leave you now,
dear child, not even if a god should offer
to strip away my age and restore the youth445
I had when I left Hellas’ beautiful women
to flee my father, Ormenus’ son, Amyntor.
He was furious to lose a fair-haired mistress
that he favored above his slighted wife,450
my mother, who clasped my knees and begged me
to lure the woman away from the old man.
I obeyed and seduced her. My father learned,
and called down curses, beseeching the Furies
never to let me sire a son, his grandson,455
to sit on his knees. Other gods heard his prayer,
Zeus and dread underground Persephone.
I would have killed the man with one sword stroke
but an immortal god reminded me
how my countrymen abhorred patricide,460
so I avoided that odious brand.
After that I could no longer bear
to linger in my furious father’s halls,
though there were many brothers and other kinsmen
who begged me again and again to stay.465
Droves of goats and shambling, curly-horned oxen
they slaughtered. Many a full-grown fat hog
they roasted over Hephaestus’ hot flames.
Jar after jar of strong spirits they drank.
They guarded me carefully for nine nights.470

They took turns as sentries, and steadily fed
two fires, one in the courtyard's colonnade,
the other outside my chamber's entranceway.
But when the tenth night's darkness blanketed me,
I forced apart my chamber's tight-fit doors,

475

slipped out and jumped over the courtyard fence
with ease, unnoticed by any guard or servant.

Then I roamed across Hellas' entire breadth
until I reached Phthia, mother of goats.

Its king Peleus warmly took me in.

480

He loved me as a father would his son—
an only son—and he presented me
all sorts of treasures. He also made me lord
to rule the Dolopes at Phthia's fringes.

I reared you, shaped the man you are, Achilles,

485

lovingly. You avoided other men,
whether at feasts or lesser palace meals,
until after you had sat on my knees

where I would carve you meat and give you drink.

How many times you drenched my tunic and chest,
spitting out wine, mischievous child that you were.

490

I endured that for you and much besides
because I knew the gods denied me a boy
to call my own. You, Achilles, are the son
I raised to look after me when I grow old.

495

But now you hurt me, for it is not right
to keep your heart so hard. Even gods will bend,
they who have more honor and might than you.

They reward humble prayer, burnt sacrifice,
fat's savor and poured libation. They relent
if begged even by one who sinned against them.

500

The Prayers are all-powerful Zeus's daughters,
albeit lame, wrinkled, unsteady of gaze.

They struggle to dog the steps of Ate
but she is faster and stronger, so all mortals
fall victim to her as she travels the earth,
spreading folly. The Prayers come behind.

505

When a transgressor welcomes Zeus's daughters

- they hear his plea and readily assist,
but if a remorseless sinner rejects them
the Prayers approach Cronus' son and request
that Ate hound that man to make him pay. 510
So, Achilles, let the daughters of Zeus
sway you as they have other noble men.
If Agamemnon had not offered you gifts,
but instead continued to berate you,
I would not urge you to banish your rage,
no matter how badly the Greeks need help,
but he will give many gifts now, more later. 515
He has sent the finest warriors to plead,
selected because they are the Greeks you love,
more than any. You should not spurn their words,
not now, though no one faulted your rage before.
We all know the fame of ancient warriors,
men who weakened and yielded to bitter anger
but later accepted gifts and overtures. 520
I can recall events, now long past,
that I will recount for you, for all these friends.
The Curetes and war-loving Aetolians
fought—slaughtered each other—at Calydon,
Aetolians struggling to save their fair city,
Curetes determined to utterly raze it. 530
Gold-throned Artemis backed the Curetes
because she had received no offerings
from Oeneus who sacrificed to most gods,
neglecting just that one of Zeus's daughters. 535
The foolish Aetolian king ignored her,
so Zeus's angry daughter, the archer goddess,
summoned from her forests a white-tusked boar
which roamed and pillaged Oeneus' fine orchards.
He uprooted mature trees, strewing the ground
with their fruitless apple blossoms and roots. 540
Oeneus' son Meleager killed the beast
after recruiting from several cities hunters
and hounds, for no small group could take that monster
whose fierceness laid many a man on pyres. 545

Then Artemis caused conflict to erupt
over the dead pig's head, his bristly hide.
Both the Curetes and Aetolians sought those.

As long as Ares inspired Meleager,
the Curetes took heavy losses and failed
to breach Calydon's walls despite their numbers,
but Ate curbed Meleager, stirring anger
that would poison the most prudent man's breast.

She made his heart rage at his mother Althaea
and he withdrew to his wife Cleopatra,
daughter of lovely, long-legged Marpessa
and Idas who was the earth's mightiest man,
in his time—he even raised his bow to fight
Apollo because of the long-legged girl.

When Cleopatra was first born her parents
called her their kingfisher because Marpessa
had led a life as sad as that bird's wail
during the time Apollo possessed her.

Meleager stayed with his wife and seethed
because of curses his mother brought to bear
through vengeful prayers after he killed her brother.
Repeatedly she pounded the fertile earth,
begging dread Persephone and Hades—
while kneeling and flooding her bosom with tears—
to cause Meleager's death. The mist-cloaked Furies
heard and responded, despite her unkind heart.

They caused thunderous crashes on Calydon's gates
and walls. The elders then urged Meleager—
through Aetolian priests who could bend the gods—
to rise and save them, then take his reward:
from the richest lands in lovely Calydon
they bade him select his own choice domain
of fifty acres, half planted in vineyards,
the other half low-lying, cleared cropland.

Even the old king Oeneus begged Meleager.
The monarch entered his son's high-roofed chamber,
rapped at the door, clasped Meleager's knees.

Meleager's sisters and at last his mother
begged him, to no avail, then close comrades—
oldest friends, most trusted friends, best-loved friends—
but no one could sway his obdurate heart—
until his house was stormed when Curetes swarmed
over the wall and set the city afire.

585

At that point Meleager's beautiful wife
implored him and reminded him how much
horror there is when warriors take a city:
they slaughter the men, burn the buildings down,
lead away the children and slender wives.

590

That history softened Meleager's heart.
He rose, clothed his body in gleaming armor
and soon prevented Aetolian ruin.

595

He relented, though no longer offered gifts,
and saved his people without recompense.

Do not delay as he did, nor let heaven
persuade you to, my boy. It would be harder
to save ships already fired. There are still gifts
to take, and Greeks will honor you like a god.
If you refuse the gifts but choose to fight later,
you will receive less honor and reward."

600

605

The fast runner Achilles answered him:
"Dear, Zeus-nurtured Phoenix, I will receive all
the honor I need directly from Zeus,
here by the hollow ships, as long as breath
remains in my chest and these legs can run.
Now I will tell you something else to think on:
I am unmoved by warnings and laments
in Agamemnon's cause. You had best avoid
supporting him unless you would lose my love.
You should abuse the man who abuses me
and be my kingly equal, honored alike.
Let others report my response while you sleep
here on a soft couch, and when Dawn appears
we will consider whether to sail or stay."

610

615

Achilles nodded at Patroclus, a signal
it was time to prepare Phoenix's bed,
time for the others to leave, but Ajax,
Telamon's godlike son, stood up and spoke:
"Able Odysseus, Laertes' Zeus-sprung son,
let us go. It does not seem that our mission
will bear fruit, so let us promptly inform
the elders, unwelcome though the news will be.
They are awaiting our return. Achilles
has let his heart grow wild with furious hate
and will not respect closest comrades' requests,
we who honored him above all other Greeks.
Ruthless! Even a man whose brother is killed,
or son, will accept ransom as full payment.
Then the killer may stay among his people,
the victim's kinsman-avengers satisfied
by ransom. But what a pitiless, hardened
heart you have in your chest—because of a girl,
just one! We offer you seven more fair,
much besides them, so soften your heart
and respect us who came under your roof
to plead for every Greek. We thought ourselves
to be comrades you would surely listen to."

The fastest Greek sprinter replied to him:
"Ajax, Telamon's son, captain of armies,
I will agree with all that you just said,
but my heart swells and boils whenever I
recall how Agamemnon publicly wronged me
as if I were a stranger, not respected.
So you should go and deliver my answer
because I will not consider fighting now,
not until Priam's battle-crazed son Hector
reaches the Myrmidon vessels and camps
after he burns your ships and slaughters your men.
When he nears my own lodge and unburnt crafts,
I will stop Hector however hard he fights." 655

The visitors each chose a two-handled cup,
poured libations and walked back along the fleet.

Patroclus told comrades and servant maids
to ready a thick bed right away for Phoenix. 660
They did as he asked. Maids covered the couch
with soft fleeces and fine-napped linen sheets.
The old man lay down and awaited Dawn.
Achilles sought out a secluded space
where he slept with a woman he brought from Lesbos,
Diomede, who had a beckoning smile. 665
Across the camp Patroclus slept beside
shapely Iphis, Achilles' gift to him,
captured at Scyros, Enyeus' citadel.

When the envoys reached Agamemnon's camp
Achaea's waiting sons raised golden cups,
crowding around to greet and question them. 670
Chief warrior Agamemnon spoke first:
"Tell us, far-famed Odysseus, Achaea's pride,
will Achilles protect our ships from fire,
or did his stubborn rage make him refuse?" 675

Daring, brilliant Odysseus replied:
"Most glorious chief commander, Agamemnon,
he will not quiet the anger that still
consumes him. He rejects you and your gifts.
He said you should devise another way
to defend the Argive army and ships. 680
He threatened, upon arrival of Dawn,
to drag his crescent ships into the sea.
He said that we should convince all of you
to sail homeward since you will not see the end
of lofty Ilium. Far-thundering Zeus 685
will shelter her while our armies perish.
Those were his words as my comrades will confirm,
Ajax and the pair of trustworthy heralds.

Achilles asked old Phoenix to sleep there
so he too may sail for his fatherland
if that should be his wish when morning comes."

690

Odysseus finished, and all the men were silent,
jarred by the stern tenor of his report.

The warriors sat bewildered a long time,
until at last Diomedes spoke up:

"Most glorious chief warrior Agamemnon,
I wish you had not begged Peleus' son
and offered him all those gifts. Haughty before,
now you have caused him to grow even more so.

700

Let us leave him be. He may well set sail,
or he may remain and fight again whenever
either a god or his own heart so commands.

Now every man should do as I say.

Get sleep, but first the heart-warming delights
of food and wine that stoke valor, build strength.
Then, when Dawn's red fingers first appear,
lead your men, your teams, away from the ships,
drive yourself to the forward ranks and fight."

705

All the assembled Achaean kings concurred,
approving the speech Diomedes gave.
Each then poured libation, walked to his camp,
lay down and welcomed sleep's soothing gift.

710

A NIGHTTIME MISSION

Alongside the ships most Achaean chiefs welcomed rest and slumbered the night through, but Agamemnon Atrides' eyes remained wide open, his mind too frantic for sleep.

As when Hera's thunderbolt-casting husband causes torrential rains or ceaseless hail, or snow that spreads its flakes over the land, covering even a blood-soaked battlefield, so constant were the sighs that Agamemnon heaved from deep inside his quivering heart.

Whenever he glanced at the Trojan plain he paled to see the thousand fires before Ilium, to hear the flutes' sounds, the countless men's voices, but when he surveyed the Greek army and ships, he tore clumps of hair from his head by the roots, prayed and offered them to Zeus between groans.

In time a plan emerged in his heart as best: seek the counsel of Nestor, Neleus' son, in case the old man could help forge a strategy that would avert ruin of the Argive force.

He rose and slipped a tunic over his chest, tied fine sandals beneath anointed feet, wrapped himself in a tawny lion's skin that hung from shoulders to ground, then chose a spear.

5

10

15

20

Similar worries gripped Menelaus. 25

Sleep could not close his eyes because he fretted
about the Greeks who, for his sake, had crossed
treacherous waters and waged relentless war.
He covered his broad back with a leopard's hide,
lifted a visored helmet to his head, 30
and took an ash-handled spear in strong hands.

He set out intending to wake his brother—
Argos' sovereign, honored there like a god—
but found him already awake, alert, armed.

Agamemnon welcomed sight of his brother, 35
Menelaus, who was the first to speak:

"Where are you heading? To meet some of your men
willing to spy on Trojans? I would surely
doubt that any would undertake that mission
and slip close enough to observe our foes. 40
Only the boldest man would do that tonight."

Prince Agamemnon replied to his brother:
"You and I need a plan, Menelaus,
a strategy that somehow will preserve
our soldiers and ships. Zeus has turned against us. 45

He remembers only Hector's sacrifices.
I have never seen, nor have I ever heard of,
one man who in one day contrived such harm
as Zeus-backed Hector has caused the Argive force.

Neither of Hector's parents is divine, 50
yet he has performed feats that Greeks will recall
for ages, so deadly have been his deeds.

Now, summon Idomeneus and both Ajaxes.
Run softly past the ships. I shall go
arouse Nestor in hopes he will agree 55
to join us at the sentries and help command them.

They will gladly obey him because his son
has been their chief, he and Idomeneus' aide,
Meriones, the two we put in charge."

War-primed Menelaus answered his brother: 60
"How then should I carry out your request?

Should I stay near those three, waiting for you,
or run back here after I summon them?"

The chief warrior Agamemnon replied:

"Stay with them or we might lose track of each other
by taking different paths through the camps.

65

Use a gentle voice to waken the men.

Call each by his father's family name.

Be respectful and do not seem arrogant.

We should be deferential, we for whom

70

Zeus ordained ill fortune when we were born."

Agamemnon gave his brother that charge,
then went himself for Nestor, the host's shepherd.

He found the old man camped beside his ship
on a soft bed. His armor lay at his side,

75

as did his shield, two spears, glittering helmet
and a polished belt that the elder warrior

buckled on whenever he armed for war

and led his army, mind unimpaired by age.

Propped on elbows, he lifted his head

80

and accosted Atreus' son, a sharp challenge:

"Who goes there, alone, among the camps and ships,
through this dark night when other mortals sleep?

Are you seeking some lost mules or comrades?

State your purpose! Do not sneak up on me!"

85

Agamemnon, chief of warriors, replied:

"O Nestor, Neleus' son, pride of Achaea!

It is Agamemnon, who more than all men

Zeus will burden with constant toil while breath
remains in my chest and my knees still bend.

90

I come to you because I am so distraught

about the war that sleep will not close my eyes.

Fear for the Greek army has clouded my mind,
leaving me bewildered as if my heart

would fly from my chest. My arms and legs tremble.

95

Since sleep has passed you by as well, would you
come with me to the sentries' posts and see

if they have given over to fatigue,
fallen asleep and forsaken their watch?
Hostile men are near. For all we know
some may mount an attack despite the dark."

100

Gerenian horseman Nestor replied to him:
"Most glorious chief warrior Agamemnon,
certainly Zeus will not grant everything
Hector prays for, and I believe that Hector
will suffer much more than we, once Achilles
purges his heart of cold tenacious rage.
But yes, I will join you. First let us wake others:
Tydeus' spear-famed son, Odysseus,
the swifter Ajax and Meges, Phyleus' son.
At the same time send another man to summon
Cretan Idomeneus, and tall Ajax
whose ships are beached farthest away of all.
Although I love and respect Menelaus
I must denounce him—even if you may bristle—
for lying asleep when he should share our tasks.
He ought to meet with all our highest chiefs,
to hearten them. We have desperate need."

105

110

115

In response the warrior chieftain said:
"Other times I would have joined your reproach,
as he has often been slow to do his part—
not because he is indifferent or lazy,
rather he thought it right to await my commands.
Even so, tonight he was up before me,
and I sent him to fetch the men you named.
Let us now part and meet soon outside the gates
among the sentries where I choose to hold council."

120

125

Gerenia's master charioteer replied:
"Good, then no man will disobey your brother
when he urges Greeks to fight and gives them orders."

130

Nestor drew a tunic over his chest,
tied fine sandals beneath anointed feet,

and wrapped around his shoulders a red cloak,
double sheepskin with thick wool still on the hide.

He selected a sturdy, bronze-pointed spear,
then strode briskly along the Achaean ships.

Odysseus, shrewd as Zeus, was the first man
that horse-master Nestor aroused from sleep,
calling his name. The voice filled Odysseus' mind
till he emerged from where he slept and barked:
"Why do you wander beside the ships alone
through sacred night? Could there be need so great?"

135

140

Old Nestor quietly responded to him:
"Odysseus, Zeus-descended Laertes' son,
be calm. The Greeks face a predicament.
Come with me now, and let us collect another
to help decide whether we fight or sail."

145

After he heard that, resourceful Odysseus
shouldered a shield and followed the other chiefs
to Tydeus' son Diomedes. They found him
outside his camp, ringed by armor and men,
all asleep, heads resting on shields. Their spears
stood upright, butts in the ground, their bronze tips
glowing like father Zeus's bolts. The great warrior
slept on the shaggy hide of a wild ox,
embroidered cloth folded under his head.

150

Nestor strode straight to his side, aroused him
with a jab of the foot, then chided the hero:
"Wake up, Tydeus' son! Why slumber the night through?
Can you not see the Trojans there on the plain,
camped such a short distance away from our ships?"

155

160

Diomedes shook off sleep, sprang to his feet,
found his voice and shot a response at Nestor:
"You are tireless, old man. You never rest.
Are there not other, younger Achaean sons
tonight who could awaken all the kings
scattered throughout the camps? Nothing slows you!"

165

Gerenia's expert horseman replied to him:

"All that you say is surely apt, my friend.

Apart from my own noble sons are soldiers
aplenty, and any could make these rounds,
but we Greeks are under an urgent threat.

170

We are as if poised on a knife-blade's edge
that separates survival from dismal death.

So run to tall Ajax and Phyleus' son Meges,
since you are younger than I. Arouse them!"

175

Diomedes wrapped his shoulders in lion skin,
tawny, brushing the ground, chose a long spear,
then waked the two men and brought them to Nestor.

As the high kings gathered among the sentries
they did not discover chief watchmen asleep,
but all wide awake and clad in full armor.

180

As when weary dogs keep watch by a sheepfold,
ears alert for a forest predator

that may creep down the mountain only to find
the sleepless dogs have waked and warned their masters,
so then sleep eluded the sentries' eyes
as they kept night vigil over the plain
in case they might hear or see Trojans advance.

185

The old man was pleased and encouraged the watchmen,
addressing them in a kindly, guarded voice:

190

"Remain alert, dear sons! Do not let drowse
overcome you and leave us easy prey."

That said, he sped from the ditch, followed by
all the Argive kings he had summoned to meet,
also his glorious son and Meriones,
two youths other chiefs invited to council.

195

After they climbed from the ditch they took seats
in a small clearing between piles of corpses,
the place where mighty Hector had turned back
from slaughtering Greeks when night shrouded the field.
The men sat there and exchanged a few words

200

before the expert horseman Nestor spoke:

"Ah friends, is there a man I can persuade
to be bold enough to approach the Trojans,
in case he might kill some at their camp's edge,
or perhaps even overhear Trojan talk

205

about what plans they make, whether they intend
to remain where they camp, not far from the fleet,
or to withdraw, having battered us so badly?

210

Such daring things he might do and return here,
unscathed. Then his fame would spread wherever
mortal men live, and he would receive rich gifts.

Think how many rulers are camped with our ships.

Each would give the hero a coal-black ewe

215

and suckling lamb, prized possessions indeed.

He would be honored at every feast."

For a time the men quietly weighed the challenge,
till fierce fighter Diomedes spoke up:

"Nestor, my warrior's spirit impels me
to penetrate the enemy encampment,
and if another man would come along,
we could support each other, be more bold.

220

If two go, one may be first to recognize
an opportunity. A single man
would carry but half the wits of a pair."

225

Several offered to join Diomedes.

Both Ajaxes wanted to go, Ares' comrades,
as did Meriones, Antilochus
and Menelaus, Atreus' spear-famed son.

230

Odysseus also wanted to infiltrate
the Trojans, prompted by his ever-bold heart.

Chief warrior Agamemnon announced:
"You are a delight to me, Tydeus' son!

Choose whichever companion you prefer,
the man you consider best for the task.

235

The most effective man should certainly go
rather than another of lesser skill,

though the latter be a king of higher rank."

He feared his brother might demand the mission.

240

Valiant warrior Diomedes spoke again:

"Since you tell me to choose a man myself,

I cannot name another than Odysseus,

a man whose heart and spirit are daring, ready

for any challenge. Besides, Athena loves him,

and if caught in the worst predicament

we would both return owing to his wiles."

245

Brilliant, bold Odysseus then said to him:

"Do not dwell on either my virtues or faults,

because these Argives remember them well.

Let us go, for night is passing, dawn nears.

The stars have marched forward through much of their course—

two thirds—and but one third of darkness remains."

250

The two men buckled their terrifying armor.

Thrasymedes presented Tydeus' son

255

a double-edged sword—the king's was by his ship—

a shield, and fitted on his head a helmet,

bull's hide with no crest or plume, a "skullcap"

they call it, such as young warriors often wear.

Meriones gave Odysseus his bow, arrows

260

and sword, then placed a cap over his head.

The cap was a network of leather straps,

dried hard, on top of which the gleaming teeth

of a white-tusked boar were set, evenly spaced

with flawless skill. The center was felt-lined.

265

Ormenus' son Amyntor wore that cap

until Autolychus took it as spoil.

He gave it to Cytherian Amphidamas,

and he made it a gift to his guest, Molus.

He gave it to Meriones, his son,

270

who now slid it down on Odysseus' head.

After the two men were dressed and equipped

they set out, leaving the other chiefs behind.

A night heron flew past toward the east, an omen
Athena sent. Their eyes could not discern it 275
through the murky night, but they heard its call.
Odysseus, cheered by the bird, prayed to Athena:
“Hear me, daughter of Zeus, you who have stood
with me through all manner of toil! Keep watch
now as I roam, goddess, befriend me again, 280
and grant that I make it back to my ships
after feats that Trojans will not soon forget!”

Next the great warrior Diomedes prayed:
“Now hear me too, tireless daughter of Zeus!
Stay by me as you stayed with my father Tydeus 285
at Thebes when he went there as Achaean envoy,
leaving his bronze-armed comrades by Asopus,
and brought the Cadmeans offers of friendship.
Ambush was their response, and he slaughtered all,
thanks to you, goddess, who stood by his side. 290
So now be willing to follow and protect me!
I will sacrifice to you a wide-browed heifer
that no mortal has tamed or put under yoke,
and I will sheath her horns in gold for you!”

Pallas Athena heard the two men’s prayers. 295

After they beseeched mighty Zeus’s daughter,
they moved into the darkness like two lions,
past heaps of corpses clad in bloodied armor.

Hector, meantime, had not let the boldest Trojans
relax, but called together his best men, 300
omitting none of his leaders or chiefs,
and when they had gathered he challenged them:
“Who will accomplish a mission for me,
earning a gift? His reward will be certain:
I will give a chariot and team of horses, 305
the finest ones at the Achaean ships,
to any daring warrior who wins glory
by sneaking near the ships to listen and learn

whether they are under guard as before,
or whether the Greeks, beaten down by us,
are planning to take flight and lack the will
to watch through the night, worn as they must be."

310

The Trojans sat in silence after he spoke.
Among them was Dolon, son of Eumedes,
a respected herald rich in bronze and gold.
He was a homely man but his feet were fast.
He had grown up, a lone boy with five sisters.
Now he rose among the Trojans and said:

315

"Hector, my manly heart encourages me
to creep beside the ships and spy on Greeks,
but first lift your scepter high. Swear an oath
that my reward will be the wrought bronze chariot
and horses that Peleus' son Achilles drives.
Then I will perform the mission you propose.
I will pass through the camps until I reach
Agamemnon's ship, where the chiefs are likely
to form their plan, whether to flee or fight."

320

325

Hector raised his scepter and swore an oath:
"Let my witness be Hera's husband Zeus:
no other man shall drive that team of horses!
I think you will glory in them forever!"

330

That was Hector's oath, and Dolon was inspired.
He strung his bow, hitched it over a shoulder,
covered his body in a gray wolf's hide
and cap of weasel skin, took a sharp spear,
then loped toward the ships, but it was not his fate
to return from there and report back to Hector.

335

Soon after Dolon left the Trojan fires,
moving swiftly along a path, Odysseus
sensed his approach and whispered to Tydeus' son:
"Diomedes, a man heads here from their camp!
I wonder if he comes to spy on our ships,

340

or maybe to plunder the corpses here.
We should at first allow him to pass us by,
a short distance, then we will dash and seize him
if we can run fast enough to chase him down.
We should stay between his camp and our fleet,
about a spear-cast distant, to keep him trapped."

345

The pair lay down among the bloody corpses
beside the path while Dolon hastened past.
When he had run beyond by a furrow's length—
a furrow plowed by mules, better than oxen
at forcing a plow through dense, fallow land—
the two raced after. He heard footfalls and stopped.

350

His heart hoped Trojan comrades had come
on Hector's orders to find and bring him back,
but when the pair were a short spear-cast away,
he knew them as enemies. His legs scrambled
in flight but the two Greeks took up the chase.

355

As when a duo of sharp-toothed wild dogs
relentlessly bear down on a young doe
in a grassy dell, blocking her way to safe woods,
so then Diomedes and Odysseus
kept themselves between their prey and his army.

360

When they had driven him near the Greek sentries,
close to the ships, Athena invigorated
the son of Tydeus, lest some other Greek
steal the glory by taking Dolon first.

365

Diomedes sprinted forward and said:
"If I reach you with this spear, I do not think
you will long escape unwelcome death!"

370

He cast the spear but aimed to miss the Trojan,
so the spear's deadly point passed Dolon's shoulder
and stuck in the ground. He halted, terrified,
trembling so hard his teeth chattered aloud.

375

His skin blanched as the two breathless Greeks
took hold of his arms. Tears flowed as he said:
"Spare me! Let me live! At home are treasures,

gold, bronze and iron, all splendidly wrought,
from which my father will give you priceless ransom 380
if he hears I am alive at the Greek ships!"

Resourceful Odysseus softly replied:
"Rest easy, do not worry about death,
but talk to me and speak the truth as you do.
Why did you go from your camp toward the ships 385
during the dark of night when most mortals sleep?
Was it to plunder corpses of fallen men?
Or did Hector order you here to scout
our fleet? Or did you appoint yourself a spy?"

Dolon's limbs quaked as he answered Odysseus: 390
"Hector led me to do a foolish thing.
Achilles' magnificent smooth-hoofed team
and chariot would be my rewards, he promised,
if I would take cover in night's darkness
and creep near our enemies where I might learn 395
whether they yet stand watch at the swift ships,
or whether they think themselves beaten by us,
and now have laid plans to flee, lacking the will
to maintain a wearisome watch all night."

Wily Odysseus grinned and said to Dolon: 400
"Well, you have your heart set on quite a reward,
Aeacus' grandson's horses, difficult
for any mortal man to drive and control,
except Achilles, who is a goddess' son.
Come now, answer some questions truthfully. 405
Where was Hector when you left to come here?
Where had he put his armor? Where his horses?
Where were the men sleeping? Where keeping watch?
Tell me the Trojans' plans. Do they intend
to march toward the ships or the citadel, 410
happy to withdraw having bested us?"

Eumedes' son Dolon answered Odysseus:
"I will tell you the truth about those things.

Hector and all his closest counselors
were laying plans at Ilus' monument, 415
away from the army. As for sentries, sir,
none were assigned to watch or guard the camp.
There are so many fires that all men are needed
to tend them. They stay awake—watchful—by calling
back and forth. That is not true of our allies, 420
who sleep content to let Trojans keep watch,
since allies have no wives or children nearby."

Odysseus followed with another question:
"Are the allies mingled with Trojan men,
or are they sleeping apart? Tell me that!" 425

Eumedes' son Dolon replied to him:
"Yes, sir, I will answer you honestly.
Carians and Paeonians are camped by the sea,
also Lelegians, Cauconians and Pelasgians.
Toward Thymbre are Lycians, fierce Mysians, 430
Phrygian charioteers and horsetail-plumed Maeones.
But why do you ask me so many questions?
If what you want is to meet more enemies,
Thracians are closest, a newly arrived force
including a king, Rhesus, Eioneus' son, 435
whose horses are the grandest I ever saw,
fast as the wind, whiter than new-fallen snow.
His chariot is crafted of silver and gold.
His gold armor is a wonder to see.
It appears too rich for a mortal man, 440
more suitable for a deathless god to wear.
Now, either take me to your fast-sailing ships
or leave me here in bonds I cannot untie,
so that you may go and see for yourselves
whether I have spoken the truth or not." 445

Diomedes shot him a frown and said:
"Do not even suggest you might escape
even if all you have told us is true.
If we should release you, let you go free,

you might later return to the Greek ships
either for espionage or open warfare,
but if you lose your life at my hands now,
you will cause no more trouble for Argives." 450

As Dolon reached for Diomedes' beard
and begged, the warrior struck his soft neck,
a whistling sword stroke that severed both tendons.
The head—still talking—rolled aside in dust.
The Greeks removed Dolon's weasel-skin cap,
took his wolf's skin, strung bow and long spear.
Odysseus lifted those four things toward the sky,
as spoils for Athena, and prayed to her: 460
"May these delight you, goddess, our gifts to you
alone among immortals. But now, goddess,
guide us where the Thracians sleep with their teams!"

After he prayed, holding the spoils aloft,
he left an unmistakable landmark
by tying them high in tamarisk saplings,
to find them easily when they returned.
The two then made their way through gory armor
and soon they came upon the Thracian force. 470
Weary Thracians slumbered, their battle gear
cleaned and arranged beside them on the ground,
three neat rows, and near each man stood a team.
Rhesus slept in the center close to his horses,
tied by reins to the top of their chariot's rim. 475
Odysseus spotted him first and showed his partner:
"There is the king, Diomedes, and there the horses
that Dolon described to us before we killed him!
Call up your fiercest fury! This is no time
to tarry for armor. Release the teams,
or I will, if you want to slay the men." 480

Athena heated Diomedes' temper
and he slaughtered right and left, answered by groans
for each sword swing till blood reddened the ground.

As when a lion that finds an unwatched flock
springs on sheep or goats with murderous intent,
so Tydeus' son attacked the Thracian warriors
until a dozen lay dead. Wily Odysseus
moved each man that Diomedes had struck,
dragging them off to one side by their feet,
because Odysseus believed that Rhesus' team
would drive easier if they were not forced
to step on men that they had known alive.

When Diomedes reached the Thracian king
he took away a thirteenth valued life. 495

The king gasped as a dream appeared in his head:
Athena guiding Tydeus' son through the night.
Meantime Odysseus untied the king's horses,
used reins to tie the team together, and drove
using his bow in place of the whip that he
had neglected to take from the Thracian's chariot. 500

He whistled so Diomedes would follow
but Diomedes tarried a while and eyed
the chariot standing in strewn battle gear.
Should he lift it, or drag it out by its shaft,
or should he take still more Thracian lives? 505

While Diomedes debated, Athena
approached, stood at the warrior's side and counseled:
"Son of lion-hearted Tydeus, return
to the hollow ships before you are attacked
when some other god arouses the Trojans!" 510

Diomedes recognized the goddess' voice
and mounted one of the team. Odysseus smacked them
with his bow and they flew toward the Argive ships.

Apollo had not maintained a blind watch,
so he saw Athena with Tydeus' son. 515
Furious, he entered the Thracian campsite
and waked Thracian counselor Hippocoön,
Rhesus' brother. He rose from where he slept,

saw the empty space where the horses had stood 520
 and heard slaughtered men gasping for last breath.

He wailed, shouting his dead brother's name.
 A clamorous throng of curious Trojan warriors
 gathered so they could see the terrible deeds
 that two men nearing the Greek ships had wrought. 525

At the place where the Greeks had killed Hector's spy,
 Odysseus halted the fast-running horses.

Tydeus' son jumped down for the bloody spoils,
 handed them to Odysseus, then remounted
 and clucked to the team. They willingly raced 530
 as if their hearts yearned to be at the ships.

When Nestor heard their distant hoofbeats, he said:
 "O friends, leaders and chiefs of the Greek force,
 am I deceived or do I speak the truth?

Thunder of fast horses falls on my ears! 535
 If only Odysseus and Diomedes
 are driving round-hoofed Trojan horses here!
 But I have a nagging fear that they have suffered
 under Trojan assault—two of our best."

He was still speaking as the pair drove up. 540
 Both jumped to the ground where happy comrades
 greeted and welcomed them with shouts of approval.
 The old horseman Nestor wondered aloud:

"Tell me, honored Odysseus, Achaea's glory,
 did you seize this team inside the Trojan camp? 545
 Or did you meet a god who gave them to you?

The horses you drive are radiant as the sun!
 I have often mixed with Trojans in battle,
 though I am old, rather than stay at my ship,
 but I have never seen or heard of such horses,
 so I would say you received them from a god. 550
 After all, you two are favorites of Zeus
 and Zeus's daughter, gleaming-eyed Athena!"

Canny Odysseus responded to him:

"Ah Nestor, Neleus' son, pride of Achaea,555
if a god were so minded, he could give
even finer horses, mighty as gods are,
but these you ask about had just arrived
with a Thracian king when valiant Diomedes
killed him and no less than twelve of his best men.560
We killed another man not far from the ships.
That one had sneaked out to spy on our army,
then report to Hector and his lieutenants."

Odysseus then drove the horses through the ditch,565
laughing, while his fellow Greeks watched and cheered.

When the two men reached Diomedes' camp
they took tight-plaited reins and tied the team
at a manger where Diomedes' horses
softly munched honeyed grain, their quick feet still.

Odysseus laid Dolon's spoils at his ship's stern,570
where he planned a sacrifice to Athena.

The men waded in surf, splashing off sweat
that coated their necks and ran down thighs and shins.

As their sweat dissolved in the sea's waves,
the two adventurers' spirits were refreshed.575

They climbed in polished tubs for leisurely baths,
then each anointed his skin with olive oil
and sat to eat supper. Thanking Athena,
they poured generous libations of sweet wine.

GREEK HEROES WOUNDED

Dawn, after sleeping beside noble Tithonus,
stirred to bring men and immortals first light.
Zeus sent Strife to the beached Achaean fleet
where she carried her grim ensigns of war.
She stopped at Odysseus' cavernous black vessel,
the fleet's center. There, her voice could reach
both the camps of Telamon's son Ajax
and those of Achilles—the fleet's extremes—
where they, trusting their might, had drawn their ships.
The ominous goddess faced each way and howled,
a sound that steeled every Achaean heart
to wage the war, fight Trojans without pause.
Indeed, battle then seemed sweeter than sailing
the hollow ships back to their fatherlands.

5

Agamemnon ordered the men to arm
and he too clothed his body in warrior's gear.
He fastened over his shins a pair of greaves,
over his ankles polished silver guards.
He buckled around his trunk a breastplate
that his guest Cinyrus had given him
when rumor reached Cyprus that a Greek force
and massive fleet would soon embark for Troy.
Cinyrus wanted to honor the Greek chief.
Ten cyan steel bands circled the bronze armor,

10

15

20

twenty tin, a dozen finest gold. 25

Purple serpents wriggled toward the neck,
three right, three left, bright like Zeus's rainbows,
placed in clouds for men to read as omens.

Over a shoulder he hung a sword whose rivets
were pure gold. A scabbard covered the blade, 30
a silver scabbard attached to a gold strap.

He selected an ornamented shield
that bore ten concentric embossed bronze circles.
Between the circles were twenty tin studs,
in the center a single round steel plate 35
on which there reared a scowling Gorgon's head,
awful to see, flanked by Terror and Flight.

Around the silver strap supporting the shield
a purple snake coiled. Its heads numbered no less
than three, and all grew on a single neck. 40

The king chose a helmet that had four crests,
horses' tails, tossing to promise menace,
and lastly he grasped two long bronze-tipped spears.
As far as heaven Agamemnon's armor
glittered till Hera and Athena thundered 45
to honor the king of gold-rich Mycenae.

Each warrior ordered his chariot driver
to hold the horses ready behind the ditch.
On foot, the heavily armed fighting men
poured forward, shouting louder as Dawn's glow waxed. 50
The moment the fighters entered the ditch, drivers
took their stations behind it. In warriors' hearts
Cronus' son sparked awe by raising red dew,
droplets of blood that meant he was about
to send Hades many a valiant soul. 55

Where the plain begins its rise to Ilium, Trojans
divided behind Hector, Polydamas,
Aeneas—honored like a god in Troy—
and Antenor's sons: Polybus, Agenor,
youthful Acamas, all like immortals. 60

Hector carried a well-balanced round shield,
shining like a portentous star near clouds
that sometimes shade, sometimes reveal the gleam.
So Hector emerged, sometimes from front ranks,
sometimes from rear, and when he appeared, his armor
flashed like Zeus's midsummer lightning bolts. 65
As when practiced reapers march parallel
through a field, cutting swath upon thick swath
till ripened barley or wheat lies windrowed,
so then Trojans killed Greeks and Greeks Trojans,
but flight never entered any man's mind. 70
The two sides were evenly matched and, like wolves,
snarled while Strife, sorrow's wellspring, applauded.
She was the one deity near the fight.
All deathless gods but she stayed home at ease, 75
sitting inside the splendid palaces
the immortals had built among Olympus' folds.
A few berated Cronus' cloud-wrapped son
because he wanted Trojans to win glory
but Zeus ignored them all, remained aloof 80
and savored his own overwhelming power,
appraising the Trojan city, the Greek ships,
the bronze armor of both killers and killed.

While Dawn continued to brighten the day,
missiles flew and countless men fell on both sides
until the hour the woodman prepares his meal,
deep in the mountains, and rests his arms, exhausted
from chopping down tree after lofty tree
as his hunger for strengthening food increased. 85
When that hour came the bravest Argives surged,
leading the lesser warriors. Agamemnon
was first to charge, killing the chief Bienor,
then Bienor's aide and driver, Oileus.
Oileus had left the chariot to face the Greek
who aimed his deadly spear at the Trojan's brow
and threw. Oileus' visor did not stop the point. 95
It passed through the bone and on to his brain,

which bespattered the inside of his skull.
Agamemnon left the two where they fell,
after he stripped the armor off their chests. 100
His next victims were Antiphus and Isus—
lawful and illegitimate sons of Priam—
aboard one chariot. The illegitimate drove,
Antiphus rode. Achilles once caught these two
and bound them with willow shoots in Ida's hills 105
where they pastured sheep. He freed them for ransom,
but this time Atreus' far-ruling son
embedded a spear above Isus' nipple
and swung his sword through Antiphus' ear.
He stripped the brothers' magnificent armor, 110
recalling that he had seen them at the ships
after Achilles led them there from Ida.
As when a lion stumbles on newborn fawns
his mighty jaws easily crush them both,
ending their lives as they lie in a nest, 115
not far from the doe, who watches at first—
helpless and overwhelmed by fear herself—
then through dense forest she races away,
coat lathered, before the beast takes her as well,
so Agamemnon then slaughtered those two 120
while their fellow Trojans ran away, panicked.

Pisander and fierce Hippolochus fell next.
Their father, fiery-hearted Antimachus,
had won Paris' favor and gold rewards
when he spoke out against returning Helen. 125
Agamemnon caught the Trojan's two sons
riding a single chariot together.
The men had dropped the oily leather reins,
losing control. The Greek pounced like a lion.
Still aboard the chariot, the brothers begged: 130
“Atrides, take ransom! Spare us our lives!
Antimachus, our father, possesses treasure
including gold, bronze and iron, well wrought.

His generous payment will surely please you
if he hears you have captured us alive."

135

So the tearful brothers implored the king—
mellow words, but no mellow words replied:
“So, Antimachus fathered the both of you!
He urged the Trojan council—when Menelaus
arrived as envoy, he and Odysseus—
to kill my brother while they had the chance.
You will now pay for your father’s treachery!”

140

With that, Agamemnon toppled Pisander
and he lay clutching the spear in his chest.
Hippolochus tried to escape but soon died
when Agamemnon severed his hands and head.
The head rolled across the plain like a round stone.
Wherever fierce skirmish flared, Agamemnon
was there to fight and lead bronze-greaved Argives.
Foot soldiers slaughtered running foot soldiers.
Charioteers killed charioteers, and dust—
from horses’ hooves that beat the plain like thunder—
obscured the glittering bronze. Agamemnon,
setting the pace, cut down man after man.

145

As when destructive fire rages through dense woods,
driven by whistling winds, the underbrush—
all but its deepest roots—incinerates,
so then, Agamemnon’s sword chopped off heads
of panicked Trojans. Confused and driverless,
empty chariots clattered down battlefield paths,
teams lacking their fallen Trojan charioteers,
suited better for vultures now than wives.

150

Zeus led Hector from the missiles, the dust,
the turbulence, to spare him slaughter for now,
while rampaging Agamemnon led the Greeks
past Ilus’ tomb, Dardanus’ great-grandson,
then up the plain past where the wild fig grew,

155

160

165

toward the city. He never let up,
and blood splashed his hands—invincible then.
Trojans who reached the oak and Scaean Gates
halted and turned to watch the battle unfold,
but lagging Trojans still stampeded like cows
before a lion who stalks them by night,
threatening every beast with brutal death,
till strong jaws grapple one and break her neck, 170
then swallow her entrails and gulp her blood.
Like him, Agamemnon Atrides chased Trojans,
killing the rearmost, one after another,
till countless fighters and charioteers had fallen,
stilled by Agamemnon's furious spear. 180

But when Agamemnon neared Ilium's wall,
the father of deathless gods and mortal men
sat down among the springs near Ida's peak,
where he had brought his thunderbolts from heaven.

He charged Iris, his gold-winged emissary: 185
“Go now, fleet Iris, and tell Hector this:
as long as he can still see Agamemnon
laying Trojan legions waste at the front,
let Hector hold back, ordering other men
to fight on Ilium's bloody battlefield, 190
but when an arrow or spear wounds Atrides,
and he withdraws, I will grant Hector the might
to slaughter Greeks until he has reached their ships,
the sun has set and sacred night has come.”

Wind-footed Iris did not disobey. 195
She left Ida's mountain and soon reached Troy
where she found Priam's son, impatient Hector,
aboard his chariot, fast horses hitched.
She planted her speedy feet there and said:
“Hector, in council peer even of Zeus, 200
he himself sent me to bring you this message:
as long as you can still see Agamemnon
laying Trojan legions waste at the front,
you should stay here, ordering other men

to fight on Ilium's bloody battlefield,
but when an arrow or spear wounds Atrides,
and he withdraws, Zeus will grant you the might
to slaughter Greeks until you have reached their ships,
the sun has set and sacred night has come."

Iris delivered her message and left. 210

Hector bounded off his chariot, armed.
He strode throughout his army, waving two spears,
spurring his men to take a stand and fight.
They whirled and took positions facing the Greeks
who moved in turn to strengthen phalanxes
nearest the Trojan lines. Agamemnon 215
hurried forward so he could fight out front.

Tell me, Muses dwelling high on Olympus,
who then was first to challenge Agamemnon,
whether he be Trojan or Trojan ally? 220

He was Antenor's son Iphidamas,
reared in fertile Thrace where cattle abound.
While growing up, the boy lived with Cisseus,
who fathered the boy's mother, Theano,
and after the lad became a young man 225
Cisseus gave him his younger daughter to wed.
The youth heard of the Greek fleet, left his bride
and set sail followed by twelve crescent ships.
He drew the vessels onto Percote's beach,
then marched overland from there to Ilium.
Now he confronted Agamemnon Atrides. 230
When the two had maneuvered close together
Agamemnon cast, but the spear flew wide.
Then Iphidamas' spear struck the Greek's belt.
Iphidamas' powerful arms shoved hard
but failed to pierce the heavy armored band. 235
The point met silver layers and bent like lead.
Agamemnon leaned forward, grasped the spear
and, strong as a lion, took it away.

The Greek's sword then split the Thracian's neck. 240
He fell and slept like bronze, permanent sleep,
reward for aiding Troy, far from the bride
whose pleasures he bought but never knew:
he gave for her a hundred oxen, pledged thousands
of goats and sheep that he had tended himself. 245
Agamemnon now stripped Iphidamas,
brandishing his spoils to show Achaean warriors.

One Trojan who watched that duel was Coön,
Antenor's first-born son, and sorrow's pain
clouded his eyes when he saw his brother fall. 250
Unnoticed, he slipped behind Agamemnon
and speared his right arm below the elbow.
The spear's thirsty point tore through the forearm
and chief Greek warrior Agamemnon winced
but did not abandon the field or pause. 255
He grabbed his wind-tempered ash spear and charged
as Coön tended his brother Iphidamas,
dragging his body away, calling for help.
He was still dragging when underneath his shield
Agamemnon's spear struck and buckled his knees. 260
The Greek lopped his head. It fell on his brother.
So Antenor's sons, at Agamemnon's hand,
met fate together and entered Hades' realm.

Agamemnon rejoined the Argive ranks.
He fought with spear, heavy boulders and sword 265
so long as oozing blood rinsed his wound
but after the blood stopped and the puncture sealed,
Agamemnon began to feel sharp stabs,
as when a woman feels the biting darts
shot during childbirth by the Eilythia, 270
Hera's daughters who keep those bitter pangs.
Intense pain weakened Agamemnon's spirit
till he mounted his chariot and told his driver
to head for the ships, though his heart was sick.
Before the king left, the warriors heard him cry: 275

"O friends, all you Argive leaders and chiefs!
The task is yours, to save our seagoing fleet
through furious battle, since Zeus will not
let me fight Trojans any longer today."

The charioteer lashed the matched pair of horses
and they willingly flew toward the ships.
Their heaving chests grew frothy and dust-flecked
as they took the exhausted king off the field.

When Hector saw Agamemnon turning back,
he yelled to encourage his men and allies:
"Trojans, Lycians and close-fighting Dardanians!
Be men, my friends! Summon your hard-charging valor!
Their leader is gone! Glory is mine, a gift
from Cronus' son! So drive your strong-hoofed teams
at the bravest Greeks! Win proud victory!"

Hector's words inflamed every warrior's spirit.
As when a hunter leading white-fanged dogs
sets the pack on a lion or wild boar,
so then he set Trojans upon Achaeans,
Priam's son Hector, murderous Ares' peer.
Striding fast, he outpaced his forward ranks
and swept the battlefield like a wild wind,
come from nowhere to buffet turquoise seas.

Who was the first and who the next that fell
to Priam's son Hector when Zeus granted him glory?
Asaeus first, then Autonous, Opites,
Dolops, Agelaus, Opheltius,
Aesymnus, Orus and Hipponeus.

Hector killed those Achaean captains, then slaughtered
young soldiers. As when Zephyrus strikes clouds
that ride a southerly wind, causing fierce gales
to whip and curl giant swells frosted with foam,
foam that scatters under wind's furious onslaught,
so Hector then vanquished legions of Greeks.

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There would have been still more, unstinting loss
and all Greek warriors would have run for the ships,
had not Odysseus called to Diomedes:

“Tydeus’ son, where is your valiant spirit?
Come here, my friend, and let us stand! Disgrace
will soon be ours if Hector should take the fleet!”

315

Mighty Diomedes said in response:
“I will stand with you awhile, but not long
will we be able to hold out, since Zeus
has vowed to glorify Trojans, not us.”

With that, he felled Thymbraeus from his chariot,
left nipple impaled, and Odysseus
dropped Molion, Thymbraeus’ respected aide.
Hard-pressed by war, they left the Trojans’ armor
and sought more battle like two mountain boars,
confident, attacking a hunter’s dogs.

325

So those two slew Trojans, and the Greek force,
breathing easier, stopped running from Hector.

The pair killed two of the Troad’s bravest men,
sons of Percotian Merops, a man gifted
at reading omens. He forbade his sons
to join the Trojans, but nevertheless
they went, and death’s darkness was their reward.
The spear of Tydeus’ son Diomedes
ended their lives, and he stripped their ornate armor.
Odysseus killed Hypirochus and Hippodamas.

330

For a while, then, Zeus kept the battle even,
so that both sides slaughtered and fell alike.

335

Diomedes’ spear wounded Agastrophus,
Paeon’s son, in the hip joint. No chariot
was near on which the dazed man could escape.
An aide was holding his team in the rear;
limping back, Agastrophus bled to death.

340

Hector studied the two Greeks fighting, then charged,
yelling, and Trojan phalanxes followed.

When Diomedes saw them coming he winced.

345

He called Odysseus, fighting nearby:

"Hector is fast coming this way to attack,
so let us make a stand and fend him off!"

Diomedes brandished his spear and threw.

The cast did not miss its target, Hector's head,
but Hector's bronze helmet parried the weapon
so he never felt the thirsty point, which stopped
on triple-thick bronze, a visor Phoebus gave him.

350

Hector staggered until he reached Trojan lines,
collapsed there and kneeled, propping his thick arms
on the ground, as dark night covered his eyes.

355

But while Diomedes traced his spear's path
until he reached the spot where it stuck upright,
Hector revived, managed to catch his team
and drove them away, eluding black death.

360

Angry Diomedes, spear retrieved, shouted:
"You dog! This time you would not have escaped
grim fate had Apollo not intervened,
the god you beseech whenever spears fly.

I will meet you later and finish you off
if another immortal assists me.

365

For now I will kill anyone else I find."

He stooped to take Agastrophus' armor off
and while he did, fair Helen's husband Paris
readied his bow to shoot the Greek hero
from where Paris lurked behind the monument
to Dardanus' scion, Ilus, Trojan forebear.

370

After Agastrophus' fancy breastplate
came off, and Diomedes had grabbed his shield
and heavy helmet, Paris drew the bow.

375

He shot an arrow that did not fly in vain.

The bronze head pierced Diomedes' right foot,

then dug in the ground. Paris laughed aloud,
abandoned his safe ambush and shouted taunts:
"You are hit! My barb was not wasted! If only
it had pierced your belly and taken your life!
Then would Trojans have drawn a relieved breath,
they who quail at you as goats do a lion!"

380

Diomedes feigned indifference and said:
"Miserable, vain archer! Woman's man!
If you would arm and try me face to face
your bow and flying arrows would be useless.
You boast too much of this nick on my foot.
It felt like a woman's slap, or a child's.
A worthless coward's arrowheads are dull
but when I strike even a glancing blow
my sharp weapon brings certain, instant death,
and tears bedraggle my victim's wife's cheeks.
His sons are orphans. His red blood soaks the earth.
He rots, fit only for vultures, not his wife."

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Odysseus joined wounded Diomedes.
He stood guard while Tydeus' son grasped the arrow
and teased it out of his foot. Sharp pain followed.
Diomedes climbed aboard his chariot
with sullen heart to head for the hollow ships.

400

Odysseus found himself deserted, as all
Achaeans had fled, overcome by fear.
The warrior looked inward, asking himself:
"Ah me, what should I do? Run like a coward
afraid of their numbers? Or worse, be taken
alone? Zeus has scattered my comrades, panicked.
But why do I debate myself like this?
I know full well that cowards run away
while the best and bravest fighter's destiny
is to take a stand and kill or be killed."

405

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As Odysseus was wrestling with his thoughts
a band of shield-carrying Trojans arrived

and circled him, which many would soon regret.
As when young men with dogs surround a boar,
and underbrush can no longer conceal him 415
so he whets the tusks on his lower jaw,
but hunters may linger despite his tusks,
keeping their distance because he is fearsome,
so then around Zeus-loved Odysseus circled
Trojans, and Deiopites was the first 420
Odysseus killed, plunging a spear in his back.
Next he cut down Thoön and Ennomus.
Then Chersidamas jumped off his chariot deck,
shield not covering his navel, and the Greek's lance
struck there. He fell, clawing the dusty earth. 425
Odysseus then killed Hippasus' son Charops,
brother of Socus whose wealth was renowned.
Socus ran up to guard his brother's corpse.
He stopped facing Odysseus and said:
"Odysseus, your strength and wits are famous. 430
Now you may claim both of Hippasus' sons,
having killed us here and plundered our armor,
or else you will fall, lifeless, to my spear!"

He thrust the weapon and struck Odysseus' shield.
The heavy spearhead sped through bronze, through hide, 435
then drove through Odysseus' breastplate,
slicing flesh above the ribs, but stopped there,
short of his entrails, foiled by Pallas Athena.
Odysseus sensed that his life's end had not come,
took a breath and one step backward, then said: 440
"You poor wretch, prepare now to meet your fate!
You may have sapped my energy to fight
but here where we stand, your fate and death's dark
will find you today, toppled by my spear.
I will take glory, give Hades your soul!" 445

Socus turned around to run for his life
but as he turned Odysseus speared his back
and shoved the spearhead all the way out his chest.
When Socus fell, thudding, Odysseus boasted:

"Ah Socus, master horseman Hippasus' son,
you failed to elude fate, your end has come.
It is a pity your parents will not
close your lifeless eyelids. Instead, vultures
will flap their wings while they pull you apart,
but Greeks will bury me when I am dead." 455

After saying that, Odysseus worked
the heavy spear out of his own flesh and shield,
grimacing as the wound spurted freed blood.
When Trojans saw Odysseus bleed they cheered,
and a detachment started toward him, shouting. 460
He eased backward, called his comrades for help.
Three times he yelled, as loud as a man can shout.
Three times Menelaus heard Odysseus' call.
He turned to Ajax, standing near, and said:
"Zeus-descended Ajax, Telamon's son, 465
I just heard Odysseus shout three times
as if he may be wounded, all alone,
and Trojans have trapped him on the battlefield.
We two should cross the plain to rescue him,
or I fear he will not survive out there, 470
tough though he is, and we lose one of our best."

Menelaus led, Ajax right behind.
They found Odysseus where all around
Trojans harried him like red mountain jackals
circling a wounded deer a man has hit 475
with flying arrow. The deer escapes the hunter,
running while his blood stays warm, his knees quick,
but after the bitter barb exhausts his strength
the jackals sense his weakness and draw near
until a deathless god sends in a lion, 480
ravenous, who eats the prey while jackals scatter.
So then around wily Odysseus
a pack of brave Trojans closed in but he,
thrusting a spear, had so far held death at bay.
Ajax ran up, holding his tower-like shield. 485

He stood beside Odysseus and Trojans fled.
Menelaus gently guided Odysseus,
supporting his arm, till aides brought a chariot.

Ajax chased Trojans and killed Doryclus—
Priam's natural son—then Pandocus,
Lysander, Pyrasus and Pylartes.

As when river floodwaters cover a plain,
waters that Zeus's winter storms have swollen,
and numberless pines, even fallen oak trunks,
sweep along till trees and mud clog the sea,
so then Ajax covered the battlefield,
scattering horses and slaughtering men.

Hector fought far at the battle's west edge,
Scamander's banks, where, as in most arenas,
war cries thundered and warriors' bodies fell.

War-loving Idomeneus was there, with Nestor.
Against their men, Hector outdid himself
with spear and horse, killing uncounted youths.
Still the Greeks refused to surrender ground

until fair-haired Helen's lover, Paris,
brought down one of two Greek healers, Machaon,
a three-barbed arrow sunk in his right shoulder.

Greek leaders were afraid the wounded physician
might be killed as the battle ebbed and flowed,
so Idomeneus soon proposed to Nestor:

"O Nestor, Neleus' son, Achaea's pride,
climb aboard your chariot, you and Machaon.
Make for the ships at your team's fastest run.
One healer is worth several battalions

since he can remove barbs, spread soothing balms."

The master horseman did not hesitate.
He climbed aboard, as did wounded Machaon,
son of famous healer Asclepius.
Nestor cracked the whip, the horses flew
toward the ships, the place they rested and fed.

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Cebriones noticed Ajax scattering Trojans.
 He approached Hector and advised the prince:
 "We fight lesser men than the toughest Greeks,
 here on the western fringe, but not far away
 Trojan fighters and teams are being routed 525
 by Telamon's son Ajax. I know him
 because of the tall shield his shoulders carry.
 We should drive our team, our chariot, there,
 where horsemen and foot soldiers on both sides
 are killing each other. The war cries never slow." 530

Cebriones gave the horses a tap
 from his whistling whip. The pair felt the stroke
 and drew the chariot where battle raged,
 trampling corpses till blood coated the axle.
 Even the vehicle's handrails were spattered 535
 with bits of gore that horses' hooves tossed up
 or wheels flung off. Hector yearned to fight,
 to attack and kill, so when he dismounted
 his spear did not cease to punish Argives.
 He assaulted enemy companies 540
 with massive boulders as well as sword and spear
 but he did not meet Telamon's son Ajax,
 as Zeus did not yet will Hector's defeat.
 Indeed, Cronus' son soon made Ajax afraid,
 and he halted, dazed behind his thick shield, 545
 then gave ground. He glanced about like a wild beast,
 inching backward but now and then turned to fight.
 As when a lion stalking unfenced oxen
 faces guard dogs with country-dwelling men
 who will not allow him to taste an ox, 550
 but stay awake all night, while he craves meat,
 advancing but unable to brave the missiles
 men's powerful arms throw, barely missing,
 or bright red firebrands that terrify him,
 till near dawn he slinks away, dejected, 555
 just so, a downhearted Ajax backed away,
 reluctant because he feared for the ships' safety.

- As when a donkey in corn withstands boys
who break stick after stick across his back
while he takes ears of grain, and the youngsters
batter him with cudgels using childlike strength
until he goes having eaten his fill,
so then, as they pursued Telamon's son
high-spirited Trojans and foreign allies
rained spears that battered the Greek's giant shield. 560
From time to time Ajax recalled his valor,
wheeled around and held at bay phalanxes
of Trojans before he resumed retreat.
Close to the ships he turned, blocking the way,
racing and fighting between the two armies 570
to slow the Trojan advance. They cast spears,
some of which flew and stuck in his tall shield,
but most landed before they reached their target,
sunk in the ground, yearning to taste flesh.
- When Eurypylus saw Telamon's son 575
in hailing missiles, almost overwhelmed,
he rushed to his side. He threw a fast spear
that hit Phausius' son Apisaon,
punctured his liver and collapsed his knees.
Eurypylus took the armor off his back,
but Paris soon saw that Eurypylus 580
was stripping Apisaon, and Paris' bow then
launched an arrow that hit Eurypylus' thigh.
Eurypylus snapped the shaft but the head stayed,
so he rejoined his troop to avoid death. 585
He yelled loud enough to reach retreating Greeks:
"My friends, the Greek army's warriors and chiefs,
turn back, take a stand and postpone death's claim
on Ajax who is outnumbered. He may not
escape this battle alive! Face his attackers
and stand fast around Telamon's great son!" 590
- Wounded Eurypylus called, and next to him
others took stands, shields resting on shoulders,

spears held ready. When Ajax reached that group—
welcome comrades—he halted, turned and fought.

595

As battle erupted there like forest fire,
Neleus' son Nestor left the battlefield,
horses lathered, carrying Machaon to safety
but Nestor did not elude Achilles' eye.

Achilles stood near his cavernous ship's stern
where he could watch the battle, now a rout.
He summoned his favorite comrade Patroclus,
then in their camp. Patroclus heard the call
and ran out—his first step down a fateful path.

Menoetius' valiant son hastened to ask:
“Why did you call? What do you wish of me?”

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The fast runner Achilles answered him:
“Menoetius' worthy son, my dear friend,
I think Greek chiefs will soon crouch at my knees,
begging. Their need for me has grown severe.
But now I want you to run and ask Nestor
who he has just brought off the field, wounded.
From behind the man looked much like Machaon,
Asclepius' son, but I could not see his face
because the horses raced ahead so fast.”

610

615

Patroclus obeyed his captain's command
and ran through the Argive vessels and camps.

Machaon and Nestor reached the old man's ships
where they stepped to the all-nurturing earth.

Aide Eurymedon released Nestor's team
while Nestor and Machaon dried sweaty tunics,
facing a cool sea breeze. After a time
they walked to Nestor's camp and sat on couches.
Fair-tressed Hecamede brought food and drink.
Nestor obtained her from Tenedos' plunder.
Arsinous' daughter, she was the Greeks'
reward for Nestor's never-failing counsel.

620

625

Now Hecamede brought and placed a table
with smooth iron feet. On the table she put
a tray of onion relish she had made, 630
then fetched limpid honey, sacred barley meal,
and a priceless cup from Nestor's Pylian halls.
The rivets that joined its parts were gold, its handles
numbered four and on each handle two doves
were feeding, wrought by a skillful goldsmith. 635
Another man might barely lift that cup
when filled, but Nestor could raise it easily.
In the cup the goddess-like woman mingled
Pramnian wine and goat's cheese that she crumbled
using a bronze grater, then sprinkled white barley. 640
When she finished the mix she bade them drink.
After the men drank and quieted their thirst
they sat relaxed, telling amusing tales
till suddenly Patroclus was at the door.
When the old man saw him he left his couch, 645
took the youth's hand, invited him to sit.
Patroclus refused the seat, explaining why:
"Respected old warrior, I dare not stay.
He who sent me is impatient to learn
the name of the wounded man you brought just now. 650
I can see the hurt man here is Machaon,
and I must now take Achilles that news.
You know quite well, old sir, how he can be:
short-tempered, quick to blame even the blameless."

Gerenia's master horseman answered Patroclus: 655
"What? Achilles suddenly cares about Greeks?
Our men that missiles have hit? He knows nothing
about the army's straits now that our champions
lie idle among the ships nursing wounds.
Wounded is Tydeus' son, mighty Diomedes. 660
Wounded are Odysseus and Agamemnon.
Wounded is Eurypylus, a thigh wound,
and I just brought Machaon off the field,
hit by a Trojan arrow. Achilles, though,

brave as he is, does not pity us Greeks. 665
No, he will sit where he is until our beached ships
are burning, despite our stubborn defense,
and Greek corpses pile high. My own sinews
are not what they once were, when my limbs were lithe.
I wish I were as young, as steady, as strong 670
as when we Pylians battled Epeans,
livestock thieves, and I killed Itymoneus—
Hypirochus' stalwart son whose home was Elis—
while he kept watch over his ill-gotten flocks.
My spear hit as he stood among the herd's leaders. 675
He fell, his country-dwelling herdsman ran,
and we drove spoils aplenty off that plain:
fifty flocks of sheep, fifty herds of oxen,
as many droves of pigs and flocks of goats,
one hundred fifty head of chestnut horses, 680
mares every one, many suckling foals.
All those we drove to Neleus' realm in Pylos,
a nighttime drive. Neleus was gratified
because it had been my first fighting adventure.
When Dawn glowed, Neleus' heralds proclaimed 685
that victims of Epean thieves should gather.
All prominent Pylian men assembled
to share the spoils. Epeans had raided often
because we Pylians were few—easy marks.
Mighty Heracles, who came to oppress us 690
years before, had winnowed our young men's ranks.
Old Neleus fathered a dozen sons
and Heracles slaughtered them all but me.
After that armed Epean thieves were common.
They staged more and more raids to plunder Pylos. 695
Herds of oxen and flocks of sheep old Neleus
took when Pylians shared the spoils I brought,
repaying him for prized stock Epeans stole,
including a four-horse racing team and chariot,
taken while in Elis to race for a tripod. 700
Those fine horses Epean king Augeas
kept and sent their driver home without his team.

- Neleus' anger flared and never died
till I brought those spoils, but he gave his folk most,
to divide, so they would not think him greedy. 705
- Each Pylian savored his share of the loot
until the third dawn when Epean fighters
invaded, strong-hoofed horses as well as men,
among them twin sons of Actor's wife Molione,
boys still so young they knew little of war. 710
- There is a hilltop citadel called Thryon
on faraway Alpheus' banks, Pylos' border.
Epeans encircled Thryon, laying siege.
- While they were camped on the open plain, Athena
came from Olympus and told us to arm. 715
- The Pylian force she waked that night was ready,
eager to wage war. Neleus forbade me
to join the battle. He hid away my horses
because he thought I did not know how to fight
but I distinguished myself among our horsemen 720
even though I entered the fight on foot.
- The river Minyeos pours in the sea
near Arene, and there we camped till dawn,
Pylian horsemen with ranks of foot soldiers.
- When first light shone, we armed without delay
and sighted Alpheus' streams toward noon. 725
- We gave almighty Zeus a sacrifice,
then Alpheus and Poseidon each a bull,
then gleaming-eyed Athena a fat heifer.
- Later we sat around our fires and ate
until, fully armed, we drifted to sleep
soothed by Alpheus' currents. The cocky Epeans
slept outside the city, waiting to sack it,
but they were about to see Ares at work. 730
- When Helios spread his light over the earth
we prayed to Zeus and Athena, then launched war.
As soon as Epeans and Pylians joined combat
I killed a man and took his strong-hoofed team.
Mulius he was, Augeas' son-in-law, 735
wed to the king's eldest, blond Agamede,

who knew every medicine grown on earth.
As he advanced I cast my bronze spear.
He fell in dust. I jumped onto his chariot
and drove fast to the front line, but Epeans
broke ranks, scattering when Mulius fell,
their bravest warrior, their chief chariot fighter. 745
Like a dark whirlwind I harried them as they fled.
I captured fifty chariots, near each a pair
of men that my spear felled, their teeth in dust.
I would also have killed Molione's twins
had not their true father, earth-shaking Poseidon,
taken them off the field, hidden in mist. 750
Zeus gave the Pylians ferocity that day.
We chased Epeans all over the plain,
killing the men and collecting their armor. 755
We chased them past Buprasion's grain fields,
past the Olenian rock and a hill, Alesion,
they call it, where Athena turned us back.
I killed just one more man, then we Pylians
drove our teams past Buprasion to Pylos
where everybody praised Nestor and Zeus. 760
So I once defended my land, but Achilles
considers only his own glory. I think
his tears will flow when our army is no more.
Ah friend, Menoetius gave you a clear charge 765
when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon.
Odysseus and I were standing nearby,
where we could hear the words Menoetius spoke.
The two of us had come to Peleus' halls
during our quest to raise an Argive army. 770
There we found the aging warrior Menoetius,
old horseman Peleus, Achilles and you.
Peleus was burning ox thighs for thunderous Zeus,
out in the courtyard. He took a gold tankard,
poured wine on the charred parts he offered the god,
then placed cuts of meat around them to cook. 775
Achilles saw us in the doorway, jumped up,
led us out to the yard, bade us take seats

and showed the hospitality due guests.

After we had enjoyed the food, the drink,

780

I invited you youths to join us and fight.

You both agreed, then your fathers gave advice.

Old Peleus advised Achilles, his son,

to strive to be the most distinguished warrior.

Actor's son Menoetius said to you:

785

'Achilles' mother is an immortal goddess.

He is mightier than you, but you are older

so you should always offer wise advice,

that he may take your guidance and benefit.'

You sometimes forget your father's words. But now,

790

speak to Achilles, see if he will listen.

Who knows? Heaven may help you prevail.

A comrade's counsel often carries weight.

But if Achilles feels that he is hamstrung,

795

perhaps by what his mother has told Zeus,

then ask him to send you to lead his ranks,

the Myrmidons, so that you may aid the Greeks.

Ask him to lend you his armor to wear,

so they will mistake you for him and shrink back,

the Trojans, giving the Greeks some breathing space,

800

worn as we are. War affords little rest.

Trojans tire too, so your fresh Myrmidons

should drive them off our vessels, back to Ilium."

Old Nestor's argument convinced Patroclus

so he set out for Achilles' camp and ran

805

as far as Odysseus' central ship,

where Greeks held their assemblies, passed their judgments,

where they constructed immortal gods' altars.

There he happened to meet Eurypylus,

Euaemon's son, an arrowhead in his thigh,

810

limping away from battle. Sweat cascaded

off his head and back. The punishing wound

still oozed blood, but the warrior remained calm.

Patroclus looked at Eurypylus sadly,

suspended his race to Achilles and said:

815

"Ah, unhappy chiefs of the Argive force,
far from your fatherlands too many are doomed
to have your flesh satiate Trojan dogs!
Tell me, Zeus-descended Eurypylus,
whether the Greeks have stopped Hector's rampage, 820
or does his spear control the battle still?"

Wounded Eurypylus replied to him:
"Patroclus, there is no more Achaean valor.
Now most men are running toward the ships,
and men who once were among our best fighters 825
are wounded, resting useless by their vessels,
though someday they will heal, regain their strength.
Be good enough to help me reach my camp,
cut this arrowhead out, let the wound bleed,
then rinse it with warm water and spread soothing balm, 830
the kind they say Achilles taught you to use,
the balm that Chiron, the centaur, gave him.
Of our healers, Machaon and Podalirius,
the one has a disabling wound of his own
and could use a skillful healer himself. 835
The other is on the plain awaiting Ares."
Menoetius' sympathetic son replied:
"How can this be? What shall we do, my friend?
I was running to give Achilles a message
that old Nestor persuaded me to take, 840
but I will not leave you suffering like this."

He supported Eurypylus as they walked
to his camp, where an aide spread oxhide blankets.
Patroclus whetted a knife and cut out
the painful arrowhead. The oozing blood 845
he gently cleansed, then applied a bitter root,
a painkiller that he crumbled by hand.
Pain vanished, bleeding stopped and the wound dried.

THE BATTLE FOR THE GREEK WALL

While Menoetius' valiant son worked in the camps,
treating Eurypylus' wound, the armies fought,
all unaware that fate would not allow
the ditch to stop the Trojans, not even the wall

Argives constructed between the ditch and ships. 5

Argive sacrifices were insufficient
to guarantee that ships and plundered spoils
would stay secure. Greeks had built against the will
of immortals, so their fort could not stand long.

Still, while Achilles fumed, Hector yet lived,
and Priam's citadel had not been sacked,
the wall the Argives toiled to build would stand.

But after most of the Trojans had died,
legions of Greeks as well, and the last Greeks
had sacked Ilium during the war's tenth year
then sailed their ships home to their fatherlands,

Poseidon and Apollo would unite
to level the wall using the fury of rivers,
all rivers that flowed from Ida's peaks seaward—

Rhesus, Heptarorus, Caresus, Rhodius,
Grenicus, Aesepus, rippling Scamander,
Simois—to where countless helmets, shields
and immortal gods' sons had fallen in dust.

Phoebus Apollo would turn those rivers' mouths
on the wall for nine days. Zeus would feed rain,

constant, rushing the wall's wreckage to sea.
The powerful earth-shaker would brandish his trident.
He would cast in the waves the entire foundation
of stones and logs that Greeks had labored to lay.
He would smooth the shore beside the Hellespont,
cover with fresh sand the long, blood-drenched beach
where the wall had stood, then return the rivers
to where their sparkling, cool waters belonged. 30

These things Apollo and Poseidon in time
would do, but now war cries and battle raged
at that wall as spears clattered against its towers. 35
The Argives reeled under Zeus's scourge,
crowding meekly around the beached ships,
terrified of Hector who had chased them there
and who was still rampaging like a whirlwind. 40
As when hunters behind a pack of hounds
confront a vicious lion or wild boar,
arranging themselves in tightly knit ranks,
then brazenly face the beast and cast a shower
of spears, but never does the valiant creature 45
quail nor does he run from them to escape death,
no, he whirls attacking time after time,
and wherever he charges the men give way,
so Hector was then. He encouraged drivers
to cross the ditch, but no horses could summon 50
the heart to go. They neighed a loud refusal,
reared and shied at the rim, afraid of the depth,
unwilling either to scramble down or jump.
Here the ditch's steep, overhanging banks
fell on both sides. Between them rose the stakes 55
that Achaea's sons had sharpened and set
close together, tall, to keep Trojans at bay.
Chariots would surely fail to pass through there,
but foot soldiers might be able to cross.
Polydamas ran up to Hector and said: 60
"Hector, all you Trojan and allied chiefs,
we would be foolish to try the ditch with chariots.

How could drivers maneuver around the stakes?

Besides, the wall beyond is so near the ditch
there is no room between for chariot fighters.

65

The space is far too narrow to use our teams.
One day the Greeks may well die by the will
of thunderous Zeus—he has given us aid.

I would like to see it happening now:

all Greeks humbled and killed, far from Argos.

70

But what if they should rally soon and surge
out here to find us trapped within their ditch?

I do not think even a single man

would live to see Ilium after the blood flowed.

Nonetheless, I have a proposal to make:

75

aides will hold our horses here by the brink,
and we warriors will fight as foot soldiers,
following Hector in phalanxes. The Greeks
cannot stop us if Zeus wills their defeat."

Polydamas' plan sounded good to Hector.

80

He jumped off his chariot, armor clanking,
and all but one Trojan warrior dismounted,
climbing down fast to follow Hector's lead.

The fighters ordered their charioteers

to line up the teams and hold them at the ditch.

85

The warriors stepped forward and separated,
five divisions behind the principal chiefs.

The first followed Hector and Polydamas,
the largest company, those most determined
to breach the wall and torch the wooden ships.

90

Cebriones was one, Hector's charioteer;

Hector left his team with a weaker man.

Next led Paris, Alcathous and Agenor.

Third led Helenus and Deiphobus,

Priam's sons, sharing leadership with Asius,
Arisbean Hyrtacus' son, who raised his team

95

of heavy chestnuts near Selleis' banks.

The fourth unit followed Anchises' son,

- Aeneas. Two of Antenor's sons joined him,
Archelochus and Acamas, both skilled fighters. 100
Fifth, Sarpedon led the Trojan allies.
His lieutenants, Glaucus and Asteropaeus,
were without doubt the bravest, the most skillful
of all allies except Sarpedon himself.
- Each unit formed rows, shield touching shield,
then attacked, all men certain they would soon
break through and fall upon the Argive ships. 105
- All attackers, be they Trojan or ally,
followed Polydamas' wise strategy
except Hyrtacus' son Asius, who refused
to leave his horses and charioteer,
but rode behind his team toward the ships. 110
Poor fool, he would not manage to skirt death
or receive honors, driving his team and chariot
back to windswept Ilium after the battle.
Instead, relentless fate shortened his life,
lost to Deucalion's son Idomeneus. 115
Asius drove to the fleet's west end where Greeks—
chariots, teams and warriors—ran from the plain.
He steered there because the western gate was not
yet closed and secured by its heavy bolt. 120
The doors were manned, to admit the last comrades
leaving the field for safety beside the fleet.
Asius rushed the gateway, his men behind him,
hopeful because they did not believe the Greeks
would defend the gate, but would run for the ships. 125
Not so. Two of Achaea's best watched those doors,
both high-spirited Lapith spearmen's sons.
One was Pirithous' son, fierce Polypoetes,
the other Leonteus, murderous Ares' equal. 130
Just inside the gateway the Lapith warriors
took positions, resembling twin mountain oaks
that withstand endless days of rain and wind,
their fibrous, clinging roots deep in the earth.

So the two Greeks, trusting to skill and strength,135
held their ground awaiting Asius' onslaught.
Straight toward the wall, Trojan oxhide shields
advanced, a man behind each shield, shouting threats,
all led by Asius, Iamenus, Orestes,
Oenomaus, Thoön and Asius' son Adamas.140

Until then Polypoetes and Leonteus
stayed inside urging Greeks to guard the ships,
but when they saw the wall under attack
and sensed fear rising among the Argives,
the Lapiths sprinted out the gate to fight,145
as two wild boars, high in mountain woods,
take on a troop of men with dogs who attack them.
They dodge, toppling young trees on the men
by ripping out roots. They rattle sharp tusks
until a hunter's spear ends one boar's life.150

So rattled the bronze on the Lapiths' chests
as they met Trojans and valiantly fought,
confident that Greeks on the wall would help.
Indeed, down from the towers jagged stones
cascaded to drive Trojans back from the camps155
and fast-sailing ships. As when snowflakes fly,
extracted from dark clouds by violent winds
that drive flakes upward, then let them fall,
so then missiles were flying toward both sides.

Both sides heard the thuds, the clangs as helmets
and shields were dented, struck by heavy rocks.
With a frustrated grunt and slap on both thighs,
Asius lifted his eyes skyward, saying:
"Father Zeus, you prove to be deceitful!160

I understood that the Greek warriors
would find our strength and fury invincible,
but they are like bees or slender-waisted wasps
that build a nest beside a rugged road.165

They do not leave their hollow home, but wait
till men come, then swarm out to guard their young.170

So these two Lapith gatekeepers refuse
to yield, and will kill more unless they die."

Asius' complaint did not affect Zeus
who still cared only about Hector's glory.

Other battles were fought at other gates,
but only a god could recount so many.

175

Trojans brought menacing fire to the wall,
which further dispirited bone-weary Greeks,
afraid for their ships. Some gods grew restive, too,
those who had backed Greeks on the battlefield.

180

The Lapith pair killed Trojan after Trojan.
Pirithous' mighty son Polypoetes
hit Damasas' bronze cheek guard with a spearpoint,
a point the Trojan armor did not resist.
The spearhead split the bone, Damasas' brains
bespattered his skull and he fought no more.
Polypoetes next killed Ormenus and Pylon.

185

Leonteus, fierce enough to be Ares' son,
ran a spearpoint through Hippomachus' belt.
The Lapith warrior then drew his sword.
He chased and overtook Antiphates,
struck from close quarters, felling him face up.
Next were Menon, Iamenus and Orestes.
His blade felled all three to the bloody ground.

190

While the two were stripping their victims' armor,
the men that Hector and Polydamas led—
the bravest Trojan youths, the youths most eager
to breach the wall and set the ships afire—
had hesitated before the ditch, perplexed.
When they were about to cross a bird appeared,
an eagle that flew above from east to west.
Its frightful talons carried a crimson snake,
alive and breathing, still able to fight.
It bit the eagle's chest close to the neck,
by bending up, and the bird dropped its prey.

195

200

205

The serpent fell right where the young men stood.
The eagle, screaming, sailed off on the wind.
The youths recoiled, frightened to see an eagle,
symbol of Zeus, wounded over their heads.

Polydamas approached Hector and said: 210

"Hector, in assemblies you often rebuke me
even when I speak well, since you think it wrong
for a lesser man to differ in council—
let alone war—rather than just support you,
but I will now say privately what I think: 215
We should not go fight the Greeks at the ships.
That is how I would interpret the omen,
the bird that came as we were about to cross,
an eagle that flew above from east to west
and carried in her talons a crimson snake, 220
alive, that she dropped then flew to her aerie.

She failed her mission to feed her young that serpent.
So for us. Even if the wall, the gates,
should yield to our forces, and the Greeks fall back,
we will not drive all the way to their fleet, 225
but we will leave on the ground countless Trojans
that Greek weapons have killed to protect the ships.
So a prophet would say, a man with insight,
an oracle that fighting men respect."

Hector looked at him, glowered and said: 230

"Polydamas, your speech does not please me.
You could think of something better to say,
but if you truly mean the words you spoke,
the immortal gods must have taken your senses.
Would you have me ignore what thunderous Zeus 235
himself has promised, nodding his head?
You call my attention to long-winged birds,
but we will not turn back. I do not care
whether the birds go east toward dawn and sunrise,
or go west toward the shadowy gloom. 240
We will obey the counsel of mighty Zeus,
who rules mortals and immortals alike.

A better seer would say: defend our land.
You have little reason to fear a battle.
Even if all the rest of us should die
near the Argive ships, you likely would not
because you lack the heart to fight up front.
But if you turn back, or if other men do
because you preached to them as you did to me,
you will feel my spear and forfeit your life."

245

250

Hector led the way and his warriors followed,
raising their war cry. Thunder-lover Zeus
unleashed from Ida's hills a whirling wind
which carried dust straight to the ships and Greeks,
dust that fogged their sight, giving Troy an edge.
Trojans, trusting Zeus's omens and his might,
set out to breach the Argives' rocky defense.
They pulled stones from sections between towers.
They pried out more than one of the slabs that Greeks
had placed on the ground first, the wall's foundations.
They removed those parts, hoping the Argive fort
could then be breached, but the Greeks did not give up.
From inside they reinforced the damaged wall
and rained missiles on Trojans standing below.

255

260

From tower to tower both tireless Ajaxes
exhorted and sought to lift Argive spirits
with words sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh—
if they saw a man reluctant to fight:
"Argive friends, be you our average, our best,
or our worst—all warriors are not equal—
now there is ample work for everyone
as you yourselves can see, so let no man
retreat to the ships because of Trojan bluster!
Stay up front! Encourage your fellow men!
Maybe the lightning-thrower Zeus will grant
that we chase these Trojans back to their city."

265

270

275

The Ajaxes stirred the Argives' fighting spirit.
As when numberless dense snowflakes fall

during a wintry day that Zeus has chosen
to drop his endless snow, wave upon wave,
while the winds are asleep, till deep snow cloaks
tall mountain peaks, seaward-jutting headlands,
low-lying plains and all the works of man,
flakes even pouring on the sea's shores and inlets—
waves there wash them away but everything
above ground is pelted by icy snow—
so then boulder barrages flew both ways,
toward Trojans and from them toward Greeks,
till crashes thundered the wall's entire length.

280

The Trojans following Hector would not then
have breached the wall or its heavy bolted gates
without Troy's ally Sarpedon, Zeus's son.
Zeus set him on Greeks like a lion on cattle.
Sarpedon held a round shield, well-balanced,
the finest beaten bronze a skillful smith
could hammer out, then back with thick oxhide
using close-set gold rivets around the rim.

290

Sarpedon grasped the shield, brandishing two spears.
He moved off like a mountain-bred lion, hungry

a long time for meat, a lion whose heart bids
him enter a sheepfold and ravage the stock
even though he knows the herdsmen are near,
watching over the flock with spears and dogs.

300

He will not leave the fold without a try
but will leap inside and either seize prey
or take a flying bronze spear in the chest.

305

So then Sarpedon's godlike heart impelled him
to smash the wall and overrun the towers.

He said to Glaucus, Hippolochus' son:

"Glaucus, why are you and I always honored
with full cups, meats and chairs at table's head
in Lycia where people consider us gods?

310

Why do we possess lands on Xanthus' banks,
fruitful orchards and bounteous wheat fields?

Because, come war, we fight at the Lycian front
and, shoulder to shoulder, confront battle's blaze.

315

Then all Lycians fighting behind us say:
‘They who rule Lycia have earned their honors,
yonder kings who enjoy the fattest cattle,
the choicest honeyed wines. Look now, their might
is wondrous when they do battle out front!’ 320
Ah cousin, if only we could quit this war
and count on living without age or death,
I would not head for the front ranks myself
nor would I urge you to do battle there, 325
but we are mortal and death’s faces stalk us
in numbers such that no man can escape.
So let us go, and take glory or give!’”

Glaucus did not turn back or disagree.
The pair advanced, leading their Lycian troops. 330
Peteus’ son Menestheus saw them and flinched
because they were coming toward his tower.
He glanced along the wall, hoping to see
a man who could help fend off the assault.
He spotted the two war-gluttonous Ajaxes, 335
and Teucer just racing up to join that pair,
but there was no way he could call to them
above the war cries—so loud they reached heaven—
the crash of shields, horsetail-crested helmets
and gates. By this time the gates were all closed 340
but Trojans tried to smash them to get inside.
Menestheus sent his herald to seek aid:
“Quickly, Thoön, run fetch the Ajaxes.
I hope they both will be able to help.
We are facing ruin here soon indeed. 345
The Lycian chiefs attack and they have always
proven themselves furious in tough battles.
But if both men cannot leave where they fight,
ask Telamonian Ajax to come,
bringing his brother Teucer, the skilled bowman.” 350

The herald heard and did not hesitate.
He raced away along the Achaean wall,
stopped when he reached the two heroes and said:

"Ajaxes, chiefs among bronze-armed Greeks,
Menestheus sent me here to ask you
to join his struggle, if only a short while.
He hopes you both will be able to help
since he is facing ruin soon indeed.
The Lycian chiefs attack and they have always
proven themselves furious in tough battles.
But if you cannot both leave where you fight
he asks that Telamonian Ajax come,
bringing his brother Teucer, the skilled bowman."

355

Telamonian Ajax did not balk

but right away said to Oileus' son:

365

"Ajax, you and stalwart Lycomedes
stay here, encouraging Greeks to fight harder,
while I join Menestheus' men and face their battle
but I will return as soon as they are safe."

With that, Telamon's son Ajax rushed away,
followed by Teucer—also Telamon's son—
and Pandion, carrying Teucer's bow.

370

When they reached the tower Menestheus held
they found beleaguered Greeks under assault.

The wall below the tower was nearly scaled;

375

Lycian warriors crawled over its face.

Telamon's sons joined the fight, and war cries swelled.

The first man Telamonian Ajax killed
was Epicles, Sarpedon's spirited aide.

Ajax picked up and threw a craggy rock,
laid to cap the wall, a boulder too heavy
for even a strong young man to lift or hold,
as men now are, but Ajax lifted and threw it.

380

The stone smashed Epicles' helmet, his skull
and the soft brains inside. Like a high diver,
he plunged from the tower wall, his soul flown.

385

Teucer shot Hippolochus' splendid son, Glaucus,
as the Lycian was halfway up the wall.

The arrow sliced an arm, a disabling wound

that Glaucus hid while he climbed down so no Greek
could see him bleed and taunt as he left the field. 390

Sarpedon was grief-stricken to see him go
but his fighting spirit only increased.

He thrust up his spear at Thestor's son Alcmaon,
drove it in, then withdrew it letting him fall
face down, ornate bronze armor resounding. 395

Sarpedon dropped his spear, grasped stones in the wall,
pulled and stepped back as a section collapsed
leaving a breach where regiments might pass.

Telamon's sons defended, and Teucer's arrow
struck Sarpedon's chest, square on the strap that held
his shield, but Zeus intervened to stay death's claim.
Zeus's son Sarpedon was not to die yet. 400

Ajax drove his spear on Sarpedon's shield
which stopped the point, but the blow's force was strong
and Sarpedon withdrew, just a short distance
because he still harbored hope to win glory. 405

He rested a moment, whirled and called his men:
"Ah Lycians, where is your fighting spirit?
I am mighty, yes, but it would be hard
to clear a way to the Greek ships alone.
So follow me! More men will get more done!" 410

The Lycians respected their lord's command
and massed behind their counselor, their king.
Meanwhile Argives strengthened their phalanxes
to guard the breach, where fierce battle flared. 415

The Lycian warriors could not fight their way
through the wall, and clear a path to the ships,
but they withstood the Greek spearmen's attempts
to drive them from their positions near the breach.
As when two men dispute the boundary
between their plowlands, using measuring rods
to argue over a small contested plot, 420

so the armies fought to control the breach.

Blow after blow landed on oxhide shields

425

where wisps of oxen's hair still clung and fluttered.

Pitiless bronze tore the bodies of many men,
some because they turned, exposing their backs,
others because their shields did not stop spears.

All over the towers and wall, men's blood

430

was spilled, blood of Lycians and Greeks alike,
but neither the Lycian nor the Greek side budged.

Like scales that measure a working woman's wages,
her spun wool placed in one of the pans, weights
opposite to poise, and she takes scant pay,
so then the battle stayed evenly balanced
till Zeus granted Hector transcendent glory
so he could be first to penetrate the wall.

His shout carried throughout the Trojan ranks:

"Arise, Trojans! Let us break through the defenses,
then take our fire and set the ships ablaze!"

440

So he commanded, every Trojan ear heard.

Massed Trojan warriors advanced on the fort
and Trojan spears assailed the Greek defenders.

Near a gateway Hector spotted a stone
that had a heavy, broad base, but its top
was sharp. No two of even the strongest men
could lever it off the ground onto a wagon
as men now are, but Hector lifted it high.

445

Devious Cronus' son magnified his strength.

As when a shepherd carries a lamb's fleece
with one hand, barely feeling the weight,
so Hector carried that stone and faced the planks
that covered one of the pairs of sturdy gates.

450

Fastened inside the thick boards were two bars,
crossing aslant, backed by a heavy bolt.

455

Hector raised the stone overhead and threw,
first planting his feet to strengthen the cast.

The rock flew inside, breaking all four hinges,
as well as the useless bolt and crossed bars.

460

Splinters flew as the boards shattered and fell
under the stone's force. Hector bounded through,
face like fast-falling night, bronze armor aglow
all over his tall body, in each hand

a long spear. No Greek could now prevent
his march to the ships. His eyes burned like fire.

He whirled and ordered the awestruck Trojan warriors
to scale the wall. The men quickly obeyed,
some swarming over the top of the wall, others
through the opened gate as frightened Greeks ran
for their ships, Trojan war cries close behind.

465

470

THE PROWESS OF IDOMENEUS

After Zeus brought Trojans close by the ships
he left them there embroiled in fighting, grim,
prolonged. He turned his glowing eyes away
and let them sweep the lands of Thracian horsemen,
Mysians—close-in fighters—Hippemolgi 5
who drink the milk of mares, and righteous Abis.
He felt no need to look toward Troy again
since he did not suspect another god
would enter battle on Achaea's side.

Earth-shaking Poseidon kept watch on Troy 10
and marveled at the conflict as he sat
on wooded Samothrace's tallest peak,
near Thrace's coast. From there he saw Mount Ida,
Priam's city, the Argive ships nearby.
After a time he came to pity the Greeks— 15
almost fallen to Troy—and seethe at Zeus.

He rose and started down the mountain slope,
long, fast strides. The forested hillside shook
with each tread of Poseidon's immortal feet.
He took three paces and on the fourth arrived 20
at Aegae where, deep in the sea, he had built
a splendid dwelling of gold—bright, eternal.

5

10

15

20

He hitched a team that pranced on burnished hooves
and flew like wind, trailing golden manes.
He dressed in woven gold, chose a lash—
braided gold—climbed to his chariot deck
and drove out on the billows. Fishes left
their hiding places to play near their lord.
The sea parted like smiling lips, and he drove
so fast that water never touched the axle.
His horses galloped straight for the Greek ships.

There is a spacious cavern beneath the bay
that separates Imbros from Tenedos.
The mountain-shaker drove his team inside.
He freed the horses near ambrosial fodder
and fastened golden hobbles between their feet,
impossible to break, so his team would not wander.
That done, Poseidon went among the Greeks.

Like furious wind or fire the Trojan force
surged behind Hector, their spirits at fever pitch,
their shouts a roar, believing the Argive ships
would burn, the finest Argive warriors die.

But the immortal god who shakes the earth
gave heart to Greeks. He had left his watery realm
assuming Calchas' looks, his robust voice.
He first addressed the battling Ajaxes:
"You two fighters could save the day for Achaea.
Inspire the men to fight instead of run!
This is the place where we are most exposed
to Trojan fighters who overran our wall.
Elsewhere your fellow Greeks will stave them off
but we could very well lose the war right here
where that man comes as fast as a windblown blaze,
Hector, who claims to be a son of Zeus.
If only a god would rouse the pair of you
to take a valiant stand and lead the rest!
You could make Hector retreat from the ships
even if no less than Zeus should spur him on!"

Earth-shaking Poseidon lifted his staff.
He tapped both men, infusing courage and strength,
invigorating their hands, their arms, their legs. 60
Then, as when a hawk spreads powerful wings,
rises skyward from a steep rocky cliff
and shoots to the plain to take a smaller bird,
so lord Poseidon darted out of view. 65

Ajax Oileus sensed he was not mortal.
Breathless, he said to Telamon's giant son:
"Ajax, one of the gods who hold the skies
has told us to take a stand here and fight.
That was not Calchas, the omen-reading seer. 70
A faint outline of his true heels and calves
showed when he left. They were those of a god.
The spirit that I hold inside my chest
is charged with fire to fight and wage the war,
my hands and feet more lively than they were." 75

The mighty son of Telamon replied:
"I feel it too—my hands invincible
with sudden strength, my courage up, my feet
about to fly. I have an urge to face
rampaging Hector and fight to the death." 80

They traded words like these between themselves,
reveling in the fire Poseidon stirred.
Meanwhile Poseidon roused the rearmost Greeks
who nursed their battered spirits by the ships,
resting limbs exhausted by constant toil. 85
Sadness overwhelmed their hearts as they watched
Trojan warriors flooding over the wall,
and tears misted many an Argive eye.

Disaster seemed assured—until Poseidon
entered the ranks to build their strength and will.
He found a group including Teucer, Leitus,
Thoas, Peneleus, Deipyrus,
brave Meriones and Antilochus. 90

He stood where they could hear and needled them:
"For shame, you Greeks, like stripling boys! I counted
on you to hold the line and save the ships. 95
If you are going to shrink from battle now
today will be the day when Troy prevails.
How sad that I should witness this event,
a terrible thing I thought could not occur: 100
our ships boarded by Trojans, they who once
acted like timid deer who, deep in woods,
become food for jackals, leopards or wolves—
deer without courage or will to stand and fight.
Back then when Trojans saw our hands, our rage, 105
they never stayed to face us, even briefly.
Now, far from Ilium they fight at our camps,
thanks to our valorless army and chiefs
who no longer possess the will to protect
the Greek ships. They would rather run than resist. 110
Even if fault lies with the high commander—
Atreus' powerful son Agamemnon—
because he offended the son of Peleus,
that is no reason for us to shirk combat.
Instead, we all must rise above that rift. 115
Stop holding back the battle skills you men
possess, you who are among our finest warriors.
I would expect to see a man shrink from war
if he were a coward, but not men like you.
My friends, grievous ruin will soon be ours 120
if you continue to fade. So take courage!
A long, decisive battle is brewing now.
Hector has brought the war here to the ships.
Single-handed, he smashed the bolted gate."

Poseidon's speech inspired the Argive warriors. 125
They formed beside the two Ajaxes in ranks.
Mighty enough to rival even Ares
or protectress Athena, these finest Greeks
awaited brilliant Hector and his force.
Spear stood against spear, shield against shield, 130

helmet by gleaming helmet, man by man.
Each plume of horse's hair brushed on another,
so close together the warrior ranks waited.
Powerful hands gripped every ready spear,
and every man's mind was bent on war.

135

The Trojan force drove forward. Hector sped
as when a boulder rolls off its rocky perch
after a rain-swollen river sets it free,
massive torrents undermining the stone
until it lacks support and tumbles thundering
through the woods, unswerving, till at last it comes
to level ground, then rolls no more that day,
so it seemed Hector would drive to the shore,
easily marching through the Argive camp,
slaughtering Greeks. But suddenly he stopped
where tight ranks of Argive warriors stood
with slashing swords and spears sharp on both ends.
They drove him back, forcing him off his ground,
but Hector shouted orders to all his men:
"Trojans, battling Lycians and Dardanians,
stay with me now! These Greeks will not hold long.
Although they make themselves into a wall,
my spear will soon defeat them if it is true
that Hera's thundering husband sides with me!"

140

145

150

Hector's urging firmed his men's determination.
Deiphobus led off, his courage fanned
by Hector's speech. He held his shield forward
and strode on agile feet toward the Greeks.
One of them, Meriones, aimed a lance
and made a thrust that struck the Trojan shield,
oxhide, but as Meriones pressed the spear
he snapped its wooden shaft. Deiphobus
cowered behind the shield, paralyzed,
so close the spear had come. Meriones
withdrew among the Greeks, bitterly angry
to have forfeited both victory and weapon.

155

160

165

He started running toward his distant camp,
to fetch another spear and fight again.

War cries crescendoed as the fight wore on.

Telamon's son Teucer soon killed a Trojan,
one of Mentor's warrior sons, Imbrius.

170

Before the war he made Pedaea home,
wed to Priam's daughter Medesicaste,
but when the Argive ships landed their army
he left Pedaea, joined the Trojan force
and lived near Priam, honored like a son.

175

Teucer's probing lance head sank by an ear,
then withdrew. Imbrius toppled like an ash—
visible far from its high mountain seat—
that drops its leafy limbs to earth when felled.
So he crashed, clad in filigreed bronze.

180

Teucer was racing to remove that armor
when Hector charged the Greek and cast a lance.
Teucer saw it coming and dodged the point—
barely. Cteatus' son Amphimachus,
joining the fight, took the spear in his chest.

185

His armor clattered as he plunged to earth.
Hector admired his helmet. He made a run
to snatch the prize off the fallen Greek's head
but Ajax noticed and thrust a heavy spear.

190

The point did not reach Hector's bronze-covered flesh
but struck the Trojan prince's shield dead center,
so hard that Hector stumbled and backed away,
leaving the corpses. Greeks then dragged them off.

Stichius and Menestheus, Athenian chiefs,
took Amphimachus to the Argive camp.

195

The pair of Ajaxes seized Imbrius.
As when two lions escape watchdogs with a goat
they have snatched and carry it through underbrush
holding it high in the air between their jaws,
so the two Ajaxes held Imbrius up,
stripping his armor. The smaller Ajax chopped

200

the head from his drooping neck—for Amphimachus' sake.
He rolled it like a ball across the plain
and there it came to rest at Hector's feet.

205

Amphimachus' forebear Poseidon raged
because of his grandson's battlefield death.

He moved among the Argive camps and ships,
inciting Greeks to make the Trojans pay.

He met Cretan spearman Idomeneus,
leaving the field with a wounded comrade
who had a gash behind one of his knees.

A healer ordered soldiers to help the man
reach camp while Idomeneus ran back to fight.

The earth-shaker stopped Idomeneus and spoke,
his voice like that of Thoas, Andraemon's son
who ruled Aetolian towns Calydon

and Pleuron where people loved and honored him:
“Idomeneus, what has become of all

those fighting boasts Achaea's sons once made?”

The Cretan ruler turned to him and said:

“Thoas, no mortal warrior deserves our blame.

We have skills and arms enough to win this war.

Fear conquered none of our men. None held back
from even the grimdest fight, but I believe
that Cronus' powerful son is pleased to see
the Greeks destroyed ignobly far from Argos.

But you, Thoas, are always burning for combat.

Go give that spark to every flagging Greek.

Start now! Do not overlook a single man!”

220

225

230

The god who grasps and shakes the earth replied:
“Idomeneus, a man should never reach home—
but rather have Trojan dogs gnaw his bones—
if he chooses to shirk or run today.

Get your weapons! Join me so we may fight,
together, with the edge of being two.

Alliance strengthens even the least of men,
but we are two of Achaea's finest warriors.”

235

Poseidon headed toward the toiling men
while Idomeneus hurried to his camp.

240

He put his finest armor on, took two spears
and streaked like a thunderbolt that Cronus' son
might brandish on steep Olympus' topmost ridge,
flashing an omen to mortal men below.

So then the running Cretan's armor flashed.

245

He met his tall lieutenant Meriones,
on his way to replace the broken lance.

Cretan monarch Idomeneus spoke first:

"Meriones, my swift, best-loved comrade,
why are you coming off the battlefield?

250

Has an arrowhead hit and wounded you?

Or do you bring me a message? What I need
is for you to fight, not go to your camp!"

Meriones confronted the king and said:

"Idomeneus, bronze-armored Cretan lord,

255

I am headed for my camp to get a spear
because the one I took to battle broke
when I drove it against Deiphobus' oxhide."

The Cretan chief Idomeneus rejoined:

"Whether you want only one spear or twenty
they stand inside my quarters on the wall—
spoils from Trojans I killed. It is not my way
to avoid engaging enemies in battle,

260

so I have plundered their spears, their studded shields,
their brightly polished breastplates, their gleaming helmets."

265

Meriones narrowed his eyes and said:

"In my camp too—and aboard my dark ship—
are rows of Trojan spoils that I have won
since never once have I forsaken valor.

I always stand among the forward ranks
when and where a battle erupts on the field.

270

Another man—perhaps some bronze-clad Greek—
might not have seen my prowess, but you have."

The Cretan leader met his stare and said:
“I know your worth. No need to tell me this. 275
There have been many times when our warriors
lay in ambush where men can best be judged,
where cowardice and valor both stand out.
The coward’s body turns from side to side.
He lacks the fortitude to hold it still, 280
sits on his feet and shifts from knee to knee.
His heart thumps like thunder inside his ribs.
He thinks of death. His teeth begin to chatter.
The brave man’s body does not move. He has
no fear in ambush—even if up front— 285
and prays that furious battle soon will blaze.
In every ambush you have proven your valor.
If you should be hit or wounded in battle
the Trojan strike would not fall on your back.
No, you would meet the blow with belly or chest 290
as you charged ahead of the frontmost ranks.
But we should not stand here prattling like children.
Fellow warriors may think ill of us.
Go in my quarters, get a sturdy spear.”

Meriones, among the fastest runners, 295
raced from Idomeneus’ camp, spear in hand,
ready to fight, and overtook the king.
A man might have mistaken those two for Ares
and Ares’ indomitable son Phobos
who puts even the steadiest men to flight. 300
Those gods once left Thrace to battle Ephyri
or opposing Phlegyans, but they could not
choose either side so gave glory to both.
Like those immortals, the Cretan leaders
entered battle, clothed in brilliant bronze. 305
Loyal Meriones asked Idomeneus:
“Son of Deucalion, where do you want to strike?
In the middle perhaps, toward the west,
or toward the east? Likely the Argive warriors
need more assistance in one place than another.” 310

The Cretan ruler turned to him and said:

"The Greeks have good men at the middle ships,
the two Ajaxes and Teucer, their finest
archer, also tough fighting hand to hand.

They will give Trojans hell and drive them off,
no matter how fierce Hector proves to be.

315

He is resolute but will find it hard
to match their fury and invincible might.

The middle ships will only burn if Zeus
should spread the decks with hungry fire himself.

320

The taller Ajax will yield his ground to none
who is mortal, who eats Demeter's grain
and is vulnerable to bronze and boulders.

He would not yield even to Achilles,
in close combat, though Peleus' son runs faster.

325

So guide us to the west, and soon enough
we will learn if glory is ours or Troy's!"

Meriones strode off as fast as Ares
and led the way until they reached Greek lines.

As soon as they saw the fiery Cretans—king
and comrade wearing ornamented arms—
the Greeks took heart, and urged each other on
till furious battle flared astern the ships.

330

As when a pair of winds drive howling blasts,
in seasons when thick dust layers the roads,
until they meet and raise a churning cloud,
like that the warriors clashed, each determined
to cut his enemy down with whetted bronze.

335

The field of battle bristled lethal spears
that tore at human bodies. Eyes squinted
to dim the bright gleam of warriors' helmets,
burnished shields and newly polished breastplates
clashing together. Hard would be the heart
that felt no grief to see the bloodshed there.

340

The split between Cronus' powerful sons 345
 devastated both embattled armies.

Zeus had ordained that Trojans would win enough
 to restore Achilles' honor, but Zeus's will
 was not that all the Greeks at Troy would die,
 only enough to requite Thetis' son. 350

Poseidon wanted the Greeks to win that day.
 He had secretly left his depths, displeased
 to see Troy's advance, and angry at Zeus.
 Their lineage was the same, both Cronus' sons,
 but Zeus was sooner born, and saw much more, 355
 so Poseidon shied from open aid to Greeks
 and kept himself disguised in mortal form.
 The brothers' wills collided on the plain.
 Forward, then back they tugged the battlefield,
 impervious to either side, and many fell. 360

The graying Cretan king spurred Greeks to fight,
 partly by example of his own prowess.
 He killed Cabesan prince Othryoneus
 who recently arrived to seek his glory.
 He asked the hand of Priam's favorite daughter,
 Cassandra, and vowed impressive martial feats 365
 to drive Achaea's sons away from Troy.
 Old Priam promised her, giving his nod,
 and so inspired Othryoneus to fight.
 Idomeneus let fly his flashing spear 370
 and caught him in mid-stride. Useless the jacket
 of bronze he wore; the point pierced his bowels.
 The Cretan taunted him as he crashed to earth:
 "Othryoneus, all the people will cheer
 if you can now attain what you were promised 375
 when Dardan Priam pledged his daughter's hand.
 Our side could do as much or more for you.
 Why, we might give you Agamemnon's child,
 bringing her here from Argos, if you help

to topple Ilium and all its folk. 380
Come to the Argive ships so we may plan
the wedding, the rich dowry you will take!"

He took hold of Othryoneus' foot and dragged
till vengeful Asius came bearing down. 385
On Asius' shoulders smoked the breath of horses
his charioteer kept close. He aimed his spear,
but Idomeneus threw first, and his point struck
beneath the chin and drove through the soft throat.
He fell the way a poplar might, or oak,
or stately mountain fir that carpenters 390
had cut with iron blades to build a ship's mast.
So Asius fell, prone before his team,
moaning and clutching lumps of bloody dust.

Asius' chariot driver lost his wits
and lacked the sense to flee the battle's press 395
or even turn the horses. Antilochus
skewered him on a spear that pierced the breastplate
where it covered his lower abdomen.
He fell to earth, gasping one last breath.
Antilochus took charge of Asius' team 400
and drove the prizes back to Argive lines.

Deiphobus crept toward Idomeneus
and flung a spear, enraged by Asius' death.
The alert Cretan glimpsed the flying shaft
and ducked beneath his round well-balanced shield—
thick cured oxhide layers with shiny bronze 405
hammered in front, two handles behind.
He crouched, hoping the spear would whistle by.
The point rang on the shield and glanced away,
but the Trojan had not made a useless cast. 410
The wayward point impaled a king, Hypsenor,
tunneled through his liver and buckled his knees.

Deiphobus exulted over his kill:
"Aha! Now Asius' death has been avenged!"

While he follows the path through Hades' gates
he will laugh to see his royal escort!"

415

Deiphobus' mocking speech inflamed the Greeks,
testy Antilochus as much as any,
but he did not desert his friend Hypsenor.
He held a shield above Hypsenor's body
until a pair of trusty comrades came—
Alastor and Mecisteus, Echius' son—
who took Hypsenor, groaning, to the ships.

420

Idomeneus fought on, determined that he would
draw death's darkness over more Trojan eyes
or fall himself, defending Greeks from ruin.

425

Trojan Aesyetes had a favorite son,
Alcathous, Anchises' son-in-law
who wed Anchises' eldest, Hippodamia,
a treasure to both her father and his queen.
No other girl her age could rival her
in beauty, wit or skill. She wed Alcathous
because she thought him fairest of Trojan men.
Poseidon took his life through Idomeneus.
The god blinded his eyes and sapped his strength,
leaving the man unable to fight or run.
Like a stone pillar or beamy leaf-crowned oak,
he stood as a Cretan spear spiked his chest.
The deadly point ripped Alcathous' breastplate,
heavy bronze that had kept him safe till now.
The armor rasped as the spearhead drove through.
He crashed to earth, the tip fixed in his heart,
whose final beats quivered the butt of the spear
while Ares drained the warrior's spirit away.

430

435

440

Idomeneus lifted his voice and boasted:
"Deiphobus, do you think that we are even?
Despite your taunts I have killed three for your one!
Stand where you are, fellow, listen to me
so you will know how I got here from Zeus.

445

Zeus sired Minos to keep watch over Crete. 450
Noble Deucalion was a son of Minos.
Deucalion fathered me to rule the island.
Now the Cretan oarsmen have brought me here
with misery for you, your father and Troy.”
Deiphobus heard and at first he pondered
whether to seek another Trojan’s help 455
or try his hand with Idomeneus alone.
He decided the wiser course would be
to seek Aeneas where he had heard that prince
complaining, as he often did, that Priam
refused to honor him as he deserved. 460
Deiphobus found Aeneas and said:
“Aeneas, Trojan counselor, there is need—
sadly—to guard your sister’s husband’s corpse.
So come with me and protect Alcathous 465
who raised you in his house when you were small.
Idomeneus’ spear has taken his life.”

The challenge sparked Aeneas’ fighting spirit,
and he sprinted to kill Idomeneus,
who saw him but did not consider flight. 470
As when a confident wild mountain boar
awaits a band of hunters who approach
his lonely haunt, his bristles stand erect,
his eyes glow like coals, he whets his long tusks
and yearns to take on hunters and their dogs, 475
so then Idomeneus stood, giving no ground
when he saw Aeneas’ charge, but he did call
Ascalaphus, Deipyrrus, Aphareus,
Meriones and Antilochus, all nearby,
and he urged those comrades to lend their hands: 480
“Come here, friends! I am alone and afraid
to face Aeneas, who charges at me fast.
He is a worthy foe for any man.
He has the bloom of youth, life’s mightiest stage.
If only we were comparable in years 485
I would face him alone and kill or die!”

The five men heard and, without a moment's pause,
moved beside Idomeneus, shields on shoulders.

Aeneas saw them and also summoned help:

Paris, Agenor and Deiphobus, 490
all Trojan chiefs like him. Hard on their heels
their soldiers came. As when a shepherd delights
to see his sheep follow a ram to water,
so then Aeneas' fighting spirit swelled
when he surveyed the troop of men behind him. 495

The warriors clashed around Alcathous' corpse.

The metal armor all the fighters wore
collided in the skirmish, clattered and rang.

Two champions stood out from all the rest,
Aeneas and Idomeneus, each like Ares, 500
each out to kill the other with ruthless weapons.

Aeneas threw a spear at Idomeneus
but the Cretan saw it coming, stepped aside
and watched the spear stick quivering in the ground,
proof that Aeneas' cast accomplished nothing. 505

Idomeneus' lance pierced Oenomaus' belly
after the lethal point tore through his breastplate.

He fell in dust, fingers clutching the earth
while Idomeneus' spear stood tall in the corpse.

He pulled it out but could not strip the armor 510
because of a Trojan missile barrage.

Years had tempered his legs—once sprightly when running
to retrieve his spear or to fall back fast—
so now he battled Trojans hand to hand.

Afraid his feet were too slow to turn and run, 515
he backed up, step by step. Deiphobus
let fly a spear to satisfy his grudge.

The cast veered wide, hitting Ascalaphus,
a son of Ares, and ran his shoulder through.

He fell, desperate hands clawing the dust. 520
Powerful, deathless Ares had no inkling
that his son went down on the battlefield.

He stayed under Olympus' golden clouds,
obedient to Zeus like all his fellow
Olympus-dwellers who sat there, barred from battle. 525

A fight centered around Ascalaphus' corpse.
Deiphobus coveted his shiny helmet
and grabbed it. Lightning-fast Meriones
impaaled Deiphobus' arm. His hand relaxed.
The helmet's visor clanged, striking the ground. 530
Meriones swooped on him like a vulture,
pulled his blood-dripping spear out of the arm
and rejoined his band of soldiers. Polites took
his wounded brother Deiphobus in hand.
He led him from the skirmish to his horses
at the gory battlefield's outer edge
where Deiphobus' driver and chariot waited.
They headed for Troy with Deiphobus moaning,
trailing hot blood that poured from his fresh wound.

The battle blazed and war cries reached a roar. 540

Aeneas killed Aphareus, Caletor's son,
with a jab of his spear that passed through the neck.
Aphareus' head lolled. He clutched at his shield
and helmet as death arrived to sweep him away.

Antilochus saw Thoön turning to run,
chased and stabbed him, slashing through the vein
that traveled from Thoön's back to his throat.
That vein severed, Thoön toppled in dust,
face up, arms extended toward comrades. 545
Antilochus stood fast and stripped his armor
but kept a wary eye on nearby Trojans,
Trojans who pelted his gleaming shield but failed
to touch vulnerable flesh with pitiless bronze.
Earth-shaking Poseidon, in mortal disguise,
protected Nestor's son from Trojan weapons,
dancing around the youth, always nearby. 550
555

The god never rested his spear except
to hesitate, twirling it while he weighed
whether to cast or charge in close and thrust.

Adamas stalked Antilochus— Adamas,
Asius' son. His cast hit the Greek's shield
from a few feet away, but dark-haired Poseidon
weakened the spear, thwarting its quest for blood.

The spear's head, like a sharpened charred wood stake,
stuck in the shield and the shaft fell on the ground.

Adamas retreated toward his cohort,
but Meriones pursued him and cast.

The Cretan spearpoint pierced Adamas' navel,
an agonizing place to take a wound.

Adamas' hands held the embedded spear,
and he gasped as would an ox that mountain herdsmen
forcibly lead in bonds against its will.

Adamas breathed like that, but not for long,
only until Meriones pulled the spear
out of his body and darkness cloaked his eyes.

Helenus' sword crashed on Deïpyrus' head
and the Thracian blade tore his helmet off.

It tumbled on the ground and one of the Greeks
retrieved it when it rolled up to his feet.

Deïpyrus' eyes filled with blackness like night.

Menelaus saw Deïpyrus fall.
He charged toward Helenus, blustering threats,
poising his spear. Helenus drew his bow.
At the same moment, the Spartan ruler's lance
took flight and Helenus' string released its shaft.

The arrow flew to Menelaus' chest—
covered in bronze—and ricocheted away.

As when the fan on a broad threshing-room floor
causes dark-skinned beans or chickpeas to jump
in shrill blasts of pulsing winnowing wind,
so then Helenus' vicious arrow flew
from Menelaus' breastplate, far from its mark.

Helenus did not fare so well, hit in the hand
that held the bow. The merciless point plunged
through his hand and stuck in the weapon it held.
Helenus withdrew to comrades, eluding death,
but his arm hung by his side and trailed the spear.
Gentle Agenor eased it from his flesh
and bound the wound with tightly woven wool
that he took from a sling he used to launch stones.

595

600

Pisander set his sights on Menelaus
but fate decreed a ghastly death for that Trojan
when he dared do battle with Atreus' son.

After the two narrowed the space between them
the son of Atreus cast his spear, and missed.

605

Pisander thrust at Menelaus' shield
and hit it, but he could not pierce the bronze,
thick as it was. Pisander's spear shaft snapped,
but not his hope that he might yet prevail.

Menelaus' silver-riveted sword
flashed at Pisander, while Pisander drew
a battle axe—bronze on an olive haft.

610

The two weapons struck at the same instant.
Pisander's blade stopped on the helmet's ridge,
but Menelaus' fell on Pisander's brow.

615

Bone crackled as both of Pisander's eyes
dropped to earth and bloodied the dust where he stood.

Pisander fell. Foot on the Trojan's chest,
Menelaus stripped his arms and cried, exulting:

"That is the way you all will leave our ships,
you Trojans who insist on fighting this war
and make yourselves one with your shameless prince.

620

You wronged me, scurrilous Trojan dogs.

You court the fateful wrath of thunderous Zeus,
jealous protector of host and guest alike.

625

After we treated you well, you took away
my lawful wife and her ample store of riches.
You cling to those. You plan to set our ships
ablaze and slaughter all surviving Greeks.

Your days of waging war will end, and soon. 630
O father Zeus, they say that you are wise,
yet you are the source of bloody killing here.
You choose to favor arrogant men like these,
these wanton-hearted Trojans who never seem
to get enough of war and death on both sides. 635
Men get their fill of passionate love and sleep.
They get enough of pleasing song and dance.
I have a better appetite for those,
but these Trojans hunger only to fight!"

After he stripped Pisander's blood-smeared armor 640
Atreus' son entrusted it to aides,
then marched ahead to join the frontmost ranks.
There he confronted Pylaemenes' son,
Harpalion, who followed his father to Troy,
never to see Paphlagonia again. 645
He drove his spear against Menelaus' shield
but could not force it through the bronze and hide.
Harpalion retreated toward his men,
warily, lest a spearpoint taste his flesh,
but Meriones drew and shot an arrow 650
that hit his right buttock. The arrowhead
skirted the bone and entered the man's bladder.
Harpalion sank, rested on friendly arms
and breathed away his soul. The men who held him
laid him down; his dark red blood soaked the earth. 655
Paphlagonians gathered around his corpse,
placed it in his chariot and drove to Troy.
A tearful grieving father staggered behind.
Nothing could make up for the death of his son.

Harpalion's fall angered Priam's son Paris 660
who had been Harpalion's guest in Paphlagonia.
To vent his anger Paris shot an arrow
that hit Euchenor, son of seer Polyidus,
a rich, respected man who lived in Corinth.
Euchenor knew his fate when he boarded ship 665

because his prescient father warned time and again
that he would either die of plague at home
or fall at Troy beside the Argive vessels.

He chose neither the shame of shirking war
nor the misery that foul disease brings,
and now an arrow drove in his ear. The spirit
flew from his limbs, and darkness took its place.

670

In such a manner fighting raged on the west.
With Zeus inattentive, Hector did not learn
that slaughter was under way west of the ships—
glory-winning Argives overrunning Trojans,
thanks to the earth-shaker, lord Poseidon,
who spurred the Greeks and used his might to guard them.

675

Hector remained where he breached the gate and wall,
and shattered the ordered ranks of Argive troops,
where ships of Protesilaus and Ajax lay,
drawn up beside the sea. Before those ships
the wall did not rise as high as elsewhere
and furious battle of men and horses flamed.

680

There Boeotians, Ionians in long shirts,
deft Epeans, Phthians and Locrians
barely kept Hector off the ships, but failed
to drive away the prince, afire with war.
The most elite Athenians fought there too.
Their leaders were Peteus' son Menestheus,
Stichius, Pheidas and Bias. Epean chiefs
were Phyleus' son Meges, Amphion and Dracius.
Phthian chiefs were Medon and Podarces.
One was Oileus' illegitimate son,
Medon, brother of Ajax. He had fled
his fatherland after he killed a man,
kin to Eriopis, Oileus' wife.
Podarces, a son of Iphiclus,
stood with Medon in forward Phthian ranks
and fought beside Boeotians to save the ships.

685

690

695

700

A time came when the swift Ajax no longer
would fight apart from Ajax Telamon.
As when a pair of oxen plow untilled land,
spirits united, straining till both beasts
have steaming sweat rising behind their horns
as they struggle against their common yoke
and cut the furrow all the way to field's end,
so then the two Ajaxes stood together.

705

A team of men followed Telamon's son,
men who took charge of his ponderous shield
whenever toil and sweat demanded he pause.
No other Locrian followed Oïleus' son
as hand-to-hand combat was not their forte.

710

They had no bronze helmets with horsetail crests,
no round well-balanced shields, no spears with ash shafts.
They carried bows and braided woolen slings
as weapons to use at Troy. When their missiles
rained from afar they scattered Trojan ranks.

715

So while heavily armored Greeks on the front line
met Trojan troops and bronze-helmeted Hector,
the Locrians shot unseen and their projectiles
soon drained the Trojans' appetite for war.

720

Then Hector's entire army might have fled
to windswept Troy and left the Argive ships,
but Polydamas boldly spoke his mind:

725

"Hector, you do not like to take advice
because you have the finest battle skills
and want to be the best in council too,
but you cannot take charge of everything.

To one the gods may give great martial talents,
to others gifts for dancing, lyre or song,
but Zeus may grant a man high skills in council,
skills that benefit all his countrymen,
or save a city, and that man knows his gift,
so I will tell you what I think is wise.

730

War blazes around us on every side
but since they scaled the wall, our Trojan fighters

735

have gone slack and use their weapons to fight
only scattered skirmishes by the ships.

We should summon all our leading warriors,
then make a judgment together as a group,
whether we should attack the Argive vessels,
beseeching a god to grant the force we need,
or leave the ships and spare ourselves, our men,
the revenge I fear for yesterday's triumphs.
Among those ships a warrior unmatched
is sitting idle now, but how much longer?"

740

745

Hector approved Polydamas' proposal,
took his weapons, sprang from his chariot deck,
turned to Polydamas and answered him:
"I agree, and we will meet our leaders here,
but there is some fighting I must do first,
before I return to join you at the council."

750

He glittered like a snowy peak in sunlight
as he flew past Trojans and allies, sending
back to Panthous' son, Polydamas,
every top-rank warrior he could find,
but not Helenus, mighty Deiphobus,
Asius' son Adamas or Asius himself.

755

Hector combed the ranks looking for those men
but he would never again find them unhurt.
Most lay beside the sterns of Argive ships,
lost to Argive fury and Argive weapons.
The others had fled to Troy, nursing wounds.

760

A chief that Hector found on the battle's west end
was handsome Paris, fair-haired Helen's mate,
encouraging soldiers, urging them to fight.
Hector approached Paris and berated him:
"Pretty Paris, you depraved women's man,
where are our chiefs Helenus, Deiphobus,
Asius' son Adamas and Asius himself?"

765

770

Where is Othryoneus? Now all seems lost,
utter ruin our city's destiny."

Resplendent Paris replied to his brother:
"It pleases you to blame the guiltless, Hector. 775
At other times I may have shrunk from war,
but Mother did not bear a thorough coward.
From the moment battle started near the ships
I have been here at this post, engaging Greeks.
Our warriors that you asked about are dead, 780
except Helenus and Deiphobus.
They are back in Ilium, wounded by Greek spears—
both in the hand—but Zeus spared them death.
Now lead, wherever your bold heart dictates!
The rest of us will gladly come. You will see 785
no lack of prowess, able as we are,
with each man ready to use all his skills."

Paris' declaration convinced his brother
so he led where the fiercest battle raged,
around Cebriones, Polydamas, 790
Orthaeus, Phalces, godlike Polypoetes,
Palmys and brothers Morys and Ascanius.
They had just come from Phrygia to relieve
their brethren who had fought nine years at Troy.
Trojans stormed as when a screaming blast of wind, 795
which Zeus's thunder drives across a plain,
strikes and roils the sea—a deafening din—
till waves foam the water's restless surface,
glinting, curling one atop another,
so then the Trojan ranks—now here, now there— 800
surged in sparkling armor behind their chiefs.

Akin to murderous Ares, Hector led,
carrying before him his disk-shaped shield,
layers of oxhide backing a bronze face.
The horsetail crest atop his helmet tossed 805

as he probed the Argive ranks at every point
to see if they would weaken when he advanced,
but he failed to shake the will of any Greek.

Tall Ajax strode forward and challenged Hector:

"Come closer, friend. Why do you fear us so? 810

We are not short of any fighting skill
yet Zeus's cruel lash keeps us subdued.

I know you have hopes that you will destroy
our ships but we have might enough to guard them.

More likely your city and people will fall, 815
sacked and enslaved or slaughtered by Greek hands.

I say the time is near when you will flee,
praying that father Zeus and your friendly gods
will make your long-maned horses swifter than hawks
as you run for your walls in a cloud of dust!" 820

As Ajax spoke a bird flew from the east,
an eagle soaring high. The Argives cheered
when they saw the omen, but Hector said:
"Ajax, your clumsy boasts are off the mark.

If indeed I fight today as though I were 825
a son of Zeus, or born of regal Hera,
honored as if Athena or Apollo,
then this day promises defeated Greeks,
with you among them if you have the heart
to stay for this long spear, which soon will puncture
your Greek skin so Trojan ravens and dogs 830
may devour your fatty flesh beside the ships!"

He yelled and strode ahead. His army followed.
Shouts from every Trojan mingled and roared.
Achaeans' battle-cries crescendoed too 835
as they took on the fiercest Trojan men.
The clamor reached the dazzling realm of Zeus.

THE SEDUCTION OF ZEUS

Nestor heard shouts despite Hecamede's wine.
He snapped alert and said to Asclepius' son:
"Machaon, I wonder what is happening now.
Do you hear that roar of shouting young warriors?
You stay seated there and enjoy the drink.
Hecamede will warm a bath for you
so she can wash away the gore and clotted blood,
but I must go where I can see this fight."

That said, he grasped a shield his son had made;
Thrasymedes had left it in Nestor's camp
when he exchanged it for his father's shield. 10
The old man chose a spear, tested its point,
stepped outside and quickly measured the scene:
the Greeks had fallen back in disarray
before exultant Trojans. The wall had failed. 15

As when ominous swells heave the high seas,
foreboding a sudden blast of howling wind,
but no waves billow forward or form crests
till Zeus delivers that decisive blast,
so then old Nestor's mind churned as he pondered
whether to join the milling mass of Greeks 20
or consult the chief commander, Atreus' son.
Upon reflection he settled on the latter.

Meanwhile warriors slaughtered one another.
Bronze weapons striking armor rang to heaven
as men fought with swords and spears sharp at both ends. 25

When Nestor passed along the ships he met
the Zeus-descended kings who had suffered wounds:
Odysseus, Diomedes and Atreus' son.
Far from where the battle raged, their ships lay 30
at shore's edge. Ships that landed earlier
lay inland and the wall rose at their sterns.
The beach was long but not nearly long enough
to hold the massive armada of vessels,
so Greeks drew them up in rows that covered 35
the inlet's shore between crags that marked each end.
The wounded men watched the tumultuous fight,
leaning on spears, anguish gripping each one
in his heart's depths. The old king joined the group,
as horrified as they to see the Greeks' straits. 40
The high commander Agamemnon spoke:
"Ah Nestor, Neleus' son, Achaea's glory,
why are you here instead of the battleground?
I fear that Hector's boast is coming true,
the vow he made in Trojan elders' council 45
not to return to Ilium's heights again
till he has burned our ships and left us dead.
So he boasted and now he makes it happen.
O gods, it looks as if every Greek
is angry at me, not just Achilles. 50
None is willing to fight hard for the ships."

Gerenian horseman Nestor answered him:
"Things already done are done and not even
Cronus' high-thundering son can alter that.
The wall we trusted for our safety is down,
a failed shield to protect our men and fleet. 55
Our enemies press the fight near our camps.
Look as hard as you will, you cannot tell
from which quarter the frenzied Greeks have fled.

They die all over. The din has reached the skies. 60
We must consider what is left to do,
whether some plan might work. I do not urge you
to fight as battle is not for wounded men."

Argive commander Agamemnon said:
"Well, the Trojans are all too near our ships. 65
Neither the wall nor ditch we made has worked—
defenses our determined soldiers toiled to build
as impregnable shields for ships and men.
So it appears that Zeus intends to condemn
the Greeks to die infamous far from home. 70
I knew a time when Zeus supported our side,
but now I know the blessed gods intend
to glorify the Trojans at our expense.
Look here, you all should do what I propose.
First drag the ships propped nearest the water's edge 75
off the beach and launch them in the sea.
Moor them in deep water until the fall
of immortal night, when men withdraw from war,
even these Trojans. Then we will launch the rest.
It is not shameful to escape ruin in darkness. 80
He who flees fares better than he who dies."

Odysseus, scowling darkly, answered him:
"What kind of talk is this from Atreus' son?
Disgraceful! Better you had other men
to lead instead of commanding us, men Zeus 85
ordained in youth and age to struggle through
this difficult war until the last is dead.
Here lies the city of Troy. How could you want
to leave after what we have endured for her?
No more of your talk. A Greek soldier might hear 90
you say words that should not pass the lips of one
who ought to say only things fitting a man
who holds the scepter and leads a mighty host,
such as the Argive force that is your charge.
So I thoroughly scorn your strategy 95

that advocates quitting the war tonight
and launching ships right now. If we should launch
the Trojan leaders' prayers will soon come true,
and ruin befall us. Our men will abandon
the battle if we put ships in the water. 100
They will stand and gaze at them instead of fighting.
Then your plan has failed, commander-in-chief!"

Warrior chief Agamemnon replied:
"Odysseus, your rebuke stings my heart,
but I would surely never command reluctant 105
sons of Achaea to drag and launch their ships.
So now let us hear a better plan from someone,
whether young or old. I will gladly listen."

Diomedes ventured to take the challenge:

"I have a better plan if only you will 110
hear me and not belittle my advice
just because I am the youngest man here.
A legendary hero fathered me:

Tydeus, now buried under earth at Thebes.

Portheus begot three illustrious sons 115
who lived in Pleuron and Calydon's heights:
Agrius, Melas and horse-master Oeneus,
my father's father, the most acclaimed of all.

Tydeus left his father and settled in Argos 120
after he roamed for years as Zeus had willed.

He wed Adrestus' child and lived in a house
filled with valued possessions. He had broad fields,
wheat, surrounded by fruitful orchard groves
and numberless flocks. He was Achaea's best
at wielding a spear. All of this is true, 125
so do not think me born of meritless stock
and belittle the plan I will tell now.

Despite our wounds we must revisit the field.
Once there, we stay out of the raging fight, 130
to lessen the chance of wound upon wound,
but we will inspire others to fight again,

the many who stand back and avoid battle.”
The wounded kings listened and all agreed,
then Agamemnon led them toward the front.

The earth-shaker did not fail to observe. 135
He joined the kings disguised as an old man,
grasped one of Agamemnon’s hands in his
and summoned a faltering voice that said:

“Atrides, surely Achilles’ ruinous heart

exults at all this slaughter and Greeks’ retreat. 140
Greek fighters are no concern to Achilles
and angry gods will likely punish him.

But no immortal holds a grudge against you,
so before much longer the Trojan chiefs
will bolt in a cloud of dust. Then you will watch 145
their flight to Troy as they leave the ships and camps.”

Poseidon disappeared but first he shouted
like nine or ten thousand united shouts
of mortal men when Ares makes them clash.
That loud was the voice Poseidon’s chest produced. 150
In every Greek the sound renewed the strength
and courage to wage unremitting war.

The goddess Hera kept her watch on the field
from steep Olympus’ peak. She recognized
the god bustling over the battleground: 155
at once brother-in-law and brother. She smiled.

The figure of Zeus on spring-rinsed Ida’s peak
captured her gaze, and rancor swelled her heart.
Regal ox-eyed Hera canvassed her thoughts
for stratagems that might subvert his will. 160
Her soul’s depths suggested a plan she liked:
groom and adorn herself, go up to Ida,
stir Zeus’s desire for passionate love.
When he had satisfied that, Lethean sleep
would dim his luminous mind and close his eyelids. 165

Hera approached the chambers her son had built,
Hephaestus, who put inside the heavy doors
a hidden bolt that only she could draw.
She slipped inside and closed the secret lock.

She bathed her radiant skin with scented water, 170
and afterward she rubbed in olive oil
mixed with perfume, her favorite fragrant scent,
so sweet the breath of a single drop would kiss
Zeus's entire house, the earth, the boundless skies.

After she amply oiled her satiny skin 175
she combed and wove the locks of shimmering hair,
gorgeous and thick, that graced her immortal head.
She chose a loose-fitting gown onto which
Athena had embroidered figures and scenes.
She pinned it at her breast with a golden clasp. 180
She put a hundred tassels around her waist.
On her pierced earlobes she hung jeweled pendants,
dark-hued, three-tiered, radiating delight.
She partly hid her face with a teasing veil,
new and finely made, bright as the sun. 185
She tied graceful sandals beneath her feet.

Satisfied with how she had preened herself,
Hera left her room, motioned Aphrodite
away from the other gods and said to her:
"Will you do me a favor, dear child, 190
or have you become too angry with me
because I support Greeks, not Trojans like you?"

Zeus's daughter Aphrodite replied:
"Hera, the eldest goddess, Cronus' child,
speak your mind and I will do as you ask 195
if what you want is something I can give."
Hera hid the truth in her heart and said:
"Empower me to stir the desire that makes
mortal and immortal men submit to you.
I am heading for earth's end where I will visit 200

Ocean, the sire of gods, and mother Tethys,
who nurtured me, raised me in their home,
after they took me from Rhea when Zeus
marooned Cronus far beneath earth and sea.

I will go to them and end their bitter fight
which for too long already has kept the pair
from making love because rage poisons their hearts.
If I can find a way to coax those two
to passionate union in their empty bed,
they will love and honor me all their days."

205

210

Laughter-loving Aphrodite replied:
"I would not presume to refuse the one
who spends her nights in powerful Zeus's arms."

She withdrew from her breast an embroidered band
in which was woven every delight of love.

215

Passion was there, desire, and honeyed words
seductive enough to cloud the sharpest mind.
She put it in Hera's hand and said to her:
"There now, conceal this band between your breasts
and I promise you, the magic it holds
will guarantee that your venture succeeds."

220

So vowed the goddess. Ox-eyed Hera beamed,
purred and hid the charm deep in her bosom.

Aphrodite wandered from Zeus's house
while Hera dashed down Olympus' snowy heights,
crossed Pieria, then scenic Emathia,
then passed above Thrace's snow-capped mountain ridge,
its highest peaks, and her feet never touched earth.

225

At Athos she stepped onto the sea's swells
and sped to Thoas' town on Lemnos island.
There she encountered Sleep, brother of Death,
whispered his name, smiled, pressed his hand and said:
"O Sleep, master of all mortals and gods,
once before you gave me help when I asked.

230

Aid me now! Make me your debtor forever! 235
Alight on the eyes beneath Zeus's brow
just after I lie with him in warm embrace
and I will give you a beautiful chair,
all gold, that years ago my son Hephaestus
used his skills to make. With it comes a stool
to rest your anointed feet during a banquet." 240

Even-tempered Sleep faced Hera and said:
"Ah, Hera, first-born goddess, Cronus' child,
if you had asked about any other god 245
I would say yes. I would subdue even streams
of Ocean, though he is father to us all,
but I will not go near Cronus' son Zeus
nor put him to sleep except at his request.
I learned my lesson when I helped you before,
when Zeus's spirited son Heracles 250
set sail from Ilium after he sacked the city.
I disabled thunderous Zeus's mind,
set it awash in peace. You then contrived
a tempest to blow across Heracles' course.
Your storm diverted him to Cos, an island
far from his home. Then Zeus awoke, furious. 255
He razed innocent gods' homes looking for me
because he planned to throw me beneath the waves.
Night saved me, mistress of mortals and gods.
I fled to her and Zeus suppressed his wrath
so he would not lose the favor of sudden Night. 260
Now you want me to do such a thing again."

Hera widened her ox-like eyes and said:
"Oh Sleep! How could you get such thoughts in your head?
How could you liken Zeus's concern for Troy
to his strong feeling for Heracles, his son? 265
Look here. One of the younger Graces will be
my reward to you. You may marry her,
Pasithea, the one you have always craved."

When Sleep heard Hera's offer he grinned and said: 270
"All right, but swear by the black waters of Styx,
and grasp the fertile earth with one of your hands,
the sparkling sea with the other. Through your touch
the gods below with Cronus will bear witness
that you have promised me a youthful Grace, 275
Pasishea, the object of my dreams."

The white-armed goddess did as Sleep requested.
She swore, calling the names of all the gods,
known as Titans, buried in Tartarus.
After she completed her oath to Sleep 280
they left the town Imbros at Lemnos' shore,
and sped on their way, dense mist concealing both.
Soon they approached Ida, mother of beasts.
They moved from sea to strand on Lectos point
where their immortal footfalls shook the high forests. 285
Sleep stayed near the shore until his time to work.
He climbed one of the firs that then flourished
on Ida, so tall they pierced the air to ether.
He perched concealed among the needled branches,
disguised as a clear-voiced hill-dwelling bird 290
that gods call Chalcis but men named Nighthawk.

Hera went straight to Gargarus, highest peak
of Ida where cloud-amassing Zeus could see her.
When he saw her, desire flooded his mind,
the kind aroused when first they had made love, 295
tumbling in bed, their parents unaware.
He stood in front of his wife and spoke:
"Hera, why did you leave Olympus' heights?
Where are the team and chariot you drive?"

Hera kept the truth in her heart and said: 300
"I am heading to earth's ends where I will visit
Ocean, the sire of gods, and mother Tethys,

who nurtured me, raised me in their home.
I will go to them and end their bitter fight
which for too long already has kept the pair
from making love because rage poisons their hearts. 305
My team waits below where springs reach Ida's foot,
resting after their trip on land and sea.
I traveled here and stopped to tell my plans
because I thought it best to let you know
that I am going to visit deep Ocean." 310

Cloud-gathering Zeus took a breath and said:
"Hera, wait until later before you leave,
but now let us lie down in a soft place.
Never has desire for goddess or mortal
flooded my soul and conquered me like this. 315
Not when I craved Ixion's faithless wife
who bore Pirithous, like a god in council.
Not when I longed for Danaë's slender legs,
who bore me my illustrious son Perseus.
Not when I courted Phoenix' gorgeous daughter
who bore me both Minos and Radamanthus. 320
Not when I warmed to Semele or Alcmena.
Alcmena bore Heracles, a mighty son,
and Semele bore mirthful Dionysus. 325
Not when Demeter gave her charms to me.
Never with Leto, and not with you yourself
has hot desire seized me as now it does."

Deceiving Zeus the goddess Hera said:
"Feared son of Cronus, what ideas you have!
You want to bed me down in warm embrace,
right on Ida's peak where others can see!
How would it be if one of the deathless gods
should get a look, then call the rest together
pointing at us? I could not go home again
after we woke. I would be too embarrassed. 335
But if it is your pleasure to sleep with me
there is a private room, built by your son

Hephaestus, fitted with tightly locking doors.
We could lie there if bed is still on your mind."

340

The cloud-amasser Zeus replied to her:
"You need not fear that any mortal or god
will see through the cloud that I will hide us in.
Not even Helios' eye will witness us,
nor could his brightest beam shine through the cloud." 345
So Cronus' son clasped his wife in tight embrace,
and the earth sprouted luxuriant grass,
dewy clover, saffron and hyacinth,
profuse cushions to hold them off the ground.
They lay in that, their bodies draped in mist
the hue of gold, and sparkling dewdrops rose.
The father slumbered motionless on Ida,
his passion fully spent, holding his wife.

350

That was Sleep's signal to race for the ships
as messenger to him who shakes the earth.
Sleep found him and delivered his dispatch:
"Poseidon! You may openly aid Greeks now
and give them what glory you can while Zeus
remains unconscious where I put him to sleep,
after Hera lured him to hot embrace." 360

355

Sleep departed to visit faraway tribes.
Poseidon gave the Greeks his potent aid.
He sprang ahead of the forward ranks and called:
"Greeks! Will you give Hector victory now,
let him set your ships afire and claim glory?" 365
He boasts that you will do just that, since Achilles
stays put at his ships, fuming at Agamemnon.
Achilles is not needed if all of us
will rally together for our common good,
so listen to me and do what I say.
Collect the best, the largest shields in camp
and strap them on. Cover your heads in helmets.
Take in hand the longest spears you can find.

370

Then I will lead us into battle and soon
see Hector falling back despite his boasts.
If any of you larger men have small shields,
swap for a larger held by a smaller man."

375

The Greeks listened to every word and obeyed.
Even the wounded kings marshaled their troops,
Odysseus, Diomedes and Atreus' son.

380

Warriors exchanged arms throughout the ranks
till each man had fitting armor and weapons.
When every man had dressed his body in bronze
they moved out, Poseidon taking the lead.
His powerful hand brandished a sharp sword,
flashing like lightning, which men do not engage
on battlefields for dread restrains them all.

385

Brilliant Hector marshaled the Trojan side.

The war's fiercest, bloodiest battle ensued,
spurred by Poseidon and Hector, Priam's son,
one inspiring Achaeans, the other Trojans.
The sea's waters surged toward the ships and camps.
Every warrior yelled as armies met.
The roar was louder than waves that crash on rocks
when Boreas' blasts drive and whip the swells,
louder than forest fire that thunders down
a mountain ravine, gobbling brush and woods,
louder than wind that lashes tall oak crowns
with shrieks and wails deafening to mortal ears,
louder than any of those, Trojans and Greeks
bellowed that day as man fell upon man.

390

395

400

Glorious Hector cast a spear at Ajax,
facing him on the field. It struck the hero
where two thick oxhide straps crisscrossed his chest,
supporting his shield and silver-studded sword.
The double thickness saved him. Hector withdrew

405

- after he watched his futile weapon fall.
He backed toward his troops to evade death,
but Telamon's giant son Ajax sought out
a boulder like those used to brace the Greek ships. 410
- He picked a rock from where it lay by his feet
and threw it over Hector's shield to his throat.
The stone raced away like a spinning top
but, as when Zeus's bolt fells a great oak
at its roots, leaving sulphur fumes in the air, 415
and no mortal who sees could fail to fear
the terrible thunderbolt of father Zeus,
so then, mighty Hector toppled to earth.
His second spear flew from his hand, but his shield
and helmet fell with the Trojan prince, clanging. 420
- Achaea's sons shouted and raced for his body,
hoping to drag him away. They launched flights
of spears at Priam's son, but none was able
to hit him. Brave Trojans surrounded Hector,
Polydamas, Aeneas and Agenor, 425
also Lycians Sarpedon and Glaucus.
Then phalanxes closed to safeguard the prince,
all holding disk-shaped shields. The nearest men
lifted Hector and took him to his team.
Away from the battle, the blood, the turmoil, 430
his horses and driver waited, chariot hitched.
They drove toward Ilium, Hector groaning loud.
- When the chariot driver reached the ford
in eddying Xanthus—born of immortal Zeus—
he stopped and took Hector into the river
whose currents opened his eyes. He revived,
climbed to his knees vomiting crimson blood, 435
then fell to the ground again where night's darkness
covered his eyes. The stone had vanquished him.
The Greeks noticed Hector leaving the field
and, spirits lifted, they charged the Trojans anew. 440

First to strike was Oileus' swift son Ajax
 who took his spear against Trojan Satnius,
 a son of Enops and a naiad nymph
 who bore Satnius near Satniois' banks.

445

Oileus' spearman son leapt to his side
 and thrust. Satnius fell, then around his body
 Trojans and Greeks clashed in furious combat.
 Polydamas neared the corpse, waved his spear
 and threw it straight to Prothoënor's shoulder.
 The heavy weapon carried through the joint.
 The Greek fell in dust, clawing the earth.
 Polydamas puffed his chest, boasted and jeered:
 "I would not say that I, the son of Panthous,
 put that spear in the air to no avail.
 A Greek is hosting it now and, I predict,
 leans on it like a staff, entering Hades."

450

455

Polydamas' swagger goaded the Greeks
 and most of all heated the blood of Ajax,
 Telamon's son, who stood nearest the body.

460

A sudden throw set his long spear in flight.
 Polydamas saw it and dodged death's dark
 by jumping aside, but not Antenor's son
 Archelochus. Heaven had willed his death.

The spear struck the junction of head and neck,
 the top vertebra, severing both tendons.

465

His head sagged, so his mouth and nose were first
 to hit the ground although he kneeled when he fell.

Now Ajax turned to taunt Polydamas:

"Polydamas, give me an honest answer.

470

Would you not match his worth to Prothoënor's?
 He does not look to be of base descent
 but more like horse-master Antenor's brother,
 or son, judging from the close resemblance."

Trojan fury rose when they saw who fell.

475

Acamas speared Boeotian Promachus
 to avenge his kin, dragged him by the foot

and proudly exulted over his prize:
“Arrogant Greeks! Incessant, taunting boasters!
At least there will be less sorrow and pain
for us since you have taken this heavy loss.
Look at your Promachus, sleeping subdued
where my spear ensured that a brother’s blood
would not spill unavenged. Every man prays
that if he is killed his kin will right the wrong.” 485

Acamas’ speech infuriated the Greeks
including fiery-hearted Peneleus.
He charged, but wily Acamas escaped,
so Peneleus attacked Ilioneus,
son of Phorbas who owned flock upon flock
and still more wealth that Hermes had given him. 490
Ilioneus’ mother bore just the one child.
Peneleus’ spear struck the base of his eye
and drove the eyeball out. The point ran on,
through the socket and head. He sank, arms lifted.
Not satisfied, Peneleus drew his sword 495
and sliced Ilioneus’ neck so the man’s head
tumbled in dust, helmet in place, long spear
still in the eye. Lifting it like a poppy,
Peneleus waved the head and shouted his taunt:
“Tell me, Trojans, whether proud Ilioneus’ 500
mother and father weep for him in their halls,
just as the wife of Promachus will weep
for her beloved husband on the day
the Achaean survivors sail their ships home.” 505

Tremor shot through every Trojan’s limbs.
Each man glanced about for ways to elude death.

Reveal, Muses who live on Olympus’ heights,
which of the Greek warriors were first to take
a life after Poseidon turned the tide. 510
Telamon’s son Ajax killed Hyrtius,
Gyrtius’ son, a mighty Mysian chief.

Antilochus killed Phalces and Mermes.

Meriones killed Hippotion and Morys.

Teucer killed Prothoön and Periphates.

515

Agamemnon Atrides downed Hyperenor,
a spear in his flank that spilled his entrails.

Hyperenor's soul flew to the wound's gash
and escaped as darkness covered his eyes.

Oileus' swift son Ajax slew the most.

520

No one could rival him at chasing down
even runners that Zeus had set in flight.

A J A X D E F E N D S T H E S H I P S

Most Trojans dodged the stakes and cleared the ditch, panicked, but legions stayed behind, dead. When survivors reached their teams and paused to rest, terror bleached their faces. Then Zeus awoke on Ida's peak where he and Hera lay. 5 He sprang to his feet and eyed the warring men— routed Trojans, buoyant Greeks pursuing, huge Poseidon leading their foremost ranks. Zeus saw Hector, comrades hovering round, his heart grown faint, his gasps feeble and few, vomiting blood. No average Greek had hit him. 10

The father of gods and men pitied the prince, scowled at Hera, then angrily reproached: "Your plot has caused serious mischief, Hera. It took out Hector, put his men to flight. 15 If ever again you dare a trick like this, I will rain blows that make you beg forgiveness. You must recall the time I hung you high, weighted your feet with anvils, bound your hands with gold and left you between ether and clouds. 20 None of the gods on Olympus approved but they could do nothing. If any tried I grabbed and threw them so hard they hit the earth barely alive. Still, all the while

I grieved, worried for Heracles, my son,
because you had marshaled strong blasts of wind
that forced him off course and over the seas
until at length his ship landed on Cos.

25

I had to rescue him before I could guide him
through difficult trials to horse-filled Argos.
I remind you so that you will end these plots.
Realize that you will regret my passion
if you should trick me into bed again."

30

The threat made stately ox-eyed Hera shudder.

In time she found her voice and said to him:

35

"Let it be known by earth, by skies above,
by Styx's gloomy waters that flow beneath—
the most solemn witness to immortals' oaths—
and by your sacred brow, and by our bed
which I would never falsely swear upon:

40

Never again will Hera help Poseidon
harm a Trojan. Let him support Troy.
If it should come to be his whim someday,
let him kill Greeks exhausted near their ships.

I will try to persuade that mighty god
to do whatever you say, lord of clouds."

45

The father of gods and men flashed her a smile.

Words flew from his mouth as he answered her:

"Well, queenly cow-eyed Hera, if henceforth
you are seated among the gods, and he rebels,
Poseidon that is, rising to go somewhere,
then you should bend his will to yours and mine.
Now prove the promises you made are true.
Visit the clan of gods and send two here:

50

Apollo with his silver bow, and Iris.

55

Iris will fly to the bronze-clad Greek army,
at once, where she will counsel the earth-shaker
to abandon the war and go elsewhere.

Phoebus Apollo will raise Hector to fight.

His fury will revive, the pain will pass,

60

no more to rob his vigor. Then the Greeks
will once again turn in retreat, routed,
and flee until they reach the oar-locked ships.
Then Peleus' son will rise to avenge his friend,
Patroclus, killed by dazzling Hector's spear 65
at Ilium's walls, after he has slain a host
of Trojans and my Lycian son, Sarpedon.
Achilles will put an end to Hector's life.
Beginning then those by the ships will rally
and I will sustain them until the Greeks 70
have taken Troy with goddess Athena's counsel,
but my overpowering wrath will fall hard
on immortals who aid the Greeks in battle
before I have granted Achilles' wish
as I promised to do, nodding my head, 75
the day his mother Thetis clasped my knees
and begged me to restore Achilles' honor."

The white-armed goddess Hera took his command
and sped from Ida's peak to Olympus' heights.
As when a traveler's thoughts flicker across 80
all lands of the earth, his mind touching each one,
"Be here, then there," till all domains pass by,
so then in one instant Hera arrived.

On steep Olympus Hera found a meeting
of gods in Zeus's house. When she arrived 85
they left their seats and offered her their cups.
She refused them all except fair-cheeked Themis,
whose cup she took. Emboldened, Themis faced Hera
and asked Cronus' second-born a question:
"Why have you come, Hera? You seem distraught. 90
Likely the son of Cronus frightened you."

The white-armed goddess Hera answered her:
"Do not question me yet. You know quite well
how hard, how arrogant, Zeus's heart can be.
Divide the portions. Start the feasting now, 95

and you will hear along with all immortals
the things that Zeus told me. I do not think
anyone will be pleased, no mortal man,
no deathless god, despite this bounteous feast."

The stately goddess Hera took her seat 100

and watched the others fidget. She formed a smile—
with her lips—but under darkened brows her face
did not soften as she spoke angrily:

"Like children, those who foolishly rival Zeus!

We gods have often tried to thwart his will 105
with either tricks or strength, but he stays aloof,
unaffected, because of all the gods
he has the mightiest body and mind.

Accept whatever ills he sends your way,
such as the father's grief Ares is about to feel.

His son has died, the mortal he loved the most, 110
Ascalaphus, whom Ares called his seed."

When Ares heard he slapped his muscular thighs,
clenched his eyelids shut to fight tears and said:

"Olympus-dwellers, do not hinder me now, 115
for I must visit the ships to avenge my son,
even if that brings me a thunderbolt
and sleep amid the corpses, blood and dust."

Ares called his horses, Terror and Flight,
hitched them, then armed himself in glaring bronze. 120

The worst horrors ever to come might then
have struck Olympus when Zeus released his wrath
had not Athena, concerned for all immortals,
stood from her chair and rushed through Ares' door.

She pulled his helmet off, took his shield away, 125
grasped the spear he held and laid it aside,
then reprimanded the powerful, headstrong god:

"You rave! Get hold of yourself or face destruction!
Did you not hear, or is your mind so weak

you failed to understand what Hera said
after she returned from Olympian Zeus? 130
Do you want more than your fill of bitter pain
when Zeus forces you back here despite your rage,
then lays a plan to torment all of us?
He would soon forget the Greeks and Trojans,
come after us and punish every one, 135
taking immortals in turn, guilty or not,
so I insist that you check your grief for the boy.
Another god's even nobler mortal son
has died by now, or will die soon. We must learn
that most of our many mortal sons will perish." 140
Athena then showed Ares a place to sit.

Hera called Apollo out of the house,
also Iris, the deathless gods' messenger.
Hera wasted no time informing them: 145
"Zeus commands that you two hasten to Ida.
When you arrive there, look Zeus in the eye,
follow whatever orders he may give."

After she gave Zeus's commands she returned
to her throne. Her listeners left. They flew
until they reached Ida, mother of beasts,
and Gargarus' high peak where Cronus' son
was sitting, wrapped in radiant, fragrant clouds.
The two slowly approached the cloud-gatherer
and when he saw them he was gratified 150
that Hera had promptly caused them to come.
He turned to Iris first and ordered her:
"Swift Iris, go below to lord Poseidon.
Give this message, make sure he understands.
Command him to stop meddling in mortals' war. 155
He should take ease among gods, or in his depths,
but if he is inclined to flout my word,
let him reconsider. He must realize
that he should not venture to challenge me,

for my power is much greater than his. 165
Besides, I was born sooner. He would be foolish
to rival me and bring my wrath on all gods."

Wind-footed Iris forthwith obeyed Zeus
and swept down Ida's slopes toward sacred Troy. 170
As when snowflakes or hail fly from cloud banks
where Boreas has brought ether-born chill,
so swiftly nimble Iris flew to the plain,
stood near the earth-shaker and gave her message:
"Dark-haired grasper of earth, I bring a command
from mighty Zeus who holds the aegis. 175
He bids you stop meddling in mortals' war.
You should take ease among gods, or in your depths,
but if you are inclined to flout his word,
Zeus promises open hostility
between you and him, so you should relent,
since his power is far greater than yours. 180
Besides, he was born first. You would be foolish
to rival him and bring his wrath on all gods."

Earth-shaking Poseidon bitterly replied:
"He is mighty but also arrogant. 185
He vaunts his strength, but we have equal rank.
My mother Rhea bore Cronus three sons,
Hades, lord below, Zeus and myself.
Each of us received an equal allotment.
I received the domain of misty sea
when lots were cast, and Hades drew the gloom. 190
Zeus's portion was heaven, ether and clouds.
Earth and Olympus stayed common for all
so I shall not submit to Zeus's will.
He may be strong, but he should recall the lots,
and he should not threaten to injure me. 195
Zeus should save his haughty, reproachful words
for young daughters or sons that he has sired
and they will be quick to obey their father."

Iris, whose feet rivaled the wind, replied: 200
“Dark-haired grasper of earth, are you quite sure
that you want me to report such defiance,
or will you have an open mind and bend?
You know the Furies always obey the eldest.”

The earth-shaker, lord Poseidon, replied: 205
“Divine Iris, you have persuaded me.
Luckily Zeus has a tactful messenger,
but still he causes grief deep in my soul.
Although we each drew equal lots and fates,
he slighted me, sends me angry commands. 210
I will yield to him now, reluctantly,
but let me tell you this vow that I make:
if despite all of us—me, Athena,
Hermes the runner, Hera and Hephaestus—
Zeus spares Ilium’s steeps and proves unwilling 215
to give the Greeks the might they need to sack it,
between us there will be eternal strife.”

The earth-shaker then abandoned the field,
left the Greeks on their own and dived to his depths.

The cloud-amasser Zeus addressed Apollo: 220
“Go find Hector, wearing his dazzling helmet.
Poseidon, the god who grasps and shakes the earth,
has dived beneath the sea, shunning the force
I would have wielded in a fight whose din
might have deafened the Titans below with Cronus. 225
It is better for both Poseidon and me
that he, though boiling inside, gave way before
a grueling battle had taxed us both.
Here, I want you to take my tasseled aegis.
Shake it near the Argives, cause them to panic. 230
Also, far-shooting son, take charge of Hector.
Fan his martial fury until the Greeks
fly to their ships and reach the Hellespont.

Then I myself will plan a strategy
by which the Greek army shall rally and turn."

235

Apollo did as his father Zeus asked.
He dropped from Ida's heights like the sleek hawk
that preys on pigeons, the sky's fastest diver.
He found Priam's splendid son Hector,
who sat up now, collecting his wits again, 240
bringing his men to mind. His sweat and gasps
slowed, then stopped as Zeus's will worked to revive him.
Lord Apollo approached the prince and said:
"Hector, why are you here, behind the front,
feeble and lame? What has befallen you?" 245
Bright-helmeted Hector's voice was still weak:
"Which of Olympus' deathless gods are you?
Did you not see what happened at the ships?
After I slaughtered Ajax's men he smashed
my chest with a rock that drained all my strength. 250
I was certain that Hades and I would meet
at his house today after I breathed my last."

His rescuer, Apollo, answered him:
"Take heart, Hector, because a mighty ally
has come from Ida, charged to join and guard you:
Phoebus Apollo, whose silver bow has long 255
protected you and your Trojan citadel.
Stand tall again! Order your chariot fighters
to drive their teams toward the empty ships.
I will go ahead of them to clear the way,
then smooth it wide, after I rout the Greeks." 260

The reassurance restored the prince's fury.
As when a stabled stallion, barley-fed,
breaks free and flies with hoofs pounding the earth,
finds a river he knew when younger, bathes, 265
then proudly holds his head upright, his mane
bouncing about his neck as he parades his splendor

while his legs take him to fields where mares graze,
so then Hector scrambled to nimble feet

and massed his fighters after he heard the god.

270

As when a wild mountain goat, or young deer,
running from bands of country men with dogs,
chooses a lofty crag or shady wood

and takes cover where the pursuers will not go
because their shouts attract a lion who appears,

275

whereupon all pursuers turn and flee,

so then the Greeks were chasing Trojan troops,
slashing with swords and spears sharp at both ends,
until they saw Hector attacking their ranks,

then their once-high spirits sank to their feet.

280

Andraemon's son Thoas addressed the Greeks.

He was easily the best Aetolian spearman,
hand-to-hand fighter too, and few in council
could better him when youthful men debated.

He gave a well-considered piece of advice:

285

"Ah friends, my eyes have just beheld a marvel—
Hector resurrected, his strength reborn!

Every one of us believed that Hector
had died after Ajax Telamon's blow,
but once again heaven has rescued and spared
the man who buckled so many Argive knees,
just as he will probably do again

since Zeus's will has restored him to the front.

Here is what I propose we Greeks should do:

order most of the men back to the ships

290

but we who claim to be the army's best
will take a stand, a first line of defense,
bristling spears, and though Hector is reckless,
he should be afraid to attack our ranks."

Every warrior heard and obeyed Thoas.

300

Tall Ajax, Cretan king Idomeneus,

Teucer, Meriones and Ares' twin Meges

formed the warrior core, ready for battle,
faces turned toward Hector and his Trojans,
while most Argives retreated toward the ships.

305

The Trojan host advanced and Hector led
with long strides, but Apollo went first of all.
He draped mist from his shoulders. He held the aegis—
tasseled and terrifying—that bronzesmith
Hephaestus made for Zeus to foment panic. 310
Apollo raised the aegis and marched out front.
The force of Greeks stood firm. War cries rose
from both armies as arrows put to strings
sprang from the archers' bows, and heavy spears
bedded in bodies of youths hardly men, 315
while other spears failed to reach enemy blood
but stuck in the ground, hungry to taste flesh.
As long as Apollo held the aegis steady
the missiles fell on either side alike,
but when he came close so the Greeks could see, 320
he shook the aegis, shouting, till each of them
was dumbstruck, all strength and valor lost.
As when a flock of sheep or herd of cows—
attacked by two wild beasts in darkest night,
while herdsmen sleep—break into mad stampede, 325
so then the Greeks took flight, after the god
unleashed panic, giving Troy and Hector glory.

Trojans killed legions as Argives fled.
Hector killed Stichius, then Arcesilaus,
chief of the bronze-armored Boeotian force, 330
a trusted peer of lion-like Menestheus.
Aeneas stripped Iasus' arms, then those
of Medon, Oïleus' son out of wedlock,
the smaller Ajax's brother. Medon moved
to Phylace after he killed a man, 335
kin to Eriopis, Oïleus' wife.
The next, Iasus, was an Athenian chief,
a son of Sphelus, in turn Bucolus' son.

Polydamas killed Mecisteus. Polites
killed Echius, and Agenor downed Clonius.
Paris spiked Deiochus in the back
as he fled the front, exposing thin armor.

340

While Trojans stripped the armor off their victims
Greek survivors raced through their stake-filled ditch,
orderless flight to get behind their wall.

345

Hector's loudest voice commanded his men:
"Rush the ships! Forget the bloodstained spoils!
If I catch a man who is not at the ships
he will forfeit his life and no such laggard
will get a pyre or family burial rites.
Dogs will drag him around our city walls!"

350

Hector touched a lash to his horses' backs.
He signaled Trojan horsemen who, behind him,
drove teams and chariots forward with raucous cries
that bred ungodly noise. Phoebus Apollo
crumbled the ditch's steep banks with his feet
and used the loosened earth to form a causeway
as wide as the longest javelin cast
when men throw their hardest to show their strength.

355

The Trojans poured across after Apollo
who raised the fearsome aegis. He smashed the wall,
easily, as when a child on a sand beach,
idly playing, constructs a citadel
and promptly kicks it apart just for sport,
so then Phoebus Apollo destroyed the fortress
that Greeks once toiled to build but now abandoned.

360

365

The Greeks stopped at their ships, expecting disaster.
They called on each other and all immortals,
every man holding his hands aloft.
Old horseman Nestor prayed loudest of all,
both his arms stretched toward the starry skies:
"O father Zeus! If ever in Argos these men
burned the fatted thighs of oxen or sheep,

370

praying to return, and you gave them your nod,
protect us, Olympian, on this bitter day.
Do not let Trojans annihilate the Greeks!"

375

On Ida Zeus released a thunder roll
to show that he accepted Nestor's plea.
The Trojans heard Zeus's distant thunder rumble
and charged faster than ever, spirits aflame. 380
As when a towering wave on high seas
cascades over a ship's rails, under force
of wind that heaves swells higher and higher still,
so then shouting Trojans surged over the wall.
They drove beyond and fought at the ships' sterns
from chariot decks using double-pointed spears. 385
Greeks stood above them on the dusky crafts
with long pikes that they kept aboard the ships
to fight at sea, bronze heads on wooden poles.

During the time when Greek and Trojan warriors
fought at the wall, some distance from the fleet,
Patroclus stayed in wounded Eurypylus' camp,
amused him with tales while tending his wound
by sprinkling powders that calmed the bitter pangs. 390
But when Patroclus saw Trojans overrunning
the wall, saw the panicked Argives routed,
he groaned aloud, smacked the tops of his thighs
with flattened palms, and his mournful voice said:
"Needy Eurypylus, I can no longer 395
stay at your side. A great battle has come.
One of your aides will tend and comfort you
but I must run urge Achilles to arm.
Who knows whether with heaven's help I may
convince him? But a friend's persuasion works best."

Patroclus' feet sped him away. The Greeks 405
managed to halt the Trojan advance but failed
to drive their forces away from the fleet,
nor could Trojans pierce the Argive defense

so as to reach and burn vessels or camps.

As when a master shipbuilder, who knows 410

every skill Athena has to impart,

stretches a line taut on a new ship's timber,

so then the battle lines stretched tight, unbending.

As man fought man, battling behind the sterns,

Hector and Ajax met at the same ship 415

where they locked in combat but, toil though they did,

Hector could not capture and burn the vessel,

nor could Ajax repel him, thanks to Apollo,

but Ajax saw Clytius' son, Caletor,

bringing a torch his way, and speared his chest. 420

Caletor fell to earth, dropping the fire.

A few steps distant Hector saw his cousin

falling in dust behind the somber crafts.

He shouted orders so all his men could hear:

"Trojans and Lycians, close-fighting Dardanians, 425

do not relent in this tight but vital spot!

Protect the son of Clytius! Prevent Greeks

from stripping his armor behind the ships!"

Hector then threw a flashing spear at Ajax.

It missed him, but not nearby Lycophron, 430

Cytherian aide who had fought with Ajax

since he killed a man and had to leave Cythera.

The bronze point entered his head above the ear

as he stood by Ajax and, face turned skyward,

he fell from the ship, limbs emptied of life. 435

Ajax shuddered, then yelled, calling his brother:

"Teucer my friend, our old comrade is dead,

Cytherian son of Mastor, who lived with us

and whom we honored like a favored parent.

Arrogant Hector killed him. Where are your arrows, 440

where is your bow, gifts of Phoebus the archer?"

When Teucer heard he ran to his brother's side

bringing along his quiver and strung bow.

He chose an arrow, set it in fast flight

and hit Peisenor's heroic son Clitus, 445
driver for Panthous' son Polydamas.

Clitus dropped the reins and fell to the ground.
His horsemanship helped shatter countless ranks,
pleasing Hector, indeed all Trojans, but now
death came after friends tried to save him but failed. 450

The painful arrow entered his neck at the back.
When Clitus groaned and fell his horses startled,
rattling the empty chariot. The team's master,
Polydamas, reached the animals first
and handed the reins to Astynous 455
after directing him to keep an eye
on the team while he returned to the front line.

Teucer fit another notch to his string.
He aimed at Hector, bent on ending the battle
by letting the Trojan chief's soul escape, 460
but the Bowman did not elude Zeus's eye
and Zeus stole glory from Teucer Telamon.

Zeus snapped the twisted string on Teucer's bow—
just as the marksman drew—spoiling the shot.
The disabled bow flew from Teucer's grip. 465

After a shiver, Teucer said to Ajax:
“Not good. All our battle plans have failed.
One of the gods wrested the bow from my hand
and broke a wiry twisted string I made
just yesterday to last a thousand arrows.” 470

Telamon's giant son Ajax replied:
“Brother, you may as well abandon your bow,
now that a grudging god has condemned that weapon.
Take up an ash spear, shoulder a shield,
fight these Trojans and urge our men to join us 475
so we will not go down without a hard struggle.
Let us show spirit and fight to save our ships!”

Teucer carried his bow inside his camp,
strapped a shield—four layers of hide—to his back
and placed over his valiant head a helmet 480

with horsetail crest that bobbed, nodding menace.
He chose a spear—bronze head on an ash shaft—
then ran like wind and stood at Ajax's shoulder.

When Hector saw how Teucer's bow shot failed
he galvanized his men with a rousing cry:

485

"Trojans and Lycians, close-fighting Dardanians,
prove men, my friends! Carry the rush of battle
throughout the ships. My own eyes have just seen
one of the gods foil their best archer's arrow!

Works of gods are easy to recognize,
both by men who receive gods' aid and glory,
and by those who lack immortals' support.

490

Today they bolster us, weaken the Greeks,
so come! Fight to the ships! If any of us
should take a blow and meet his fate today
while battling to save his fatherland, let him die
and fall upon it. His family is safe,
his home untouched. The few surviving Greeks
will soon set sail and leave the shores of Troy!"

495

Hector's speech inflamed each warrior's heart.

500

Across the lines Ajax exhorted the Greeks:
"For shame, Achaeans! Let us now either die
or drive the Trojan threat away from our fleet!

If Hector sets our ships afire, do you think
that any of you will make it home on foot?

505

You must have heard him rallying his men
and goading them on to destroy our vessels.

He leads his men here to fight, not to dance!

There is only one way for us to answer:
confront them hand to hand in close combat.

510

Better to die soon before we collapse,
exhausted after grueling hours of battle,
beaten by lesser men who win our ships!"

Ajax's warning renewed the Greeks' ardor.

Hector killed Schedius, Perimedes' son,
a Phocian. Ajax killed Laodamas,

515

- Antenor's son, an infantry commander.
Polydamas won the armor of Otus,
Epean captain, Phyleus' comrade.
- Meges saw that and cast. Polydamas ducked
and stayed alive because Apollo forbade
that Panthous' son should perish so soon,
but Meges' spearhead sank in Croesmus' chest.
- Croesmus fell. Meges ran to take his armor
but spearman Dolops saw him and charged fast—
Dolops, who was the mightiest son of Lampus,
who was, in turn, Laomedon's valorous son.
- Dolops drove his spearpoint through Meges' shield
from close at hand but it stopped at Meges' breastplate,
a piece of heavy bronze armor that Phyleus
brought from Ephyra near the river Selleis,
- a gift to him from his host there, King Euphetes,
to wear in war and block enemy weapons.
- Now it saved Phyleus' son, inches from death.
- Meges rebounded, thrusting a spear
that caught the crested ridge on Dolops' helmet
and cut away its cocky horsetail plume,
fresh with crimson dye that colored the dust.
- Dolops fought on and might well have triumphed
but Menelaus came to Meges' aid,
unseen, and speared the back of Dolops' shoulder.
- From there the eager point sped through his chest—
a powerful thrust—and Dolops' legs crumpled.
- The two Argives ran to collect his armor
but Hector noticed and called cousins for help.
- The prince first chided Hicetaon's son,
strong Melanippus, who tended shambling oxen
in Percote where he lived, avoiding wars
until the graceful Argive ships arrived.
- Then he traveled to Troy, joined the Trojans
and lived near Priam who honored him like a son.
- Hector rebuked his cousin Melanippus:
“What if we all shirked like you? Can you avoid
sorrow after seeing your brother killed?

Do you not see them taking Dolops' armor? 555
Up now! The time to stop fighting Argives
will come when we have killed them all, or else
when they have taken Troy and slain its folk!"
Melanippus followed where Hector led.

Meanwhile Telamon's great son urged the Greeks: 560
"Be warriors, friends! Embolden yourselves!
Always back your comrades through this battle!
Men who regard their comrades will likely live,
and there is no glory for those who flee!"

Ajax's speech warmed his listeners' spirits. 565
They took his words to heart. They hedged the ships
with spears, and right away Zeus sent Trojans toward them.
Menelaus incited Nestor's son:
"Antilochus, no Greek is younger than you,
a faster runner, or braver in battle. 570
Kill any Trojan who steps from their ranks!"

Menelaus sped away after he spoke.
The youth vaulted forward and cast a spear,
keeping a wary eye. Trojans drew back
when they saw it coming but it found a mark, 575
Hicetaon's spirited son Melanippus,
who took it in his chest beside a nipple,
then crashed to earth as night covered his eyes.
As when a sharp-toothed dog leaps on a fawn
that a hunter has wounded outside its hiding place,
and the arrow has drained the fawn of strength, 580
so then Antilochus sprang at Melanippus,
aiming to strip his armor, but Hector saw
and charged through the clash toward the Argive youth.
Antilochus did not stay for that fight. 585
He edged away, as when a slinking beast,
one that has killed a dog—even a herdsman—
escapes before a band of hunters arrives,
so then, Nestor's son retreated from Hector

amid a blizzard of arrows and spears 590
until he reached his troop where he took a stand.

Trojans, as if they were flesh-devouring lions,
rushed the ships to effect the will of Zeus,
who kept Trojan warriors' spirits ablaze
and steered glory away from Argive fighters. 595

Zeus was determined to grant Hector triumph
till fire crackled aboard the Argive ships,
in keeping with Thetis' fateful request.

So Olympian Zeus would hold his course
until he saw the glow of burning crafts. 600

Then he would cause the Argive troops to rally,
turn the Trojans, regain Achaean glory.

With that in mind, Zeus set Hector, Priam's son,
on the hollow ships, more furious than ever.

Frenzied he was, like Ares, or ruinous fire
that rages on a forested mountainside. 605

A froth appeared around his mouth; his eyes
glowed under bushy brows; his plumed helmet
shook and bobbed with every move he made.

Supporting Hector was no lesser power 610
than Zeus himself, and Zeus glorified Hector
above all men that day—but not much longer,
for Hector's fate was already ordained
and Athena steered him toward Peleus' son's might.

Hector attacked, testing Greek formations 615
wherever he saw the most or finest arms
but he could not manage to break their ranks.

The Greeks stood fused. As when a cliff's stone face
that rises tall above a foamy sea
withstands blast upon blast of shrieking wind 620
and the boiling crash of towering swells,
so then Argives withstood Trojan assaults,
but Hector kept coming from every direction,
assailing Greeks. As when waves fall on a ship,
waves that powerful gales have spawned, then lashed 625

to frothy crests, and each time a burst of wind
roars in the sail the seamen tremble, blanched,
afraid that death is but moments away,
so then the heart in every Greek warrior quaked.

Hector was like a hungry lion among oxen 630

grazing on broad, marshy springtime meadows,
where the herdsman tending them does not see
as he stalks, then kills, a fat curly-horned ox—
because the herdsman stays among the fore-
or hindmost beasts while the lion attacks midway—
and all the herd stampedes. So then the Greeks 635
fled before Hector and Zeus's advance,
but Hector killed only Periphetes,
son of Copreus who once served Eurystheus
as messenger to mighty Heracles. 640

Copreus fathered a son better than he
and Periphetes excelled at running, fighting
and council where he was Mycenae's wisest,
but now he too augmented Hector's glory.

He turned to cast, tripped on the rim of his shield—
which reached his feet to parry spears and arrows—
then fell back on his chariot's deck. The helmet
hugging his temples struck hard wood and clanged.
Alert Hector heard and ran close enough
to plunge a spear in Periphetes' chest. 645

Periphetes' angry comrades could do nothing
because fear of Hector had frozen their limbs.

The Greeks backed to the ships. They held for a time
behind the inland vessels till Trojans surged,
forcing most defenders away from the crafts
that lay in front, and drove them to the camps. 655
But there the army stopped, restrained by shame
and dread, frantically shouting to one another.
Gerenian Nestor, Achaea's safekeeper,
implored the army, invoking each man's family:
"Be men, my friends, put respect in your hearts 660
for your fellow man! Let everyone recall

his children, wife, possessions, but mostly parents,
those living today and those who have died.

In absent parents' names I now entreat you:
take a valiant stand, and do not flee!"

665

Nestor ignited each man's courage and strength.

Athena cleared mist that obscured their eyes.

Light shone on the Greeks from both directions,
that of the sea, that of the battleground.

670

Hector and his army became plain to see
by Argives who had avoided the fight
and those who had defended the ships so far.

Battling Ajax was not yet of a mind
to retreat along with most of Achaea's sons.

675

He vaulted from one ship's deck to another,
waving a pike designed for naval battle,
its riveted shaft three times a spear's length.

As when a man, well-skilled at fancy riding,
links up four horses outside his city,
then races them toward the city walls

680

on the public road as admiring crowds watch,
women and men, while sure-footed, balanced,
he jumps first to one then another, flying,

so then from deck to deck, from ship to ship

685

Ajax bounded, his voice reaching the skies,
constantly bellowing shouts that urged the Greeks
to guard their ships and camps. Hector burst

ahead of his heavily armed Trojan host.

As when an eagle attacks waterfowl

690

that light on a river near cattle pastures,

be the birds geese, cranes, or long-necked swans,

so then Hector swooped on the dark-prowed crafts,

chose one and pounced. Zeus drove Hector ahead

and his spirited Trojan army followed.

695

Sharp battle flared once again at the ships
and one might have thought none of the men fatigued,
as fiercely as every warrior fell on another.

But the two sides had different motives. Greeks
fought to avoid ignominious flight 700
but every Trojan fought because he wanted
to see the ships afire, every Greek a corpse.
So guided, warriors slaughtered on either side
till Hector grasped a ship's stern—the far-sailing,
graceful, fast vessel that brought Protesilaus
but would not take him back to his fathers' land. 705
Around Protesilaus' ship Greeks and Trojans
locked in hand-to-hand struggle, no longer
able to cast spears or use cumbersome bows
but, crowded close together face to face,
they fought with whetted hatchets, battle-axes,
swords, and spears with bronze points at both ends. 710

Many a sword with fine ebony hilt
slipped to the ground from shoulders or limp fingers
of falling men, and blood darkened the earth. 715
Hector did not let go of the ship he grasped
but held the vessel's stern and yelled to his men:
"Bring fire! All of you raise the battle cry!
This is the day that Zeus ordains for us
to seize the ships that came, flouting the gods! 720
They brought us misery, thanks to timid elders
who would not let me fight my way to the fleet,
but held me, all our Trojan forces, back.
Just as in years past Zeus caused us to fail,
today it is he who leads and drives us on!" 725

The speech inspired Trojans to fight even harder
till Ajax could not withstand the missiles' rain.
Willing to die, he backed away, not far,
seven steps, to a bench above the decks.
He took a stand on that and thrust his spear
to keep Trojans carrying fire at bay. 730
Unflagging Ajax urged his fellow warriors:
"Fellow Achaeans, heroes, comrades of Ares!
Be men, my friends, renew your courage, your strength!"

Do we expect reinforcements to come, 735
or a new wall to rise and spare us ruin?
There is no wall of stone around this place
to help protect us or turn the battle's tides,
only a field of Trojans, heavily armed,
and broad seas at our back that hem us in.
Quitting will not save us but strong hands may!"
He waved his bloody spear to beckon comrades.
Whenever a Trojan bore down on the fleet,
carrying hot fire as Hector commanded,
Ajax's long pike was waiting to jab. 740
His thrusts killed a dozen foes behind the ships.
745

THE DEATH OF PATROCLUS

So they battled at Protesilaus' ship.
Patroclus, meanwhile, stood before Achilles,
tears streaking his face, as when a sunless spring
pours its shadowy water down a cliff.
The sight troubled fast-running Achilles, 5
and he questioned his friend about the sadness:
“Patroclus, why do you cry like a girl
who runs to her mother, begs to be held,
tugs her gown, interrupts the woman's work
and gazes up, weepy, till Mother relents?” 10
Like her, Patroclus, you are a fount of tears.
Have you something to tell the Myrmidons,
perhaps some news that you have heard from Phthia?
I hope Menoetius is still in good health,
Aeacus' son Peleus alive and well. 15
One of our fathers' deaths would sadden you.
Or do you mourn the Greeks, the many who died
beside the hollow ships because they slighted me?
Speak your mind so that I may know your thoughts!”

Sighs punctuated Patroclus' reply: 20
“Achilles, Peleus' son, mightiest Greek,
be patient with me and my fears for our army.
Men who were once the best fighters we had

are languishing beside their ships now—wounded.

Tydeus' son, formidable Diomedes,

25

Odysseus, Agamemnon were all hit.

An arrow sank in Eurypylus' thigh.

Healers are busy around them, using salves

to soothe the wounds, but you do nothing, Achilles.

I hope rage like yours never consumes me.

30

How will future generations regard you

if you fail to save us now from ruinous doom?

Peleus could not father a pitiless son.

You would have to be a child of cold seas

or stony cliffs to have so hard a heart.

35

If you stay here because of a prophecy

that Zeus conveyed through your mother divine,

send me in your place to captain our host,

the Myrmidons, and I will relieve the Greeks.

Let me wear your well-known armor on my body

40

so Trojans will think I am you, shrink back,

and let the worn Achaeans catch their breath,

a rare, welcome chance on battlefields.

The weary Trojans should be easy for us

to drive away from our ships, back to their walls."

45

So Patroclus entreated—foolishly,

since what he asked would hasten his life's end.

Achilles scowled, furrowed his brow, then said:

"Ah me, Patroclus, what strange things you say!

I do not bow to any prophecy

50

nor has my mother brought me one from Zeus,

but I have lingered here because offended

that a man no nobler than I robbed my spoils,

took my favorite prize away by force.

I am still troubled by that, my heart still aches.

55

Achaea's sons allotted me that prize,

a trophy my spear won when I sacked her city,

but Agamemnon took her from my hands

as if I were a stranger to the Greeks.

Yet I shall let it pass, as I do not want 60
rage to sour my heart forever, but I vowed
that I would not rejoin the war until
the battle cries come near my own dark ships.
Yet you—yes! Put my armor on your shoulders
and lead the war-starved Myrmidons to meet 65
the ominous Trojan forces that threaten
the Argives, now backed to the water's edge,
holding just the tiniest bit of ground.
All Trojans have left the city to fight,
emboldened because they do not see my helmet 70
opposing them. They would have fled through rivers
and filled the beds with their corpses if Atrides
had only treated me fairly. Instead they attack
because they do not see Diomedes' hand
waving a spear to drive ruin from the ships, 75
nor do they hear Agamemnon's war cry—
from his hated head—only the shouts of Hector,
urging his soldiers on, and the Trojans' cries
as they swarm the plain, slaughtering Argives.
It falls on you, Patroclus, to save the vessels 80
and counterattack, for if you do not, fire
may burn the fleet, ending all hope of return.
Now hear my orders, do as I command
so as to win us immortal glory 85
in every Greek's eyes, win me the girl
and lavish gifts that Agamemnon promised.
Drive away the Trojan fire then pull back,
and if Zeus should offer you still more glory
while I am absent, do not continue fighting, 90
which could only bring more dishonor on me.
Do not become absorbed in battle's allure
and attack the high-walled city Ilium,
as that would invite deathless Olympian gods
to intervene. Apollo favors Troy. 95
Come back to me as soon as the ships are safe.
Let other Greeks press the fight on the plain.
By Zeus, Athena and Apollo, I wish

none of the Trojans would escape alive,
nor any Greek fight on but you and me
so just we two could topple Ilium's heights!"

100

So Achilles and Patroclus talked at length
while battling Ajax yielded his short retreat.
Zeus's will subdued him; the Trojans helped
with airborne weapons. The helmet that fit fast
on his temples clanged time and again when struck. 105
His left shoulder came to ache after hours
of bearing his heavy shield, but Trojans failed
with all their missiles to drive him farther back.
He took his breath in desperate gasps, sweat
poured from tired limbs that no longer could pause
to rest while Trojans added blow on blow.

110

Tell me now, Muses who dwell on Olympus,
how fire first arrived to burn a Greek ship.

Hector sprang within reach of Ajax's spear,
brought his sword blade down on the wooden shaft, 115
cutting it through, so Ajax Telamon
held only a worthless stick while, by his side,
the bloody spearhead thudded on the deck.
Ajax shuddered because he recognized
the handiwork of the god who foiled Achaea
and willed Trojan success: high-thundering Zeus.

120

Ajax retreated. Trojans then threw fire
on the nearest ship. Licking flames engulfed it.
Achilles saw the blaze flare in the fleet,
slapped his thighs with flattened palms and declared: 125
"Get moving, Patroclus, master of horses!
Look there, fire glows red among the ships!
Do not let it destroy the means of escape!
Arm yourself now and I will gather the men!"

Patroclus dressed in Achilles' bronze armor.
He started by strapping greaves over his shins,

130

greaves that had silver shields to protect the ankles.
Next he buckled around his chest the breastplate—
a fine smith had made it to gleam like stars.

He shouldered Achilles' silver-studded sword
and on the other shoulder hung his shield.

Over his head he placed Achilles' helmet
whose nodding horsetail plume portended danger.
He found two spears well-fitted to his hand,
but not the one Achilles himself used—
so heavy that no Achaean was able
to wield it apart from Aeacus' grandson.
Chiron gave it to Peleus, mountain ash
that grew on Pelion's peak to slaughter men.

135

140

Patroclus bade Automedon yoke the horses,
the man he respected most after Achilles,
and trusted well to answer his battlefield call.
Dutiful Automedon harnessed the team,
Xanthus and Balius, both fleet as the breeze,
twins that Zephyrus sired with harpy Podarge,
who pastured cattle beside Ocean's currents.
The spare set of traces hung on Pedasus,
a horse Achilles took from Eëtion's city,
a mortal horse that ran with the deathless pair.

145

150

Achilles ordered the Myrmidons to arm,
then leave their camps. The chiefs fell to like wolves
whose hearts pound, brimming with ferocity
as they dismember a grand mountain stag.
They eat it all, blood reddening their cheeks,
before they race off, find a shady spring
and lap its black water on slender tongues,
belching gore from the prey until their hearts
at last beat quietly above full bellies.

155

160

So then the Myrmidon leaders and chiefs
gathered around Achilles' friend Patroclus
while Peleus' son himself continued his rounds
to summon foot soldiers and horse-drawn fighters.

165

Achilles commanded fifty dark ships
when he journeyed to Troy. Each vessel carried
fifty strong comrades at oarlocks and arms.
From all of these Achilles chose five
as captains but he remained commander-in-chief.
Menesthius captained the first brigade.
He was a son of river Spercheus
and Peleus' daughter Polydore who bore him
after she slept with the tireless river god,
although she claimed Borus to be the father.
Borus wed her and gave her lavish gifts.

170

Another battalion leader was Eudorus.
Polymele conceived him at a dance,
Phylas' daughter whom powerful Hermes
craved to embrace after he watched her movements
during a fete that gold-bowed Artemis gave.
Polymele slipped upstairs to sleep beside him
and later gave Hermes a splendid boy,
Eudorus, who inherited divine strength,
but when in time the labor-inducing Eilythia
carried him forth to see the light of sunbeams,
the son of mighty Actor, Echeclies,
led Polymele home to be his wife.
Phylas, the boy's grandfather, housed and raised him,
treating him better than if he were his own.

175

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185

190

Pisander was the third battalion chief,
Maemelus' son, best of all Myrmidons—
after Patroclus—at using a spear.
The old warrior Phoenix led the fourth brigade,
Alcimedon the fifth, Laerces' son.

195

When all the Myrmidons had gathered, Achilles
addressed the army and gave his commands:
“Let none of you Myrmidons forget the threats
against Troy that you once made as you sat here
berating me in my long, angry days:

200

'Hard-hearted son of Peleus, suckled on wrath,
you keep your men on the beach against their will.
We might as well have sailed our ships back home
when this crippling anger flooded your heart.' 205
You harangued me like that but now you face
the great task of battle, the task you have wanted.
Fight Trojans now, whoever is brave enough!"

The speech ignited every man's heart and strength. 210
The Myrmidons closed ranks when they heard their lord,
as when a mason lays a tight stone wall
to thwart the wind's force on a tall house.
So then helmets and shields knitted together,
shield against shield, helmet near neighboring helmet, 215
horsetail crest mingling with horsetail crest
in soft breezes that stroked the Myrmidons.

Two Myrmidon warriors stood out front,
Patroclus and Automedon, of one mind:
to lead Myrmidon fighters into war. 220
Back in his camp Achilles opened a chest
that silvery-footed Thetis, his mother,
had put on his ship, filled rim-full with shirts,
mantles and wind-sheltering woolen covers.
Underneath those he kept a cup from which 225
no mortal man besides himself had sipped.
He had used it only when praying to Zeus.
He took the cup from the chest, scrubbed it with sulphur,
rinsed it under a stream of crystal water,
washed his hands and filled it with lively wine. 230
He poured the wine beside his altar and prayed,
eyes skyward where thunderous Zeus was listening:
"O faraway Pelasgian, Dodonan Zeus,
lord of wintry Dodona, master of Selli
who sleep unwashed on the ground and know your will, 235
not long ago you answered one of my prayers.
You crushed Greek brigades to restore my honor.
Now once again fulfill a wish for me,

while I remain here by my crescent ships
and send Patroclus to lead the Myrmidons. 240
Bestow glory on him, far-thundering god!
Fill his heart with courage in order that Hector
may learn whether Patroclus outfights him alone,
or whether my friend's hands are invincible
only when I am on the battlefield. 245
After Patroclus drives the Trojans back
let him return here to this camp unharmed,
bringing my armor and all brave Myrmidons."

That was the prayer Achilles offered Zeus.
The father granted part, denied the rest. 250
Patroclus would drive the Trojans away
but Patroclus would not return alive.

After Achilles prayed and poured the wine,
he put the cup back in his mother's chest,
then hurried out to stand before his lodge 255
where he could watch the Greeks and Trojans fight.

Patroclus led the armored Myrmidons
who rushed in high spirits to charge the Trojans.
Myrmidons swarmed from the camps, as hornets swarm
onto a road, hornets children poke at, 260
teasing, whenever they pass the wayside nest
and so cause pain for innocent wayfarers,
for if a hapless traveler passes by,
slightly stirring the nest, they all fly out,
valiant hearts determined to guard their young. 265
With brave spirits like theirs, the Myrmidons
burst from the ships and their war cries curdled blood.
Patroclus shouted, inspiring his troops:
"You men are fellow soldiers of Achilles!
Be brave, my friends! Call up your strength, your valor! 270
Let us win honor for Peleus' mighty son,
for ourselves who have battled by his side,

and let wide-ruling Agamemnon learn
the folly of slighting Achaea's best warrior!"

Patroclus' speech heated every man's blood
and each attacked a Trojan while cheering rose
among the weary Greeks already afield.

When the Trojans saw Menoetius' valiant son,
clad in brilliant arms, leading Myrmidons,
every heart beat fast. Many men faltered,
convinced the fast-running son of Peleus
had put his rage aside and returned to war.
Each Trojan looked around for ways to escape.

Patroclus brandished and threw a gleaming spear
where wavering Trojans were concentrated,
near the stern of Protesilaus' ship.

It hit Pyraechmes who had led Paeone chariots
to Troy from Amydon on Axius' streams.
The point ran through his shoulder and he fell
in dust, yelping with pain, as his men fled.

Achilles' friend panicked Paeone troops
by killing the chief who outfought all his men.

Patroclus cleared the burning ship, quenched the fire
and, leaving the half-burned hull, soon repelled
the entire Trojan army. Greeks then raced
out from around the hollow ships, war cries renewed.

As when a tall mountain's majestic summit
stays cloaked in clouds till Zeus blows them away,
revealing high promontories, crags
and glens in crystal ether dropped from heaven,
so then when threat of fire vanished, the Greeks
breathed easier, then quickly rejoined the fight.

The Trojans turned but not by any means
in headlong rout conceding the Argive ships.
They took another stand, not far from the fleet,

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305

where warrior slaughtered warrior in tight combat.
Chiefs set the pace, led by Menoetius' son.
He whirled and struck Areilucus' thigh,
shoving the tapered bronze spearhead hard, deep
enough to split the bone. The Trojan fell 310
on the sandy beach. Menelaus speared Thoas,
chest exposed beside his shield, and his legs crumpled.
Meges spotted Amphiclus coming fast
and impaled his upper leg near the groin.
Dense muscle parted around the sharp point 315
of the spear. Darkness draped the Trojan's eyes.
Atymnius fell to one of Nestor's sons,
Antilochus, who drove a spear in his side,
then pitched him forward. Maris, watching nearby,
rushed toward the youth to avenge his brother 320
and stood over the corpse, but Thrasymedes
thrust as Maris prepared to cast, and hit
his arm, the upper part. The weapon's point
ripped through flesh and shattered the shoulder bones.
He fell, crashing, night eclipsing his eyes. 325
So did a pair of brothers slay a pair
who sank to Hades. They were Sarpedon's men,
warrior sons of Amisodarus who also
nurtured Chimaera, horror to countless mortals.

Ajax Oïleus charged Cleobulus, 330
attacking, killing him in turbulent fray—
one quick sword jab to his vulnerable neck.
Trojan blood washed the blade while widening eyes
yielded to looming fate, darkness of death.
Peneleus and Lycon cast at one another. 335
Both missed, losing their only spears for naught,
but both attacked with swords. Lycon was first
to land a blow, on the helmet's heavy ridge
where his sword shattered. The Greek swung at his neck
and the blade sliced through till nothing remained 340
but skin to hold a drooping head as he fell.

Acamas fell to Meriones who jabbed
a shoulder as the Trojan climbed his chariot.
He sank, dark vapor flooding his eyes.

Idomeneus' spear flew in Erymas' mouth. 345
The weapon's whetted point continued back
under the brain and split the chalky bone.
Teeth flew out; a powerful gush filled
Erymas' eyes with blood. Through nostrils, through mouth,
still more blood burst as death's dark covered him. 350

Every Greek captain killed his opponent.
As when hunting wolves chance upon lambs or kids
wandering high in mountains—far from their flocks
and inattentive herdsmen—the hungry beasts
rapidly dismember their timid prey, 355
so then Greeks fell upon Trojans till panic
conquered their spirits and all valor was gone.

Great Ajax, time and again, lofted a spear
at Hector but the battle-hardened prince
covered his broad shoulders with a bull-hide shield, 360
alert for an arrow's song or spear's whistle.
Hector was well aware the tide had turned,
but held firm while he could to protect his men.
As fast as clouds can cross the sky from Olympus
when Zeus launches a tempest brewed in ether, 365
so then terrified Trojans raced from the ships,
disarrayed, and before long Hector's chariot
took him toward Ilium, leaving his warriors
mired in the ditch the Greeks had dug and staked.
Deep in that trench many a frightened team 370
snapped its chariot's shaft dashing for home.
Patroclus pursued, barking orders to Greeks,
intent on killing panicked Trojans whose flight
congested every road. High dust plumes
rose to the clouds as hooves pounded the plain, 375

racing away from ships and camps toward Troy.
Wherever Patroclus saw Trojan troops massed
he drove at them and his wheels crushed the men
who fell from chariots he overturned.

Patroclus' team leapt the ditch and pointed stakes— 380
immortal horses, heaven's gift to Peleus.

Patroclus' heart was set on fighting Hector,
but Hector's team was heading toward the city.
As when a sudden, violent tempest appears,
spilling torrents of late summer rain— 385
Zeus's angry punishment for a king
who has oppressed his people through unjust laws,
ignoring justice and divine retribution—
until rain brims every watercourse,
mountain rivers undercut their steepest banks, 390
and waters roar down to the purple sea,
headlong from hills, wasting the works of men,
so then Trojan teams thundered, racing for Ilium.

Patroclus severed the hindmost Trojan ranks
and drove them back toward the fleet. Few of those 395
escaped alive because, in the space between
the ships, the river, the towering walls of Troy,
Patroclus assailed them and avenged dead Greeks.
Soon to feel his polished lance was Pronous,
whose shield did not cover his chest. He tottered 400
and crashed on the ground. Thestor, Enops' son,
was next to die. He huddled inside his chariot
where terror paralyzed his mind till his hands
released the reins. Patroclus thrust a spear
at his right jaw. The point passed through his teeth 405
and Patroclus pulled hard. As when a man
who fishes from overhanging rocks draws
in his line and barbed hook holding the catch,
so he hauled Thestor over the rim, the spearhead
sunk deep in his mouth. His soul fled as he fell. 410

Erylaus charged; Patroclus threw a rock
straight at his head. It burst the skull apart
inside his heavy helmet, and he dropped
flat on the earth, lifeless before he hit.

Erymas, Amphoterus, Epaltes,
Damastor's son Tlepolemus, Pyris, Echius,
Euippus, Ipheus and Polymelus—
all these Patroclus downed in quick succession.

Sarpedon saw his fellow Lycian warriors
falling beneath the hand of Menoetius' son. 415
He shouted a stern rebuke to those still left:
“For shame, Lycians! Where would you run? Stand fast!
I myself will face that man, and we shall see
who it is that has such might, brings such ruin
on Troy by slaughtering ranks of our best.” 420
425

Sarpedon jumped down from his chariot's deck,
Patroclus sprang to the ground facing him.
As when two eagles fight with hooked claws and beaks,
high on a cliff, exchanging high-pitched screams,
so then the two men shouted, rushing each other. 430

Cronus' son watched, feeling sad for his child.
He said to Hera, both sister and wife:
“Ah me, my most beloved mortal, Sarpedon,
is about to die at Patroclus' hand.
My heart confounds my mind. I am unsure—
since Sarpedon remains alive so far—
whether I should save him, move him to Lycia,
or whether I should let Patroclus kill him.” 435

Stately, ox-eyed Hera replied to Zeus:
“What are you talking about, feared son of Cronus?
He is mortal so his fate is long since fixed.
Do you really want to free him from death?” 440

Go ahead, but no immortal god will approve.
I will tell you why and you should think on this.
If you should send Sarpedon home alive,
then why would not another god desire
to draw a favorite son out of the fight?
Fighting around the city of Troy are many
sons of immortals you will surely enrage.
Even though you love and pity Sarpedon,
let him remain there on the battlefield,
fight Menoetius' son Patroclus and die,
but when Sarpedon's spirit has fled his bones,
send soothing Sleep and Death to carry your boy
until they reach Lycia, then set him down
where family and friends will give him funeral rites,
a marker, a mound, honors due the dead."

445

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455

Hera persuaded the father of gods and men.
He sprinkled blood-laced dewdrops on earth
to honor the son Patroclus was about
to kill in fertile Troy, far from his home.

460

After the two fighters approached each other
Patroclus cast and hit Thrasymeles,
prince Sarpedon's aide, his charioteer.
Thrasymeles' knees failed, the point in his belly.
Sarpedon threw a spear that missed Patroclus
but struck his third horse, mortal Pedasus,
near the shoulder. The beast screamed, exhaled his life,
then dropped, whinnying as his soul took flight.
The team parted, the yoke creaked, and their reins
were snarled after the spare horse fell in dust,
but Automedon quickly sprang to respond,
drew the sword that always hung by his thigh
and chopped Pedasus' traces free with one blow.
The team grew quiet as he unfouled the reins,
then once again they were ready for combat.

465

470

475

Sarpedon made a second fruitless cast
that flew over Patroclus' left shoulder,

whereupon the Greek threw another spear
which did not leave his hand to fly in vain. 480
It pierced Sarpedon's chest, entered his heart.
Sarpedon dropped as an oak would fall, or poplar,
or towering fir that builders find in mountains
and fell with axes to make timbers for ships.
He lay flat before his chariot and team, 485
moaning, fingers clutching at blood-soaked dust.
As when a lion slaughters a bull in a herd
of oxen—a bold-hearted tawny lion—
the bull groans dying between mighty jaws,
so then the Lycian chief on Patroclus' spear 490
struggled with death, calling his closest comrade:
“Ah Glaucus, man among men, now there is need
for you to be more valiant than ever before.
Let merciless war be your only desire,
but first call the Lycian leaders and chiefs 495
from all quarters to battle around my corpse,
then bring your own weapons. Fight above me,
because Sarpedon's infamy, his shame,
will haunt you all your days if you allow Greeks
to overrun me and plunder my fine armor. 500
So encourage the Lycians to make a stand!”

The dark curtain of death fell as he spoke.
Patroclus planted a foot on his chest,
withdrew the spear and released Sarpedon's life.
His soul and the spear's point came out together. 505
Myrmidons took hold of the heaving team,
about to bolt with both their masters gone.

Grief swept over Glaucus when he heard Sarpedon,
worse because he could not guard the corpse
while stanching the blood from his own limp arm 510
that Teucer wounded when he shot an arrow,
atop the wall where Trojans almost scaled it.
So Glaucus beseeched far-ranging Apollo:
“Hear me, lord, whether you be in fecund Lycia
or here by Ilium's heights. You always listen 515

to men who suffer grief as I do now.
Look at this serious wound that makes my arm
useless, not only painful but gushing blood
that will not stop. I cannot lift the limb,
let alone hold a steady spear to fight 520
against healthy Greeks. The best of men is dead,
Sarpedon, abandoned by his father Zeus.
But you, Apollo, heal this wretched wound,
deaden the pain. Give me new strength enough
to gather and lead the Lycian men in battle,
to fight myself, and guard Sarpedon's corpse!" 525

That was Glaucus' prayer which Phoebus heard.
He stifled the pain, stanched and dried the blood
around the wound, granted the Lycian strength.
Glaucus sensed he had come. He inwardly smiled 530
because the god had been quick to grant his prayer.
He summoned fellow Lycian captains and chiefs
from every quarter to fight around Sarpedon,
then rapidly strode toward Trojan leaders:
Agenor, Panthous' son Polydamas, 535
Aeneas and Hector, bright helmet agleam.
Glaucus approached the chiefs and addressed their foremost:
"Hector, it seems you have forgotten your allies
who, far from our homes, are dying here
for your sake though you do not protect us. 540
Sarpedon lies dead, Lycian warrior prince
who governed his folk with justice and strength.
Ares subdued him using Patroclus' spear.
So, friends, summon valor! Stand by him now,
or foes will strip his arms and foul his corpse, 545
incensed that they have lost so many men,
those that our spears slaughtered beside their ships."

Glaucus' report saddened the Trojan leaders,
because Sarpedon had been a Trojan mainstay,
although he was Lycian. He had led 550

legions to Troy and fought best of them all.
Trojans then charged the Greeks near Sarpedon's corpse.
Hector led, inflamed by the prince's death.
Greeks had gathered to hear Patroclus speak,
and he first addressed the pair of Ajaxes: 555
“Ajaxes, your concern should now be to battle
Trojans as both of you always have.
The prince who first climbed over our wall lies dead,
Sarpedon, so let us capture his corpse,
strip the armor he wears and show the men
who guard his body what ruthless bronze feels like!” 560
Patroclus' energy steeled the Greeks' resolve.

After chiefs on both sides had inspired their ranks—
Trojans and Lycians, Myrmidon-led Greeks—
they joined battle over Sarpedon's corpse. 565
Armor crashed on armor and war cries rose.
Zeus extended the battle's toil till night
to multiply the deaths around his son.

The forward Trojans attacked the quick-eyed Greeks
and hit one of the better Myrmidons, 570
Agacles' son, splendid Epigeus
whose home was the densely peopled town Budion
until he killed a well-respected cousin.
He moved near Peleus and silvery-footed Thetis.
They sent him along with Achilles' force 575
to the foal-filled Troad so he could fight Trojans.
Just as he grasped Sarpedon's corpse, Hector struck,
with a boulder that cracked open the skull
inside his heavy helmet. His body fell
across Sarpedon's. Death released his soul. 580

Patroclus grieved for fallen Epigeus.
He charged the hostile ranks as when a hawk
plunges, scattering flocks of starlings or jackdaws.
So you, horseman Patroclus, charged the Lycians

and chased the Trojans, heartsick for your comrade. 585
He struck Sthenelaus, Ithaemenes' son,
behind the neck with a rock that snapped both tendons.

Hector and his frontline ranks soon withdrew,
the distance a long javelin will fly
when a man casts while taxing himself in games 590
or defending against his battlefield foes.
Greek pressure forced the Trojans back that far.

Glaucus, now chief of the Lycian force, was first
to halt and turn. He killed Bathycles,
Chalcon's cherished son who had lived in Hellas, 595
prospering until he joined the Myrmidons.
Glaucus suddenly spun as Bathycles chased him.
The Lycian's spear caught the Greek mid-chest.
He clattered falling. Sadness washed the Greeks
when Bathycles dropped, but cheer was the Trojans' mood 600
as they surrounded the corpse. The Greeks were sad
but kept their valor and bore down on the foe.

Meriones killed yet another captain,
Laogonus, son of Zeus's priest Onetor,
a man the people honored like a god. 605
Meriones' lance plumbed his ear, and the soul
abandoned his body as darkness fell.

Aeneas threw a spear at Meriones,
aiming to pass under the shield he held.
Meriones saw the weapon. He dodged, 610
leaning forward so that the point flew past
and plunged in earth, its upright shaft aquiver.
Ares gradually drained the weapon's force
while earth herself brandished Aeneas' spent spear
after it flew useless from his strong hand. 615
Anger boiled Aeneas' heart and he growled:
"You are a nimble dancer, Meriones,
but would not be if my spear had struck home!"

Spear-fighter Meriones answered him:

"You are mighty, true, but you will find it hard
to quench the fury of every Greek warrior
you come up against. Death will take you now
if only I can reach you with this long spear.

620

Then soon, despite your strength, your skillful hands,
you will give me glory and Hades your soul!"

625

Menoetius' stalwart son rebuked the speaker:

"Meriones, why do you talk so much?

My friend, your taunts will not drive Trojans back
or win us the corpse. They would rather die.

Hands are the means of war. Words are for council.

630

Now is no time to talk, only to fight!"

Patroclus led and Meriones followed.

As when a band of woodmen shout so loudly
that roars travel from mountain glades to plains,
so then the fight produced a deafening noise:
clashing bronze shields, warriors' battle cries,
clangling swords, clattering ash-handled spears.

635

A man who sought a trace of fallen Sarpedon
would fail as dust, missiles and bloody gore
gradually covered his corpse from head to toe.

640

Warriors swarmed about the body, like flies
that buzz around buckets and bowls in a sheepfold
during spring when the vessels are wet with milk.

So then warriors crowded the body, and Zeus
kept his glowing eyes on the brutal fight.

645

While he watched he debated with himself,
considering when Patroclus' death should come.

Should it be soon—in the fight under way
around Sarpedon's corpse—that brilliant Hector
would slay Patroclus and win Achilles' armor?

650

Or should Patroclus increase the slaughter first?
Zeus concluded that he preferred to see
the mighty, closest friend of Peleus' son
force the Trojan men and bronze-helmeted Hector

back to Ilium, taking many more lives. 655
So Zeus slowly undermined Hector's valor
until he climbed his chariot and told his men
that Zeus's scale had shifted so they should fly.
Not even the valiant Lycians held. They fled
to a man, missing their king whose heart was stilled, 660
buried beneath numberless other corpses
that fell as Cronus' son prolonged the fight.

Greeks found Sarpedon's corpse. They stripped his armor,
once sparkling bronze, to store by the hollow ships,
and Patroclus told soldiers to take it there. 665

Cloud-gathering Zeus commanded Apollo:
"Go, son, carry Sarpedon off the field.
Clean away the gore that cakes his body now.
Take him to river waters and bathe him.
Anoint and clothe him, using immortal raiment. 670
Have a speedy escort transport him then,
twin brothers Sleep and Death. Let them straightway
place him among the prosperous folk in Lycia,
where family and friends will give him funeral rites,
a marker, a mound, honors due the dead." 675

Apollo obeyed his father Zeus's word.
He left Ida's heights for the battlefield,
lifted Sarpedon above the hailing missiles,
took him aside, bathed him in river waters,
anointed and clothed him using immortal raiment. 680
He then commended him to swift escort,
twin brothers Sleep and Death. The brothers straightway
placed him in Lycia among its prosperous people.

Patroclus called his driver Automedon
and sped toward Trojan and Lycian warriors—
poor man, for had he kept Achilles' command 685
he would have escaped his wretched fate and death.
Zeus's will is always stronger than mortals'

and he can put the bravest man to rout
or inspire the same warrior to fight
as he then fanned Patroclus' martial fury.

690

Who was the first, who the last man you killed,
Patroclus, after Zeus steered you toward death?
Adrestus, Autonous, Echeclus,
Perimus, Epistor, Melanippus,
Elasus, Mulius and Pylartes.
You slaughtered those and all the others ran.

695

The Greeks would then have seized high-gated Troy
under Patroclus' hand, his driving spear,
but Phoebus Apollo planted his feet
on Ilium's tallest tower and spared the Trojans. 700
Three times Patroclus climbed the soaring wall.
Three times Apollo forced the warrior down,
an immortal fist striking his bright shield.
When Patroclus started a fourth ascent
Phoebus Apollo's terrible voice thundered:
"Back down, Patroclus! Fate has not ordained
that Ilium's citadel will fall to you,
or to supreme Achaean champion Achilles."

705

Patroclus knew the voice and left the wall
rather than further provoke Apollo's wrath.

710

Hector's team galloped through the Scaean Gates.
He wondered whether he should rejoin the battle
or bring his army safely inside the walls.
While the prince was thinking Apollo appeared,
disguised as a powerful, youthful Trojan, 715
Asius, Hector's uncle through his mother—
Hecuba's blood brother, son of Dymas,
a Phrygian who lived by Sangarius' streams.
In Asius' form, Zeus's son Apollo spoke:
"Hector, why did you run? You should be ashamed!
If only I were mightier than you

715

720

I would make you regret you quit the war.
Get hold of yourself! Drive against Patroclus.
If you prevail, Apollo's glory is yours."

725

The god returned to the battling men.
Hector, inspired, summoned Cebriones
to drive his team back to the plain. Apollo
entered the field and spread seeds of defeat
among Greeks so as to give the Trojans glory.

730

Hector disregarded most Argive warriors.
He drove his strong-hoofed team straight for Patroclus.
Patroclus bounded off his chariot's deck,
spear in left hand. With the right he grabbed a rock,
jagged, almost too big for one hand's grasp.

735

He lifted and threw it hard—neither far
nor uselessly because it hit Hector's driver,
Cebriones, Priam's illegitimate son,
square on the brow while he was holding the team.
The stone hit above his nose and smashed through

740

the brittle skull, dropping both his eyes in dust.
Cebriones, as if he were a diver,
plunged from the deck, soul leaving his flesh.

Then you spoke mocking words, horseman Patroclus:

"My, he somersaults well, this agile fellow!"

745

If he were aboard ship on the fish-filled sea,
diving for oysters, he would fill many bowls.
Why, he could dive even in stormy weather,
considering how gracefully he tumbles!

These Trojans have acrobats in their ranks!"

750

Patroclus leapt for dead Cebriones
much as a panther, who has slaughtered a fold,
swells his chest, unaware that death is near.
So you sprang for Cebriones, Patroclus,

and Hector jumped off his chariot deck.

755

They fought by Cebriones like two lions
around a fallen deer, high on a mountain,

each animal hungry for food and fight.
So then beside the corpse two masters of war,
Menoetius' son Patroclus and brilliant Hector,
sought each other's flesh with pitiless bronze.
Hector grabbed and clung to Patroclus' helmet,
while Patroclus took hold of the prince's foot.

760

All Trojans and Greeks joined in furious battle.
As when rivalrous east and north winds vie
in mountain glades, shaking the nearby forests—
sturdy oak, slender dogwood, long-leaved ash—
driving the outermost branches together
till limbs shatter and crash—deafening noise—
so then Trojan and Greek warriors collided
but not one even considered shameful flight.
Around Cebriones spear after spear struck home,
flights of feathered shafts bounded from bows,
and heavy, jagged boulders crashed on shields
but, shrouded in whirling dust, Cebriones
lay quiet, his horsemanship consigned to memory.

765

770

775

Until Helios bestrode heaven's center
each army took an even share of blows
but when he started down toward evening,
the Greeks gained greater might than they were due.
They dragged Cebriones away from missiles,
from Trojan shouts, and took his armor off,
while Patroclus charged Trojans, bent on slaughter.
Three times he charged as swift as Ares himself.
Three times he killed nine men and gave his war cry.
But when he rushed a fourth time, like a god,
the limit of your life drew near, Patroclus,
and Phoebus met you on the battlefield.
No one saw him coming through the crowd,
concealed in mist no mortal eye could pierce.
He stood behind Patroclus, struck his back
with open palm, and set his eyeballs reeling.

780

785

790

Phoebus Apollo knocked his helmet off
and rolled it clanging under horses' hooves.
Strands of the helmet's horsetail plume mingled
with bloody dust. Never before had that
splendid crested helmet fallen to earth
during the days it guarded Achilles' head,
but now Cronus' son granted it to Hector,
proud spoils, though death was near for him as well. 800
Apollo splintered the spear Patroclus waved,
thick and strong though it was. He yanked the shield
off his shoulders, breaking the strap that held it.
Zeus's son tore Patroclus' breastplate loose,
emptied his mind, softened his limbs' sinews 805
and left him helpless. Then came a spear in his back,
thrust between his shoulders by Dardan warrior
Euphorbus, Panthous' son, the best young Trojan
at spear-fighting, horsemanship and foot-racing.
He had downed no fewer than twenty men 810
during a single day on the battlefield.
His was the first weapon you felt, Patroclus,
but you withstood it and Euphorbus fled
with his blood-drenched spear, unwilling to stand,
to fight even a weak, disarmed Patroclus, 815
who, failing from divine and mortal blows,
drew back seeking refuge among his men.

As soon as Hector saw valiant Patroclus
wounded, weakened, giving up his ground,
the Trojan prince overtook him, thrust a lance
below his ribs and drove the point straight through. 820
Patroclus fell. The watching Greeks were stunned.
As when a lion overwhelms a tireless boar
on mountain steeps after a heated fight
around a tiny spring where both would drink, 825
the weary lion's greater power prevails,
so then, after Patroclus had cut down ranks,
Hector took away his life with a spear thrust,

and while he did he mocked the dying man:
"You had in mind to sack our town, Patroclus,
and end the Trojan women's days of freedom,
taking them home with you aboard your ships.
Folly! To guard our women, my fast horses
stretched out their legs toward war, and with this spear
the best Trojan warrior has spared our women
from servitude. Now you will feed our vultures!
Poor wretch. Achilles did not rescue you.
He doubtless told you often before you left:
'Horseman Patroclus, do not come back to me
here at the ships till murderous Hector's
tunic and chest are bloody, riddled with holes.'
In saying that he swayed your foolish mind."

Barely alive, you answered, horseman Patroclus:
"You should thank the immortals who handed you
my life, Zeus and Apollo. They were my ruin.
They easily took the armor from my body.
Had they not, if twenty such as you had come
all twenty would have fallen under my spear,
but wretched fate let Leto's son kill me.
Euphorbus helped, so now you kill me third.
I will say this for you to keep in mind:
you too have little time left. Starting now
relentless fate and death will dog your heels
until they claim you by Achilles' hand."

Death stopped his voice after those threatening words,
and Patroclus' soul left his limbs for Hades,
lamenting his fate: his youth, his manhood, lost.
As Patroclus died, victorious Hector said:
"Why do you prophesy my death, Patroclus?
How could you know if fair-haired Thetis' son
will reach me with his spear and take my life?"

He braced a foot against Patroclus' side,
grasped his spear's handle and pulled the head out.

He brandished the weapon, then chased Automedon,
fast-running Achilles' charioteer, 865
but he sped safely away behind the swift,
immortal horses that gods once gave to Peleus.

THE BATTLE FOR PATROCLUS' BODY

A treus' son Menelaus observed
Patroclus falling in battle among Trojans.
He ran through the front ranks, helmet agleam,
and paced around the corpse like a female ox
after she has heard her first-born calf whimper. 5
So Menelaus guarded fallen Patroclus,
holding forward his spear, his disk-shaped shield,
ready to kill any who came his way.

Panthous' son Euphorbus also saw
noble Patroclus' fall. He raced to the corpse, 10
took a stand and addressed the Spartan king:
“Zeus-fostered Menelaus, chief of armies,
give way! Leave the corpse and armor to me
since mine was first of all Trojan or allied
weapons to hit Patroclus before he fell. 15
Let me enjoy the honor, the fame in Troy,
or this spear will take away the life you love!”

Menelaus' face reddened as he replied:
“For Zeus's sake! Unworthy, arrogant boaster!
No leopard would brag as much, nor would a lion, 20
nor even a mischief-minded boar—the beast
that grows most cocky as he vaunts his strength.
None would boast half as much as Panthous' sons!

5

10

15

20

Your brother Hyperenor already lost
his life after he brazenly challenged me, 25
called me a miserable Argive warrior.
He will not return upright on his feet
to gladden his lovely wife or cherished children.
If we duel I will free your soul like his,
but you had better think twice and rejoin 30
your fellow warriors, rather than battle me,
or you will die. A child would realize that!"

Euphorbus did not take the advice, but answered:
"Menelaus, now you will pay full price
for my brother's death you just bragged about. 35
You left his wife forlorn in newly built halls,
cursed his young children with sadness and grief,
but I will allay their mournful misery
if I can carry home your head and armor
to put in Panthous' and Phrontis' hands. 40
So let our battle be no longer postponed,
whether it is resolved by valor or flight!"
He thrust his spear at Menelaus' shield
but the point did not pass through, no, it bent
in the layered oxhide. Then Atreus' son 45
lunged a spear while praying to father Zeus.
Just where the throat's base enters the chest,
there he struck and pressed with powerful arms.
The point sped clean through the vulnerable neck.
Euphorbus fell amid a clatter of armor. 50
Blood streaks clotted his hair, much as the Graces
use gold and silver to intertwine their braids.

A man once nurtured a healthy olive shoot,
a lonely shoot where plentiful springs purled,
a shoot that flourished, its leaves kissed by breaths 55
of all the breezes. White blossoms bedecked it
till suddenly came a violent gusty wind
that blew it down and left it lying prone.

So then Panthous' spear-skilled son Euphorbus
fell to Atreus' son, who stripped his victim's armor.

60

As when a bold, confident mountain lion
seizes the finest cow from a grazing herd,
grasps and breaks her neck in powerful jaws,
then feeds, gulping her blood, her ample entrails,
after he tears her open, while men and dogs
yell and bark from a safe distance, none willing
to face him, every one in fear's yellow grip,
so then not a Trojan near Patroclus dared
approach or fight triumphant Menelaus,
and he would have captured Euphorbus' armor
had not Phoebus Apollo grudged him the spoils.
As fast as Ares, Apollo rushed to Hector
after taking Ciconian Mentes' form.
He imitated the mortal's voice and said:
“Hector, do not waste time trying to catch
hotheaded Achilles' horses. They are hard
for any mere mortal to master and harness,
except Achilles, whose mother is a goddess.
Look there, while you were chasing them Menelaus
was guarding Patroclus and speared a good man,
Panthous' son Euphorbus, who now is dead.”

75

80

Apollo then rejoined the toiling warriors
as bitter sorrow darkened Hector's mind.
He studied the ranks and quickly recognized
the one stripping off the armor, the other
lying in blood the fatal wound let flow.
He raced through the front lines, his bronze aglitter,
brilliant as the flames lord Hephaestus makes,
unquenchable. Atreus' son saw him coming
and, troubled, debated his own brave heart:
“What should I do? If I abandon these spoils,
Patroclus, too, who died to save my honor,
some Greeks may rightly think little of me,

85

90

yet if I await Hector all alone
to avoid shame, I may be overwhelmed
since he is leading Trojan legions here. 95
But why do I debate my heart like this?
If I should flout heaven and fight a mortal
who has a god's backing, defeat is certain,
so no Achaean should think less of me
for leaving, since Hector has a god's support. 100
But if perhaps I find the taller Ajax
we might together forge courage to return,
even against the god, and bring the corpse
to Peleus' son Achilles. That I will try." 105

While Menelaus pondered what to do,
ranks of Trojans advanced, Hector leading.
Atreus' son withdrew, leaving Patroclus.
Now, again, he turned like a thick-maned lion
that dogs and shepherds chase inside a fold,
waving spears, shouting till his valorous heart
grows cool and he hesitates, then leaves the pen. 110
So Menelaus then abandoned the corpse.
When he reached his troop of men he stopped and scanned,
looking for great Ajax, Telamon's son. 115
He spied him on the battle's western fringe
where he was encouraging Greeks to fight
and overcome the fear Apollo had stirred.
Menelaus raced to Ajax and said:
"Ajax my friend, to dead Patroclus' side!
Let us make haste, and bring Achilles the corpse,
albeit stripped, since Hector has the armor." 120

The Spartan roused Ajax's fighting spirit,
and he crossed through the ranks with Atreus' son.
Hector had finished stripping Achilles' armor. 125
He was about to sever Patroclus' head
and make the body a gift to Trojan dogs
when Ajax appeared, shield like a city wall.
Hector backed to safety among his men.

He climbed his chariot, but first he sent the armor
where it would fuel his glory most—Ilium. 130

Ajax placed his shield to cover Patroclus
and took a stand. As when a lioness
leading her cubs through woods suddenly meets
hunting men, fury expands her chest 135
and she narrows her eyes until they are slits,
so then, Ajax stood over dead Patroclus.
Close by his side war-hungry Menelaus
planted his feet, though sadness burdened his heart.

Hippolochus' son Glaucus, Lycian chief, 140
frowned at Hector and reprimanded him:
“You make a good show but fall short in battle.
You play the coward to preserve your fame,
but you had better plan to guard your city
using only soldiers who live in Ilium. 145

Why should Lycian warriors fight more Greeks
to save your town? You do not appreciate
our long struggle against hostile Argives.
Why, on the field you protected lesser men
but abandoned Sarpedon, your one-time host. 150
You let him become Achaean prey and spoil.

Sarpedon defended you and your city
while yet he lived, but you would leave him for dogs.
If my Lycian warriors persuade me
that we should go home, Troy's defeat is assured. 155

Still, if Trojans could muster bolder spirit—
the spirit of warriors who are eager to fight
for their fatherland and drive invaders out—
then we might yet drag Patroclus to Ilium.

Once the dead man is inside Priam's high gates—
if we can carry him there from the plain—
the Greeks might swap Sarpedon's splendid armor
for him. I would rather take the bronze gear.
Patroclus fought as bravely and well as any
Argive chief or warrior in close combat. 160
165

You lack his heart. You even shrink from Ajax,
afraid to face his fiery eyes and shouts,
let alone attack, since he fights better than you."

Hector replied, matching Glaucus' frown:

"You should not presume to insult me like that!"

170

I once considered you wiser than most,
wisest of all the Lycian men who came,
but now I scorn your thoughts since you have dared
to say that I will not confront Ajax.

I have never shirked fights or thundering teams
but Zeus's will is always overwhelming.

175

Even the bravest men will take to their heels
when Zeus has inspired their battlefield foes.

Look here, follow me now and judge my deeds,
whether I prove to be a coward today
or whether hosts of Achaea's mightiest men
fall at my hand while guarding Patroclus' corpse!"

180

Hector addressed his men so all could hear:

"Trojans, Lycians, close-fighting Dardanians!

Be warriors, friends! Summon your passion, your courage,

185

while I cover my flesh in Achilles' armor

that I took off Patroclus after I killed him."

When bright-helmeted Hector finished he left
at a run and quickly overtook his aides,
not far away, the men that he had sent
to carry Achilles' armor to Ilium's gates.

190

Hector paused and exchanged the armor he wore.

He sent what he removed to the citadel,
then covered his skin with the immortal arms
of Peleus' son Achilles, arms that gods
gave Peleus and he in turn gave his son—
but the son would not age in his father's armor.

195

Cloud-gathering Zeus, seated afar, observed
Hector dressing in Achilles' fine war gear,

- shook his head and mused grimly to himself: 200
“Poor man, you do not consider your own death,
soon to occur. You wear the immortal arms
of Achaea’s best, a man all others fear.
You took life from his strong but gentle friend
and wrongly stripped that armor off his back, 205
but for the moment I will give you might,
which carries a price: you will not return
to bring Andromache Achilles’ armor.”
The son of Cronus gave his decisive nod.
- Hector adjusted the arms. Ares granted 210
the prince martial fury that filled his limbs
with strength and prowess. Hector then took his war cry
to vital Trojan allies, let them see
him wearing Achilles’ brilliant armor,
and forcefully addressed the foreign chiefs— 215
Glaucus, Thersilochus, Medon, Mesthles,
Asteropaeus, Phorcys, Hippothous,
Disenor, Chromis and Ennomus, the seer—
meaning to rekindle their loyalty:
“Hear me, countless neighboring allied clans! 220
It is not because I like to see a crowd
that I asked you to leave your lands and come,
but so that our Trojan wives, our helpless children,
might yet be spared from warmongering Greeks.
I have since exhausted the fortune and food 225
of Troy’s soldiers to buttress the will of yours.
Let us now turn for attack, and either die
or not, in warriors’ camaraderie!
Look at Patroclus lying there. Any man
who drives Ajax away and brings me the corpse 230
will get full half the spoils, the same as me.
That man’s glory and fame will equal mine.”
- The speech stirred allies and Trojans to charge,
brandishing spears. Each man thought he was sure
to drag Patroclus from under Telamon’s son. 235

Poor dupes! They lost legions around the corpse
after Ajax told Menelaus to get help:

"Atreus' son, my friend, we two no longer
can hope to defend here without more men.

I have less concern about dead Patroclus—
that he may fatten Trojan vultures or dogs—
than I have about losing my own head,
or yours, since heavy attack is closing in
and bloody deaths for us are likely soon.

240

So summon Greek fighters, all who can hear!"

245

Menelaus, renowned for his loud voice,
made his plea carry to multitudes of Greeks:
"O friends, captains, leaders of Argive men,
you warriors who share common stores with my brother
and me, who side by side with us marshal
your own armies, may Zeus's glory be yours!
I cannot see where any of you stands,
through this cloud of dust that battle has raised,
but every man should come who does not want
Trojan dogs to tear Patroclus apart!"

250

255

Oileus' fast son Ajax heard him well.

He came running through the battlefield first,
but close behind followed Idomeneus
and Meriones, murderous Ares' peer.

What mortal's mind could hold the others' names,
the numberless Greeks who answered the call?

260

Hector led the massive Trojan advance.

As when, from time to time, a great wave enters
a river's mouth and roars upstream till inland
cliffs resound, echoing the forceful sea,
so then, bellowing Trojans rushed. The Greeks
surrounded Menoetius' son, spirits united,
using their shields to barricade the corpse.
Zeus cascaded dense mist around their helmets
to show respect. He liked Menoetius' son
while he was yet Achilles' living friend

265

270

and did not want dogs to tear him apart,
so he assisted those guarding the body.

At first the Trojan assault was overwhelming.
Greeks edged back from Patroclus to avoid
the flying spears Trojans launched in the air
toward the corpse, but soon the Argives regrouped,
held fast round the body. They rallied behind
Ajax whose size and martial feats made him
the finest Greek warrior after Achilles. 275

Ajax crossed the front ranks as when a boar,
mountain-bred, easily disperses dogs
and strapping youths by wheeling through woodland glades.
So then Telamon's mighty son Ajax
entered and quickly scattered the Trojan ranks
that hovered around Patroclus, all determined
to drag him off to Ilium and win glory. 280

Indeed, Pelasgian Lethus' glorious son,
Hippothous, managed to grab Patroclus' foot
and tie a strap around his ankle tendons—
a means to drag the corpse—but Hippothous
encountered death, so he dragged nothing away.
Telamon's giant son suddenly appeared
and thrust a spear at Hippothous' bronze cheek guard.
The point ripped through the horsetail-crested helmet, 290
and powerful hands drove the heavy shaft
till brains spurted onto the spearhead's base,
mixed with blood. Hippothous' fingers opened
letting Patroclus' foot fall on the ground—
to stay. Hippothous fell on him face down,
far from rich Larisa. His sons would not
requite their father's nurture, short as his life
became when he met mighty Ajax's spear. 295
300

Hector's lance streaked toward Telamon's son
but he saw it and dodged the deadly point— 305

- barely. It hit Iphitus' son Schedius,
the best Phocian fighter. In Panopeus
he made his home, a king of many people.
The spear's tip coursed beneath his collarbone,
plunging ahead till it went through a shoulder. 310
Schedius' armor clanged as he dropped to earth.
Ajax's next victim was Phaenops' son Phorcys.
Near Hippothous' corpse, Ajax speared his belly,
pierced the breastplate and reached the bowels inside.
Phorcys fell in dust, fingers clawing the ground. 315
The Trojans reeled under Ajax's assault.
Shouting, triumphant Greeks stripped the armor
that Phorcys' and Hippothous' bodies wore.
- Then once again the battle-weary Trojans
would have fled to Ilium, meek, defeated, 320
allowing Greeks to win glory not yet due,
by dint of strength and heart, had not Apollo
incited Aeneas, using Periphates' form,
the herald who, at his aging father's side,
grew old himself, but kept a kindly heart. 325
In Periphates' likeness Zeus's son declared:
"Why would you flout the gods and retreat again
to Ilium's walls? I remember an army
that boasted of manly strength, courage, boldness,
great numbers, but bowed to a smaller force. 330
Yet, even though Zeus's will is for us Trojans
to win, our leaders cringe, avoiding battle!"
- As far-ranging Apollo spoke, Aeneas
recognized the god and shouted, excited:
"Hector, all you Trojan and allied chiefs! 335
These war-insatiate Greeks have disgraced you,
driven you toward Ilium's walls like sheep,
but just now a deathless god stood here and said
all-powerful Zeus will back us if we fight!
Follow me! Attack the Greeks! Make it hard
for them to carry Patroclus to their ships!" 340

Aeneas pivoted, sped to the front;
his listeners followed and faced the Greeks.

Aeneas threw and hit Leocritus,
Arisbas' son, Lycomedes' aide.

345

A sad Lycomedes watched his comrade fall.
He stood beside the corpse and hurled a spear
that hit Hippasus' son, prince Apisaon,
piercing his liver, sapping his legs' strength.

An ally, he had traveled from Paeonia,
that region's best after Asteropaeus.

350

Asteropaeus saw Apisaon fall.

He charged the Greek front lines seeking revenge,
but could not penetrate the bank of shields
and bristling spears stationed around Patroclus.

355

Tireless Ajax marshaled, prodding the Greeks.
He allowed none to retreat from the corpse,
or to advance and fight ahead alone.

All must stay with Patroclus, fight together.

So Ajax commanded. The battleground
grew wet and crimson as warriors bled—
not only fallen Trojans and their allies
but also Greeks, who lost their share of blood,
though fewer Greeks fell because they took care
to guard each other better as they fought.

360

365

The heated battle raged until it seemed
that neither sun nor moon existed there,
so dense the mist that draped the warriors
who vied and fell around Patroclus' corpse.
Elsewhere the Greek and Trojan multitudes
remained engaged under the ether, in gleam
of brilliant sun, where not a cloud appeared
above the earth. Both sides paused now and then
to allow themselves brief respite from missiles.
But those around the corpse suffered trials of both
cloud and ruthless battle—exhausting trials.
Word did not reach two of Achaea's fighters—

370

375

glorious Antilochus and Thrasymedes—
that brave Patroclus had died. They thought him still
alive, fighting among the foremost Trojans. 380

Those two guarded their men against death and panic
in far-flung battles, as old Nestor had counseled
when he sent his sons from his ships to fight.

Violent strife continued all day long.
The flow of blood and sweat increased until 385
the feet of every man, his shins, his knees,
his arms, even his eyes were fouled from struggle
over Achilles' fallen comrade's corpse.

As when people stretch a bull ox's great hide
that they have coated with oil before they form 390
a circle, grasp the hide's edges and tug
until seeping oil penetrates the skin
as steady pulling stretches every part,
so then the two sides tugged Patroclus' corpse
back and forth. Every warrior's heart held hope 395
that he would drag it to either Ilium's walls
or the Greek ships. Fighters around the body
were savage as beasts. Ares or Athena
would have been proud to fight in either army,
sharing credit for all the men and horses 400

that Zeus ordained to suffer there. Still no hint
had reached Achilles' ear that Patroclus fell.

The battle raged a long way from the ships,
beneath Troy's towers, and Achilles assumed 405
his friend yet fought outside the Trojan gates,
about to return. He did not think Patroclus
would enter Troy without him, or at his side,
because his goddess mother often foretold
the destiny Zeus had allotted her son,
but she had not reported the sad event 410
that his closest friend had already died.

The warriors brandished spears above the corpse,
clashed without pause and killed man upon man.

One bronze-armored Argive was heard to say:

"Ah friends, bravest Greeks, we should not retreat
to the hollow ships, but let the dark earth here
swallow us all, for that would bring more honor
than if we left the corpse so Trojan men
could drag it to Ilium and claim our glory."

415

Likewise one of the valiant Trojans said:

"O friends, do not withdraw even if we
must die at this corpse, all together and soon!"
So some would speak, fanning the fury of all,
and as they fought their weapons' crashing clangor
rose through empty ether, reaching the heavens.

420

425

Meanwhile, at the battle's edge Achilles' horses
stood and wept as they had since learning Patroclus
had fallen in dust after Hector killed him.

Automedon, Diores' valiant son,
laid on the lash, stroke after whistling stroke,
tried coaxing them with gentle words, then cursed,
but they refused to run back to the ships
and Hellespont or on to where Greeks were fighting.
Like a marble monument marking a tomb
containing a dead woman's or man's remains,
the horses held the chariot motionless.

430

435

They bowed their heads near the ground to let tears
spill from their eyes and warm the earth as they wept,
longing for Patroclus. Tears soaked the manes
that tumbled over bridles and brushed their hooves.

440

Zeus saw the horses weeping, pitied them,
shook his head and voiced the sadness he felt:
"The poor wretches! Why did we give Peleus,
a mortal, those two who will not age or die?

To share the misery of ill-starred men?
No other creature that breathes and crawls the earth
is half as miserable as mortal man.
Hector will never drive that team and chariot

445

because I will not allow it to occur.

Enough that he brags wearing Achilles' armor!

450

I will strengthen the horses' legs, their hearts,

so they can safely return Automedon

while I continue to grant Trojans glory,

more slaughter—until the hour they reach the ships,

the sun settles low and sacred darkness falls."

455

Zeus breathed spirit into Achilles' team

till they shook tear-drenched dust from tangled manes,

then sped the chariot wildly through Greeks and Trojans.

Automedon drove, spurred by Patroclus' death,

darting the chariot like a vulture in geese,

460

making Trojans fly through the field in flocks,

chasing after the ones who lagged behind.

Yet he did not kill any that he chased

because there was no way, being alone,

to handle a spear while driving the team.

465

After a time one of his comrades noticed—

Laerces' worthy son, Alcimedon.

He signaled Automedon to halt and said:

"Such aimlessness! Tell me, which deathless god

has touched your chest and seized your sensible mind,

470

that you would drive the Trojan forefront alone?

Your comrade is dead and Hector has the armor

he wore, armor that once graced Achilles."

Diores' son Automedon replied:

"Alcimedon, no Greek other than us

475

can drive this deathless team and curb their fury.

Patroclus could, equal to a god

while yet he lived, but he has met his fate.

Now the whip and glistening reins are yours.

Let me dismount so I may fight for his corpse."

480

Alcimedon mounted the chariot's deck,

taking the whip and reins in ready hands

so Automedon could alight. Hector saw them

and called Anchises' son, not far away:

"Aeneas, counselor of bronze-armed Trojans,

485

I just saw fast-running Achilles' team

crossing the field with two inferior men.

I can seize that team, but only if you

will join me. If we both advance the two Greeks

490

will lack courage to stand and fight like Ares."

Anchises' bold son did not hesitate.

The pair set out carrying oxhide shields—

dried until hard and coated with thick bronze.

Aretus and Chromius came right behind.

Each of the four men expected that he

495

would kill the two Greeks and seize the arch-necked team—

but the Trojan band would not escape intact.

Automedon prayed to almighty Zeus,

opened his angry heart to courage, to fury,

and told his charioteer Alcimedon:

500

"Do not station the horses far from me,

but let me feel their warm breath on my back.

Priam's son Hector would press his assault

until he has taken Achilles' team

and left us dead. Then he would rout more brigades

505

of Greeks or die himself on the front line."

Automedon shouted for reinforcement:

"Ajaxes, Menelaus, Argive chiefs!

Let someone else now take charge of the corpse,

to remain around it and hold off attacks,

510

while you come help the living stay alive!

See who charges across the battlefield:

Aeneas and Hector, the Trojans' best fighters.

The outcome here rests with immortal gods

so I will fight and leave it up to Zeus!"

515

He brandished and threw a spear that traced a long shadow.

It struck the disk-shaped shield Aretus held.

The spear did not stop, but plunged through the shield,

through Aretus' leather belt to his belly.

- As when a strong man uses a whetted axe 520
to chop the neck behind an ox's horns,
cutting clean through, the ox lunges and falls,
so then Aretus lurched and fell. The spear
quaked in his belly as life forsook his limbs.
- Then Hector cast a spear at Automedon, 525
who saw it coming and dodged the bronze point,
stooping forward, so that the sharp weapon
entered the ground, its butt end quivering
until Ares drained its fury away.
- Hector would have drawn his sword and charged the Greek 530
had not the two Ajaxes seen the threat
as they approached to answer their comrade's call.
The three surviving Trojans, Hector, Aeneas
and Chromius, retreated before the Ajaxes,
leaving Aretus there, eviscerated. 535
- Automedon, moving as fast as Ares,
stripped Aretus' armor while boasting aloud:
"Patroclus' loss will now sadden me less
though this Trojan cannot compare with him."
- Automedon dragged the spoils to his chariot, 540
loaded them, then mounted, his hands and feet
as bloody as a lion's paws ripping an ox.
- Furious combat surged back toward Patroclus.
Athena fanned the strife, the sorrow, the pain.
Zeus had told her to step down from the skies 545
and brace the Greeks since his will would soon change sides.
- As when Iris appears wearing a dark veil,
sent as Zeus's portent of either war
or winter so cold, so harsh, that all work
halts among earthbound people, and cattle starve— 550
so dark was mist that shrouded Athena's body
when she joined the Greeks to inspire each man.
First she addressed and spurred Atreus' son,

powerful Menelaus, after she
had taken Phoenix's form, his steady voice:
"Menelaus, you will be despised and scorned
if you allow Achilles' closest friend
to be torn beneath the Trojan wall by dogs,
so set an example, take a firm stand!"

555

Menelaus heard the goddess and answered:
"Phoenix, my dear old man, if only Athena
would grant me might, safeguard me from missiles,
then I would go, stand beside and protect
Patroclus whose death has wounded my heart.
Hector rages like fire that never rests.
I think Zeus has granted him the day's glory."

560

565

Gleaming-eyed Athena was pleased to hear
that she was the god he chose to beseech.
She charged his arms and legs with tireless strength.
She made his heart as bold as a biting horsefly
that, no matter how often driven away,
returns again to taste rich human blood.
Athena filled the Spartan with such daring.
Then he returned to Patroclus and cast.
Eëtion's son Podes was fighting nearby,
a brave man, rich, a man whom Hector prized
as a favored feasting and drinking companion.
Now Menelaus' spear flew to his waist,
powered through armor as he turned to run.
He fell as might a heavy stone, and Atreus' son
dragged his body away to a band of Greeks.

570

575

580

Apollo approached Hector, having adopted
the likeness and voice of Asius' son Phaenops,
Hector's favorite host at his Abydos home.
Disguised as him Apollo addressed the prince:
"How could any Achaeans fear you now?
You shrank from Menelaus, a man once known

585

as a soft warrior, but he alone has dragged
away the corpse of your friend that he cut
from your foremost troops, Eëtion's son Podes."

590

A dark mist of anger damped Hector's heart
but his armor gleamed as he crossed the ranks.
Cronus' son lifted his aegis, tasseled,
sparkling. He draped clouds round Ida's heights,
flashed lightning and thundered, then shook the aegis, 595
causing Argives to flee, Trojans to win.

Boeotian Peneleus led the Greek flight
after a Trojan spear disabled his shoulder,
a glancing blow that almost nicked the bone.
Polydamas came close and threw the weapon. 600
Hector arrived and wounded Leïtus' wrist,
putting Alectryon's son out of action.
Leïtus backed away, no longer able
to keep a spear in his hands and fight Trojans.
Idomeneus, inflamed when he saw Hector,
cast at the prince's chest and hit his breastplate,
but the spear's wood handle broke. Trojans cheered. 605
Hector returned a cast that missed the Cretan—
who stood in his chariot, spared by only inches—
but not Meriones' driver and aide,
Coeranus, citizen of well-built Lyctus. 610
Once when Meriones was fighting on foot,
about to die and give a Trojan glory,
fearless Coeranus drove the chariot close
so Meriones could defer his death. 615
Now Coeranus instead would fall to Hector
whose spearpoint struck his jaw, scattered his teeth
and sliced his tongue, dividing it in halves.
He let the team's reins fall, then fell himself.
Meriones bent down from the chariot's deck,
picked up the reins and told Idomeneus: 620
"Lay on the lash until you reach the ships!
It is apparent the Greeks cannot win now."

- Idomeneus agreed and drove his team
toward the ships, dismay flooding his heart. 625
Ajax and Menelaus were well aware
that Zeus had turned the battle's tide Troy's way.
Telamon's towering son had to admit:
"This is so one-sided that even a child
would see that Zeus himself is aiding Troy. 630
All their missiles hit home—whatever shoots,
skillful or not—as Zeus is guiding each one,
but all of ours plummet useless to earth.
We must decide what will be wisest to do.
Should we continue to guard Patroclus' corpse 635
or should we retire and bolster Greek soldiers?
When they look here they tremble. They do not think
that murderous Hector's invincible fury
will subside before he reaches our ships.
Perhaps a man should go deliver word 640
to Achilles who, I think, has not learned
the sad news that his closest friend is dead,
but I cannot identify most Greeks
since dark mist is hiding them and their teams.
O father Zeus! Spare the Greeks this murk! 645
Change it to ether, permit our eyes to see!
If you must make us die, let it be in light!"
The father listened and pitied Ajax.
He promptly drove away the gloomy mist,
allowing sun to illumine the field. 650
Ajax then addressed Atreus' Spartan son:
"Now, Menelaus, see if you can find
old Nestor's son Antilochus alive
and send him running fast to find Achilles
with word Patroclus died, his dearest friend." 655
Menelaus did as Ajax proposed.
He left the way a lion leaves a pen
grown weary of battling men and dogs
who will not let him seize the sleekest ox.
All night long he hungers to taste ox meat. 660

He charges but never makes it past the spears
that fly at his face from bold herdsmen's hands,
and flaming brands that damp his fiercest zeal,
till dawn when he reluctantly draws away.

Like such a lion the Spartan left Patroclus,
hesitating for fear that other Greeks
might also leave the corpse and turn to run.
Forestalling that, he urged nearby heroes:
"Meriones, Ajaxes, chiefs of Achaea,
let kind, unfortunate Patroclus now
remain your charge. He treated all of us well
his whole life long until he met this fate."

665

670

That said, Atreus' ruddy son strode more quickly,
looking around like an eagle which, they say,
has the sharpest eye of all high-flying birds
and does not fail to notice a timid hare
beneath dense foliage, but straight to the spot
he swoops, seizes the hare, claims its life.

So your bright eyes, Zeus-nurtured Menelaus,
wheeled throughout the numberless Argive force,
searching for Nestor's son among the living.
He soon spied him at the battle's west edge,
inspiring his men so they would fight harder.
Menelaus ran to his side and said:

"Antilochus, listen that you may learn
terrible news which should not be true, but is.
I think you have already seen enough
to know a god has turned disaster on us,
but sadly one of the finest Greeks has died,
Patroclus, and that leaves us in serious need,
so leave this spot, race to Achilles' ships.
Ask if he will come rescue the corpse,
stripped though it is, since Hector has the armor."

The sorrowful news hit Antilochus hard.
He was unable to speak because his eyes
brimmed with tears and his lusty voice was still.
Yet he did not disregard the Spartan king.

675

680

685

690

695

He handed his armor to his charioteer,
Laodocus, who held his team nearby.
Antilochus' feet sped him and his sorrow
toward Achilles to tell the horrible news.

700

You were left, Zeus-strengthened Menelaus,
to lift spirits of weary Pylian soldiers
who sorely missed their chief, Antilochus,
so you put godlike Thrasymedes in charge,
while you returned to the dead hero, Patroclus,
rejoined the fighting Ajaxes and said:
"I sent Antilochus running toward the ships
to get Achilles, but I do not think
that he will come despite fury at Hector.
Achilles cannot fight without his armor,
so we must reconsider, plan a means
for us to take this corpse safely away,
escaping Trojan war cries, fate and death.

705

Telamon's great son Ajax answered the king:
"I agree with what you say, Menelaus,
so you and Meriones kneel at once,
lift the corpse, carry it safely from here.
We two will fight the Trojans, even Hector,
for we, alike in name and heart, have long
fought side by side and known the worst of wars."

715

The Spartan and the Cretan lifted the corpse.
Anguished shouts rapidly swelled behind them
as Trojans saw the Greek side taking Patroclus.

720

Trojans charged like dogs at a wounded boar,
dogs that dash ahead of their hunting masters,
dogs that are determined to take him down—
until he wheels around showing his mettle,
and then they fall over each other fleeing.
So the spirited Trojans steadily came,
brandishing swords or spears sharp at both ends,

725

730

but when the two Ajaxes wheeled at them
their skins turned green and not a Trojan dared
step forward to fight for Patroclus' corpse.

The two who carried the corpse hastened away 735

toward the ships while war flashed through the armies.

As when uncontrollable fire strikes a city,
flares without warning and destroys all homes,
its red glow spreading before a gusty wind,
so then legions of horses and fighting men 740

overran the Trojan plain in heated combat.

The corpse-bearers resembled a pair of mules
on a rugged mountain trail, bringing down
a beam for a roof or tall mast, their spirits
exhausted from toil, bodies dripping sweat. 745

So they carried the corpse, while far behind
the Ajaxes held, as a dike holds a flood
that struggles to spill over the plain below—
a mighty river's swollen, deadly tide—

and though its smaller streams may reach the plain, 750
dispersed, they do not flow with crushing force.

Just so the two Ajaxes managed to hold
the Trojans, but they continued to press forward,
Anchises' son Aeneas and Hector leading.

As when a cloud of starlings or jackdaws flies, 755
screeching, the moment one glimpses a falcon
hungering to slaughter the smaller birds,
so then young Greeks flew from Aeneas and Hector,
frightened, screaming, all their courage gone.

The ditch became cluttered with splendid armor 760
that panicked Greeks threw off escaping strife.

THE GOD OF FIRE RE-ARMS ACHILLES

While the two sides battled like wind-whipped wildfire
Antilochus carried his doleful message.

He found Achilles by his straight-prowed ships,
worried, wondering what had happened near Ilium.

Fretful, he addressed the depths of his own soul:

5

"Why do I see Argives running this way,
confused, panicked, leaving the battlefield?

I hope this is not the sorrowful moment
my goddess mother foretold, the day she said

10

that while I live the finest Myrmidon
will depart the sun's light at Trojan hands.

I fear Menoetius' valiant son has died,
ignoring my command to repel the fire
and return—not to confront mighty Hector."

15

As Achilles worried about Patroclus
old Nestor's son came running to his side,
tears falling, and told his sorrowful news:

"Ah, Peleus' son, I have come to deliver
a devastating report of sad events.

Patroclus died, and now they fight for his corpse,
stripped though it is, since Hector took your armor."

20

A dark cloud of anguish enveloped Achilles.
He cupped his hands, scooped up soot, ashes, dirt,

poured them over his head and smeared his face.

Dark sooty filth coated his fragrant tunic.

25

He stretched his great, powerful frame on the ground;
his fingers ripped matted hair from his head.

The women he and Patroclus took as spoils
shared his grief, wailing, flocking out the doors.

They circled Achilles and battered their breasts
with fists till each woman had spent her strength.

30

Antilochus wept and lamented too.

He grasped Achilles' hands because he feared
that grief might lead the hero to take his own life.

Achilles moaned so loud his mother heard,
deep in the sea beside her aged father.

35

Thetis wailed till goddesses congregated,
every nereid that dwelt beneath the waves.

Glauca was there, Thalia, Cymodoce,

Nesaea, Spio, Thoa, ox-eyed Halia,

40

Cymothoa, Limnoria, Actaea,

Amphithoa, Melita, Iaera, Agaua,

Dynamene, Pherousa, Doto, Proto,

Dexamene, Amphinome, Callianira,

Panope, Doris, storied Galatea,

45

Nemertes, Callianasa and Apseudes.

There was Janira, Janassa, Clymene,

fair-haired Orithia, Maera, Amathia,

and all other nereids who haunt the depths.

They filled the shining cave and all together

50

battered their breasts while Thetis wailed her lament:

"Listen, sister nereids, so each of you
may know the grief my heart cannot conceal,
what sad, wretched motherhood is my lot.

Once I bore a noble, mighty son,

55

a supreme hero, who grew to manhood fast
under my care, like an orchard's favored tree,

and then I put him aboard his ship for Troy
although I knew I would never welcome him

as he came home to Peleus' house again.

60

He is still alive and sees the sun's light
but he suffers. I do not know the reason,
so now I will visit my son to hear
what torments him as he sits out the war."

Thetis left the cave, all nereids behind her, 65
each weeping. Above the party frothy billows
swelled until they approached the Trojan strand
where all the nereids emerged on a shore packed
with Myrmidon ships beached around Achilles.
His mother walked to his side, heard him groan. 70
Moaning herself, she cradled her child's head,
summoned her voice and softly questioned him:
"Why weep, my child? What sorrow pierces your heart?
Do not keep it from me. Zeus has done all
that you beseeched him for, raising your arms: 75
he forced Achaea's sons to the ships' sterns,
and every man regrets how you were treated."

Achilles, the fast runner, sobbed and replied:
"The Olympian, Mother, did answer that prayer, 80
but what is the use when my best friend is dead,
Patroclus, the man I prized above all others.
Hector took away his life and armor—
my armor—spoils to make himself look splendid.
Gods bestowed those marvelous arms on Peleus 85
the day they sent you to a mortal's couch.
Better you had stayed deep in the deathless seas
and Peleus had taken a mortal wife.
As it is you will feel a thousand sorrows
when I die, the child you will not greet again
coming home. My heart has forbidden me
to stay alive among men unless Hector
topples beneath my spear, losing his life
to pay for that of Menoetius' son Patroclus." 90

Thetis wept, responding despite her tears:
"My child, you have little time left to live: 95
your fate will beckon soon after Hector's death."

Achilles churned inside and declared to her:

"I ought to die now. I lent my friend no aid
to prevent untimely death far from home
when he needed me to protect his life.

100

I should never see my fatherland again.

I failed to save not only Patroclus,
but also countless Greeks that Hector killed
while I sat here, a useless weight on the earth,
I who am easily best of all the Greeks
in battle, though others may excel in council.

105

"A quarrel can lead a man to cause great harm
when rage smolders, rage that twists even the wise
till it comes to seem sweeter than sips of honey,
rage that billows like smoke and swells the chest.

110

Agamemnon Atrides angered me so,
but I will put that aside because I must.

Necessity bids me control my heart.

Now I will go to meet Patroclus' killer,
Hector, and afterward take fate whenever

115

Zeus or another deathless god decrees.

Not even Heracles eluded death
though Zeus loved him most of all his mortal sons.
Yet fate subdued him—that and Hera's wrath.

So will it be for me when my fate is due.

120

Then I will fall, but first I will win fame
through deeds that will cause deep-breasted Trojan women
to press their hands on soft, delicate cheeks
and wipe away tears while they beseech heaven,
accustomed to the long time I did not fight.

125

I will not be stopped, Mother, so do not try."

The silver-footed goddess Thetis replied:

"Let it be so, child. I cannot object
if you spare your fellow warriors pain or death,
but Trojans have taken your armor as spoils,
sparkling bronze. Now bright-helmeted Hector
wears it, struts and boasts—but not, I predict,

130

for long since death is now approaching him too.
Yet you must not enter the battlefield
until you have seen me arrive here again—
which will be tomorrow, just when the sun rises—
bringing armor that Hephaestus will make.”

135

After Thetis instructed her son she left,
returned to her kin at the shore and said:
“I want you all to dive in the sea’s broad breast,
seek out my father, the old man of the deep. 140
Remain with him while I visit Olympus
and learn whether Hephaestus will use his skill
to give my son a glorious set of armor.”

The nereids instantly dived beneath the waves.
Up Olympus’ slopes Thetis’ silvery feet
raced on her quest to arm her beloved son.

145

As Thetis’ feet sped her away Greeks flew,
shouting, confused under Hector’s assault.
They fled till they reached the Hellespont and ships. 150
The men who carried Patroclus’ corpse failed
to remove the body from the battlefield.
Trojan chariots and men overtook them,

including Hector, Priam’s valorous son.

Three times his strong hand grasped Patroclus’ foot,
about to drag him away while Trojans cheered. 155

Three times the two Ajaxes summoned courage
to break his grip, but he was resolute
and each time promptly renewed his attack,
bellowing louder, refusing to yield ground. 160
Just as herdsmen cannot drive a tawny lion
away from his kill while the beast remains hungry,
so then the two Ajaxes’ efforts failed
to frighten Priam’s son away from the corpse.

Hector might then have won the corpse and glory
but Achilles received a visitor, Iris,
come from Olympus urging him to act. 165

Hera had sent her without Zeus's knowledge.
When Iris reached Achilles' side she said:
"Arise, most terrifying mortal man! 170
Defend Patroclus over whose corpse battle
rages close to the ships. They slaughter each other,
Greeks determined to keep and protect the corpse,
Trojans to drag it into windswept Troy.
More than any other zealous Trojan, Hector 175
is eager to maim the corpse and have the head
stuck on a pole after he chops it off.
So up from the ground! You should be afraid
that Trojan dogs will tear Patroclus apart!
You court disgrace if his body is shamed." 180

She paused and fast-running Achilles asked:
"Divine Iris, which god sent you here?"

Wind-footed Iris truthfully replied:
"Hera dispatched me, Zeus's glorious wife,
but he does not know, nor does any other 185
immortal god who lives on snowy Olympus."

Achilles fixed his gaze on the envoy-goddess:
"How can I join the fight? They have my armor!
My honored mother forbade me go to war
until I see her coming here tomorrow. 190
She promised me new armor from Hephaestus.
Besides, I know of none whose armor would fit,
except perhaps Ajax Telamon's shield
which he doubtless wears himself in the front ranks
where his bloodthirsty spear protects Patroclus." 195

To that the wind-footed goddess replied:
"I am aware of who possesses your armor,
but just let the Trojans see you by the ditch.
The sight alone will likely cause retreat,
giving the Greeks a chance to catch their breath. 200
They are worn, and war has little breathing space."

Iris finished her charge then streaked away.
Achilles rose to his feet and Athena
draped her tasseled aegis on his broad shoulders.
The shining goddess crowned his head with mist,
golden, and in the mist she caused flames to blaze. 205
As when glowing smoke climbs the sky above a city
on a remote island surrounded by foes
that defenders have managed to beat back
from their walls till darkness pauses the siege
and lets the glow of citizens' beacon fires 210
flicker, then soar, calling neighbors for aid
in case any might sail their ships to help,
so fire around Achilles' head shined to ether.
He stood by the ditch, but not among Greeks
as that would violate his mother's command. 215
He planted his feet and shouted while Athena
strengthened his voice to guarantee Trojan panic.
As when a trumpet sounds its loud, clear notes
to warn a town that invaders attack,
so then Aeacus' grandson's voice blared and carried. 220
When Trojans heard Achilles' brazen call
their hearts faltered, the fair-maned Trojan teams
sensed danger and turned their chariots around,
drivers frozen when they saw the fire that danced
over Achilles' head, menacing fire, 225
fire that bright-eyed Athena kindled and fanned.

Three times Achilles yelled across the ditch,
three times Trojans and Trojan allies panicked.
In the turmoil, twelve of their best men died
by their own wayward spears and chariots. The Greeks,
relieved, carried Patroclus off the field
and laid him on a bier. His comrades gathered,
weeping, and foremost among them was Achilles
whose eyes gushed tears to see his closest friend, 230
stretched out dead, his body torn by bronze weapons,
the friend he had sent with his team and armor,
the friend he would never welcome back alive. 235

Ox-eyed Hera commanded the tireless sun
to sink early beneath Ocean's streams, 240
and sunset brought weary Greeks welcome rest
from harsh struggle with constant threat of death.
Trojans, weary too, left the battlefield,
released their fleet-footed horses from yokes
and met in council before they ate their dinners. 245
They stood while they met and talked, as none dared
to sit, all fearful because Achilles
appeared after refusing to fight so long.
Polydamas was first to address the meeting
with his strategy for the coming hours. 250
He and Hector were friends, born the same night,
one supreme in council, the other in war.
Polydamas gave the Trojans his advice:
"Friends, consider this well. I urge that we
return to the city and not await dawn 255
beside the ships, so distant from our walls.
While Achilles still raged at Agamemnon,
fighting the other Greeks was easy enough.
Then I willingly camped close to the fleet
and thought the long black vessels would soon be burned, 260
but now I have a sickening fear of Achilles.
His wanton spirit will not be satisfied
to fight on the field where we Trojans and Greeks
have shared equal measure of Ares' fury.
He will take the fight to our walls and wives. 265
Thus it will be, so let us head for Ilium.
Night's darkness has restrained Achilles' frenzy,
thanks to the gods, but should he find us here
when he emerges armed at dawn, his fierce lance
will make our acquaintance. Those who retreat 270
shall be safe in Troy, while dogs and birds devour
those who do not pay attention to me.
So every man should follow my advice.
Get rest tonight guarded by city walls
that tower above, and heavy wooden gates, 275
equally tall, bolted together tight.

In early morning we will arm ourselves,
man the ramparts and foil him if he decides
to cross the plain surrounding our citadel.
He will return to his ships, he and his team,
weary of fruitless roaming outside our towers.
His spirits will not stay roused enough to fight,
and Troy will not fall. Dogs will eat him first."

280

A scowling Hector addressed Polydamas:
"The things you say do not find favor with me,
you who advocate retreat to the city.
Have you not been cooped inside the walls enough?
Among mortals Priam's city was long
renowned for its bronze stores, its hoarded gold.
Today the treasure once in our homes is gone.
Much of it went to Phrygia and peaceful Lydia,
sold there when almighty Zeus turned against Troy.
At last devious Cronus' son will give
me glory and drive the Greeks to the sea,
so do not preach your foolish ideas again.
None would do as you urge against my will,
and here is what I say you all must do.
Go to your posts. After you eat your dinners,
send sentries out, and bid them stay alert.
If you should have more spoils than you can carry
pass them around so other soldiers may share.
Better they go to Trojan men than Greeks.
Then first thing tomorrow we will arm ourselves
and waken Ares against the hollow ships.
If Achilles should indeed emerge from his vessels
he will meet the trouble he wants. I will not
run from the field, no, right before his face
is where I will stand till one of us proves mightier.
Ares is blind. Famous slayers are slain."

290

295

300

305

The Trojans shouted agreement with Hector,
like children because Athena robbed their senses.
They all approved Hector's ruinous plan,

310

none what Polydamas wisely proposed.

They dispersed to their posts to eat, but Greeks
gathered and mourned Patroclus all night long.
Peleus' son led the constant lament.

315

He placed death-dealing hands on his friend's chest,
groaning, bereft, just like a powerful lioness
whose cubs a hunter chances upon and takes
from deep woods. The beast returns, grows frantic,
combs woodland trails and sniffs for scent of man,
or cubs, hoping to quiet the ache in her heart.

320

Sad as she, Achilles spoke while his men listened:
"How idle were the words I spoke that day
to hearten old Menoetius in his halls.

325

I told him I would take his splendid son
to sack Ilium and share alike its spoils,
but Zeus does not fulfill mortals' intent,
and we are both fated to reddens earth
on this Trojan plain. I will never return
to be greeted in Peleus' halls by him

330

or my mother Thetis. Dirt will cover me here.
Although the earth will blanket you first, Patroclus,
your rites will wait until I bring back Hector's
armor and head, to avenge his lethal blow.

335

Atop your pyre I will cut a dozen throats
to vent my rage, comely Trojan youths.

While you lie here next to my crescent ship
Trojan and Dardan women will circle you,
weeping, lamenting through both night and day,
the same women we two won with our spears
when we killed their men and plundered their rich cities."

340

Achilles selected worthy Myrmidons
to set a tripod over flames and prepare
to wash the gore that caked Patroclus' body.

345

The men erected a tripod, hung a kettle,
filled it with water, set a blaze below.
Flames licked the kettle, soon the water warmed.
When a boil arose in the polished vessel

they washed Patroclus, rubbed him with olive oil
and packed his wounds with ointment aged nine years. 350
They draped linen over his bier and body,
head to toe, over that a pure white mantle.
Afterward, all through the night Achilles
and Myrmidon warriors grieved beside Patroclus. 355

Zeus addressed Hera, his sister and wife:
“You have meddled again, ox-eyed Hera my queen,
you have roused fast-running Achilles to fight
and so you have rejuvenated the Greeks.”

The stately cow-eyed goddess answered Zeus: 360
“Why criticize me, Cronus’ most feared son?
Even a mortal does what he can for friends,
though he is transient and knows but very little.
Why then should I—who am the leading goddess
by birth as well as by my marriage to him 365
who rules heaven and all immortal gods—
not stitch together trouble for Trojans I hate?”

In such a vein they chided one another.
Meanwhile Thetis arrived at Hephaestus’ house—
star-sprinkled, preeminent on Olympus— 370
which the lame god’s skilled hands constructed of bronze.
She found him dripping sweat, bustling among
twenty tripods that he had designed, formed
and placed around the walls of his main shop.
Under the base of each were golden wheels 375
which, on command, rolled to the gods’ assemblies
and back to the house again, wonders to see.
The pots were complete, but none of their grips
was yet attached. He fitted and hammered them firm.
While he labored, using unrivaled skill, 380
the silvery-footed goddess Thetis approached.
First to notice the visitor was Charis,
beautiful wife of the strong-armed deathless smith.
She squeezed Thetis’ hand, called her name and said:

"Why have you come to our house today, Thetis? 385
We love and respect you, but you rarely visit.
Allow me to treat you as an honored guest!"

Charis took Thetis' hand, led her inside,
seated her on a throne studded with silver,
purest grade, and placed a footstool before her. 390
Charis called to the artful craftsman, saying:
"Come here, Hephaestus, greet Thetis our guest!"

The strong immortal artisan answered her:
"A goddess I truly revere has come!
She saved me once when I had fallen deep, 395
cast away by a mother who wanted me
hidden from sight because I was born lame,
but gentle Thetis took me to her breast,
she and Ocean's daughter Eurynome.
Nine years I made them fine bronze ornaments—
necklaces, spiral armbands, brooches, baubles. 400
I hid in a secret cave where streams of Ocean
constantly flowed, foaming, and no one else
knew where I was, neither mortal nor god,
only my saviors: Eurynome, Thetis.
Now one is here in my house, a sure occasion
to honor and reward her for what she did.
So show her our finest hospitality
while I put up my bellows and all these tools." 405

The hulky god stepped back from his anvil block. 410
He limped, but his frail legs moved rapidly.
He set his bellows beside the fire, gathered
his tools and arranged them in silver urns.
He moistened a sponge and wiped his brow, hands,
powerful neck, his massive, hairy chest. 415
He took a tunic and staff, then left the shop,
hobbling but assisted by servant maids
that he had made from gold to look like women.
Every head and throat contained a mind and voice.

- Other immortals taught the creatures skills. 420
They attended their lord and accompanied him
to the radiant throne where Thetis waited.
He pressed her hand, whispered her name and said:
“Thetis, what has brought you under our roof,
you whom I love and revere? You rarely come. 425
My heart bids me do whatever you ask
if it is anything within my power.”
- Thetis responded despite tears that welled:
“Of all the gods on Olympus, who else
carries inside a burden of misery 430
such as Cronus’ son ordained for my lot?
He made me submit to a mortal man,
Peleus, and I endured the mortal’s bed
although unwillingly. Having reached extreme age,
the mortal lies feeble, useless to me. 435
Once he gave me a son to bear and raise,
the greatest hero, who soon sprouted to manhood.
I nurtured him like an orchard’s favored sapling.
Then I sent him aboard his ship for Troy,
to war, but never again will I see him 440
return to me or his place in Peleus’ house.
While he remains alive and sees the sun’s light,
he suffers but I am unable to help.
The Greeks gave him a prize of honor, a woman,
but Agamemnon seized her for his own. 445
My son pined and grieved for her while the Greeks
retreated, driven to the ships. He refused
to fight even though senior Argives begged him
and offered an array of splendid gifts.
He declined to stir and ward off ruin himself 450
but let another wear his arms, Patroclus,
whom he sent with the Greek army to fight.
They chased the Trojan force to the Scaean Gates.
They would have sacked the city had not Apollo
intervened, fouled Menoetius’ valiant son 455
and killed him, though Hector received the credit.

I come to your knees and ask if you are willing
to give my short-lived son a shield, a helmet,
sturdy greaves that will fit above his ankles,
a breastplate. His armor was lost with Patroclus,
and now he does nothing but lie there weeping."

460

The strong-armed artisan replied to Thetis:
"Take heart, do not let armor be a concern.
I cannot avert inevitable death,
or delay it, but when death reaches your son
his armor will be so grand that ever after
the countless men who see it will stare astonished."

465

Hephaestus then returned to his shop and bellows
which he aimed toward his fires and ordered to work.

At each of twenty crucibles they blew,
precisely measured blasts on every side,
moving quickly to one, then another,
wherever their lord Hephaestus wanted wind.
He put obdurate tin above fire, bronze,
highly prized metals, too: silver and gold.
He set his huge anvil, took in his left hand
tongs and in his right a heavy smith's hammer.

470

475

First he fashioned a shield, sturdy and broad,
which displayed all his skills. He gave it three rims,
sparkling, also a silver shoulder strap.
The shield had five layers and on its face
he lavished scenes portrayed with matchless art.

480

On it he made the earth, the sky, the sea,
the never-tiring sun, the moon at full,
every constellation the heavens hold:
mighty Orion, Pleiades, Hyades,
and Bear—called Wagon by men of distant regions—
who ever wheels and keeps his eye on Orion
but never gets a turn to bathe in Ocean.

485

- On earth he fashioned two populous cities. 490
In one he put joyful weddings and feasts.
He showed torchlit brides who walked from their rooms
through the streets singing a nuptial song.
Meanwhile expectant young men danced, whirling,
tracking the pace of flute and lyre. A wife 495
stood in every doorway, watching delighted.
In the market men gathered around a quarrel
between two rivals over the blood price
for a murdered man. One who claimed he had paid
told the crowd so, the other denied receipt. 500
They both agreed to let the people decide,
but the throng shouted support for each alike.
Heralds restrained the mass while elder men
took seats on a hallowed ring of polished stones,
passed among them a loud-voiced herald's staff 505
and one by one stood up to give their judgments.
In the ring's center were two talents of gold
to reward the man whose judgment proved most fair.
- Camped by the other city were two armies
in burnished bronze, split over strategy: 510
whether to take and divide, or simply destroy
whatever treasures might be inside the walls.
Meantime the men under siege armed for ambush.
On the ramparts cherished wives, tiny children
and men too old for fighting gathered to watch. 515
Pallas Athena and Ares led the sortie,
their bodies and clothing yellow forged gold,
their armor splendid, huge, marking them gods
beyond doubt. The mortals were smaller scale.
The party found a place right for a trap, 520
a riverside, a livestock watering pool,
and there they crouched and waited, armor gleaming.
Their leader posted two perimeter scouts
to watch for approaching sheep and oxen.
The beasts soon came, and with them waltzed two herders 525

- playing their pipes, not suspecting a snare.
The warriors bided their time, then sprang and quickly
surrounded the herd of oxen, the fine flock
of chalky sheep. They slaughtered both herdsmen.
The animals' frightened cries reached the besiegers, 530
still at their meeting place. They boarded chariots,
raced toward the sound and quickly arrived.
A tumultuous riverbank battle ensued
as warriors cast bronze spears at one another.
Strife and Turmoil were there, dreaded Fate too. 535
She grasped a wounded man and one unhit,
then dragged a dead one through the fight by his feet,
the cloak draping her shoulders red with blood.
The battling warriors looked like living men,
and each side hauled away its fallen corpses. 540
- He added a virgin field, fertile, dark,
broad, and plowmen turning the soil three times.
They guided their teams over every part,
and when one had plowed through to the field's end
he received a flagon of honeyed wine, 545
so every man pressed to finish his row
of deep, untilled land and claim his reward.
The turned-up land behind the plows was black
though made of gold—Hephaestus' wizardry.
- He made a king's domain, and workers there
were reaping with strokes of whistling scythes.
Thick swaths of laden stalks toppled behind
where grain binders belted them to make sheaves.
Three binders there were and, supplying them,
children holding stalks in the crooks of their arms 555
steadily marched. Silent and still, the king
surveyed the harvest, beaming, scepter in hand.
Heralds made ready a feast under an oak.
They sacrificed and cooked an ox which women
sprinkled with barley before the workers ate. 560
Hephaestus made a vineyard, where hung grapes

of finest gold, though their skins were colored black,
and silver poles supported vines throughout.

Around the vineyard he forged a ditch and fence—
strong tin. The vineyard contained a single path
for bringing out grapes during harvest time,
and young women and men skipped down the path,
carrying baskets overflowing with fruit.

Among them a boy held a clear-toned lyre,
strummed melodious vintner's songs and sang
with gentle voice. The young folk matched his rhythm
with dancing, gamboling feet and happy cries.

565

570

Elsewhere the god made a herd of straight-horned oxen.
He used gold and tin to fashion the beasts,
lowing as they ambled from pen to pasture,
beside waving reeds that bordered a brook.

575

He made gold herders who walked behind the oxen,
four men and nine herd dogs with flashing feet.
Ahead of the herd two ferocious lions
had taken down a loud-bellowing bull.

580

Dogs raced toward the sound, men close behind.
The lions had already ripped the bull's hide
and gulped down blood-darkened entrails. The herdsmen
goaded their dogs to charge, chase the lions away,
but not one of the dogs would challenge the lions.

585

Keeping a safe distance, they howled and barked.

Elsewhere the craftsman depicted a pasture—
set in a lovely glade—with snowy sheep,
farmstead, pens and huts to protect the shepherds.

He filled what space remained with a dancing scene
in an arena like the one in Cnossos
that Daedalus once crafted for Ariadne.

590

Hephaestus showed young men and beautiful maids
who held each other by the wrists and danced.
The maids wore silky gowns, their partners tunics—
cloth fine-spun, rubbed with olive oil till glossy.

595

The maids wore circlets; the youths wore knives
that had gold blades and hung from silver belts.

Some of the dancers spun on nimble feet,
quick, blurred like the wheel at a potter's hand
when he stoops to test how fast it revolves.

600

Others formed rows and raced toward each other.

A crowd had gathered around the dance arena
to watch, delighted. A pair of acrobats

whirled among the dancers to set the pace.

605

Hephaestus inlaid Ocean's powerful river
around the shield's edge, encircling his work.

After he had finished the heavy shield
he made a breastplate flecked with fiery glints,
and a thick helmet to fit Achilles' head,
perfectly wrought, topped with a golden ridge.
Finally he made greaves of flexible tin.

610

When all the gear was done the strong-armed god
carried and laid it before Achilles' mother.

She then plunged from Olympus like a hawk
to bring her son the armor Hephaestus made.

615

ACHILLES AND AGAMEMNON RECONCILE

Saffron Dawn rose above Ocean's streams,
bringing immortals and men her welcome light
just as Thetis reached the ships with the god's bounty.
She found her beloved son prone by Patroclus,
weeping as were the others gathered there. 5
The brilliant goddess stood beside Achilles,
took his hand in hers, whispered his name and said:
"My child, now it is time to leave Patroclus
who is forever dead by heaven's will.
Here, take this splendid armor Hephaestus forged,
the likes of which no man has ever worn." 10

She stooped and placed the armor she had brought
at Achilles' feet. All its pieces clanged
so loud the Myrmidons nearby were afraid
to look at the gear. They recoiled but Achilles 15
looked and anger began to stir till his eyes
cast a frightful glow beneath lowered lids.
He lifted and admired the fabulous gifts.
After he closely studied the workmanship
he turned to Thetis and told her his thoughts: 20
"Mother, these arms Hephaestus has given me
no man could make, only a deathless god.
Now I will arm myself, but I must confess
a worry: that while I fight, flies will find

Menoetius' son, burrow into his wounds
to spawn worms that will desecrate his body—
lifeless now—and all his flesh will rot."

25

Thetis' feet shimmered as she replied:
"Child, do not let such things trouble your mind.

I will protect against that unruly swarm,
the flies that ravage mortal battle victims.

30

Even if Patroclus lies a full year
his flesh will stay as firm as it is today.
So go call the Greek warriors together,
repudiate your wrath at Agamemnon,
arm your body for war and master the field!"

35

His mother's words toughened Achilles' resolve.
She took ambrosia and nectar to the corpse,
poured them in the nostrils to keep it fresh.

Achilles walked along the water's edge,
and yelled his loudest to summon Greek warriors.

40

Even those men who rarely left the fleet—
the helmsmen who manned and tended ships' rudders,
the quartermasters who doled out food stores—
attended the meeting because Achilles
had called after remaining aloof so long.

45

Two comrades of Ares limped as they came,
Tydeus' war-loving son and wily Odysseus,
using spears as crutches, their wounds still grave.
They reached the front row of warriors and sat.
Last came supreme commander Agamemnon,
clutching the spear wound that Antenor's son,
Coön, inflicted on the battlefield.

50

When the entire Greek force had come together
fast-running Achilles arose and said:
"Atreus' son, have either you or I
gained any benefit from our extended,

55

corrosive quarrel over the young woman?
Artemis should have killed her aboard my ship
the day I took her after I sacked Lyrnessus. 60
That would have spared the many Greeks Trojans caused
to bite the earth while I sat here, resentful.
Trojans and Hector benefited, but Greeks
for ages will regret the strife between us.
However reluctant, we must put aside 65
or forcibly quell the anger our hearts hold.
I now renounce my wrath. It does not profit
a man to prolong rage. Go quickly then,
tell the long-haired Greek warriors to arm
so I may face Trojans and test the mettle 70
of those who slept near our ships. I think they
will hunger for rest, any who escape
the battleground unhit by Argive spears."

The greave-wearing Greeks took heart when they heard
Peleus' mighty son forswear his wrath. 75
Next Agamemnon addressed the assembly
from where he sat, not rising to his feet:
"Fellow Achaean warriors, Ares' friends,
it is well not to interrupt a speaker.
Public speech is difficult enough at best 80
and if the crowd is boisterous, who will hear,
or speak? All but the loudest voice is drowned.
I will address Peleus' son but all
should listen so that each may know what I say.
Some of you Argives have often approached 85
and rebuked me, though I am not to blame,
but rather Zeus, fate and perverse Furies
who made me inwardly blind during assembly,
encouraged me to take Achilles' prize.
What could I do? A goddess caused it all: 90
Zeus's daughter Ate who has skill to blind
and stealthy feet so soft they do not press
the earth when she treads, so she can enter hearts,
confounding mortals one after another.

Why, once she even blinded Zeus—the toughest
of all the gods and men, they say—in league
with Hera who used Ate to trick him,
during the day when mighty Heracles
was born to Alcmena inside Theban walls. 95

Zeus had boastfully told all the immortals:
'Listen to me, every goddess and god,
hear the things my heart bids me announce.
Today, through woman's labor, the Eilythia
shall bring to light a man who will rule far,
born to a mortal woman but of my lineage.' 100

Jealous, Hera devised a trick and said:
'You could be wrong. Your words do not make it true.
So come, Olympian, swear me a solemn oath
that he who falls at a woman's feet today,
born of her body but having your lineage,' 105

will someday rule over lands both near and far.'

Zeus did not detect deceit in her voice
and swore the oath, for Ate clouded his mind.
Hera then bounded from Olympus' heights.
She soon arrived in Argos where she found
the comely wife of Sthenelus, Perseus' son,
carrying an unborn boy in her seventh month. 115

Hera straightway induced his early birth
and kept the Eilythia away from Alcmena.

Hera carried the news back to Olympus:
'Now, father Zeus, I have something to tell.
A man who will rule Argos has just been born,
Eurystheus, son of Sthenelus, Perseus' son,
your stock and therefore fit to rule the Argives.'

Hera's report roused Zeus's bitter anger 120
and he took hold of Ate's glossy head
in a fit of rage, then swore a loud oath
that she, Ate, would never again return
to starry heaven or Olympus' peaks.

He swore that oath and cast her from the skies,
whirling till she landed on earth among mortals. 125

It pained Zeus when he saw his favorite son

enduring Eurystheus' loathsome tasks and trials.
I faltered just so, when bright-helmeted Hector
was slaughtering Greeks here at the ships' sterns. 135
I could not shake the folly that Ate caused.
Then I was blind, as heaven had seized my senses,
but now I will make amends, compensate.
So rise for war, and rouse every Greek,
but since I have safeguarded the many gifts 140
that Odysseus promised you the other day,
tarry a few moments here if you please.
My aides will gather the things from my ship,
then bring them so you may see and enjoy."

Fleet-footed Achilles answered the king: 145
"Most glorious Agamemnon, Atreus' son,
bring on the gifts if that is what you want,
or keep them yourself, but let us think of war,
and soon. This is no time for idle talk
or delay, so much work needs to be done. 150
I want the field to see me leading again,
my spear destroying rank upon Trojan rank.
All of you should support my resolve to fight."

But crafty Odysseus declared in response:
"Noble Achilles, you should hesitate 155
to urge Achaea's hungry sons to Ilium
for battle now, since it will not be a brief
skirmish once the battalions join combat
and Ares breathes his fury through both sides.
We should first send our men to their ships, their camps, 160
for food and wine, the fuels of martial might.
No man exists who, all day long till sunset,
can fight if he starts with an empty stomach,
for even though his heart is eager to strive,
his limbs grow heavier, slower, as he suffers 165
hunger and thirst that cause his knees to falter,
unlike a man who has had his food and wine.
He can fight his enemies the whole day through.

His heart and mind stay bold, his joints remain
supple till all fighters have left the field. 170
Now then, bid the army disperse to eat.
Let the high king Agamemnon's gifts
be brought to the meeting place so every Greek
can see for himself how you have been appeased.
Let the Argives hear Agamemnon swear 175
that he did not once make love with the girl,
as is the usual way of women and men.
Then let the heart in your own chest be softened.
Let him give you a banquet in his camp,
and lay your lingering resentment to rest. 180
Henceforth, Atrides, more temperance and justice
should be your goals. A great ruler may proudly
be gracious to any who picks a quarrel."

Agamemnon answered Odysseus:
"I like the words you say, Laertes' son. 185
I think you well described our circumstance.
I am prepared to swear the oath you propose
and by the gods it will not be false. Achilles,
stay here a while despite your battle fever.
All you Argives remain until the gifts 190
come from my camp and blood has sealed my oath.
Now I will give you this command, this charge,
Odysseus: choose the best Achaean youths
to bring the gifts from my ship, all that Achilles
refused the other day, including the woman. 195
Talthybius, I want you at once to make
a boar ready to kill for Zeus and Helios."

Fast-running Achilles answered the king:
"Agamemnon, Atreus' most glorious son,
the gifts and boar should await another time, 200
later when the battlefield has grown quiet,
when fury ceases to overwhelm my chest.
Our men lie mangled now—the many who died
at Hector's hand when Zeus granted him glory—

yet you urge us to eat and drink. For my part 205
I would now order Achaea's sons to war,
hungry or not, and when the sun is down
they may eat food after they taste revenge.
Until that time my mouth and throat will shun
all food, all drink, in honor of my friend 210
whose bronze-punctured body lies in my camp,
facing toward the entrance, among his comrades.
I have no interest in anything else
besides Trojans' slaughter, blood and dying groans."

In answer level-headed Odysseus said: 215
"Achilles, Peleus' son, mightiest Greek,
you are much stronger, better than I
with weapons, but I do better laying plans,
since I was born first and have learned more lessons.
So open your heart, consider what I say. 220
Fighters will quickly get their fill of battle
during times when reapers' scythes cut mostly straw,
little grain, obedient to the scales
that Zeus uses to mete out wartime supplies.
Besides, we Greeks cannot fast to mourn our dead 225
because every day row upon ranks of men
are falling and hunger would never end.
It is essential to bury men who fall
the day they die, however heavy our hearts,
but those who make it through the day alive 230
should have food and drink to restore their strength
before they do another day's constant battle
while wearing heavy armor. Having eaten,
no man should linger hoping for more incentive
because he will be punished, any who stays 235
at the ships while the rest of us make our charge
and waken sharp-edged Ares against Trojans."

Glorious Nestor's two sons followed Odysseus,
as did Meriones, Meges, Thoas,
Creon's son Lycomedes and Melanippus. 240

They reached Agamemnon Atrides' camp,
and as fast as words are said, the task was done.
They found and carried the seven promised tripods,
the twenty shining kettles, the dozen horses.
They brought the women skilled at flawless work, 245
seven, then an eighth: fair-cheeked Briseis.
Odysseus weighed out ten talents of gold.
He led the young men with the other gifts
back to the meeting place where Agamemnon
waited beside his strong-voiced herald Talthybius 250
who stood holding a sacrificial boar.
Atreus' son grasped the hilt and drew the knife
that always hung beside his sword's long sheath.
He cut several bristles, lifted his hands skyward
and prayed while all the men sat silently 255
as befits warriors hearing a great king.
He studied the heavens above him and said:
"Let Zeus know first, highest and noblest god,
then Helios, Earth and Furies below—
punishers of men who falsely proclaim oaths— 260
that I have not laid hands on the girl, Briseis,
through lure or force or any other means,
and she has not been touched while in my camp.
If that is untrue may gods punish me
as they punish all who swear them false pledges." 265

His knife cut the boar's gullet from its throat.
Talthybius, facing the sea's deep gulf,
sent it flying to feed fish, while Achilles
rose among the war-loving Greeks and said:
"What folly father Zeus can cause us mortals!" 270
The spirit in my chest would never have grown
so angry, nor would Atreus' son have taken
the woman away from me, had not Zeus
determined that many Argives should die.
Go eat your food, then make ready for war!" 275

The meeting ended after Achilles spoke,
and the men dispersed, each to his own vessel.

Willing Myrmidons took charge of the gifts.
They carried them aboard Achilles' ship,
except that they led the women to his lodge
and loosed the horses with Achilles' herd.

280

Briseis, golden Aphrodite's image,
gasped at Patroclus' lacerated body.
She fell upon it wailing. Her nails clawed
her bosom, her tender neck, her lovely face,
while she, goddess-like woman, wept and moaned:
"Patroclus, who consoled me when I was sad,
you were alive the day I left this camp
but now, captain of armies, I find you dead
when I return. My lot grows worse and worse.
My father and mother gave me a husband
but near our home I saw weapons tear his body
and those of three brothers my mother bore,
darlings all, who encountered death the same day.
Although Argives had leveled Mynes' city
and killed my husband, you never suffered me
to weep but rather told me that Achilles
would someday make me his wife, then sail with me
to Phthia for Myrmidon wedding feasts.
I shall always mourn your death, for you were kind."

285

290

295

300

Tears flowed as she spoke, and all the women wept,
each expressing her own grief for Patroclus.

The Greek elders gathered around Achilles
and begged him eat, but he refused and groaned:
"Please, if any of you dear friends will hear,
do not press me to eat or drink just yet,
even a taste, as I am too sad for food.
I will abide this day's end as I am."

305

After Achilles spoke most kings dispersed
but not Atreus' two sons, Odysseus,
Nestor, Idomeneus or aging Phoenix.
They stayed, trying to comfort him, but he wanted

310

no comfort till he had entered battle's maw.

He recalled his friend, heaved a sigh and said:

"My closest, most pitiable friend, how often
you prepared fine dinners here in this camp,
speedily too, before we Greeks would march
against the Trojans to bring them tearful war,
but now you lie there, butchered, and my heart
rejects the food, the drink that sit close by.

315

I yearn for you and could not suffer more
if I had learned my father Peleus died—
though he is likely unhappy now in Phthia,
missing the son who sailed to foreign lands
and war with Trojans over wretched Helen—
or that my boy growing in Scyros had died,
but I think Neoptolemus still lives.

320

Until now, Patroclus, I fervently hoped
that only I would perish outside Argos,
but that you would leave Troy and return to Phthia
aboard your fast black ship, you and my son.

325

I hoped you would board him on Scyros, show him
my possessions, my slaves and my tall house.

It might be, too, that Peleus is already
dead or barely alive and suffering
old age's rigors while he awaits me—
or unwelcome news that I have died at Troy."

335

Achilles fell silent. His listeners sighed
as each man recalled what he left behind.

Cronus' son saw the mourning and felt pity
which prompted him to face Athena and say:
"My child, you seem to have abandoned your man!
Do you no longer care about Achilles?

340

He languishes by his tall-masted ships
and mourns his friend. Most Argive warriors
retired to eat but he rejects food and drink.
Visit him, take nectar, take sweet ambrosia
to fortify his strength and stave off hunger."

345

Her father's words renewed Athena's zeal.

Like a long-winged, shrill-voiced eagle or hawk,
she shot from heaven through ether. The Greeks
were arming as she slipped close to Achilles
and instilled in him nectar, ambrosia too,
so that hunger would not weaken his knees.

350

She returned to her all-powerful father's house
while Greek warriors surged away from the ships.
As when Zeus sends thick clouds of snowflakes flying
before Boreas and his frigid blasts,
so then dense masses of brightly shining helmets
stormed from the ships, as many studded shields,
polished heavy breastplates and ash-handled spears.
Gleams reached the skies as earth reflected the glow
of brilliant bronze and groaned under the feet
of warriors waiting for Achilles to arm.

360

Achilles ground his teeth. His angry eyes
shone as if they were coals, though in his heart
deep sorrow remained. Trojans on his mind,
he grasped the gifts Hephaestus toiled to make.
First he buckled over his shins the greaves,
fitted with silver guards to cover his ankles.

365

Next he fastened the breastplate around his chest.
He shouldered both his silver-studded sword—
the blade bronze—and the round elaborate shield
that shined as brightly as if it were the moon.

370

As when a sudden tempest drives mariners
across the seas far from their land and loved ones,
till at last lost sailors see a distant glimmer,
a fire blazing high on a mountain farmstead—
so that day Achilles' shield shined to heaven,
showing its wonders. He next lifted the helmet
and placed it on his head. It shone like a star
as he shook the helmet's ominous plume,
gold filaments that Hephaestus had made.
Achilles tested the armor, flexing to see
how well it fit, whether his joints bent freely.

375

380

385

The hero felt as if he had grown wings.
He drew his father's spear from its storage case,
a spear so heavy that no other Greek
could wield it—only Achilles had the strength.
Chiron gave Peleus its shaft, Pelian ash,
grown on Pelion's heights to slaughter men.

390

Automedon and Alcimus yoked the team—
harnessed in finely tooled breast bands—snugged bits
between their jaws, then uncoiled the reins
to the driver's stand. Automedon took
a glossy lash and mounted the chariot's deck. 395
Right behind him climbed Achilles, wearing gear
that shined as brightly as Hyperion's son.
He gave his father's team a sharp command:
“Xanthus and Balius, Podarge's famous foals,
make it your charge to draw your driver safely
here when today's battle is finally spent,
and do not leave him lifeless like Patroclus.”

400

From under the yoke, flashing-footed Xanthus
replied, bowing his head until his mane 405
tumbled beneath the yoke and brushed the ground.
Hera had given him the power to speak:
“Look to your own safety, mighty Achilles.
Your day of destiny nears, but we are not
to blame, rather a god and relentless fate. 410
It was not through our sloth or inattention
that Trojans stripped your armor off Patroclus.
The powerful god that fair-haired Leto bore
killed him stealthily and gave Hector credit.
We two could run as fast as Zephyrus,
the swiftest wind, but our speed would not avert
your fate: to be struck dead by man and god.”

415

The Furies then stilled Xanthus' speaking voice.
Fast-running Achilles said over a sigh:

"Xanthus, you do not need to foretell my death. 420
I know my fate quite well, to die at Troy
far from father and mother, but not before
I have given Trojans more than enough war."
With that, he whooped and drove the team ahead.

ACHILLES AVENGES PATROCLUS

A stern their graceful ships the Greeks prepared
to fight, centered around you, Peleus' son,
while Trojans armed against them on the plain.

Zeus ordered Themis to summon the gods.
She combed Olympus' glens and earth below,
calling all immortals to Zeus's house. 5
None of the rivers came, apart from Ocean,
none of the nymphs who dwell beneath the waves
or haunt streams' headwaters and wet lowlands.
All others entered the cloud-gatherer's halls,
crowding Zeus's polished colonnades
which once Hephaestus built with singular skill. 10

When the gods assembled even the earth-shaker
answered the call. He left the foamy sea,
strode into the meeting and questioned Zeus:
"Lightning-flasher, why did you gather us here?
Are you concerned about Trojans and Greeks?
It is plain to see that battle will soon flare." 15

Cloud-amassing Zeus answered Poseidon:
"Know then, earth-shaker, what I have decided.
Although I care about warriors as they die,
I will remain here in Olympus' folds, 20

content to watch the field while other gods
descend to support either Trojans or Greeks.

You all may aid whichever side you want.

25

If the Trojans fight Achilles without you
they will not be able to hold out long.

Why, yesterday they fled when he showed his face!

Unnatural fury drives him while he grieves,
and he might subdue fate and ravage Ilium."

30

Zeus's encouragement waked a long battle.

Immortals set out toward Troy, toward those they favored.

Hera and Athena raced to the ships.

Close behind came earth-grasping Poseidon,

Hermes—the nimblest thinker among the gods—

35

and Hephaestus, puffing, swelling his chest.

He limped but his slender legs moved rapidly.

Trojan allies were Ares in bright armor,

arrow-laden Artemis, wild-haired Phoebus,

Leto, Xanthus and mirthful Aphrodite.

40

Before immortals reached the Trojan plain

Greeks were gaining thanks to Achilles' power,

exploding after he shunned battle so long.

Terror crippled every Trojan's joints

whenever Peleus' fast-charging son attacked—

45

his dazzling arms the envy of murderous Ares—

but after Olympians joined the battle,

Strife balanced the field. Athena shouted,

standing sometimes between the ditch and wall,

sometimes by the thundering briny surf.

50

Ares faced her and roared like a whirlwind,

deafening yells, first from the city's heights,

then from Callicolone near Simois.

So the blessed immortals inspired the armies

to clash, and fierce combat broke out on the plain.

55

The father of gods and men loosed his thunder.

Nearer the battlefield Poseidon shook

the boundless earth, shook the mountain summits
including spring-rinsed Ida's every spur
and peak, shook the Argive ships, shook Ilium's streets. 60
A terrified Hades, lord of farther below,
left his throne protesting that overhead
earth-shaking Poseidon might open the ground,
letting men and immortals see his domain,
moldy, dank and loathsome even to gods. 65

Such was the tumult gods evoked at Troy.
Apollo waved a winged arrow and stood
opposite lord Poseidon, glowering,
while Ares opposed gleaming-eyed Athena.
Hera confronted the golden bow and war cry 70
of Artemis, far-ranging Apollo's sister.
The protector Hermes stood opposite Leto.
Hephaestus faced the great, deep-whirling torrent
that mortals named Scamander but gods call Xanthus.

While gods took stands opposing gods, Achilles
sought to find and fight Hector above all others
because Achilles' heart pulsed determination
that Hector's blood would satiate Ares' thirst.
Apollo, on the other hand, fired Aeneas
with fury and strength enough to fight Achilles. 80
Taking the form of Priam's son Lycaon,
Zeus's son Apollo addressed Troy's ally:
"Aeneas, Ilium's bulwark, what of the boasts
you made while drinking wine with Trojan princes,
that you would fight Achilles, Peleus' son?" 85
Aeneas answered Lycaon's imposter:
"Son of Priam, why do you encourage me
to face and fight the spirited son of Peleus?
It would not be the first time I met Achilles.
Once before I fled to elude his spear. 90
He found me tending herds on Ida the day
he sacked Lyrnessus and Pedasus. Zeus
rescued me, strengthening my legs enough

so I could escape Achilles and Athena,
who always lighted his way, guiding him,
guiding his spear to slaughter Leleges and Trojans.

95

There is no mortal to stand against Achilles
because he ever has the goddess' aid.

Besides, his spear flies straight and never slows
until it pierces flesh. Even a god,
who might hazard a fight, would not be likely
to win unless his body were forged bronze."

100

Zeus's son Apollo answered Aeneas:
"Come, warrior, you are no less than a son
of Zeus's daughter Aphrodite, they say.
Achilles comes from inferior stock.

105

Your mother's sire is Zeus, his mother's a sea god,
so take your weapons against him and ignore
the taunting threats, the empty boasts he makes!"

Apollo's reassurance convinced Aeneas
and his gleaming armor streaked to the front.

110

Hera did not fail to notice Aeneas
heading through the battlefield toward Achilles.
She urgently addressed her allied gods:

"Poseidon, Athena, we three must devise
a plan to counter what is happening now.

115

Phoebus Apollo has dispatched Aeneas
in flashing bronze to battle Peleus' son.

I propose we steer Aeneas away,
then one of us three should take a position
where Achilles fights and lend him the strength
he needs to prove that gods who bolster him
are mighty, not lesser ones like those who have
assisted Trojan fighters in this war.

120

We noblest Olympians should ensure
that Trojan hands do not subdue Achilles—
today—though soon enough he will bow to fate,
which spun his thread of destiny at birth.

125

If Achilles does not sense our support
he may weaken, faced with opposing gods.
The sight of undisguised gods terrifies mortals."

130

The earth-shaker Poseidon answered her:
"Hera, you need not worry about that yet.
I would rather the gods avoided strife
among ourselves if we possibly can.
For the moment let us go find a place
to watch and leave the war in mortal hands,
but if Ares or Phoebus Apollo should fight,
or slow Achilles from fighting as he has,
then in an instant we shall lend him aid.
The Trojan-backing gods will soon retreat
to Olympus—where most immortals remain—
after they feel the strength our hands can wield."

135

140

That said, dark-haired Poseidon led the way
to what was left of the wall that Heracles—
aided by Trojans and Pallas Athena—
once built to protect against the sea monster
that emerged to chase the hero on the plain.
There Poseidon, Athena and Hera stood
and caused opaque mist to cover their bodies.
Opposite them, atop Callicolone,
city-sacking Ares sat, with you, Phoebus.
So waited the gods on either side, laying
their strategies, but despite Zeus's mandate,
none was ready to go farther and join battle.

145

150

155

Bronze illumined the plain which overflowed
men and teams, and earth quaked under feet
that pounded her surface. Two of the best men
met between the armies, both eager to fight:
Anchises' son Aeneas and fierce Achilles.
Aeneas strode forward and each stride brought
a nod of his crested helmet. His shield was ready,
protecting his chest, and he brandished a spear.

160

Achilles rushed upon him as would a lion,
hungry, under lethal attack by men
assembled from near and far. Heedless at first,
he goes his way, but when one of the youths
casts a javelin, he crouches, his teeth foam.
Valor and fury fill his mighty heart.

165

His tail switches first one way, then the other,
leading his body to pivot and fight.
He charges, eyes blazing, either to kill
the men or perish himself among their ranks.
So feral spirit and might stirred Achilles
as he strode to face the high-spirited Trojan.

170

After the two had closed on one another,
they spoke and fast-running Achilles began:
“Aeneas, why have you left your army’s safety
to take me on? Do you really want to fight me
in hopes that you may win the Trojan throne
as Priam’s reward? Even if you should prevail
Priam would not bestow that honor on you.

175

His wits are sharp and he has his own sons.
Or have the Trojans promised you a tract,
orchards and fertile land where you may dwell
if you should defeat me? You will find that hard,
as you did the first time you fled my spear.
You must recall the day you left your oxen
and flew down Ida’s slopes as fast as you could.

180

Why, you never even turned to look back!
You sought refuge in Lyrnessus but I
soon plundered that town, backed by Zeus and Athena.
I took rich spoils including captive women
but immortals led by Zeus rescued you.

190

I think you will not fare as well this time
so I suggest you turn and walk away,
rejoin your comrades instead of facing me—
or you will die. Even a fool knows that.”

195

Aeneas breathed deep and answered Achilles:
“Peleus’ son, do not hope to frighten me

200

with childish threats. Like you, I know how
to use mocking, provocative speech.

You and I well know each other's blood lineage
because we have heard the famous stories told,
though neither of us has met the other's parents.
They say that noble Peleus is your sire,
fair-tressed Thetis your mother, the sea's child,
while I am the son of bold-hearted Anchises,
they say, and my mother is Aphrodite.

205

One set of parents will surely mourn a son
today since more than mere childish retorts
will determine which of us walks away.

210

But if you wish, listen to better learn
my stock which most men already know well.

Cloud-gathering Zeus fathered Dardanus
who founded Dardania, before sacred Ilium
had risen on the plain to house the folk
who lived along Mount Ida's spring-run slopes.

215

Dardanus fathered Erichthonius, a king
who came to be richest of mortal men.

220

His fertile pastures grazed three thousand horses,
all mares that frolicked among their playful foals.
Lust for the mares overpowered Boreas.

Disguised as a stallion, he seduced twelve.

Those mares conceived and bore a dozen young
who raced across the bounteous earth so lightly
their tread did not even scatter ripe grain.

225

When they chose to play on the sea's broad back
they skipped atop the breakers' frothiest surf.

Erichthonius fathered Trojan king Tros.

230

Tros in turn had three most noble sons,
Ilus, Assaracus and Ganymede
who grew to be the handsomest mortal ever.

The gods appointed him to pour Zeus's wine,
a means to keep his beauty close at hand.

235

Ilus fathered conniving Laomedon
and he begot five sons: Tithonus, Priam,
Lampus, Clytius, warlike Hicetaon.

Assaracus sired Capys, and he Anchises.

Anchises fathered me, and Priam Hector.

240

That is the stock and blood I claim as mine.

But Zeus exalts or shrinks the worth of mortals
however he will, being the mightiest god.

Now, let us no longer bandy words like children,
standing here while battle rages around us.

245

Either of us could invent many more taunts,
enough to overload a hundred-oared ship.

The tongues of men engender endless talk
of every kind, and spacious meadows of words.

A man will repeat every word he hears.

250

There is no reason for us to wrangle more,
squabbling between ourselves as when two women,
incensed by what they see as deep discord,
stand in the street peppering one another
with vituperative slurs, some true, some false.

255

Your empty speeches will neither blunt my valor
nor spare yourself a fight. So come at once
and we shall test each other with bronze-tipped spears!"

Aeneas drove his spear on Achilles' shield,
metal against metal, a strident scream.

260

Achilles held the shield at full arm's length
and paused, afraid the long-handled spear
might strike a place where it could travel through—
a needless fear. He underestimated

the god's gifts, how difficult they would be
for any man to pierce or drive away.

265

Mighty Aeneas' heavy spear could not
break through the gold barrier Hephaestus forged.
The point pierced two layers but three remained
because the lame god had made five in all:
the outer two bronze, the two innermost tin,
a single gold between that stopped the weapon.

270

Achilles then let fly his own long spear.

It struck the waiting face of Aeneas' shield,

just at the rim where thinnest layers of bronze
and oxhide were applied. Easily piercing,
the Pelian spear raced on. The shield screeched.
Aeneas crouched and held the disk aloft
so the spear flew over his back to earth,
after piercing the outer and inner sides
of the life-protecting armor. He survived,
yes, but he froze, eyes glazed from mortal terror
that the weapon's near-miss had bred. Achilles
drew his razor-sharp sword and charged Aeneas
with fierce whoops, but Aeneas grabbed a rock,
far too heavy for any pair of men
living today, yet easy for him to lift.
Aeneas' rock would then have flown to Achilles,
clanging useless against his shield or helmet,
and the sharp sword would have robbed the Trojan's life,
had not the earth-shaker Poseidon seen.
He quickly warned the deathless gods at hand:
"Look there, I fear for bold-hearted Aeneas.
Peleus' son is about to send him Hades-bound
because he followed bad advice, Apollo's,
who will not return now to prevent his death.
Why should blameless Aeneas suffer so
on others' behalf after all the prayers
and gifts he has sent us gods who hold the skies?
We should lead Aeneas away from death,
because Zeus will be furious if Achilles
kills him now. Aeneas' fate is to live
in order to save the last lineage and stock
of Dardanus, a favorite among the sons
that mortal temptresses have borne to Zeus.
The son of Cronus detests Priam's seed,
and soon Aeneas will rule over Trojans
as will sons of his sons hereafter born."

Hera widened her eyes at Poseidon and said:
"Earth-shaker, you must make up your own mind.
Either rescue Aeneas now or let

him fall to a better man, Peleus' son.
Athena and I have sworn many an oath—
which every other deathless god has heard—
never to thwart the day of Trojan doom
even when Troy is all ablaze with fire
Achaea's sons will light when they win the war."

315

The earth-shaker, Poseidon, listened, nodded,
then shot through the troops, the forest of spears,
straight to Aeneas and dazzling Achilles.

320

He shed mist over Achilles' eyes,
grasped the shaft of the Greek's bronze-tipped ash spear,
withdrew the deadly point from Aeneas' shield,
then laid the weapon before Achilles' feet.

He lifted Aeneas and sped him away.

325

Countless battalions and myriad teams
flashed beneath as the god propelled Aeneas
all the way to the edge of the battleground
where the Cauconians were arming to fight.

Once Aeneas was there, Poseidon stood near him,
feigned a mortal's voice and addressed the Trojan:
"Which immortal counseled you to do battle—
recklessly—against Peleus' spirited son,
mightier than you, better loved in heaven?

330

You must back down when you encounter him,
or you may defy your fate and reach Hades,
but after fate has brought Achilles death
you should be bold, enter the forward ranks.
There is no other Greek who can strike you down."

335

After saying that, Poseidon departed
and cleared the mist that blocked Achilles' sight.
The champion rubbed his eyes, looked around,
heaved a sigh and inwardly spoke to himself:
"These eyes have witnessed a great marvel indeed!
My spear lies here on the ground but I can see
no man where one I almost killed was standing.

345

The immortal gods must deeply love Aeneas,
and I mistakenly thought his boasts were empty.
So much for him. He will not seek me again,
not after such a narrow escape from death.
Now I will rouse the battle-loving Greeks
and try my hand on countless other Trojans."

350

Achilles bounded to the Greek ranks and cried:
"Glorious Argives, the time for rest is past!
Each of you should now confront a man and fight!
I am mighty, true, but it would be hard
to fight and kill every Trojan myself.
Not even immortal Ares or Athena
could face the jaws of battle against so many.
As long as I am able—my hands, my feet,
my heart—I will not for a moment relent.
I will go through whole battalions and not one
Trojan who crosses my spear will live to tell."

355

During that speech, on the Trojan side Hector
bellowed his boast that he would fight Achilles:
"Trojans, do not let Peleus' son frighten you!
Why, my words could rival even a god's,
though not my spear because gods are too mighty.
Achilles will not accomplish his threats—
perhaps a few, but most will come to naught.
I will face him even if his fingers flame,
his fists are like coals, his fury like steel!"

360

Lifted spears rewarded those rousing words
which stirred Trojans to shout as if they had one heart,
but then Apollo approached Hector and said:
"Hector, do not challenge Achilles to fight.
Stay in your massed army behind the front
where you may avoid his spear, elude his sword."

365

Hector obeyed and returned to his army,
frightened by what Apollo's voice had said.

370

Achilles, valor aroused, attacked Trojans
with fearsome war cries. First he killed Iphition,
army chief, Otrynteus' valiant son
that a nymph bore to his city-sacking father
in Hyde's rich land beneath snowy Tmolus.

385

Iphition charged Achilles whose spear struck
the Trojan's head, splitting it down the middle.
He fell and crashed. Triumphant Achilles said:
"Otrynteus' son, once feared among men,
you die here now, leaving your family
near Gyge, site of your ancestral lands
on fish-filled Hyllus and deep-eddying Hermus."

390

Death's darkness eclipsed Iphition's eyes,
and Greek chariot wheels cut him to pieces
as they raced to fight. When he saw that, Demoleon,
proud son of Antenor, took to his heels,
but Achilles speared his temple through the cheek guard.
The helmet failed to check the bronze spearpoint
which traveled on and pierced the skull. The brains
splattered inside, marking the end of life.

395

400

Hippodamas jumped from his chariot
and ran, but Achilles' spearhead found his back.
He exhaled his soul, bellowing as a bull
would bellow being dragged to Poseidon's altar,
an offering to please the earth-shaking god.
He roared like that as the soul fled his bones.
Achilles next pursued handsome Polydorus,
son of Priam, who forbade the boy to fight.
Polydorus was Priam's youngest son,
his father's favorite, Troy's best foot-racer.
Now he was foolishly showing off his speed,
racing along the front—till he lost his life.
A faster runner, Achilles plunged his spear's point
in Polydorus' back where the belt buckled
with gold clasps and his breastplate halves overlapped.
The bronze drove through and out beside the navel.

405

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415

He groaned, fell to his knees and entered a cloud
of darkness, clutching spilled bowels in both hands.

When Hector saw his brother Polydorus
sinking earthward, entrails between his fingers, 420
mist clouded his eyes and he lost resolve
to stay in the rear. Straight for Achilles he raced,
inflamed, waving a sharp spear. Achilles
saw Hector, stiffened and said to himself:

"Here is the man my heart has marked to die, 425
the man who killed my friend! No longer now
shall faceless ranks conceal us from each other!"

The Greek then scowled, yelled and challenged the prince:
"Come closer still, the sooner to reach your death!"

Hector was unafraid and said to Achilles: 430
"Peleus' son, do not expect to frighten me
with empty speech. I know as well as you
how to speak words that are scornful or sharp.
You may be stronger, and I a lesser man,
but a fight's outcome rests in the gods' laps. 435
Though inferior, I may take your life
with this spear which has proven deadly before."

With that he shook the spear and cast, but Athena
guided it off its path using her breath,
gently exhaled, sending it back to Hector 440
where it dropped at his feet. Achilles then
eagerly jumped forward, ready to kill,
but Phoebus Apollo snatched Hector aside—
easily, being a god—and hid him in mist.
Three times fast-charging Achilles attacked, 445
thrusting his spear, three times struck only mist.
A fourth time he charged—any immortal's peer—
and as he charged, he yelled furious threats:
"You managed to slip away, you dog, but death
was closing in until Apollo came, 450
the god you pray to every time you fight."

Be assured I will finish you off next time
if another immortal will give me help.
For now, I will take whoever else I meet."

Achilles speared the side of Dryops' neck, 455
dropped him lifeless to earth, then charged ahead
at Philetor's son Demuchus, tall, strong,
and pierced his knee with a spear. One sword stroke
sent Demuchus to the end of his life.

Laogonus and Dardanus were next, 460
brothers Achilles drove off their chariot.
His spear dispatched the first, his blade the other.
Alastor's son Tros knelt before Achilles.
He hoped he could sway the Greek to let him live,

to pity a warrior the same age as he.

Poor boy, he did not know he had no chance.

Achilles' heart held no kindness or mercy,
only fury. As Tros took Achilles' knees
to beg for life, the sword circled his liver,
cutting it out, and dark blood from the wound 470
flowed over Tros while night covered his eyes,
life gone. Achilles turned his spear on Mulius.
Straight through an ear and out the other sped
the bronze point. Echeclus, Agenor's son,

was next to die. Achilles' sword split his head.

His blood warmed the blade's surface, as his eyes
succumbed to relentless fate and death's dark.

Deucalion was next. Just where tendons knit
the elbow, there Achilles' bronze spear tip
pierced his arm. The limb drooped while Deucalion waited 480
for death which came when the sword chopped his neck,
setting both head and helmet in flight. Fluid
leaked from his spine as his body lay prone.

Achilles then went after Piras' son,
Rhigmus—who came to Troy from fertile Thrace—
and drove the lance's head into his groin.
Fallen Rhigmus' driver Areïthous

485

wheeled until Achilles' spear stuck in his back
and he dropped off the deck. The horses bolted.

As wildfire rages through hollow ravines 490
high on a parched mountain, consuming woods
where blustery winds drive the hungry flames,
so Achilles and his spear covered the field,
slaughtering victims till the earth ran blood.

As when a farmer yokes two broad-browed bulls 495
and husks white barley in his threshing house,
ever more husks pile up under their feet,
so underneath Achilles' chariot his horses
trampled piles of corpses and shields. The axle
below, the double rims above were caked 500
with blood and gore thrown by the horses' hooves,
the whirling wheels. Achilles' glory-lust
soon turned his invincible hands dark red.

ACHILLES AGAINST THE RIVER

The Trojans reached a ford in the restless river,
Xanthus, immortal Zeus's eddying spawn.
Many safely crossed and escaped to the plain—
the battleground the panicked Greeks had fled
the day when Hector fought as though possessed. 5
Trojans flooded the plain but Hera spread mist
in their way to slow the pace. Achilles drove
those left at the ford into Xanthus' eddies
where they fell and met his deep, roaring currents.
The banks echoed terror as Trojans screamed, 10
fighting against the river's whirling pools.

As when locusts sensing a grass fire fly
toward a river, but crackling flames outpace
their wings till down to water they fall, shriveled,
so then as Trojans fled Achilles, Xanthus 15
grew clogged with bellowing horses and men.

Achilles propped his spear on the riverbank
against the tamarisk and jumped in the current,
determined to slaughter with sword alone.
He slashed left, right, forward, evoking howls 20
and drawing blood until the water blushed.

As when a monstrous whale pursues small fish
who scatter and fill a harbor's hiding places,
knowing the beast will eat each one he finds,
so then Trojans—chased in sacred waters—
cowered beneath the banks. After a time
Achilles selected twelve youths from the stream
as blood price for Menoetius' son's death.
He brought them out, puzzled, timid as fawns,
and tied their hands behind their backs with straps
that they themselves had worn to belt their tunics.
He assigned aides who led them back to the ships
while he turned to Xanthus for still more slaughter.

Achilles met one of Dardan Priam's sons,
Lycaon, fleeing the river. Once before
Achilles had seized Lycaon in Priam's orchard
where the youth had gone to cut wild fig trees,
saplings that he would bend to make chariot rims,
never suspecting Peleus' son would find him.
That time Achilles sold his captive in Lemnos,
to Euneus, having brought him there by ship,
but he regained freedom through a friend's ransom,
Imbrian Eëtion, who sent him to Arisbe
from where he cautiously made his way home.
He spent only eleven days at Troy
after his return, till on the twelfth he came
once more to Achilles' hands, destined now
for Hades, however against his will.
When fast-running Achilles saw him, he was
unarmed except for his helmet and shield.
He had thrown his spear aside to make it easier
to flee the stream whose current had tired his legs.
Achilles, startled, silently told himself:
“What is this! Quite a wonder my eyes see now!
It seems the spirited Trojans I thought dead
may leave the misty gloom and rise again,
as this one comes today. He escaped his fate

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once when I sold him, again when he returned,
eluding the sea's depths where so many lie.

No matter. This time I will let him taste
my spear's point so I may see for myself
whether he goes his way, or remains beneath
the earth who holds fast the mightiest men."

60

So the Greek mused as Lycaon crept up,
determined to clasp Achilles' knees in hopes
he could avoid grim fate, ruin and death.
Achilles lifted and poised his long spear.
He cast, but Lycaon grabbed at his knees
and crouched so the spear flew by to hit the ground
where it stood upright, still craving human flesh.
One of Lycaon's hands clasped Achilles' legs,
the other clenched the spear and would not let go.
In that posture Priam's son implored the Greek:
"Achilles, I beg you to pity me!"

65

I face you as a suppliant, owed respect
because you and I shared Demeter's grain
the day you seized me in the orchard rows,
then took me far from father and friends to sell,
in Lemnos, my price a hundred oxen's worth.
I bought freedom for three times that, and this day
is only the twelfth since I returned home,
weary from trials. Now you have me again.

75

Such is my dismal fate. Zeus must loathe me
or this would not happen. My mother, Laothoë,
gave me a brief life. She is Altes' daughter
and he rules the war-addicted Leleges
from his halls in Pedaesus on Satniois.

80

Priam kept her among his many wives
and she bore him two sons for you to stalk.
One you already killed today, the warrior
Polydorus, a victim of your spear,
now you may kill me. I have little hope
to escape your hands since gods drew me to you,

90

but pray consider what I ask you now:
Spare me! I come from a different womb than Hector, 95
who killed your comrade, both gentle and strong."

So Lycaon, Priam's son, addressed Achilles,
entreating him, but he listened unmoved:
"Do not harangue me or hope to be ransomed.
Before Patroclus' fateful hour arrived, 100
I was often mercifully disposed
to Trojans and would take them alive for sale,
but now there is sure death for all that a god
may send my way beneath Ilium's walls,
especially Trojans who are Priam's sons. 105
So you die too, my friend, but why complain?
A better man than you has died, Patroclus,
and do you not see my own splendor, my size?
My father is noble, my mother a goddess,
but dogged fate and death await me too. 110
One day, whether at dawn or noon or dusk,
some warrior's weapon will take even my life—
a flying spear or arrow loosed from his string."

Lycaon listened and knew he was doomed.
He released the spear then sat, arms extended 115
together while Achilles drew his sword
and struck the collarbone. The double-edged blade
sank deep in Lycaon's neck. The Trojan fell
flat on his face, his dark blood soaking the earth.
Achilles flung him into the river's eddies, 120
then exulted above his spinning body:
"Drift awhile and fishes will lick the blood
around your wound, but your mother will never
mourn you laid on a bier. Instead Scamander
will whirl you along to the sea's deep folds. 125
There, as you float the waves, a fish may rise
to sample Lycaon's glistening fat.
Perish, while we approach the citadel—
Trojans in flight, I dealing death behind.

Scamander's flashing eddies will not come
to your aid despite the bulls you sacrificed
and the living horses you gave his pools.
Every Trojan I meet shall fare as you did,
till I avenge Patroclus and all the Greeks
you killed by the ships while I refused to fight!" 130

Achilles' arrogant boast angered the river
and Xanthus pondered how he could stop the killing,
spare Trojans ruin at Achilles' hands.
Peleus' son retrieved his long-handled spear
and, slaughter in mind, charged Asteropaeus, 140
son of Pelagon, son of wide-flowing Axius
and Periboeia, Acessamenus' daughter
who mated with the deep, meandering river.
The youth climbed the riverbank, faced Achilles
and brandished two spears. Might flowed to his limbs
from Xanthus—determined to avenge the legions
Achilles felled in his waters without qualm.
After the pair of men had moved close together
peerless runner Achilles was first to speak:
"Who are you that presumes to challenge me? 145
Those who face my fury are sorrow's heirs!"

The glorious son of Pelagon replied:
"Valiant Achilles, why do you ask for my stock?
I came from Paeonia's distant, rich fields,
as the long-speared Paeonians' chief, and this day 155
is the eleventh I have spent at Troy.
I claim descent from the wide river Axius,
who carries the earth's most beautiful waters.
He fathered Pelagon, and I am said
to be Pelagon's son. Now let us fight!" 160

Achilles heard and his right arm drew back
the Pelian ash, but toward him flew both spears
of ambidextrous spearman Asteropaeus.
One hit Achilles' shield, but failed to drive

through the center gold layer, the god's gift. 165
The other barely grazed Achilles' arm,
drawn back, and bright blood gushed as the spear passed
to stick in the ground, still yearning for flesh.
Achilles then aimed his ash-handled lance
and cast, bent on killing Asteropaeus, 170
but the point missed. It drove in the steep bank,
a depth of half the Pelian ash's length.
Peleus' son drew the sword by his thigh.
He sprang at the youth, who grabbed the planted spear
and tugged, but could not pull it free of the ground. 175
Three times he tried to draw the weapon out,
three times he failed. On a fourth try he sought
to bend and break Aeacus' grandson's ash,
but the Greek sword intervened, taking his life.
The blade opened his belly near the navel, 180
his entrails spilled and night covered his eyes.
Achilles jumped on Asteropaeus' chest,
stripped the Paeonian armor and boasted loud:
"Die here! You had no chance against Zeus's stock
even though you may spring from a sacred river. 185
You claim descent from a wide, gushing torrent,
but I am the lineage of Zeus himself.
The man who sired me is the Myrmidon king,
Peleus, son of Aeacus, a son of Zeus.
Zeus is mightier than any waterway 190
so Zeus's stock will best that of a stream.
Here is a strong river if any could give
you aid, but he will not fight Cronus' son.
Not even Achelous could rival him,
nor even deep-flowing Ocean's great might, 195
from where all the rivers and all the seas
and all the springs and deep wells draw their waters.
Yet he too cowers at the thunderbolts
that Zeus can send rumbling down the sky."

Achilles withdrew his spear from the bank. 200
He left lifeless Asteropaeus there,

prone on the sand, lapped by dark river waters,
fishes and eels busy about his body,
nipping, eating the fat above his kidneys.

The Greek pursued the horsetail-crested Paeonians
who had taken flight along the whirling river
the moment they saw the best fighter they had
falling dead under Achilles' sword stroke.

205

He killed Thersilochus, Astypylus,
Mnesus, Thrasius, Aenius and Ophelestes.
Achilles would have continued the slaughter
but the deep, whirling river angrily cried—
a human voice brought from bottomless whorls:
“Achilles, mightiest and deadliest
of warriors, the gods never fail to back you,
but if Cronus' son will let you kill all Trojans,
first drive them away from me to the plain.
You have filled my sacred water with bodies
till I cannot empty into the sea,
choked as I am by corpses you have felled.
Now go and let me be, captain of armies!”

210

215

220

Fast-running Achilles answered the river:
“I would do as you ask, esteemed Scamander,
but I cannot curtail my slaughter of Trojans
before I reach their city, challenge Hector
and prove whether I kill him or he kills me.”

225

Achilles charged Trojans like a madman,
and deep-eddying Xanthus reproached Apollo:
“Silver-bowed son of Zeus, whose will you choose
to flout, you know he told you time and again
to stand beside the Trojans until the hour
of twilight, shadowy fields, evening star.”

230

Achilles jumped in the swirling current
beneath the bank, but Xanthus quickened his flow.
He rose, twisting his streams to gather bodies,

235

the throngs Achilles slew and left in the water.

He bellowed like a bull and hurled corpses
on land but safeguarded men still alive,
hidden in great, spiral eddies' depths.

He reared and dashed Achilles, monstrous waves
that drove against his shield until his feet
lost touch with earth. Achilles grabbed an elm,
lofty, broad, but Xanthus uprooted the tree,
ripping away the bank, blocking his current
with dense branches and leaves that formed a dam
after they fell in. Achilles escaped the channel
and started across the plain at a fast clip,
terrified, but the river god bore down—
a dark, watery wall—determined to stop
Achilles' single-handed ruin of Troy.

240

The son of Peleus jumped a spear-throw ahead,
as quick as a hunting black eagle's dive—
the most powerful, fastest bird that flies.

Achilles leapt that fast, causing his breastplate
to clatter and clang. He veered, swerved on the plain,
feet flying, but Xanthus followed, roaring louder.

250

255

As when a ditch-digger directs a spring's trickle
toward his thirsty orchards or parched gardens,
using a spade to dig debris from his trench,
and as the flow increases, impediments
all wash away till the stream gurgles, then runs
down a steep slope where he barely keeps ahead,
so then the waves constantly pressed Achilles,
quick though he was, for gods are faster than men.

260

Often Achilles halted his flying legs
and tried to take a stand, a means to test
whether the gods above would still ignore him.
Each time the river's heavy fist-like waves
beat his back. He jumped as high as he could,
desperate now, but Xanthus weakened his knees
with steady pressure and undercut his feet.

265

270

The hero scanned the skies and called, distressed:
"O Zeus, since no immortal god will pity me
or turn this river back, I will succumb,
and no heaven-dweller is more to blame
than my mother Thetis, who led me astray.
She told me I would die beneath Troy's walls,
struck by one of Apollo's fatal arrows.
Hector, the finest Trojan, ought to kill me
so that a brave man is both killer and killed.
But no, my lot instead is a wretched death,
sunk in a torrent like a swineherd boy
swept from his feet while crossing a winter river."
275
280

Poseidon and Athena heard, and flashed
to Achilles' side disguised as mortal men.
They held his hands in theirs and made a pledge,
the earth-shaker Poseidon as spokesman:
"Son of Peleus, you need not be concerned
as we are two immortals come to help you,
Pallas Athena and I with Zeus's blessing.
No, a watery death is not your fate,
for Xanthus will soon retreat as you shall see.
You may credit this solemn pledge we make:
your indiscriminate slaughter will not slow
until you herd every surviving Trojan
to Ilium's walls, take Hector's life away
and bring to the Greek ships the glory you win."
285
290
295

The two then rejoined their fellow immortals.
Achilles, cheered by heaven's assurance, raced
through the plain, now awash with turbulent water
and numberless slaughtered Trojan youths, still armed,
their corpses bobbing. Achilles' legs rose
above the flood which no longer could hold him
against the new power Athena infused.
Unrelenting Scamander grew all the more
enraged at Peleus' son and crested his waves
higher than ever while calling Simois:
300
305

"Beloved brother, the two of us should check
this mortal's strength, or soon Priam's proud city
will fall since no Trojan will stand and fight.

310

So you must help me at once! Take a draft
from your headwaters till all your channels swell,
then raise towering waves, violent, packed
with logs and men, as a means to stop this wild man
who now holds sway, raging like a god.

315

I vow that neither his size nor might will serve him,
nor his grand armor, when slime covers him
in my bed where I will weight his prostrate body
with sand and tons of gravel that I have brought,
so much the Greeks will never find his bones
to gather after I finish burying them.

320

They may erect a marker, but a mound
will be useless for his funeral rites."

Xanthus then coiled himself. He lashed Achilles
with thundering water, corpses and gore.

325

The Zeus-poured river raised its purple waves
to the sky, then crashed them on Peleus' son
till Hera intervened after she grew worried
that the river might sweep the mortal away.

She called upon her loyal son, Hephaestus:

330

"Arise, my crooked-footed son, since you
were paired to do battle with swirling Xanthus.
Go stop him now! Unleash your limitless flames
to fly before the west and southerly winds
that I will arouse and send storming shoreward
so you may consume armored Trojan corpses
with gales of your hot fire. Burn off trees
that line his banks! Spread fire on him! Do not
allow his threats or flattering words to stop you.
Do not slow your fury until you hear
my command to dampen your tireless blaze!"

335

Hephaestus promptly deployed immortal fire.
He set the plain ablaze and burned the corpses—

340

heaps of Trojans that Achilles had slain—
then dried floodwaters outside the banks.

345

As when late summer winds stir damp fruit groves,
quickly drying them to the grower's delight,
so the whole plain dried and all corpses burned.
Hephaestus turned his fire at the river's channel
and burned the willows, the tamarisk, the elms.
He burned the rushes, clover and fragrant grass
that carpeted the banks of Xanthus' streams.

350

Fish and eels that swam the deeper eddies wearied
as currents tossed them first one way, then another,
under force of Hephaestus' ceaseless blasts.

355

The river spoke, a fire-weakened voice:
"Hephaestus, none of us gods can rival you.
I cannot battle your blistering fire.

Desist! Trojans be damned! And let Achilles
capture Ilium. Why should I fight for their sakes?"
He spoke through flames, his currents boiling away.
As when a cauldron seethes over lively flames,
melting fat of a lavishly fed hog,
and dry wood added sets the fat abubble,
so then flame scorched Xanthus' face, boiled his waters.

360

In time Hephaestus' constant fiery bursts
left the river unable to flow, but Hera
softened when she heard Xanthus imploring her:
"Hera, why does your son beset me so?

Surely I am no more to be condemned
than are other immortals who aid the Trojans.
Yet I shall stop if that is what it takes
for you to call him off, and I will swear
never to slow impending Trojan doom,
not even when Ilium burns in ruinous fire
that war-loving Achaean sons will light."

365

The white-armed goddess Hera heard the river
and she commanded her beloved son:

"Draw back, Hephaestus my child, it is not fit
to hound a deathless god for mortals' sake."

375

Hephaestus obeyed, stilled his Olympian blaze,
let the sparkling streams and eddies return.

Afterward, Xanthus and Hephaestus withdrew,
reluctantly accepting Hera's will,

but strife broke out among fellow immortals

385

whose sympathies were split between the armies.

They clashed like thunder, the earth groaned beneath,
the skies resounded above. Zeus observed,

seated on high Olympus, and his heart warmed,

delighted that the gods had locked in contest.

390

The first immortal to make a move was Ares,
the shield-piercer, who leapt toward Athena.

He waved his spear and insulted the goddess:

"How could you goad us to war again, dog fly?

Your chest is swollen, your boldness overblown.

395

Do you recall the time you urged Diomedes
to strike me, brazenly steered his spear yourself,
drove it straight at me and wounded my flesh?

Now I will make you pay for your misdeeds!"

With that he thrust and hit her tasseled aegis,

400

impervious even to Zeus's thunderbolts

let alone the long spear of bloodstained Ares.

She lowered her sturdy hands and grasped a rock,
heavy, jagged, that men of former times

had set on the Trojan plain to bound their fields.

405

She smashed Ares' neck and crumpled his legs.

He sprawled over three acres, fouled his hair,

dented his armor. Pallas Athena laughed,

derisive, and ridiculed her victim:

"Are you so ignorant of how much more mighty

410

I am that you would dare challenge my strength?

Your mother may likely set Furies on you

because she will want to avenge the Greeks

that you opposed when you fought on Troy's side."

Athena turned her gleaming eyes away.

415

Aphrodite took Ares' feeble hand,

gently soothed his spirits, ended his groans.
The moment white-armed Hera noticed those two
her anger rose and she ordered Athena:
"Look out there, aegis-wielding Zeus's daughter, 420
once more that little dog fly is helping Ares
escape the heat of war. Go after her!"

Athena willingly raced to Aphrodite
and battered the goddess' breasts with clenched fists.
Aphrodite's composure and legs collapsed. 425
Now she and Ares both sprawled on the ground.
Once again Athena spoke triumphantly:
"There are immortals inclined to aid the Trojans.
Any of them who fight the Greeks will get
a drubbing just as Aphrodite has, 430
after she backed Ares and opposed me.
Had it been so all along, the Greeks by now
would have sacked and burned the citadel of Troy."

The white-armed goddess Hera listened, smiling,
but the mighty earth-shaker challenged Apollo: 435
"Why are we two holding back? We should not,
when other immortals have begun battle.
We would return to Zeus's halls disgraced.
Have at me, then! For me to strike you first
would be unfair since I am older and stronger. 440
Foolhardy, empty-headed youth! You seem
to forget the foul play that you and I
suffered at Troy under Laomedon
when Zeus sent us to labor a year for payment
that our master, Laomedon, had promised. 445
I constructed the wall around the city,
solid and tall, to keep Trojans secure,
while you, Phoebus, tended curly-horned cows
in Ida's hills, her shady, wooded vales.
After the year was out the time for payment 450
arrived, but our master refused all wages
and sent us away. Loathsome Laomedon!"

He threatened to put us in bonds, hands and feet,
then sell us to distant islands as slaves.

He said that first he would cut off our ears.

455

You and I struggled homeward, heavy-hearted,
angry about the pay, the broken promise,
but now you would aid Laomedon's descendants
rather than see the arrogant Trojans killed,
all of them, the men, the women, the children."

460

The far-ranging prince, Apollo, replied:

"Earth-shaker, you would not consider me prudent
if I should battle you because of mortals.

Mortals resemble a tree's leaves. Sometimes
they absorb the earth's bounty, bursting with life.
Other times they weaken and die. Henceforth,
we should forbear and let them settle their fates."

465

That said, Apollo backed away, ashamed
to lay a hand on his father Zeus's brother.

Apollo's sister complained, the hallowed huntress,
wild-roaming Artemis, and scornfully said:

470

"You are conceding Poseidon's dominance
and yielding him glory for no good reason.
Why do you keep that useless bow? A toy?
I doubt a day will come ever again
when you dare boast, as you have in Zeus's halls,
that you would confront Poseidon and fight."

475

The far-shooting archer did not respond,
but anger overcame Zeus's honored wife,
and Artemis soon felt her caustic tongue:

480

"Shameless bitch, how dare you align yourself
against me? My fury will hit you hard.
Your bow is a scourge only to mortal women
that Zeus has granted you power to kill.
You should stay in the mountains stalking beasts,
matching your vaunted might and arrows with does.

485

Your taste for fight will fade as soon as you learn
how much mightier is the goddess you have angered."

Hera's left hand took hold of Artemis' wrist
while her right snatched away the huntress' bow 490
and used it to batter Artemis' ears.
Hera then dumped and scattered Artemis' arrows.

Artemis fled Hera's wrath like a dove
that flies into a cave, a hawk pursuing,
but the dove is not destined to escape. 495
So tearful Artemis ran without her bow.

Hermes, the Argus-slayer, said to Leto:
"I will not fight you, Leto. No good can come
of crossing one of cloud-master Zeus's lovers.
In future councils of gods you may presume 500
to claim you vanquished me through greater might."

Leto gathered the graceful bow and arrows
that lay scattered about in swirling dust.
She then returned arrows and bow to her daughter,
Artemis, who found refuge in Zeus's halls 505
where she sat at her father's knees. Tears and sobs
rippled tremors through her gossamer gown.
The son of Cronus held her and gently asked:
"Dear child, which immortal has treated you
as if you had committed shameful wrong?" 510

Artemis, leader of raucous hunts, replied:
"Father, your own wife beat me, white-armed Hera.
She causes bitter strife among immortals."

Daughter and father talked in such a way,
but meanwhile Phoebus Apollo entered Ilium 515
because he was concerned the city's walls
might yield that very day, contrary to fate.

All other deathless gods remained on Olympus—
some basking in glory, the rest despondent—
sitting beside the cloud-wrapped father. Achilles
continued to massacre men and horses.

520

As when smoke clouds ascend the boundless skies
after angry gods set a city ablaze,
the city's people struggle but most die,
so Trojans toiled and died at Achilles' hand.

525

Aging Priam, atop the god-built wall,
noticed giant Achilles and watched the Greek
scattering panicked Trojans, their valor gone.
Melancholy, the monarch climbed off the rampart.

He commanded the men who kept the gates:

530

"Open and hold your portals until the army
comes fleeing inside the wall, where Achilles
has almost driven them now, threatening slaughter,
but when they are safely within the city,
quickly slam and bolt the heavy planked doors
before that death-dealer can leap inside."

535

The keepers threw the bolts and opened the gates,
which sparked hope in running Trojans. Apollo
sprang outside the wall to prevent Trojan ruin.

All the warriors were running toward Ilium,
thirsty, breathing the cloud of dust they stirred.
Behind them furious Achilles thrust his spear
with tireless strength, determined to win glory.

540

The Greeks could then have taken tall-gated Troy
if Phoebus Apollo had not roused Agenor,
Antenor's son, a man both strong and brave.
The god approached him, filled his heart with daring,
then stood nearby to guard the mortal's life,
hidden in mist, leaning against the oak.

545

When Agenor first saw rampaging Achilles,
he stopped while his mind churned, vacillating,
confused, as he silently queried himself:

550

"What shall I do? If when Achilles nears
I run behind the other, routed Trojans,
he might catch and shame me, slitting my throat. 555
Perhaps I should leave them all for Peleus' son
to cut down, and take to my heels elsewhere,
across the plain of Illus until I reach
Ida's foothills where underbrush would hide me.
When evening comes, after a river bath 560
to cool the sweat, I could return to the wall.
But why do I debate myself like this?
Would he not see me heading away from Troy
and overtake me, swift as his feet are?
Then there would be little chance to escape death 565
since Achilles is such a mighty warrior.
I may as well face him before the city.
His body, too, is vulnerable to bronze,
harbors a soul, and people say he is mortal
though Cronus' son has granted him much glory." 570

Agenor braced himself for combat, his heart
infused with courage to fight and press the war.
As when a leopardess strides from dense thickets
to face a hunter, her bold heart conceals
no timidity or fear of his dogs, 575
and even if he should hit and wound her,
or impale her with his spear, she will maintain
her valor until she leaps on him or dies,
so then, Antenor's courageous son Agenor
resolved to take a stand and challenge Achilles. 580
He held his round, well-balanced shield out front,
extended his spear toward the Greek and yelled:
"Glorious Achilles, you may well have hoped
to sack the Trojans' city on this day.
What folly! Long times of struggle await you, 585
as we Trojans are both many and brave.
We will guard Ilium for the sake of our parents,
wives and infants, but fate will master you
no matter how fearsome a fighter you are!"

Agenor's sturdy hand lofted the spear 590
and hit Achilles' leg below the knee,
causing the greave of recently fashioned tin
to sound an ominous clang, but the point bounced,
failing to pierce or dent Hephaestus' gift.
The son of Peleus charged valiant Agenor
but Apollo did not allow him glory yet.
He picked Agenor up, cloaked him in mist
and sent him silently off the battlefield.

Apollo then led Achilles astray 600
by taking Agenor's bodily form
so as to entice the Greek to chase him down.
Achilles pursued him over the mottled plain
and on beside Scamander's whirling pools.
The god stayed barely ahead to keep Achilles
convinced his feet would overtake his quarry. 605

Meanwhile the routed Trojan army thronged
into Troy's haven, escaping likely death.
None would hazard the plain outside the wall
to wait for comrades or tally up who lived
and who had died that day. They streamed inside,
each man whose legs could still scramble for safety. 610

THE DEATH OF HECTOR

After the Trojans fled like fawns to Ilium
they cooled their sweat and drank to slake their thirst,
leaning against the breastwork while Achaeans
drew nearer the wall, shields hung on shoulders,
but destiny constrained Hector to stay 5
outside the city, before the Scaean Gates.

Phoebus Apollo questioned Peleus' son:
“Achilles, why do your flying feet chase me,
a god, you a mortal? You must have thought
that you pursued an ordinary Trojan. 10
Now you cannot harry those panicked warriors
who escaped inside the gates when you strayed here.
You will not kill me, since I can never die.”

Fast-running Achilles groaned and replied:
“You tricked me, Apollo, deceitful immortal, 15
and lured me away from Troy. Many by now
would have grasped earth in their teeth outside the wall,
but you stole my glory and rescued them
knowing that you were immune to my revenge.
What a price I would make you pay if I could!” 20

Achilles headed for Ilium, resolute.
He sped away as fast as a racehorse

stretching out, swiftly completing its course.
Like him, Achilles drove his knees and feet.

Old Priam's eyes were first to notice the Greek
crossing the plain, aglitter like the star
that comes in late summer and gleams most bright
of all the thousands that dot the sultry dark,
the one people have named Orion's Dog,
the brightest star and one portending ill,
often followed by plagues on hapless mortals. 25
So shone the bronze on Achilles' speeding chest.

The old monarch groaned, battered his head
with clenched fists and cried in a frightened voice,
imploring his son who stood outside the gates,
motionless, ready to duel Achilles. 35

Priam extended his arms toward him and said:
"Hector, my boy, if you await that man,
alone, you will surely meet your fate today,
since Achilles is mightier than you— 40
and he is harsh. If heaven loved him the same
as I do, vultures or dogs would soon devour him,
and some of the sorrow might ease from this heart
which he has robbed of many noble sons,
either dead or sold as slaves to distant isles. 45

I still have yet to see Polydorus
and Lycaon escaping into the city,
the sons Laothoë bore, princess of wives.
If they remain alive in the Greek camp
we shall ransom them both with bronze and gold 50
plenty of which accompanied Altes' daughter,
but if they have died, gone to Hades' house,
there will be even more grief for me, their mother
and common folk. The greatest sorrow of all
will come if you allow Achilles to kill you, 55
so come through the gates, my child, that you may guard
our Trojan women and men. Deny glory
to Peleus' son who would finish your life.

Take pity on me! Bear in mind I face
a wretched lot in my oldest years when Zeus 60
will deal me gruesome death after I watch
Greeks killing my sons, dragging my daughters off,
sacking my halls and city, hurling our children
down from the wall onto the battlefield,
taking the wives of all my sons as slaves. 65
Then last of all my own palace dogs will drag
my body and eat it, after some Greek
has taken away my life by thrust or cast.
The same puppies I raised on table scraps, 70
frenzied, will lap the blood that my heart spills
where I fall at my door. The young are revered
when weapons of war kill and mangle them;
they appear splendid even after death.
Yet when gray covers a man's head and chin, 75
dogs are allowed to shame the fallen old
who are the most despised of pitiful mortals."

The old man's hands lifted his colorless hair
and plucked strands out as Hector stood unmoved.
Then his weeping mother pleaded with him.
She parted her gown's deep folds, exposed a breast 80
and spoke to her son through cascading tears:
"My child, have pity on me! Respect this!
Recall the times I soothed you with this nipple.
Remember, dear boy! Save yourself from that man!
Do come inside! Do not stay to confront him. 85
If he should cut you down, I could not even
lament beside the bier of my body's child,
nor could your bounteous wife Andromache,
since Greek dogs would savor you on the beach."

So they wept and implored their cherished son, 90
entreating him, but he was not persuaded.
He waited where he stood while Achilles loomed.
As a mountain snake awaits men in its pit
after ingesting herbs to strengthen its venom,

and, coiled tight, it glowers from the lair,95
so Hector gathered his might, stood his ground
with his shining shield braced against the wall.
Still he was troubled and debated himself:
“Ah me, if I should pass inside the gates
the first to shame me will be Polydamas,100
who bade me lead the Trojans back to the city
on that bodeful night when Achilles appeared,
but I paid him no mind as I wish I had.
Now that my folly has cost countless men
I feel ashamed to face the Trojan people105
who may be saying hateful things of me:
‘His overconfidence was our army’s ruin.’
So they may say, and hence I might prefer
either to kill the Greek before I return
or else die with honor outside the wall.110
But suppose I lay down my studded shield,
my thick helmet, lean my spear on the gate,
then walk unarmed straight to noble Achilles
and make a vow that Helen, Helen’s possessions—
everything that Paris’ hollow ship115
carried to Troy, bringing us this dreadful war—
will be returned to Atreus’ sons; in addition
we will divide all our city contains.
I will obtain the Trojan elders’ oath
to hide nothing so as to share equally120
all the treasure that still remains in Ilium.
But wait, what is the point of this delusion?
I could not reach him, since he is merciless
and would not be ashamed to kill me, exposed
though I would be, like a helpless woman.125
This is no time for me to make him offers
by tree or rock, like a young man and his maid
exchanging proposals of carefree youths.
Better to clash and fight immediately,
see which one the Olympian grants glory.”130

While Hector mused, Achilles moved in close,
a gleaming warrior the image of Ares.

He shook the Pelian ash with his right arm,
menacingly, the bronze around him bright
as wind-driven fire or newly risen sun.

135

The brilliance caused Hector to tremble and lose heart.
He left the gates behind and started to run,
Achilles' proven feet too close behind.

As a mountain hawk—among the fastest birds—
swoops, effortless, after a timid dove

140

that flies below, the hawk screaming on her tail
darting time after time, determined to kill,
so then Achilles pressed while Hector retreated,
driving his legs beneath the Trojan wall,
past the sentinel post, the windswept fig,

145

then away from the wall on the wagon track
that led to a pair of lovely springs whose waters
well from earth's depths to feed whirling Scamander.
One flows warm water and above it a mist
rises as dense as smoke from burning wood,

150

but the other's water feels, even in summer,
like frigid snowflakes or hard-frozen ice.

Not far from there were spacious laundering pools
amid rings of smooth stones where Trojan wives
and daughters had once washed elegant clothes
in peaceful days before the Greeks arrived.

155

They raced past those, one fleeing, one pursuing,
a fast man leading, a faster man behind,
each at his best. They ran, not for an ox
or lamb—the usual prizes for men who race—

160

but for the life of stallion-master Hector.

As two racing horses will round a turn
with all speed they can summon to win a prize
at funeral games, perhaps a tripod or woman,
so those two warriors circled Troy three times,

165

their feet flying, while all the gods looked on.

The father of gods and men was first to speak:
“A beloved man is fleeing around the wall,

I see, and my heart is unhappy for him,
Hector, who burned many an ox thigh for me,
yes, sometimes on Ida's slopes, other times
in the city's heights, him who now Achilles
chases around the city on those swift feet.
So come, gods, let us all deliberate
whether we spare him death, or whether today
he falls to Peleus' fearsome son Achilles."

170

The gleaming-eyed goddess Athena replied:
"What do you mean, lightning-flashing father!
That mortal's fate was long ago ordained,
and would you now free him from wretched death?
Do it, but none of the other gods approves."

175

Cloud-gathering Zeus responded to her:
"Cheer up, dear third-born child. I did not, just now,
voice all of my thoughts, and I will be gentle with you,
so you may do whatever you desire."

180

185

Zeus's permission revived Athena's ardor
and she darted down from Olympus' peaks.

Achilles kept Hector in constant flight.
As when a dog chases a mountain fawn
out of its bed, then through ravines, through dells,
and though it may crouch under a shrub, hiding,
he will keep sniffing the ground until he finds it,
so Hector could not elude Peleus' son.

190

Each time Hector approached the Dardan Gates
he sprinted in hopes he might get near the rampart
so Trojans could rain missiles on the Greek,
but every time Achilles flanked and forced him
back to the plain, away from the wall's protection.

195

As in a dream one cannot chase down his quarry,
nor the quarry leave its pursuer behind,

200

so neither hero could outstrip the other,
but Hector would not have postponed his death
had not Apollo joined him one last time,
filling his legs with divine strength and speed.

A shake of Achilles' head signaled the Greeks
not to assail Hector with arrows or spears
lest one of their weapons steal Achilles' glory.

When for a fourth time they rounded the springs
the father made ready his golden scale. 205
He placed in each pan a portent of death,
one for Peleus' son, the other for Hector.
He raised the center, and Hector's side sank
toward Hades. Phoebus Apollo left him then
while the gleaming-eyed goddess reached Achilles,
stood at his side and spoke prophetic words: 215
"Achilles, Zeus-beloved, we two will soon
return to the Greek ships with well-won glory
after death has stilled Hector's lust for war.
He will no longer elude the two of us
no matter how Phoebus Apollo may whimper, 220
groveling at our father Zeus's feet.
Stop running and rest. Leave Hector for me
to persuade that he should face you here and fight."

Athena's assurance raised Achilles' spirits.
He leaned on his bronze-tipped ash to wait
while she left him and went to search for Hector. 225
She took Deiphobus' form, his powerful voice,
approached Hector and offered to assist him:
"Brother, Achilles is wearing you down
in this fast chase around our father's city. 230
Come, let us stand together and fight him off!"

Great, bright-helmeted Hector answered her:
"Deiphobus, you were ever my favorite
of all the children Hecuba bore to Priam,

but now I feel I honor you even more
because you saw my plight and had the courage
to leave the wall while all the others stayed."

235

The gleaming-eyed goddess picked up his theme:
"Brother, how many times our mother, father
and fellow warriors took turns begging me
to stay inside, as they were all afraid,
but sadness for you weighed my spirit down.
Now let us go put our weapons to use
in order that we may see whether Achilles
masters us both and takes our bloodstained armor
as his trophies, or dies on your spear's point."

240

245

Goddess Athena deceived Hector and led
the way until they drew close to Achilles.
Bright-helmeted Hector addressed the Greek:
"Peleus' son, I will run no more as I did
three times around the city, lacking the will
to stop and fight. My heart impels me now
to stand and face you whether I kill or die,
but let us pledge to the gods—who make the best
witnesses to any mortals' agreement—
that I will not defile your body if Zeus
should grant me power to finish your life.
After I strip that fine armor, Achilles,
I will surrender your corpse, and you do likewise."

250

255

Fleet-footed Achilles frowned and replied:
"Hector, do not prattle about agreements.
As there are no pacts between lions and men—
who always mean each other only the worst—
nor meetings of minds between wolves and lambs,
so for us two there is no amity,
nor will there be truce till one of us falls
and sheds enough of his blood to glut Ares.
So summon all your skill, for now you need
to be a bold warrior, a fine spearman."

260

265

Your gods have quit you. Soon Pallas Athena
will kill you through my spear, making you pay
for my comrades that your weapons cut down."

270

Achilles drew back and cast the Pelian ash.
Hector saw it flying toward him and ducked,
watching the bronze point streak over his head
then plunge in the ground. Pallas Athena took it
to Achilles but Hector did not see
and he taunted Peleus' peerless son:
"Your throw missed, Achilles, so Zeus did not
tell you my fate as you pretended he had.
You spoke craftily; you sought to deceive me
in hopes that I would forget my strength and valor.
You will not thrust your spear in my fleeing back
but in my chest as I charge you head-on
if heaven grants you glory. Now dodge my spear,
or your tender flesh may host its bronze head.
Then Trojan warriors' toil would be lightened
since you are their deadliest adversary."

275

280

285

Hector poised his long spear, then let it fly.
It hit Achilles' shield dead in the center
but the point bounced aside, and Hector seethed
that the missile had left his hand for nothing.
He did not have a second spear to cast.
Desperate, he called for Deiphobus
to bring him one, but Deiphobus had vanished.
Hector then realized the truth and said:
"I see, surely the gods steer me to death.
I thought my brother Deiphobus was near,
but he must still be inside. Athena duped me,
so my death is at hand, no longer remote,
no means of escape. Achilles was long favored
by Zeus and Zeus's son, who for a while
protected me, but now my fate arrives.
Yet I will not die without struggle and honor,
but doing a deed that men recount forever!"

290

295

300

305

With that promise Hector drew the sharp sword
that hung heavy and long beside his hip.
He crouched, then plunged like a high-flying eagle
that drops out of dark clouds straight for the ground
and seizes a tender lamb or timid hare.

310

So Hector plunged, waving his whetted blade.
Achilles' chest swelled with the boiling fury
of wild beasts as he stalked behind the shield
and its elaborate art. On his helmet
nodded the four plumes—horses' tails, spun gold—
that Hephaestus made and put there as crests.

315

There is a star that shines when skies first darken
late in the day, heaven's loveliest gem,
and so gleamed the tip of the spear Achilles
shook in his right hand as he studied Hector,
searching for where the point could enter his body
despite the armor that was once Achilles',
the armor Patroclus wore when Hector killed him.

320

He saw exposed flesh near the collarbone,
the gullet, where life is most quickly destroyed,
and there Achilles forcefully drove his spear.
The point passed all the way through the yielding neck
but the bronze did not sever the windpipe
or rob Hector's ability to speak.

325

He fell in dust and heard Achilles boast:
“Hector, after killing Patroclus you felt
no need to consider me who stayed aloof.
Fool! Behind Patroclus a fierce avenger
was waiting among the hollow ships: I,
who have collapsed your legs. Now dogs and birds
will pick your bones while Greeks honor Patroclus.”

330

335

Hector, barely conscious, said to him:
“I beg—by your parents, life and matchless feet—
do not let Argive dogs devour me.

Accept instead a wealth of bronze and gold
my father and mother will gladly pay.
Surrender my corpse so that Trojan men
and women may give me the pyre I am due."

340

Peerless runner Achilles scowled and responded:
"Do not invoke my parents to plead with me,
or my fury and heart may be aroused
to peel your flesh and eat it raw for revenge.
No one exists who can save your head from dogs,
not even if ten or twenty times the ransom
were brought and more were promised in addition,
or if Priam himself should offer gold that weighs
as much as you. Not even then would your mother,
whose body bore you, mourn you on a bier.
Dogs and birds will eat your every shred."

345

Hector replied, dying as he spoke:
"I knew enough to foresee that I would fail
to sway you since you have a heart like iron.
But think further, or risk heaven's retribution
on that day when Phoebus Apollo and Paris
combine to bring you down at the Scaean Gates."

355

360

After those words the curtain of death dropped
and Hector's soul flew from his limbs to Hades,
lamenting its fate: youth and manhood lost.

As Hector expired Achilles said to him:
"So die, and I will accept death whenever
Zeus or other immortals will it to come."

365

Achilles pulled his lethal spear from the corpse,
laid it aside and stripped off Hector's armor,
dripping with blood. A crowd of Greeks drew near
to see and verify the size, the splendor
of Hector, and each probed the corpse with his spear's point.
One onlooker told another close by:

370

"Would you not say this corpse is far more calm
than Hector was when he set our ships afire?"
So they all spoke while spearing the body.

375

After Achilles removed Hector's armor
he stood among Greek warriors and spoke:
"My friends, leaders and chiefs of the Greek army,
now that the gods have let me destroy the Trojan
who damaged us more than all the rest combined,
we could approach the wall in arms to test
the Trojans' will and learn what they intend.
With Hector dead they might abandon Troy,
or they may hold despite their champion's death.
But wait, I should not consider such things now.
Patroclus' corpse lies at the ships without rites,
or tears, a friend I will not forget as long
as I am alive and my legs have strength.
If the dead in Hades have memory,
I will remember my friend when I am there.
So tell the young Greeks to raise a triumphal song.
Bring this body back to the hollow ships,
for great glory is ours. We have killed Hector,
worshipped like a god by people in Troy."
Achilles then set out to defile Hector.
He pierced tendons behind the Trojan's feet,
above the heels, and threaded through them thongs,
tied to his chariot, leaving the head to drag.
He put the armor aboard, climbed on himself
and whipped the team, already eager to fly.
The dragging head wore dust as a plume, dark hair
spread out, and dust coated the prince's face—
so handsome once—that Cronus' son at last
allowed Achilles to shame in Hector's homeland.

As Hector's head was furrowing dust, his mother
discarded her veil, uprooted clumps of hair
and screamed, horrified to behold her child.
Pity and grief choked Hector's father. Crowds

380

385

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gathered wailing throughout the Trojan streets,
as many and loud as if that day the whole
of Ilium's citadel had burned to ash.

410

Soldiers could barely restrain the old man
who sought to rush out through the Dardan Gates,
and he rolled in dung, imploring them all
by name, every Trojan man he saw:

415

"Desist, my friends! Allow just me alone
to leave the city and visit the Greek ships
where I will beg that worker of wanton deeds
to respect the dead of his same age, to pity
an old man likely his own father's years,
Peleus, who sired and raised him to afflict
us Trojans, causing me miserable loss,
killing so many of the sons I sired.

420

I mourn them all, but none nearly as much
as him who makes his way to Hades now,
Hector, who should have died held in my arms
so my tears and hers could have drenched his body,
mine and his mother's who gave him fateful birth."

425

The citizens sighed as one, hearing him speak,
then Hecuba led a long women's lament:

430

"Cursed am I, child! How shall I go on, longing
for you, now dead, who were a source of pride
to me both day and night, always a comfort
to our people as if you were a god.

You were every Trojan's grandest hero
but today you have met your fate, your death."

435

Hecuba wailed, but Hector's wife did not know
what occurred, as no one wanted to bring word
that her husband had stayed outside the gates,
so she plied her loom in their home and wove
a purple cloak skillfully dotted with flowers.

440

She summoned fair-haired handmaidens. She told them
to stand a tripod over fire and prepare
a hot bath for Hector's return from battle.

- She did not know that, far from the bath they drew, 445
Athena had wrought death through Achilles' hands,
but when she heard the cries, the wails from the wall,
her limbs trembled, the shuttle dropped to the floor
and once again she ordered her servant maids:
“Two of you follow me to see what happened. 450
I heard my honored mother-in-law cry out.
My heart vaulted here to my throat, my knees
are rigid. A son of Priam is in distress.
I pray my ears do not hear the report
of Hector I dread worst: that fierce Achilles 455
outstripped him, isolated, on the plain
and ended for all time the fateful courage
that drove him never to stay among his ranks
but always far out front, second to none.”
- With that she dashed outside like one possessed, 460
her heart pounding, two handmaids close behind,
and when she reached the men who lined the rampart
she peered beyond the wall. She soon saw Hector
as fast horses dragged him away from Ilium,
brutally, toward the hollow Argive ships. 465
Darkness like night covered Andromache's eyes.
She fell backward, unable to catch her breath.
She pulled off the ornaments gracing her head:
the plaited browband, the hairnet, its ties,
the veil that golden Aphrodite gave 470
the day when dashing Hector came to lead her
from home and bring Eëtion countless gifts.
Hector's sisters and brothers' wives drew close
and supported her until the frenzy ebbed.
When she had revived and gathered her wits, 475
she sobbed, then lamented among the women:
“Oh Hector, we were destined to share our lives,
you born here in your father's Trojan palace
and I in wooded Placus' shade at Thebe.
Eëtion nurtured and raised his child 480
for a wretched fate, worse than never born.

You may have gone to Hades' dismal realm
beneath the earth but you left me here to weep
in your house, widowed, tending the tiny son
of our unlucky union. You will be
no more use to him, nor he to you,
and even if he should survive this war,
afterward his lot will be sorrowful toil,
since other men will take away his land.

485

A child orphaned becomes a child outcast.

490

Tears cover his cheeks. He defers to all
and goes begging among his father's friends,
tugging the tunic of one, another's cloak,
till one takes pity, offering a scant cup
that may wet his lips but not his tongue or palate.
Sons of living fathers will drive him from feasts,
give him the backs of their hands, scornful taunts:
'Begone, you have no father to eat with us!'

495

This widowed mother will comfort your weeping boy,
Astyanax, who once ate only marrow
or rich sheep fat while seated on your knee,
and later when sleep would interrupt his play,
he slept in his nurse's arms on a fine couch
of soft bedding, his heart happy and warm,
but now, his father lost, he will only suffer.

500

The Trojan people named him Astyanax
because you, your valor, guarded their gates,
you who will soon arrive at the crescent ships
where dogs and writhing worms will feast on you.
At home your clothes are laid out for your return,
spun fine, spun soft, woven by women's hands,
but now I will pile your garments and burn them—
useless to you who will never wear them again—
to blaze amid the Trojans who honor you."

505

The other wives wailed while Andromache spoke.

510

515

CONTESTS TO HONOR PATROCLUS

While Trojans were mourning Hector, the Greeks reached the Hellespont and their dry-docked vessels where the warriors dispersed, each to his ship, except that Achilles stayed the Myrmidons.

He ordered his war-loving men at arms: 5

"My trusty comrades, breeders of fast horses,
do not yet release the teams from the yoke.

First let us go—ourselves, horses, chariots—
and mourn Patroclus, giving the man his due.

When our measure of sad lament is done 10
then we shall free the teams and dine together."

They did as he said and he led their grieving.

They drove their teams around the corpse three times.

Thetis aroused the mourners' urge to weep.

The warriors' armor grew wet, the sand soaked,
as tears honored the fallen wellspring of rout,
and in their midst tireless Achilles mourned,
murderous hands placed on his good friend's chest:

"Patroclus, you are in Hades, but be patient
for I will soon fulfill all that I vowed. 20

Hector is here where dogs will eat him raw.

There, to be slaughtered on your pyre, are a dozen
of Troy's most splendid sons, to salve my rage."

Achilles pondered ways to desecrate Hector,
sprawled by Patroclus' bier, his face submerged 25
in dust. The other Myrmidons removed
their sparkling bronze, released their arch-necked horses.
They took seats alongside Achilles' ships,
countless warriors to share the funeral feast
for which many a sleek bull fell when iron 30
opened its throat, and many a sheep and kid,
and many a white-tusked, fat-swollen hog,
all of which men cooked on Hephaestus' flames.
Beasts' blood flowed by the bowlful around the corpse.

At length the fleet-footed Myrmidon chief 35
visited Agamemnon with other kings
who barely swayed him to go, sad as he was.
After they entered Agamemnon's camp
that monarch commanded his clear-voiced heralds
to set a tripod over the fire in case 40
Achilles should want to cleanse his skin of gore,
but he firmly refused and swore an oath:
"By Zeus, who is the first, the highest immortal,
it is not right for me to wash my head 45
until I burn Patroclus, heap his mound
and shear my hair, since grief like this will never
strike me again however long I live.
So now let us complete our dreary feast
but, Agamemnon, rouse the men at dawn
and have them cut enough wood to burn and honor 50
a dead warrior, gone to the misty gloom,
enough so that the fire can take his body
quickly from sight. Then we shall war anew."

All acknowledged what he said, and obeyed.
They quickly finished preparing the meal, 55
then ate, no man without an equal share.
When no one desired to have more food or drink
each king returned to his quarters and slept,
except Achilles, who lay beside the surf,

groaning among his Myrmidon comrades 60
out on the beach where breakers battered the strand.
When sleep arrived and washed away his cares
with soothing waves—welcome after the toil
of chasing Hector around windswept Ilium—
hapless Patroclus' shade stole upon him, 65
entirely like the man in stature, face
and voice, even the clothing that draped its limbs.
It stood over Achilles' head and spoke:
“You sleep, Achilles. You have forgotten me.
You did not slight me alive, only when dead. 70
Give rites so I may enter Hades' gates!
The phantom shades will not accept me now.
They will not let me cross over Styx to join them
where I could wander through Hades' domain.
Give me your hand, I beg, for never more 75
will I emerge from Hades after the pyre.
We two, alive, will not again step aside
and sit to form our plans, now that my doom
has come, grimly ordained since I was born.
Even for you—half divine—there lurks a fate: 80
death beneath the wall of prosperous Troy.
Now let me ask something I hope you will grant:
do not bury my bones apart from yours.
Keep them together, as we were growing up, 85
after my years in Opus. From there Menoetius
brought me to your house, escaping revenge
the day I killed a son of Amphidamas
while in a foolish, witless rage over dice.
Horseman Peleus welcomed me to his home,
reared me fondly, appointed me your aide. 90
Let them bury our mingled bones in that urn
your goddess mother gave, gold with two handles.”

Peerless runner Achilles answered him:
“Beloved spirit, why have you come to me
with this request? No matter. For your sake 95
I will see that what you have asked is done,

but now stand closer, let us embrace a moment,
have our fill of mutual, sad lament."

Achilles' powerful arms embraced the shade—
arms empty except for mist. The earthbound spirit 100
fluttered away. Achilles jumped to his feet,
slapped his palms together and addressed his men:
"Patroclus' soul has not yet reached Hades' realm!
His phantom spirit, an ethereal thing,
appeared beside me here all through the night. 105
The desolate wraith sobbed, lamented, moaned.
It looked like him and made requests of me."

The account brought tears to every warrior's eyes
and Dawn's rose fingers lighted the men still weeping 110
around the piteous corpse. Then lord Agamemnon
ordered that mules and men of every ship
cut and bring wood. He named Meriones,
Idomeneus' aide, to command the cutters.
The men set out equipped with timber axes
and strong-braided rope. They marched behind the mules, 115
climbing hillside slopes and traversing valleys
until they reached spring-rinsed Ida, a spur
where high-crowned oaks abounded. Sharp Greek axes
chopped without pause, and oak upon tall oak crashed.
The men cut the trunks into shorter sections 120
and hitched them to mules, whose feet harrowed the ground
as they struggled through brush that flanked the plain.
Every man dragged wood, for that was the will
of Meriones, brave Idomeneus' aide.
They arranged the logs on the shore, near where Achilles 125
had planned a mound for his friend—and for himself.

After the Greeks had brought numberless logs
they sat together, waiting till Achilles
ordered the battle-loving Myrmidons
to gird on bronze, put the chariot yokes 130
on teams. The warriors then stood and dressed in armor.

Drivers and chariot fighters climbed aboard.
A sea of soldiers marched behind the teams,
bearing fallen Patroclus in their midst.
They covered the corpse with locks of warriors' hair, 135
shorn as they marched. Achilles held the head,
heartsick that he had sent his friend to Hades.

When they reached the place Achilles had marked
they lowered the corpse and stacked a wood pyre.
Achilles stood watching for a while but soon 140
he left the pyre and sheared his tawny locks
that he had let grow thick by Spercheus' banks.
He studied the wine-hued sea, sighed and said:
"Spercheus, Peleus offered you a futile prayer
that when I returned to my fathers' land 145
I would clip this for you and sacrifice
fifty uncastrated goats at the shrine
where burning spices always scent your headwaters.
No, you did not fulfill that old man's wish,
and since I never will return to my home 150
my hair may just as well go with Patroclus."

Patroclus' lifeless fingers grasped the hair
and every warrior was moved to tears,
tears that would have flowed until the sun went down
had not Achilles said to Agamemnon: 155
"The Greeks will obey you above any leader.
These soldiers have had enough mourning now,
so bid them leave the pyre and eat their dinners
while we complete the rites, we few comrades
who loved him dearest, but let the kings stay too." 160

The chief warrior Agamemnon heard.
He sent the army away to eat and drink,
but the most bereaved stayed and stacked more wood
until the pyre was one hundred feet square,
then with hearts heavy they laid the corpse on top. 165
They brought, then flayed, shambling curly-horned oxen,

sheep and goats. Achilles carved fat from every
sacrificial animal and coated the corpse,
head to foot, then ringed it with carcasses.

He placed amphoras of honey and oil 170

against the bier, then drove four strong-necked horses,
bellowing frantic protest, onto the pyre.

Achilles kept nine pet dogs by his table,
two of which he threw on the pyre, their throats cut.

Lastly he led on the dozen Trojan youths 175

and slaughtered them, brutal intent in his heart.

Achilles started fire to burn the wood
and after a mournful wail addressed his friend:

"Patroclus in Hades, be patient with me,
for I will fulfill all that I vowed before. 180

These dozen splendid sons of noble Trojans
will share the pyre with you, though not Hector.
Fire will not consume him, but Greek dogs will!"

So vowed Achilles, but no dogs came near Hector
because Aphrodite kept them at bay 185

both day and night. She rubbed his skin with oil
from heaven so it would not tear when dragged.

Phoebus Apollo guided a dark cloud
from the sky to cover and shade the ground
where Hector lay, before relentless sun 190
could parch the flesh that wrapped his sinews and bones.

The fire lit under Patroclus barely smoldered.

When Achilles noticed the faltering flames
he left the pyre, prayed to a pair of winds,
the north and west. He promised sacrifices,
poured wine from a golden cup and beseeched 195

them come so the corpses would sooner burn
on crackling heaps of wood. Iris intercepted
Achilles' prayer and carried it to the winds
who were all four inside Zephyrus' house,
seated, feasting. Iris arrived and stood
on the stone threshold until the winds saw her. 200

They all jumped up, each inviting her in,
but Iris refused to sit and spoke instead:
“Not now, as I must go back near Ocean’s streams. 205
Ethiopians are sacrificing hecatombs.
I do not intend to forfeit my share,
but listen, Boreas and Zephyrus, Achilles
promises sacrifices, prays that you come
and fan to a furious blaze the pyre beneath 210
Patroclus whom all the Greeks are mourning now.”

Iris departed, and the two winds rushed,
shrieking, scattering hapless clouds in their wake.
They struck and crossed the sea, churning its waves
with shrill blasts until they reached the Troad 215
where both fell on the pyre. The blaze soon roared.
All night the pair together plied the flames,
blowing and whistling. All night Achilles
carried a cup back and forth to a jar
from which he dipped wine to pour on the ground, 220
and while he poured he hailed Patroclus’ spirit.
As a father mourns the burnt bones of his son,
just married, whose death stunned his sorrowful parents,
Achilles mourned his comrade’s burning bones,
circled the pyre and groaned with rarely a pause. 225

The moment the morning star’s light touched earth—
before saffron-clad Dawn tinted the sea—
the flames ceased, the fire died away to coals,
the pair of winds departed, headed homeward
to Thrace, and lashed the weary sea again. 230
Not far from the red coals, Achilles dropped,
exhausted, and blissful sleep flowed over him,
but Atreus’ sons soon led men to the pyre.
As they approached, the clamor waked Achilles.
He sat up straight, alert, and spoke to them: 235
“Sons of Atreus, indeed all noble Greeks,
first extinguish the coals with sparkling wine,
poured every place the flames traveled. Then,

collect Menoetius' son Patroclus' bones,
conspicuous and easy to distinguish,
since he lay in the center, not near the hapless
men or horses that burned at the edge, commingled.
This golden urn shall hold his bones—cased in fat—
until the day I too am lost to Hades.

240

For now, heap only a minimal mound,
just fitting enough to last until the Greeks
that outlive me will build it tall, whoever
may then be left at the many-oared ships."

245

The Greeks obeyed Peleus' fast-running son.
First they poured sparkling wine to quench all fire,
wherever the flames had spread and ash was deep.
They gathered their gentle comrade's white bones
and put them, fat-encased, in the gold urn,
then set it, linen-wrapped, in Achilles' camp.

250

The men laid out and built the base of a marker
around the pyre, heaped a low earthen mound,
then started back to their camps, but Achilles
stopped and bade them sit to form an assembly.
He brought prizes from his ship: kettles, tripods,
several head of oxen, horses, mules,
shapely women and ingots of gray iron.

255

260

Horse racers' prizes were the first he announced:
a comely woman skilled at useful crafts,
and a tripod that held twenty-two measures,
both for the winner. Second prize was a mare,
an untamed six-year-old with unborn mule.

265

He offered a kettle as third prize, unused
and fine, deep enough for the fat of four hogs.
As fourth prize he offered two talents of gold,
fifth was a two-lug urn unscorched by fire.

270

That done, Achilles faced and addressed the Greeks:
"Sons of Atreus and all you greaved Achaeans,
the horsemen's prizes are there for you to win.
If today's race were not to honor Patroclus

I would carry the first prize off myself 275
since my horses excel, as all of you know.
They are immortal beasts Poseidon gave
to Peleus, and he gave them to me.
But today my team and I will wait behind,
as they have lost their driver, noble, glorious, 280
gentle, who often bathed them in clear water,
rubbed their coats with nourishing olive oil.
They mourn for him, drooping so near the ground
they drag their manes. Sorrow has cracked both hearts.
Get ready to race, whoever of you 285
have faith in your teams and the strength of your chariots!"

The prizes inspired horse racers to rise.
First to get on his feet was King Eumelus,
Admetus' son, a gifted chariot driver.
Then Tydeus' son, formidable Diomedes, 290
harnessed Tros's stallions that he had seized
from Aeneas when Phoebus rescued that prince.
Next ruddy Menelaus, Atreus' son,
put under the yoke a fast-running team:
Podargus and Aethe, Agamemnon's mare, 295
a bribe Anchises' son Echepolus gave
so that, instead of waging war at Troy,
he could stay behind and savor his gifts
from Zeus: wealth, his home in Sicyon's fields.
The Spartan yoked that mare, straining to race. 300
Fourth to ready a team was Antilochus,
valiant-hearted Nestor's splendid son.
He hitched to his chariot a pair of stallions
that Pylians bred for speed. His father approached
to address him, beaming pride and kindly intent: 305
"Since you were born, my boy, Zeus and Poseidon
have granted you a way with horses, talent
of every kind. There is little to teach now.
You know well how to make the turn, but your team
is the slowest here, so this race will be hard. 310
The other horses are faster but no driver

- surpasses you in tact or using his wits,
dear son, so remember to use your skill,
all that you learned, and the prize will not elude you.
By skill, the woodman cuts more than by strength. 315
By skill, the helmsman tossed on the wine-hued sea
steers his battered vessel despite the winds.
By skill, one horseman draws ahead of another,
who leaves the race's outcome up to his horses
and veers, unthinking, now this way then that
without controlling the team to keep them straight. 320
The man with slower horses looks for advantage,
alert for each turn where he will not forget
first to shorten his horses' oxhide reins,
so he can drive unswerving, eyes out front. 325
I will tell you a clear signal to watch for:
a dried tree stump, about the height of a man—
oak, or maybe fir, not rotted by rain—
with two white stones, one laid on either side.
Those two stones mark the turn in the racers' course. 330
They could be markers set for a man long dead
or perhaps the finish line in ancient races,
but for this race Achilles made them the turn.
So drive your team and chariot close to there
and as you stand on your deck, weight your body
slightly inward while you lash the outside horse,
shout and gently loosen that horse's reins. 335
Then let the left horse come close to the markers,
so near you almost strike them with the hub
of your wheel, but do avoid grazing the stone
as that might injure your horses, wreck your chariot,
please rival horsemen and bring yourself disgrace.
All right, dear son, be careful, stay alert.
If you drive out front when you round the turn
there is none who can overtake and pass you by,
not even if he drives Arion himself, 345
Adrestus' speedy horse of immortal lineage,
or even the fast team Laomedon raised here."

The son of Neleus then returned to his seat,
having told his son all he wanted to say.

350

Meriones was fifth to prepare a team.
All climbed aboard and awaited the lots.
Achilles shook and Antilochus' stone
was first to fall, followed by that of Eumelus.
Next was the lot of Atreus' son Menelaus,
fourth was Meriones', and last of all
Diomedes' who drove the fastest horses.

355

Achilles showed the racers the turn marker,
far out on the plain, and standing near the turn
respected Phoenix, Achilles' father's squire,
where he could watch the course and settle disputes.

360

All together the drivers braced the horses,
slapped reins on their backs, shouting commands
to run, and the teams raced across the plain
away from the ships. Under their chests, dust
rose thick like a violent storm's swirling clouds,
and manes flowed behind as horses sped away.
At times the chariots hugged the fertile earth,
at other times they bounced aloft, but drivers
stuck to their decks. Each racer's heart was pounding,
eager to win. The racers shouted so loud
that all the horses flew over the course.

365

After the teams rounded the turn and headed
back to the misty sea, the horses' mettle
showed as they bore down on the finish line.
Eumelus' flying mares pulled to the lead.
Diomedes' stallions fell back to second,
but not by much, and they gained stride by stride,
almost running up on Eumelus' chariot,
their breath blasting his broad shoulders and back
as they snorted, racing with lowered heads.

370

375

380

They would have pulled to a dead heat, or passed,
except that Apollo hated Tydeus' son.

Phoebus knocked the whip from Diomedes' hand.

Rage-bred tears welled in the warrior's eyes 385
as he watched Eumelus' mares widen their lead
while his stallions faltered without the whip.

Athena, though, saw what Apollo did.

She sped to assist her ward Diomedes,
returned his whip and fortified his team. 390

Not satisfied, she turned on Admetus' son.

She shattered his team's yoke so that the mares
veered off course and drove the shaft in the ground,
causing Eumelus to fly over a wheel.

The impact gashed his elbows, mouth and nose, 395
tore skin off his forehead and brows. His eyes
overflowed with raging tears, he lost his voice.

Diomedes steered to avoid the wreck
and led the field by lengths because Athena
had strengthened his team, ensured him first place. 400

Atreus' son Menelaus was running second.

Third-place Antilochus urged his father's horses:

"Step out, you two! Give it all you have!

Forget about beating the team out front,

Diomedes' stallions who now possess 405
Athena's added strength to make sure he wins.

But pull up behind Menelaus' team,
quickly now, or she will put you to shame—
Aethe, a mare! How could you stallions trail?

Listen to me! The stakes for you are high: 410

Nestor will not care for you anymore—

and he might run lances through both of you—
if you slack so that we win only the kettle!

So churn those legs and pull up close behind
while I keep alert to think of a way 415
to overtake them as soon as the track narrows."

Their master's command frightened Nestor's team
so thereafter they quickened their pace and soon

Antilochus saw a narrow place ahead,
a washout where pent-up winter floodwaters
had burst on the track, cutting one edge away.
Atreus' son steered a safe course down the track
but Antilochus swerved and drove his pair
outside the track, racing on the sloped bank.
Menelaus, frightened, yelled at the youth:
"You drive like a fool, Antilochus, rein in!
The way is narrow! Pass me when it is wider!
By Zeus, you are going to kill us both!"

420

Antilochus drove his horses harder still,
quickening his whip as if he had not heard.
As far as a discus flies over the shoulder
when youthful, vigorous, strong men compete,
so far the two teams raced—till one fell back,
the team of Atreus' son who lost his nerve.
He feared the teams were about to collide
and overturn the chariots, then both men
would fall in dust, striving too hard to win,
but red-faced Menelaus rebuked his rival:
"Antilochus, no mortal makes more mischief!
Go on! We wrongly held you in high regard!
No prize without an oath that you raced fair!"

430

435

440

Glaring at his horses the Spartan yelled:
"Do not sulk, give up and stay behind that team!
They will hold their lead only if they work harder
than you since they are older and lack your strength!"

445

Their master's words inspired, goaded the team,
and they rapidly closed Antilochus' lead.

Meanwhile the assembled Greeks eagerly watched
for horses flying back on the dusty plain.
Idomeneus was first to make out a team
from where he sat alone on the highest lookout.
Though far away, he heard a horseman's voice,

450

recognized it, saw a distinctive horse,
redder than most chestnuts, and on its face
a white mark perfectly round like the full moon.
The Cretan monarch stood up and declared:
“My friends, leaders and chiefs of the Greek army,
do you make out the team that I see there?
Different horses have taken the lead,
instead of Eumelus’ fast-running mares
that started strongest but now have fallen back.
I saw them in the lead approaching the turn
but now I cannot see them anywhere
though I can scan the whole breadth of the plain.
Eumelus may have dropped the reins, or failed
to manage that tight curve around the stump.
He must have fallen off or crashed his chariot,
or else those high-spirited mares would lead.
Someone else should come and look, as I cannot
be sure, but the front runner appears to be
Aetolian stock, a man who rules in Argos,
the mighty son of Tydeus, Diomedes!”

455

460

465

470

Oileus’ son Ajax presumed reproach:
“Idomeneus, why do you always prate?
The wind-swift mares are crossing the wide plain.
You are by no means the youngest man here
nor does your head contain the sharpest eyes.
Your tongue runs heedless but you should restrain it,
not rattle on when better men could speak.
Those mares are running first, the same as before,
and Eumelus still drives and snaps his whip!”

475

480

485

The angered Cretan chief glowered and said:
“Quarrelsome Ajax, you are the most perverse
of Greeks and have the basest, rudest thoughts,
but let us wager, say, a tripod or kettle.
Let Agamemnon hold them both and judge
which of the teams finishes first. You will lose!”

Oileus' hot-tempered son jumped to his feet,
fuming, about to reply with testy words.

Then the wrangle might well have come to blows 490
had not Achilles intervened and said:

"That is enough of this angry dispute!

It is unseemly and could dispirit the men.

Save your fury for when it may do some good.

Sit down with the others, both of you, and watch 495
for the horses bearing down hard on the finish,
soon to arrive. Then you will both find out
which of the teams is first and which is second."

As he stopped speaking, Tydeus' son appeared,
his arm steadily working the whip, stallions 500
lengthening strides as they strained for the finish.
Dust clouds billowed, falling on Diomedes,
coating his chariot made of gold and tin.

His swift-footed stallions raced hard, barely
leaving behind a trace of the speeding wheels, 505
so rapidly they flew on the fine dust.

He halted at the assembly. Sweat streamed
from the horses' necks, legs and heaving chests.
He jumped off the once-glittering chariot,
hung his whip on the yoke. Without delay 510
trusty Sthenelus laid hold of the prizes.

He gave willing helpers the woman and tripod
for safekeeping while he released the team.

Antilochus was next to finish the race,
besting Menelaus by wits, not speed, 515
but Menelaus drove in close behind,
about as close as a wheel follows a horse
that stretches out on a plain drawing a chariot,
the longest hair in his tail brushing rims
of the wheels, so close ahead he runs, so small 520
the space between as he spans the plain's breadth.
By no more distance than that the royal Spartan

trailed, though earlier he trailed by a discus throw.
He had rapidly closed as inborn might swelled
in Agamemnon's mare, silky-maned Aethe,
so if the course had been just slightly longer
she would have finished ahead, or neck and neck.

525

Meriones, Idomeneus' valiant aide,
finished a spear's cast behind Menelaus
for his horses ran the slowest of all.

530

He was last to drive his chariot in
but Admetus' son was last to reach the finish,
pulling the chariot himself behind his team.
When he saw that, Achilles felt regret,
stood up among the Greek warriors and said:

535

"The best man is bringing his team in last!
Still, let us give him a fitting prize, the one
for second place, but Tydeus' son takes the first."

The men shouted assent to what he proposed.

He would then have handed over the mare
had not Antilochus, Nestor's bold son,
faced and addressed Achilles as was his right:
"Achilles, you will wrong me if you do
what you said, give the prize I won away
to one who shamed his chariot, his fast stallions,
even himself although a famous horseman.

540

If he had prayed he would not have come back last,
but if in your heart you love or pity him,
your camp contains plenty of livestock, bronze
and gold, as well as slaves, strong-hoofed horses too.
Choose and give him an even better gift,
do it now so that the Greeks may agree.
But I will not give up the mare. I challenge
any man who may want to fight me for her."

545

Fast-running Achilles listened and smiled,
pleased with the youth, who was a favorite comrade.
He answered him with little hesitation:

555

"Antilochus, you ask me to get another
gift for Eumelus and I will do just that:
the breastplate I took from Asteropaeus. 560
It is hammered bronze with gleaming cast tin
around the edges. It will suit him well."
Achilles told his aide Automedon
to enter his lodge and fetch the breastplate,
which Eumelus accepted cheerfully. 565

Menelaus rose to his feet, his seething
rage at Antilochus still hot. A herald
called for silence and handed him his scepter.
The monarch spoke as might a deathless god:
"Antilochus, your deeds were prudent till now, 570
when you sullied my honor, blocked my team
and raced ahead with your own inferior horses.
Well then, leaders and chiefs of the Greek army,
pass judgment between us without bias for either,
so none of the bronze-clad Greeks will ever say: 575
'By his own corrupt judgment, Menelaus
wound up with that mare. His team was much the slower
but he had more authority than the youth.'
Oh, never mind that. I will decide and none
of you will disagree, as I will be fair. 580
Come here, Antilochus, and observe custom.
Stand in front of your chariot, hold a whip
in your hand, the whip you used to drive today,
then take hold of your team and let the earth-shaker
hear you swear that you did not pass me by trick." 585

Prudent Antilochus faced the king and said:
"Let me apologize. I am much younger
than you, lord Menelaus, and you are nobler.
You know how reckless we younger men are,
quick-witted, yes, but untempered by wisdom. 590
So be tolerant and accept this mare
I won as a gift. If I have more things

you want I will promptly give them to you—
descended from Zeus—rather than live my days
without your grace, and transgress the immortals.”

595

The son of Nestor then led up the mare
and put the lead in Menelaus' hands.

Atreus' son warmed as a farmer warms when dew
moistens ripening corn near harvest season,
so then your heart, lord Menelaus, warmed.

600

The Spartan monarch faced the youth and said:

“Antilochus, this time I will subdue
my rage since recklessness and folly were not part
of your nature till youth overcame you today.

Next time do not use guile to humble a king.

605

Another man might not appease me so soon,
but you have endured much, fought many times—
for me—as have your noble father and brother,
so I have relented, and now this mare—
rightfully mine—I give to you as proof
my heart is never arrogant or harsh.”

610

The king handed Antilochus' aide, Noëmon,
the mare and took for himself the shiny kettle.

Meriones took the talents of gold
since he was fourth. That left the prize for fifth,
the urn, which Achilles presented to Nestor
after carrying it through the assembly:

615

“This is for you, old sir, something to keep
in memory of Patroclus, never again
to be seen among the Greeks. I give this prize
although you will not box or wrestle for it,
nor will you throw the spear, or try your legs
foot-racing, since weighty years oppress you now.”

620

He offered the gift, and Nestor took it, beaming,
then lifted his voice and let fly a response:

625

“Everything you say, my boy, is apt.

My joints and feet have weakened, my arms no longer
swing rapidly back and forth on my shoulders.

If only I were as young, steady, strong
as I was at Epean Amarynceus' rites. 630
His sons offered prizes to honor the king,
and none of the men rivaled me—no Epean,
no other Pylian, no spirited Aetolian.
My fists beat Enops' son Clytomedes
and I outwrestled Ancaeus, the Pleuron. 635
I outran Iphiclus, good as he was.
I outthrew both Polydorus and Phyleus.
With horses, only Actor's twins beat me.
They schemed for one to block my way on the course
because the day's most splendid prize was at stake. 640
They were two against me. The one stood still—
drove without moving—the other flailed the whip.
I was once like that, but now give younger men
those feats to do since wretched age bids me
bow out, though then I was the finest warrior. 645
Now you are honoring your friend with prizes here.
I will accept this gladly, my heart warmed
that you still think of me, and do not forget
the honor I am owed among the Greeks.
May the gods bestow great rewards on you." 650

The son of Peleus returned through the ranks
of Greeks after listening to Nestor's speech.
He then set out two prizes for dauntless boxers.
He brought forward and tied a sturdy mule,
a hard-to-tame, unbroken six-year-old. 655
For the loser he brought a two-handled chalice.
He stood tall among the Greeks and proclaimed:
"Sons of Atreus, all you strong-greaved Achaeans,
we invite two of you men, two of the bravest,
to raise your fists and box. Whoever Apollo 660
allows to win, witnessed by every Greek,
let him take to his camp the valuable mule.
This cup with two handles goes to the loser."

A man promptly stood up, powerful, large,
versed in boxing: Panopeus' son Epeius. 665

He laid a hand on the mule's back and said:
"Come here, whoever would take away the cup,
for I doubt the mule will go to anyone
who fights me with fists, since I claim to be best.
Granted, I may sometimes fall short in battle
but no man is blessed with every skill.
Let me predict how this fight will turn out:
the challenger's broken bones will tear his flesh.
A group of his friends had better step up
to carry him off, vanquished by these hands."

670

675

A hushed silence settled over them all,
and only Euryalus dared to rise,
son of Mecisteus, a son of Talaus,
who, after Oedipus died, journeyed to Thebes
for games in which he defeated all the Cadmeans.

Tydeus' son attended Euryalus,
coached his cousin and wanted him to win.
He buckled on the boxer's girdle and knotted
the hand-straps, cut from a wild ox's hide.
When both boxers were set they stepped to the center,
faced each other, brandished powerful hands,
then fell together flailing muscular arms.

There was loud grinding of jaws, and sweat poured
from every limb. Epeius found an opening
to land a heavy blow on Euryalus' cheek,
and his once-steady legs quickly collapsed.
As when a fish in shallow riffles thrashes
through coastal weeds until the tide at length rises,
so Euryalus floundered then. Epeius
grasped under his arms and straightened him, then comrades
carried him through the assembly, feet dragging,
his head thrown to one side, mouth spitting blood.
They helped him sit down, barely conscious,
and the same comrades brought the loser's cup.

680

685

690

695

Achilles set out a third round of awards,
these for wrestlers, and showed the Greeks each prize:

700

a tripod to stand over the winner's fire,
valued at a dozen oxen or more.

For the loser he presented a woman
with many skills, the value of four oxen.

705

Achilles then addressed the seated men:
"Stand if you want to compete in this contest!"

Telamon's giant son Ajax stood up,
then shrewd Odysseus, keen to every advantage.

The two girded, met in the meeting's center,
and each grasped the other with sturdy arms
that resembled rafters a skilled builder fits
on a tall house to foil relentless wind.

The wrestlers' backs creaked as powerful hands
stubbornly wrenched till sweat appeared, then rained.

710

Along their shoulders, over their ribs, thick welts
sprang up, red, bleeding, but neither man flagged,
both striving to win that finely made tripod.

Odysseus could not manage to fell Ajax,
nor could Ajax suppress Odysseus' strength.

715

When the watching Greeks became restless and bored
the great son of Telamon made a proposal:

"Odysseus, Zeus-descended son of Laertes,
he wins who lifts the other off the ground!"

He lifted, but Odysseus thought of a ploy:
the blow behind the knees that buckles the legs.

725

Ajax fell, Odysseus on his chest,
while all the men gazed at the two and marveled.
Then bold Odysseus took a turn at lifting.

He almost hefted Ajax off the earth
but then his own knees buckled. The two men fell
beside each other, both covered with dust.

730

They would have locked and wrestled a third round
but Achilles decided to intervene:

"Do not persist and grind yourselves down too far.
You are both winners and ought to share the prizes.
Now go, so others may continue the games."

735

The weary wrestlers heard Achilles' command,
wiped the dust from their bodies and dressed in tunics.

Achilles presented awards for the swiftest: 740

a perfectly formed, full-size silver vase
whose workmanship so far exceeded most
that only Sidonian artists could have made it.

Phoenicians brought it across the misty seas,
and gave it to Thoas, Jason's wife's father. 745

The vase ransomed Priam's son Lycaon
when Patroclus took it from Jason's son Euneus.
To honor his friend, Achilles offered that

to whichever man could show the fastest feet.

As second prize he tethered a fat ox, 750
then brought third prize, half a talent of gold.
He stood above the Greeks and said to them:
"Step up, you who would compete in this race!"

Quick to stand were Oileus' swift son Ajax,
next Odysseus and finally Nestor's son, 755
Antilochus, fastest of all the youths.

They lined up and Achilles defined the course.
All racers sped from the starting mark, but soon
Oileus' son took the lead, with Odysseus
right on his heels. As close as the heddle rod 760
draws to a woman's chest when her hands stretch
the warp to accept the shuttle and woof thread,
so closely Odysseus followed—so near
his feet filled Ajax's prints before dust rose.

Ajax felt Odysseus' breath in his hair, 765
in feverish pursuit. The onlookers yelled
to cheer the challenger and urge more speed.

When Odysseus reached the far point of the course
he prayed silently to gleaming-eyed Athena:
"Hear me, goddess, come assist my feet!" 770
Pallas Athena heard and granted the prayer
by making his legs more nimble than ever.
When the racers began the final sprint

Athena caused Ajax to slip and fall.
She spread before his feet manure from bulls,
the bulls Achilles slew to honor Patroclus. 775
Bull dung packed Ajax's nostrils and mouth.
Breathless Odysseus took away the vase
for finishing first, and Ajax took the ox.
He walked forward, grasped the ox's horns,
spit out the dung, then told the cheering Greeks:
"By Hades! The goddess tripped me up! She always
stands by Odysseus and helps him as a mother!" 780

His fellow warriors replied with friendly chuckles.
Antilochus took away the loser's prize 785
but showed a broad grin and told the Argives:
"My friends, you have just seen that to this day
the immortals honor those earlier born.
Ajax is only somewhat senior to me
but Odysseus is an older generation,
though his years do not show, and he is hard
for any Greek except Achilles to outrun."

The young man's bow to Peleus' fast-running son
drew a reward from Achilles who said:
"Antilochus, your praise was not unnoticed. 795
I will double your prize to a full talent."
Antilochus gladly accepted the gold.

A long-handled spear was the next prize Achilles
presented, flanked by a helmet and shield,
arms that Patroclus took from Sarpedon's corpse. 800
The son of Peleus addressed the Greek warriors:
"For these prizes I want two of our best fighters
to dress in armor, take up flesh-tearing spears
and duel each other here as we watch.
We shall see who is the first to reach skin
and draw blood despite his opponent's armor.
He will receive this silver-studded sword,
Thracian, that I took from Asteropaeus. 805

Then both fighters may share Sarpedon's arms
and afterward we shall give them a feast."

810

Telamon's great son Ajax rose to his feet
as did Tydeus' son, valiant Diomedes.
After they had armed on opposite sides,
eager to fight, they both moved to the center,
trading fierce glares that frightened even spectators. 815
When the fighters were a spear's length apart,
they charged and joined in close combat three times.
Through Diomedes' shield ran Ajax's lance
but his breastplate guarded the flesh it covered.
Then Tydeus' son topped Ajax's tall shield, 820
once, then again, and the spearpoint grazed his neck.
The watching Greeks feared for Ajax's life.
They bade the men stop and take equal prizes,
but Ajax gave Diomedes the long sword,
whose scabbard hung from a finely tooled strap. 825

Achilles next put out a hunk of raw iron
that Eëtion threw to display his strength
until the day Achilles chased and killed him,
then stowed the iron aboard his ship as spoil.
Now he straddled the iron and told the Greeks: 830
"Come forward, you who would throw to win this prize.
Even a man who plants many rich fields
will see at least five or six years come and go
with never a shortage of high-grade iron,
his plowmen never idle, lacking plowshares." 835
Battle-minded Polypoetes stood up,
Leonteus, strong-willed rival for any god,
stout Epeius and Ajax, Telamon's son.
They took the weight in turns, and first Epeius
spun around and threw, while onlookers smirked. 840
Second to throw was Ares' sprout Leonteus,
and third Telamon's giant son Ajax cast,
his powerful arm besting the first two.
But then Polypoetes lifted the weight

and as an ox-herder may fling a staff,
send it end over end across his herd,
that far he threw over the cheering assembly.
Polypoetes' loyal comrades stepped forward
and carried their king's prize to his ship's hold.

Achilles brought out blued iron archery prizes:
ten double-bit axe heads, ten single-bit.
He set a dark-prowed ship's tall mast upright,
far down the beach, and tied to it the leg
of a wild dove, using a long, lightweight cord,
then said: "Whichever man should hit the bird
may take away the double-bit axe heads.
855
He who misses the bird but hits the string
may take the single-bit heads as second prize."

The powerful archer Teucer stood up first,
then skilled Meriones, Idomeneus' aide.
They dropped lots in a bronze helmet and shook.
Teucer's fell out first. His swift arrow soon
took flight, but he had failed to promise Apollo
a lavish sacrifice of newborn lambs,
so the god caused his arrow to miss the bird
but not the thin string that tethered her leg.
865
The sharp bronze arrowhead severed the cord.
The newly freed dove darted skyward, trailing
the string toward earth, while all the Argives cheered.
Meriones snatched the bow from Teucer's hand,
notched an arrow, drew the string and aimed.
870
As he aimed he promised the archer god
a lavish sacrifice of newborn lambs.
He spotted the dove just below high clouds,
circling, and there he hit the base of her wing.
875
The arrow flew through, then returned to earth,
stuck beside Meriones' foot. The bird
plummeted till she hit the mast's rope rigging.
Her neck tangled there, her slender wing broken.
The soul departed her limbs and, that lost,
880

she dropped to the ground as men watched amazed.
Meriones took the ten double-bit axes,
Teucer took the single-bits to his ship.

Achilles presented his last two prizes,
a long spear and a flower-engraved kettle,

885

worth an ox. Two spear-throwers rose to compete:

Atreus' son, far-ruling Agamemnon,
and Meriones, Idomeneus' aide,
but fleet-footed Achilles intervened:

"Son of Atreus, we know your spearmanship,
how very far you would be able to throw,
so here, take this winner's prize to your ships
and let us give Meriones the spear.
That is my wish provided you are willing."

890

Warrior chief Agamemnon agreed
and gave the spear to Meriones who handed
Agamemnon's herald Talthybius the first prize.

895

HECTOR'S BODY RETURNS TO TROY

Achilles dismissed the army, and each man returned to his ship ready for savory food, then sleep's balmy relief. Achilles, though, wept, remembering his friend. Sleep eluded him as he tossed to the right, then rolled left, recalling Patroclus' manliness, his courage, during the many trials they faced together—battles against warriors and stormy seas. 5 The memories stung and misted his eyes. He lay still a while on one side, then turned to face the sky, then earth. At length he rose. 10 He wandered up and down the beach, till Dawn discovered him when she brightened sea and shore. Then he put his horses under the yoke, tied Hector behind his chariot and dragged the body three circuits of Patroclus' mound. 15 He left the hapless Trojan prince in his camp, features buried in dust, but lord Apollo pitied the mortal and safeguarded his body, though it was dead. He covered the corpse in fleece, thin gold, so dragging would not tear the skin. 20 While vengeful Achilles abused Hector's body, fortunate deathless gods recoiled as they watched. Some urged the Argus-slayer to steal the body. Most immortals favored theft, but not Hera, 25

not Poseidon, not the gleaming-eyed maid.
Those three nursed hatred for sacred Ilium,
Priam's people, too, because of Paris' foolish
affront when the goddesses vied in his courtyard
and he chose the one who stirred hot-blooded lust. 30

After Dawn had lighted heaven a twelfth time,
Phoebus Apollo spoke among the gods:
"You gods are stubborn, harsh! You must recall
Hector's sacrifices—oxen and goats—
yet now you lack the heart to rescue his corpse 35
so that his wife may see him, his son, his mother,
his father Priam, all his army, who then
would hold funeral rites and give him a pyre.
Instead you continue to aid Achilles
whose heart contains no temperance or hint 40
of mercy, but who is like a wild lion
that uses his bold spirit, his great strength,
to spring on helpless cattle and seize a feast.
Achilles has lost pity, also respect,
and so has lost the mortal virtue of shame. 45

Another man might lose one loved even more,
a son or brother born of the same woman,
but he would put aside mourning and tears,
for fate grants men the courage to carry on.

But since Achilles finished Hector's life 50
he ties the body behind his team, drags it
around the tomb, which is neither fit nor right.
He is half divine but should not offend us
by using Earth to shame the senseless dead."

White-armed Hera bitterly said to him: 55
"It might be as you say, silver-bowed archer,
if we owed the two men honor alike,
but Hector fed at a mortal woman's breast,
while Achilles sprang from a goddess, one
that I myself raised and gave as wife to a man, 60
Peleus, dear to every immortal heart.

All of us met at the wedding where you
feasted and played your lyre, inconstant friend!"

The cloud-amasser Zeus replied to her:
"Hera, you need not angrily scold immortals. 65
Hector will surely be honored less but he,
of all the Trojan men, was dearest to gods,
including me, since his gifts pleased without fail.
My altar never lacked a generous feast,
libation or savory fat, as is our due. 70
Yet we will lay aside the plan to steal
Hector away from Achilles. After all,
his mother watches closely both day and night.
One of you find Thetis, summon her here.
I shall make her understand that Achilles 75
should take ransom, let Priam have Hector."

Storm-footed courier Iris accepted the task.
Midway between Imbros and Samothrace
she plunged in dark water where breakers crashed.
She dropped to the bottom like a lead sinker 80
fixed to a sliver of wild ox's horn
that brings fish a morsel of meat—and death.
In Thetis' cave she found her among assembled
sea goddesses, seated nearby as Thetis
lamented her noble son's fate, about 85
to die in fertile Troy far from his home.
Swift-footed Iris stood beside her and said:
"Arise! Zeus desires to tell you his will!"
Thetis shifted her silver feet and replied:
"Why does the great god call me? I am ashamed 90
to join the immortals, grieving as I am.
Yet I will go hear what he has to say."

The glorious sea goddess reached for her veil,
a darker hue than any worldly cloth,
then left her cave, and swift, wind-footed Iris 95

charted a way through waves that rolled aside.
Together they walked ashore, then flashed to heaven
and found the son of Cronus circled by all
the fortunate gods who never confront death.

Athena made room and Thetis sat by Zeus. 100
Hera offered her a golden wine goblet,
a friendly gesture. Thetis took the drink.

The father of gods and men began to speak:
“You came to Olympus, Thetis, despite grief,
despite the constant sorrow I know you feel. 105
I will tell you why I summoned you here.
For nine days the immortals have disagreed
about the way Achilles treats Hector’s corpse.
Some even suggested Hermes steal the body
but I accommodated your son this far 110
since I want to retain your love and respect.
Now he must stop. Go to the camps. Tell him
he has angered the gods. Say I, above all
Olympians, resent his frenzied resolve
to keep and abuse the dead prince’s remains. 115
Tell him he should respect me, release Hector.
I will dispatch Iris to direct Priam
to visit the Greek ships and ransom his son
with gifts sure to delight Achilles’ heart.”

Silver-footed Thetis obeyed the command, 120
departed and sped from Olympus’ peaks
straight to Achilles’ camp. She found him there,
moaning without pause amid his faithful comrades,
some working to prepare Achilles’ breakfast,
others sacrificing a fat woolly sheep. 125
The regal mother sat beside her son,
caressed him, then softly spoke his name and said:
“My child, must this steady grief, this lament,
devour your heart? You think of neither food
nor bed, though a woman’s love would do you good. 130
You have not much longer to live. Even now,
relentless fate and death are drawing near.”

Listen, as Zeus sent me to bring this message,
that you have angered gods. He, above all
Olympians, resents your frenzied resolve
to keep and abuse the Trojan prince's corpse,
so let him go, accept ransom instead." 135

Fast-running Achilles heard and replied:
"Then whoever brings ransom may take the body
if that is Olympian Zeus's will." 140

Among the ships, mother and son continued
to sit and talk—touching on many subjects—
while Cronus' son rushed Iris to sacred Troy:
"Leave your Olympian home, Iris, go there—
Ilium—and take Priam this message from me.
He should visit the ships to free his son
and take gifts sure to delight Achilles' heart.
He should travel alone, no other men
except an elderly herald to drive
the mules and strong-wheeled wagon out, then back
to Ilium with the corpse Peleus' son killed. 145

Priam should have no fear or thought of death
because Argus-slayer Hermes will be
their guide until they near Achilles' ships.

When he has led Priam to Achilles' lodge,
that Greek will guarantee the monarch's safety,
for he is neither sinful, thoughtless nor mad,
and will honor his duty to spare a suppliant." 155

Storm-footed Iris hurried that urgent message
to Priam and found him wailing, grief-foundered. 160

His sons, too, sat in their father's courtyard,
garments soggy, tear-soaked. The old man
stooped low, veiled in a black cloak. Marring his neck,
his venerable head, were smears—farmyard waste
that he had groveled in and plastered there. 165

His daughters and sons' wives lamented inside
as they recalled the countless noble Trojans
who fell, their lives lost to Achaean hands.

Zeus's messenger approached Priam and spoke,
lifting her voice gently, but still he quaked:

170

"Take heart, Dardanus' son, have no fear,
as I am not a harbinger of ill;
rather I bring a welcome message from Zeus
who pities you although he is far away.

The Olympian bids you ransom glorious Hector
with gifts sure to delight Achilles' heart,
but you must go without escort, alone
except for an elderly herald to drive
the mules and strong-wheeled wagon out, then back
to Ilium with the corpse Peleus' son killed.

175

You should not be afraid or think of death
because Argus-slayer Hermes will be
your guide until you near Achilles' ships.

When he has led you to Achilles' lodge
that Greek will guarantee your life and safety,
for he is neither sinful, thoughtless nor mad,
and will honor his duty to spare a suppliant."

180

Iris finished and left on her nimble feet.

Priam told his sons to bring a mule-drawn wagon,
one with sturdy wheels and a cargo box,
while he entered his palace halls—redolent
of cedar—whose high roof sheltered countless gems.

190

He called his wife, Hecuba, and said:

"My dear, a messenger brings me Zeus's counsel
that I should visit the ships to get our son
and take gifts that are sure to delight Achilles.
Now tell me how that strategy strikes you.

195

My own spirit and heart strongly bid me
go to the ships, the sprawling Argive camp."

The woman exclaimed, anguished, then replied:

200

"Oh no! What happened to your common sense,
renowned among Trojans and strangers alike?
Why would you want to visit the ships alone,
vulnerable to a man who has slaughtered

so many sons of ours? Your heart is iron! 205
After he notices and captures you there,
that fierce, hotheaded man will show neither pity
nor respect. Let us keep our distance and mourn
our son here in our halls. The day I bore him
relentless fate spun thread foreordaining
that he would sate swift-footed dogs, far from us 210
but near a brutal man whose liver I
would relish eating as my way to avenge
our beloved son who perished, not as a coward,
but out front where Trojan women and men
could see him make his stand, spurning retreat." 215

Priam drew himself up like a god and said:
"Do not attempt to dissuade me. Be not
a bird of ill portent. I will not yield.

No matter what any earth-dwellers might say, 220
whether they be readers of omens or smoke,
I would consider them false, turn my back,
for I have just witnessed and heard a goddess.
I will trust her, but if it is my fate
to die beside the ships the Greeks sailed here, 225
so be it, and may Achilles cut me down,
emptied of tears, while I embrace my son."

The resolute old man opened several chests,
selected and laid out twelve shimmering gowns,
the same number of mantles, of coverlets, 230
as many white tunics with cloaks to match.

He weighed and set aside ten talents of gold.
He chose two shiny tripods and four kettles,
then an ornate cup he had received in Thrace,
a grand possession indeed, but nothing now 235
was hoarded as the aged man's sole concern
was to free his son. He rebuked the men
who stood in his courtyard and drove them away:
"Begone, you shameless scoundrels! You have plenty
of dead in your own families to weep about! 240
Leave me and let me suffer! Zeus has caused

the death of my best son—your loss as well,
 because without him it will be much easier
 for Greeks to slaughter you. After they have,
 I will enter Hades' realm before the sight
 of Troy pillaged and burned reaches these eyes."

245

Priam moved through the courtyard thrusting his staff
 as the men scurried out. He called his surviving
 nine sons, Helenus, Paris, Agathon,
 Pammon, Antiphonus, Polites,
 Hippothous, Deiphobus and Dion.

250

The old monarch sternly reproached all nine:
 "Hurry, you worthless sons! The lot of you
 should have died facing the Greeks instead of Hector!

How luckless I am! I fathered the best men
 in all of Troy, but not a one still lives:
 splendid Mestor, stallion-spirited Troilus
 and Hector, giant among men, who always seemed
 more like the son of a god than mortal man.

255

Ares killed them, leaving me these disgraces—
 good only at revelry, dancing, deceit
 and stealing my people's lambs or young goats!
 Where is the mule wagon I told you to bring?
 Get it and load these things so I can go!"

260

The old king's angry rebuke frightened his sons,
 and they fetched the mule wagon with strong wheels,
 recently made, then tied on a cargo box.

265

The youths took from its peg a mule-team yoke
 with an upright horn and rings for reins and shaft.
 They brought yoke cord, the length of a team and chariot,
 slid the wagon shaft into the yoke's main ring,
 passed an iron bolt through both main ring and shaft,
 wrapped cord three turns on the horn and the bolt's ends,
 then round the shaft, and tucked the ends through a wrap.
 After the wagon was ready, Priam's sons brought
 and loaded the priceless ransom for dead Hector.

270

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They yoked a pair of tough-hoofed, plow-trained mules,
splendid presents the Mysians once gave Priam,
then harnessed horses, animals the old man
had raised himself and kept in a special stall.

280

After Priam's sons had hitched the teams,
the old herald and king each steeled his mind
as Hecuba approached them, timid, fearful.
Her right hand held a gold cup, unmixed wine,
a libation to pour before they went.

285

She stopped by her husband Priam's team and said:
"Here, pour it for Zeus. Pray you will come home
from those murderous men, since it seems your heart
impels you toward their ships against my wishes.
Will you at least, though, pray to Cronus' son
who is watching you and Troy's domain from Ida?
Ask him to send a sign, and let it be
his favorite bird, the most powerful flier.
If my eyes see it flying from the east
I will trust that omen while you are gone,
but if thunderous Zeus will not give that sign,
I will insist that you stay safely here
despite your intent to visit the ships."

290

The old king, resembling a god, replied:
"All right, wife, I will do what you ask.
It is good to beseech Zeus. He may take pity."

295

The old man summoned Hecuba's housekeeper
to rinse his hands in pure water. The maid
brought him a hand basin and fresh-filled pitcher.
After he washed he took Hecuba's cup,
walked to the courtyard center, poured the wine,
fixed his eyes on the sky and prayed aloud:
"Most glorious father Zeus who rules from Ida,
grant that pity and kindness spring from Achilles.
Then, to confirm your boon, send us a sign:

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310

your favorite bird, the most powerful flier.
If my eyes see the bird leaving the east
it will give me courage to visit the ships."

That was the old man's prayer and Zeus heard.

He sent an eagle, the sky's swiftest flier, 315

the dark hunter that men have misnamed "dappled."

As wide as the entrance gates to the tall house
of a wealthy man, gates where bolts bristle,
that wide the bird's wings spread as he approached Troy—
from the east—and dodged through the city. Priam 320
and Hecuba watched the bird, heartened, amazed.

The old man climbed aboard his chariot
which clattered through the portico and gates.

The mules led, drawing the four-wheeled wagon,
skilled Idaeus at the reins. Close behind, 325

the old man wielded a whip to urge his horses
onward through the streets. His family trailed,
most weeping as if Priam drove to meet his doom.

After the teams had passed beyond the walls
the saddened followers turned back to Ilium. 330

Far-seeing Zeus did not overlook the two
as they crossed the plain. He pitied old Priam,
turned to his beloved son Hermes and said:
"Hermes, one of your favorite pastimes
is to consort with mortals whose prayers you hear. 335
Go there, where Priam heads for the hollow ships,
and guide him so that he is unobserved
till after he has found the son of Peleus."

The Argus-slayer did not hesitate.
He tied beneath his feet his splendid sandals, 340
divine gold, that carried him over seas
and continents, keeping pace with the winds.
He grasped the wand he used to close men's eyes

or, if he chose, to waken them from sleep.
With that in hand the Argus-slayer flew,
soon arriving at the Hellespont and Troad
where he assumed a disguise, that of a youth
whose face showed just the beginnings of a beard.

After the two passed Ilus' monument
they let the mules and horses stop to drink
at the river, for darkness was falling fast.
The old herald peered through the gloom and discerned
the youth, a sight that prompted him to say:
"Dardanus' son, I fear that danger stalks!
I see a man I think is about to attack,
so let us take your chariot and flee, or else
embrace his knees, ask him to show us mercy!"

Sudden dismay unhinged the old king's mind
and stood the hair on his bent limbs on end.
He stood dazed, but Hermes the helper approached,
clasped the old man's trembling hands and inquired:
"Father, where do you lead these horses and mules
during the sacred night when mortals sleep?
Do you not fear the fury-breathing Greeks,
your bitter enemies, now close at hand?"

If one should glimpse you through the fast-falling dark
and see this treasure, how could you defend?
You are not young. You have just this old attendant
to guard against those who may attack tonight.
But I will not harm you, and I will fend off
any who would, for you are so like my father."

Old Priam, like a god himself, replied:
"Matters are quite as you have said, dear boy,
but some god still holds his hand over me.
He sent you to wander and meet me here,
a fine young man, a striking form and face,
a lively mind. Your parents have been blessed!"

The messenger who slew Argus replied:

"All that you say is on the mark, old man,

but speak again, and tell me honestly

380

whether you take this massive, splendid treasure
to foreign folk where it will be safe for you,
or whether the people have all abandoned Troy,
terrified now that the best Trojan is lost,

your son who never avoided fighting Greeks."

385

Old Priam, resembling a heaven-dweller, said:

"Who are your noble parents, and who are you
that speaks eloquently of my ill-starred son?"

The Argus-slayer Hermes answered Priam:

"You test me, sire, by asking of godlike Hector,
a man I often saw doing glorious battle,
including the day when he reached the fleet,
using his spear and sword to slaughter Argives.
We stood back, awed, while Achilles forbade us
to fight because he raged at Atreus' son.

390

I am his aide, you see, and sailed on his ship.

My father is Polycitor, a Myrmidon,
a wealthy man but growing old like you.
He had six sons, then me, seven in all.

The lots we shook ordained that I come here.

400

Now I leave the ships for the plain where, come dawn,
the Greeks will attack all sides of the city.

They have grown restless, and even their own kings
can no longer restrain the men from war."

Godlike aged Priam replied to him:

405

"Well, if you are indeed an aide to the son
of Peleus, come tell me now, tell me true:
is my boy still at the ships? Or has Achilles
already carved his limbs apart for dogs?"

The Argus-slaying messenger answered Priam:

410

"Neither dogs nor vultures have eaten Hector.

He lies there yet, beside Achilles' ships,

unspoiled despite twelve dawns above our fleet.
His flesh has not decayed, nor hosted worms
that eat mortals fallen on battlefields. 415
Even though Achilles has dragged his body
around Patroclus' tomb each day at morning,
his body is intact, and you shall see:
he lies unmarred. All blood has washed away
without a trace, and all the wounds are closed,
the many that wanton Argives inflicted. 420
The blessed gods have protected your son,
though now a corpse, for he was loved by them."

The old man breathed relief and told the youth:
"Ah, child, how well it pays to offer gifts 425
for heaven. Never once did my dead son
forget his dues to those who hold Olympus,
so they remember him now, even dead.
Here, boy, accept from me this fancy bowl.
Now, with heaven's aid, guard and escort me 430
straight to the camp of Peleus' son Achilles."

The fast runner who killed Argus replied:
"I am tempted but you cannot sway me
to take a gift behind Achilles' back.
I have too much respect and fear of him 435
to do him wrong, lest I suffer later,
but I would guide you as far as Argos,
whether on foot or aboard a swift ship.
No mortal will fight and defeat your escort."

Hermes then leapt to the chariot deck,
taking whip and reins in deft immortal hands. 440
He breathed power through the horses and mules,
which soon reached the ditch and wall around the ships.
The sentries had just begun to eat their dinners
when the Argus-slayer showered them with sleep,
removed the bolts, threw wide open the gates, 445
then led Priam and his wagonload of ransom

directly to Peleus' son Achilles' lodge
which Myrmidons constructed for their prince.
They built a frame, pine poles, and wove a roof,
waterproof reeds that grew in a marshy field. 450
Outside they fenced a spacious courtyard,
using close-set stakes and a gate with one bolt—
a beam so heavy, it took three strong men
either to set the bolt or to remove it. 455
Only Achilles could move the bolt alone.
Hermes opened that gate for the old man,
guided through it the wondrous ransom gifts,
stepped from the chariot onto the ground, and said:
“Old man, your guide has been the immortal god, 460
Hermes, and my father sent me to you,
but I will leave you now before Achilles
recognizes me, as it is not meet
for a deathless god to take a mortal's cause.
Go inside and clasp Peleus' son's knees, 465
then stir his heart by pleading in the names
of his father, his divine mother, his son.”

The Argus-slayer headed for high Olympus
as Priam stepped down from his chariot
and left Idaeus to wait behind, holding 470
the teams. The old king went straight to the lodge
where Zeus-loved Achilles stayed. There he found
the man himself, seated near two attendants,
warriors Alcimus and Automedon,
who had brought their lord a meal he had finished, 475
all but a few remaining scraps on the table.
Priam quietly skirted the two, approached
Achilles, clasped his knees and kissed his hands—
the lethal hands that slew so many sons.
As when cold fear seizes one who has murdered 480
and he seeks refuge with a wealthy man
in a strange land, to his host's complete surprise,
far more Priam's presence astounded Achilles
and his aides who glanced at each other amazed.

Old Priam addressed and entreated the Greek: 485
“Godlike Achilles, recall your own father,
oppressed by age like me, nearing life’s end,
and likely those who live around him now
deplete his wealth, but no one is there to aid.
Still, when he hears that you are yet alive 490
his spirits soar, and every day he hopes
to see his cherished son return from Ilium.
But wretched me, I sired the finest sons
in all of Troy yet none remains alive.
There were fifty when the Argive force arrived. 495
Nineteen emerged from the same woman’s womb,
the rest were born to palace servant maids.
No matter how many Ares struck down,
one always remained to guard me and the city
until a fortnight ago you slaughtered him, 500
Hector, for whose sake I have journeyed here
with rich ransom for you, to gain his release.
Respect the gods, Achilles, and pity me
as you would your father. Most pitiable am I,
for never has any mortal father stooped 505
and pressed his lips to the hand that slew his sons.”

Achilles listened and longed for his father.
He gently removed the elder king’s arms,
then both men mourned. Old Priam lamented Hector,
crouched at Achilles’ feet, shedding tears. 510
Achilles wept awhile for Peleus, then
Patroclus, and moans echoed from both mourners.
After Achilles had lamented enough
to relieve the anguish that so racked his heart,
he rose from his chair, lifted Priam upright, 515
touched by the old man’s graying head and chin.
He then addressed the king in a calm voice:
“Poor soul, your chest harbors a thousand sorrows.
How could you dare approach these ships alone,
vulnerable to a man who has slaughtered 520
so many sons? Your nerve is firm as iron.

Come here, sit in this chair, and for a time
let our hearts be quiet despite the grief we feel.
There is nothing to be gained by more lament.
The gods ordain that we miserable mortals 525
shall live in sorrow, while they have no cares.
On Zeus's floor there stands a pair of jars,
one each for the good and ill fortune he gives.
The man who receives a mixture from both
encounters sometimes bounty, sometimes pain. 530
A man to whom Zeus gives only the ill
must stagger hungry over the earth's face,
roaming, honored by neither gods nor men.
So heaven gave Peleus marvelous fortune
right from his birth, till he surpassed all mortals 535
in wealth, in power. He ruled the Myrmidons
and, though a mortal, made a goddess his wife,
but he also received pain, for there is not
a family of young princes within his halls.
He sired but one ill-fated child who is absent 540
during his old age. Far from my fatherland,
I stay in Troy to harry you and your sons.
We hear that you, old man, were also blessed,
that in the region bounded west by Lesbos,
Phrygia east and south, the Hellespont north, 545
your sons and wealth surpassed those of any rival,
but then the heaven-dwellers afflicted you,
bringing your city endless battle and death.
Take heart. Do not let sorrow wear you down.
When you lament your son it does no good. 550
Your suffering will not restore his life."

The old king Priam responded like a god:
"You will not get me to sit, not while Hector
is lying nearby, unburied, so now
release him for me to see. Take the ransom, 555
all the splendid ransom we brought. May you reach
your home again, since you have allowed me

to live and see the morning's light once more." Achilles stared at Priam, frowned and replied:
"Beware my wrath, old man. I already planned
to give you Hector as commanded by Zeus,
through my mother, old sea god Nereus' child.
You two did not escape my notice, Priam,
you and the deathless god who guided you here.
No mortal, even a brash youth, would dare
such travel, nor could he pass the guards, unbolt
and throw open my gates with little effort.
Take care that you do not cross me again,
old man, or else I will end your long life
despite Zeus's command and all your prayers."

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The threat cowed the old king and he fell silent.
Achilles sprang from his lodge like a lion.
Right after him followed his two attendants,
Automedon and Alcimus, his most
respected aides since brave Patroclus' death.
They removed the yokes from horses and mules,
guided the herald inside, the old man's crier,
and found him a place to sit. Back at the wagon
they took the priceless ransom for Hector's body,
but left two each of the cloaks and fine-spun tunics
so Achilles could wrap the corpse for the trip.
He bade women cleanse, then anoint dead Hector—
out where he lay, lest Priam might glimpse his son
and, unable to check his grief or rage,
arouse Achilles' ire, furious enough
to transgress Zeus's command and kill him.
After the women washed and oiled the body
they dressed it in a princely tunic and cloak.
Achilles himself laid the corpse on a bier.
His aides helped him load the bier on the wagon.
Achilles wailed, calling the name of his friend:
"Patroclus, do not be angry if you learn,
in Hades, that I have given Hector up!"

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The ransom his father brought was not unworthy
and I will put by an ample share for you." 595

Achilles turned, strode back inside his lodge,
sat for scarcely a moment, rose again
and spoke to Priam, near the opposite wall:
"Your son has been freed, old man, just as you asked.
He lies on a bier. With dawn's earliest gleam 600
you will see for yourself, but now let us eat.
Why, fair-haired Niobe remembered food
even with twelve of her children slain at home,
six sons in youthful prime and as many daughters.
Apollo killed the boys with his silver bow, 605
Artemis the girls, both piqued at Niobe
because she dared belittle their mother, Leto,
for bearing but two children, far less than she.
So two avengers ended life for the twelve,
who lay in blood nine days. There was no one 610
to tend them because Zeus turned their folk to rock,
but on the tenth day gods buried them all.
Niobe grieved and wept but nonetheless ate.
Today she is just a stone on a lonely peak,
Sipylus, resting place, they say, of nymphs 615
who gambol and dance by Achelous' streams.
Though she is stone, she still pines for her children.
So come, esteemed old king, let us two think
of food, though you may mourn your son again
on the return road where lakes of tears will fall." 620

Achilles selected a snow-white sheep.
He cut its throat, then comrades skinned the beast,
carved and spitted cutlets with practiced skill,
and held the pieces over coals to cook.
Automedon placed bread around the table 625
but Achilles himself passed out the meat.
They all sat down and reached for tempting fare.
When they no longer desired food or drink
Dardanian Priam eyed and admired Achilles,

how tall he was, how much like a god. 630
Achilles, too, admired the Trojan king,
studied his face, recalled his eloquent words.
After each had measured the other's worth
old Priam broke the silence and said to Achilles:
"Give me a bed, sir, in order that now 635
I may rest, enjoy blissful sleep's delight.
The lids of these two eyes have not yet closed
since Hector lost his life under your hand,
but all this time I moaned, nursing my grief,
rolling in farmyard dung on my palace court. 640
I have just now savored food and sparkling wine
but before tonight I had tasted none."

Achilles told his aides and female slaves
to prepare beds outside his lodge—soft sheets
tucked tightly, purple blankets spread on top—
and to drape woolly cloaks for privacy. 645
The women left the lodge, torches in hand,
and made the two beds without wasting time.
Achilles directed Priam, half in jest:
"Bed down outside, elderly friend, lest Greeks
should come to meet in council here, the chiefs 650
who daily plan our strategy for war.
If one should notice you, dark though it is,
he might report your presence to Agamemnon,
postponing my release of Hector's corpse. 655
Now tell me one more thing and be precise:
how many days will it take for Hector's rites?
I will hold the army waiting that long."

The godlike old monarch Priam replied:
"If you are willing to let me burn Hector 660
you will do me a great favor, Achilles.
We are trapped, far from wood, and without your leave
no Trojan would brave the hills to fetch wood in.
We will mourn nine days in our palace halls.

On the tenth we will burn Hector and feast, 665
on the eleventh build my son a mound.
The twelfth day we will fight more if we must."

Fast-running Achilles replied to Priam:
"Let it be so, old king, as you have asked.
I will hold off the war for that much time." 670

Achilles gently clasped King Priam's wrist,
to quiet any fear he might retain.
The two Trojans lay down outside the lodge,
Priam and his crier, keeping thoughts to themselves.
Achilles slept in his lodge's farthest corner, 675
next to him his beautiful Briseis lay.
All other fighting men, most gods as well,
slumbered till dawn under the spell of sleep,
but sleep did not overcome the helper, Hermes.
Hermes' mind pondered how the old king Priam 680
might leave the ships, eluding watchful sentries.
He stood over the monarch's head and spoke:
"Ah, old man, without thought of harm, you rest
near hostile men, here where Achilles left you.
Generous ransom freed your cherished boy 685
but your remaining sons would have to pay
at least three times as much if Agamemnon
or another such Greek should learn you are near."

The old man was frightened and roused his crier.
Hermes yoked the teams of horses and mules, 690
then drove them through the camps himself, unseen.

When they reached the rapidly flowing river,
whirling Xanthus, immortal Zeus's spawn,
Hermes took leave and sped to Olympus' steeps
just as saffron-clad Dawn spread over the earth. 695
The two drove toward the city, weeping, moaning.
The mules drew the corpse, but none of the folk
ahead saw them coming, no man, no woman

except Cassandra, like golden Aphrodite.
From Pergamus' heights she discerned her father
astride his chariot, and the stentorian herald. 700
She saw Hector atop the mule-drawn bier
and released a howl of grief heard citywide:
"Look there, Trojans, Hector is coming! Greet him!
Remember how his return from war alive
gratified all you people countless times!" 705

They heard, and not a man or woman stayed
in the city. Poignant sadness flooded each one
as men unbolted the gates nearest the corpse.
Hector's regal mother, his treasured wife, 710
plucked at their hair, mounted the strong-wheeled wagon
and clasped his head while crowds gathered to weep.
Through the rest of the day till the sun went down
they would have mourned Hector outside the gates
had not the old man cried from his chariot deck: 715
"Stand back! Let me and the mules pass through! In time,
when I get home, you will have your fill of tears."

The throng heard their king and made way for the teams.
When Hector's body was inside the palace,
they moved him to an ornate bier, and chose minstrels
who led a dirge marked by sorrowful tones. 720
All the women wept as they joined the chant.

Andromache started the women's lament,
with once-murderous Hector's head in her arms:
"Husband, you lost your life, you widowed me,
left in your halls to mother the infant son 725
whom we gave life and misfortune. I doubt
that he will attain manhood before this city
is razed for lack of you, who guarded your wife,
your son, all Troy's infants, and all her wives
who soon will clamber aboard the hollow ships 730
with me among them. You, my infant, either
may go and be put to wearisome tasks

under a harsh master, or else some Greek
may seize and throw you off the wall to die,
angry because Hector slaughtered his brother,
his father, perhaps his son. Hosts of Achaeans
that Hector toppled took earth between their teeth.
Your father was not a gentle man in battle,
and that is why so many here are sad,
why such profound sorrow has gripped your parents,
Hector, but I will miss you more than any.
Now dead, you have not reached your arms for me,
nor spoken those intimate words I could always
cherish while I weep endless days and nights."

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She sobbed as she spoke. The other women moaned
and Hecuba was next to voice lament:
"Hector, dearest to me of all my sons,
even the gods loved you while yet you lived
and they sorrow that you have met your fate." 750
Fleet-footed Achilles captured other sons
of mine and sold them beyond the trackless sea—
in Samos, Imbros, sometimes foggy Lemnos—
but he ruthlessly took your life away,
then dragged you often around his friend's tomb,
a friend you killed, never to be revived. 755
Yet now you lie here in our halls, lifelike,
pristine as if Apollo's silver bow
had just released one of his gentle arrows."

Hecuba's speech aroused yet more lament,
and Helen was the third woman to speak:
"Oh Hector, you were my favorite brother
of handsome Paris who is my husband now
and brought me to Troy. Better I had died.
In all the many years that have come and gone
since I left my fatherland to come here,
I never heard an unkind word from you,
and whenever one of your kin would slight me,
a brother or brother's wife, or fair-robed sister,

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or your mother—your father is always kind— 770
then you would come to my aid, speaking out,
choosing gentle words that showed your kindly thoughts.
So now I weep, mourn you, and my heart aches,
for no other man who yet remains in Ilium
is half as kind. Most still treat me with scorn.” 775

She wept as she spoke and throngs of mourners sighed.
Then old King Priam commanded his people:
“Bring wood to the city now, Trojans, without
fear of Greek ambush. Achilles himself
sent me away from the dark ships and vowed 780
not to harm us before a twelfth dawn shines.”

Trojans hitched oxen and mules to wagon shafts,
then gathered their convoy outside the walls.
Nine days they carted wood and built a pyre,
but when Dawn shone her light on Troy a tenth time, 785
solemn Trojans brought Hector through the gates,
laid him atop the pyre and set it ablaze.
When Dawn next extended her violet fingers
a crowd assembled around Hector’s pyre.
After the Trojans had gathered together 790
they found and quenched smoldering coals with wine,
wherever the hot, furious fire had raged.
Hector’s brothers and friends collected his bones,
and as they did they mourned, shedding tears.
They placed the bones in a golden urn they brought, 795
then wrapped the urn in soft, thick purple robes
and laid it in a hollowed grave, over which
they dragged a thick layer of heavy boulders.
They heaped a marker, while keeping lookouts posted,
should eager Greeks attack ahead of time. 800
The marker done, they all returned to Ilium
and feasted together, a sumptuous banquet
that Zeus-descended Priam held in his palace.

So Trojans honored Hector, master of stallions.

NOTES

The *Iliad* often refers to people, places, customs, events, and legends that Homer assumed were well known to his audience, and that therefore are explained only briefly, if at all, in his poem. The modern reader will find most of these allusions elucidated in the “Pronouncing Glossary of Proper Nouns” under entries for the persons or places involved. The purpose of these notes is to address passages that warrant more illumination than the glossary provides.

1.1 The “goddess” invoked in the poem’s first line is a Muse, elsewhere referred to as such, usually in the plural, e.g., 2.484, 16.113. Muses, daughters of Zeus, have the ability both to inspire and to silence the poet, if aggrieved. See 2.594–600, describing how the Muses silenced Thamyris for presuming to liken his odes to their song.

1.11–21 Chryses approaches the sons of Atreus humbly, as a suppliant. In the Homeric view, suppliants enjoyed special protection by Zeus, resulting in a duty on the part of mortals to respect suppliants or face divine retribution. Agamemnon’s harsh response to the priest, which would be offensive in any case, is all the more so because it violates that duty.

1.268 “Beasts” refers to centaurs, whom legendary heroes defeated in a battle that Nestor apparently claims to have joined.

1.477 In the translation, Dawn is capitalized when she is personified as a goddess who drives a team bringing light, but not when the word denotes earliest morning with little or no personification (e.g., 7.372). There are many other capitalized personifications,

such as twin brothers Sleep and Death (16.671–82), Night (14.78), Terror (4.440), Flight (9.2), Panic (9.2), and Rumor (2.93), all of which also appear as ordinary phenomena, in which usage they are lowercased.

2.155 Troy's defeat was the "fate" that the Greeks would have defied had they sailed. Grand events, such as the fall of Troy, are fixed by "fate," as is the destiny of each mortal. The gods know what fate ordains, but they cannot avert fate and are therefore subordinate to it. The poet frequently states that a certain event might have occurred, "contrary to fate," but for something else, often divine intervention. This is a rhetorical device, not implying a real possibility of an occurrence contrary to fate—something that never happens in the *Iliad*.

2.157 "Aegis-keeping" is an epithet denoting Zeus's control of the aegis, which originally may have meant "storm cloud." In the *Iliad* it is a shield-like object made by Hephaestus with one hundred gold tassels and a gorgon's head. Zeus, Athena, and Apollo wield the aegis to strike terror into mortal warriors. (See 5.738, 15.308.)

2.791, 795 Iris assumes mortal disguise, as do all Olympian gods when they appear to mortals. One reason for the disguises may be, as Hera later says, that "The sight of undisguised gods terrifies mortals" (20.131). Lesser deities such as Thetis, who do not dwell on Olympus, may appear undisguised.

3.205–206 In a prewar diplomatic mission, Menelaus and Odysseus unsuccessfully attempted to procure the peaceable return of Helen. In a later reference, Agamemnon asserts that while they were there, the Trojan Antimachus advocated that they take advantage of the occasion to murder Menelaus (11.138–42).

3.276 "Zeus on Ida": Throughout the *Iliad*, Zeus spends much of his time near Troy on Mount Ida's peak, Gargarus, rather than on Olympus.

3.330–38 The standard battle gear included greaves and ankle guards to protect the shins and ankles; a breastplate (consisting of two halves, front and back); a sword and shield, hung from straps over opposite shoulders; a helmet; and a spear. Secondary protection included a metal belt or girdle, a leather apron, and an inner bronze shield, perhaps for the belly and genitals. (See 4.186–87.)

3.380–82 Aphrodite’s rescue of Paris is the first of many occasions when gods rescue endangered warriors.

4.146 The poet-narrator briefly switches to the second person, referring to Menelaus as “you” instead of “he.” This rather arresting device occurs frequently.

4.370–97 Tydeus’ exploits at Thebes are referred to several times in the *Iliad*. This passage recounts an occasion when Tydeus entered Thebes as an ambassador and defeated the Cadmeans (Thebans) in various contests, which prompted them to ambush him on the way out of town—an ambuscade consisting of fifty Cadmeans, of whom Tydeus killed forty-nine. Later he was one of the “Seven against Thebes,” a group of seven Argives who led an unsuccessful assault on the city.

4.478 This is the first reference to θρέπτρα, care that sons owe their aging parents in return for childhood nurture.

5.265–73 Ganymede, a son of Tros and the comeliest boy ever to exist, was taken by Zeus to be his cupbearer; in exchange, Zeus gave Tros the stallions referred to at lines 5.265–67. The stallions passed to Tros’s grandson Laomedon, from whom Anchises stole the breed as described. At the note to 20.215, see the chart depicting Tros’s lineage, backward to Zeus and forward to Hector and Aeneas.

5.638–40 Laomedon agreed to give Heracles the stallions described in the preceding note if he would kill a troublesome sea monster. Heracles built a wall to contain the monster and eventually killed it, but Laomedon refused to honor the bargain, prompting Heracles to return with a small army, kill Laomedon, and raze Troy.

6.215–25 See the note at 13.625 regarding the importance of the guest-host relationship in the *Iliad*.

6.237 “The oak” is one of two landmark trees located near Ilium (see also 7.22, 7.60, 9.354, 11.170, 21.549), the other being a “wild fig” (6.433, 11.167). At 7.60 the former is described as “the aegis-keeper Zeus’s oak,” a reference to Zeus’s identification in general with oaks.

6.428 “Artemis shot her dead”: Artemis’ arrows are portrayed as the cause of inexplicable sudden death among women. Those of her brother Apollo serve the same function for men. See Hecuba’s perception of Hector’s appearance in death at 24.757–59.

8.81 Chariots were drawn by a team of two horses, but often a third was at hand to replace a disabled member of the team.

8.362–69 This is one of several references to the dozen trials or “labors” that Eurystheus imposed on Heracles, one of which was the task of cleaning Augeas’ stables. Zeus often relied on Athena to relieve Heracles, as when she helped him capture Hades’ three-headed dog Cerberus. See the note for 14.250.

8.550 Lines 8.550–52 do not appear in the *Iliad* manuscripts canvassed by the editors of the Oxford Classical Text, and the lines are omitted from that text altogether (except for mention in a footnote). They appear in Plato, *Alcibiades* II at 149d. Accurately rendered, line 550 in the Greek says that “none” of the gods partook, for the reasons in lines 551–52. This translation says that “some” did not partake, in order to be able to include the passage and have it make sense. By this point in Book 8, the reader is well aware that several powerful Olympian gods favor the Trojans.

9.557–60 Apollo and mortal Idas both fancied Marpessa, and Apollo abducted her for a time. Idas challenged Apollo, but Zeus intervened and decreed that Marpessa could choose. She chose Idas because she feared that Apollo would lose interest in her as she aged while he stayed young.

11.690 Because Augeas refused to pay Heracles as agreed for cleaning his stables, Heracles later ravaged Augeas’ Elean realm and its environs, including Pylos.

11.709 “Twin sons of Actor’s wife Molione” are so described because their true father was Poseidon (11.751), without whose intervention Nestor says he would have slain the twins during the Epean attack on Thryon in Pylos. They later defeated him in a chariot race during Amarynceus’ funeral games. See 23.638, where they are referred to as “Actor’s” sons.

12.239–40 The direction of birds’ flight—like other omens—is clarified by Hector here, although often it is referred to elsewhere in the Greek as “left” (bad omen) or “right” (good omen). Hector—together with this translation—equates flying to the “right” with easterly flight, toward dawn, and to the “left” with westerly flight, toward gloom. “Left” and “right” are often meaningless, as when an eagle flies toward Priam and Hecuba while they are apparently facing each other at 24.315. The same is true of references in the

Greek to the “right” or “left” side of a battle, translated here as “east” or “west” (e.g., 11.498).

12.258–60 The Greek fort consisted of heavy stone slabs laid on the ground as a foundation, above which rose a stone wall, with towers rising still higher at intervals.

13.301–303 This refers to an ancient battle between Phocian Phlegyians and Ephyri from either northern Elis or, more likely, Corinth.

13.459–61 An oblique reference to Aeneas’ marginal family status at Troy: a somewhat remote cousin of Priam, as compared with the sons whom Priam favors. See the family tree at the note for 20.215.

13.625 Zeus’s role as “jealous protector of host and guest alike” is akin to his role as protector of suppliants, noted at 1.11 above. Guest and host were under a duty of mutual respect, violation of which risked divine retribution. Paris’ seduction of Helen, wife of his host, Menelaus, was an egregious affront to that duty. The *Iliad* contains many references to warm relations and exchanges of gifts between host and guest. In one memorable incident, the warmth passes to grandsons on opposing sides of the Trojan War, who meet on the battlefield and eschew fighting each other. See 6.119–236.

13.695–96 This is the first of several references to men who fled their homeland in order to avoid revenge by families of men they had killed. An alternative to such flight was to appease the family with a “blood price” for the slain relative. See the reference at 18.498.

14.200–207 Legend has it that Tethys, Ocean’s wife, mothered Hera while Zeus battled the Titans, including Cronus and perhaps Rhea, mother of Zeus and Hera. The spat between Ocean and Tethys is likely an invention that Hera contrived to suit her purpose.

14.250–56 Hera hated Heracles, apparently because she was jealous of Zeus’s devotion to him, or of Zeus’s affection for Heracles’ mother, Alcmena, or both. At any rate, Hera often tried to foil Heracles, as in the passage describing how she caused a storm to blow him off course as he was returning from his sack of Troy, noted above at 5.638.

14.434 Rivers such as Xanthus have a dual source: Ocean is said to be their source, and that of all watercourses (see 21.195–97), but they are also said to be sired by Zeus (as here), or poured by Zeus (as at 21.326). Correspondingly, waters (including Ocean and

rivers) have a dual nature: they are at once a physical body or course of water and a divine personification.

15.18–31 This describes how Zeus punished Hera for driving Heracles off course, as referred to in the note to 14.250.

16.574 There is ambiguity about where Thetis resides. Here she resides with Peleus in Phthia, and elsewhere there are laments that she will not greet Achilles upon his return to Peleus' halls (e.g., 18.59–60, 18.330–32), but when Achilles calls her at 1.357–58, when she hears him weeping at 18.35, and when Iris finds her at 24.83, she is in the depths with her father or with nereids. She may be spending less time with Peleus because, as she complains, he has reached "extreme age" and "lies feeble, useless to me" (18.434–35).

18.487 "Bear" refers to the Big Dipper, still called *Ursa Major* or Great Bear.

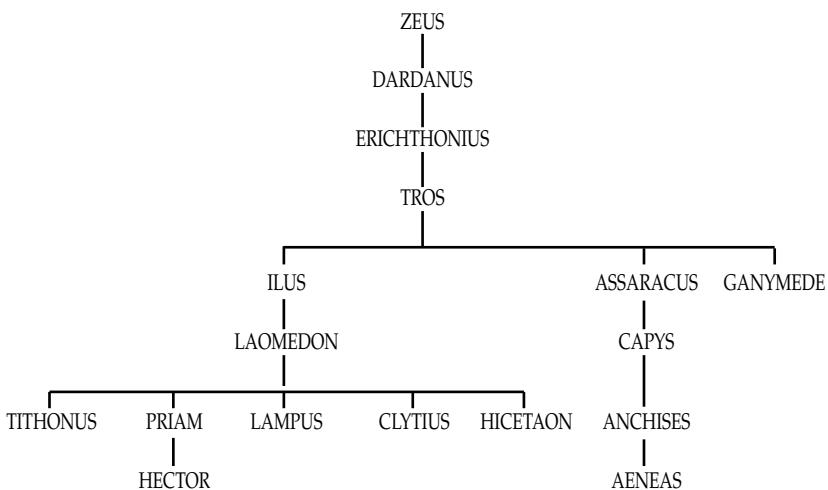
18.590–92 The legendary craftsman Daedalus created a dance arena for Ariadne, daughter of the Cretan king Minos, an arena that gave rise to orgiastic dances later performed by adherents of her cults.

18.604 The editors of the Oxford Classical Text omitted most of line 604, substituted line 605, and renumbered the line as "604, 605." They did not, however, renumber the balance of the lines in Book 8, so the lines numbered 610 and 615 in that text are in fact lines 609 and 614.

19.95–124 Hera's first act against Heracles (see the note at 14.250) was to use trickery to ensure that he was born after Eurystheus, and that Eurystheus, not Heracles, would rule in Argos, in order to fulfill Zeus's oath at lines 19.108–12.

20.145–48 See the note at 5.638 concerning the wall that Heracles built.

20.215–41 Aeneas' account of the family tree is depicted in the following diagram:



20.300–308 Aeneas and a few others will escape the Greek sack of Troy, and many centuries later, Romans will identify Aeneas as an ancestor of Romulus, the founder of their imperial city.

21.441–60 Poseidon and Apollo labored for Laomedon as described, and Poseidon constructed Ilium’s formidable wall. After Laomedon refused to pay for the work, Poseidon sent the sea monster that Heracles killed, as referred to in the note at 5.638.

23.471 “Aetolian stock” is a reference to Diomedes’ grandfather, the Aetolian king Oeneus.

23.630 Nestor’s account of “Amarynceus’ rites,” like the reference to games after Oedipus’ death (23.678–80), puts the funeral games for Patroclus in perspective as a regular occurrence.

23.638–43 “Actor’s twins” are Molione’s twins. See the note at 11.709.

23.745–47 The reference to Patroclus’ receiving ransom for Lycaon from Jason’s son suggests that Patroclus was acting on Achilles’ behalf in the transaction referred to at 21.40–43, where it is reported that Achilles sold Lycaon to Jason’s son in Lemnos.

24.187 See the note at 1.11 concerning the duty to suppliants.

24.602–17 As the passage indicates, according to legend, Niobe offended Leto by belittling the size of her brood, whereupon Leto's two children slaughtered Niobe's twelve. To encourage Priam to eat despite his grief, Achilles embellishes the legend, saying that Niobe ate while she grieved.

PRONUNCIATION GLOSSARY OF PROPER NOUNS

Major stress is denoted by a high mark (') preceding the syllable, minor stress by a low mark (.). Pronunciation of most phonetic equivalents is sufficiently apparent, with the following exceptions:

- a: as in "cat"
- e: as in "set"
- eye: rhymes with "sigh"
- i: as in "sit"
- o: as in "nod"; as in "for" when followed by "r"
- ow: rhymes with "now"
- ɔ: like the final "a" in "banana"

Many names lend themselves to shortening by elision. For example, "Balius" may be shortened from "bal•i•us" to "bal•yus," "Odysseus" from "o•dis•ee•us" to "o•dis•yoos," "Hippodamas" from "hip•od•a•mas" to "hip•od•mas."

- Abantes (a•ban•tees): A tribe in Euboea
- Abarbarea (a•bahr•ba•'ree•ə): A naiad near Troy
- Abas ('a•bas): A Trojan
- Abis ('a•bees): A tribe in Thrace
- Ablerus (a•bler•us): A Trojan
- Abydos ('a•bee•,doss): A town on the Hellespont
- Acamas (a•ka•mas): (1) A Trojan, son of Antenor; (2) a Thracian
- Acessamenus (a•ke•'sa•men•us): A king in Thrace
- Achaea (a•'khee•ə): A region in the northern Peloponnese; Greece in general
- Achelous (a•khe•'loh•us): Rivers in western Greece and Phrygia
- Achilles (a•'khi•lees): Son of Peleus and the goddess Thetis
- Actaea (ak•'tee•ə): A nereid

- Actor ('ak•tor): (1) A king in Arcadia; (2) grandfather of Patroclus; (3) father of Molione's twins (if not Poseidon); (4) father of Myrmidon Echeles
- Adamas ('a•da•mas): A Trojan, son of Asius
- Admetus (ad•'mee•tus): Father of Greek Eumelus
- Adrestia (a•dres•tee•ə): A town in Mysia, a Trojan ally
- Adrestus (a•dres•tus): (1) A king in Sicyon and father of Diomedes' wife Aegialia; (2) a leader of Adrestians; (3) two different Trojans
- Aeacus (ee•'ay•kus): Grandfather of Achilles; a son of Zeus
- Aegae ('ee•jee): A town in Achaea, sacred to Poseidon
- Aegaeon (ee•'jee•on): Alternate name for Briareus
- Aegeus ('ee•jee•us): Father of Theseus
- Aegalia (ee•jee•al•'eye•ə; ee•jee•'al•yə): Wife of Diomedes
- Aegialus (ee•jee•'ay•lus): (1) A region in the Peloponnese; (2) a town in Paphlagonia
- Aegilips ('eej•lips): A district or island ruled by Odysseus
- Aegina (ee•'jeye•nə): An island southwest of Athens
- Aegion (ee•'jeye•on): A town in the northern Peloponnese
- Aeneas (ee•'nee•ass): A Trojan ally, often referred to as a Trojan; son of Anchises and Aphrodite
- Aenius ('ee•ni•us): A Paeonian
- Aenus ('ee•nus): A town in Thrace
- Aeolus (ee•'oh•lus): The most remote ancestor known to Glaucus
- Aepy ('ee•pee): A town in Pylos
- Aepytus (ee•'peye•tus): Progenitor of royal Arcadians
- Aesepus (ee•'see•pus): (1) A Trojan, son of Abarbarea; (2) a river northeast of the Troad, in the Lycian district
- Aesytes (ee•'seye•tees): (1) Father of Trojan Antenor; (2) father of Trojan Alcathous
- Aesyme (ee•'seye•mee): A town in Thrace
- Aesymnus (ee•'sim•nus): A Greek
- Aethe ('ee•thee): A mare
- Aethices ('ee•thi•sees): A tribe from northern Greece near Achelous' headwaters
- Aethon ('ee•thon): One of Hector's horses
- Aethre ('ee•three): Mother of Theseus; a handmaid of Helen
- Aetolia (ee•'tohl•i•ə): A region north of the Peloponnese, south of Phthia
- Agacles ('a•ga•klees): A Myrmidon
- Agamede (a•ga•'mee•dee): An Epean woman, expert on medicinal plants
- Agamemnon (a•ga•'mem•non): The Greek commander-in-chief; the king in Mycenae
- Agapenor (a•ga•'pee•nor): A king in Arcadia
- Agasthenes (a•'gas•then•ees): A king in Elis
- Agastrophus (a•'gas•troh•fus): A Trojan

- Agathon ('a•ga•thon): A son of Priam
Agaua (a•'gow•ə): A nereid
Agelaus (,a•jee•'lay•us): (1) A Trojan; (2) a Greek
Agenor (a•'jee•nor): A Trojan, son of Antenor and Theano
Aglaea (a•'glee•ə): Mother of Nireus, the handsomest Greek after Achilles
Agrius ('a•gri•us): A son of Calydon's king Portheus
Ajax ('ay•jax): (1) Telamon's son: Preeminent Greek warrior after Achilles; (2) Oileus' son: Greek archer and runner; the "smaller" or "swifter" Ajax
Alastor (a•'las•tor): (1) A Lycian; (2) a Pylian leader; (3) father of Trojan Tros
Alcander (al•'kan•dor): A Lycian
Alcathous (al•'kath•oh•us): Trojan husband of Anchises' daughter Hippodamia
Alcestis (al•'ses•tis): Mother of Greek Eumelus
Alcimedon (al•'si•me•don): A Myrmidon leader; Achilles' charioteer
Alcimus ('al•si•mus): A Myrmidon
Alcmaon (alk•'may•on): A Greek
Alcmena (alk•'mee•nə): Mother of Heracles, by Zeus
Alean ('ay•lee•an): Plain where Bellerophon wandered
Alectryon (a•'lek•tri•on): Boeotian father of Leītus
Alesion (a•'lees•i•on): A hill in Elis
Aloeus (a•'lee•us): Mythical father of Otus and Ephialtes
Alope ('a•loh•pee): A town in Achilles' domain
Alos ('a•los): A town in Achilles' domain
Alpheus ('alf•ee•us): A river in the Peloponnese
Altes ('al•tees): A Lelegian king
Althaea (al•'thee•ə): Wife of Caledonian Oeneus; mother of Meleager
Alybe ('a•li•bee): A region far inland from Troy
Amarynceus (a•ma•'rin•see•us): (1) An Epean leader; (2) father of Automedon
Amathia (a•math•'eye•ə): A nereid
Amisodarus (a•mis•'o•da•rus): A king in Caria
Amopaon (a•moh•'pay•on): A Trojan
Amphiclus ('am•fi•klus): A Trojan
Amphidamas (am•'fi•da•mus): (1) A Cytherian; (2) a Locrian
Amphigenia (,am•fi•jen•'eye•ə): A town in Nestor's realm
Amphimachus (am•'fi•ma•khus): (1) An Elean leader; (2) a Carian leader
Amphinome (am•'fin•oh•mee): A nereid
Amphion ('am•fi•on): An Epean leader
Amphithoa (am•fi•'thoh•ə): A nereid
Amphius ('am•fi•us): (1) A Trojan leader; (2) a Trojan ally
Amphoterus (am•'fot•er•us): A Lycian
Amyclae (am•'eye•klee): A city south of Sparta

- Amydon ('am•i•don): A city in Paeonia, on river Axius
- Amyntor (am•'in•tor): Father of Achilles' companion Phoenix
- Ancaeus (an•'kee•us): (1) An Arcadian leader; (2) a wrestler once beaten by Nestor
- Anchialus (an•'khey•a•lus): A Greek
- Anchises (an•'khey•sees): (1) Father of Aeneas; (2) father of Greek Echepolus
- Andraemon (an•'dree•mon): Father of the Aetolian leader Thoas
- Andromache (an•'dro•ma•khee): Wife of Hector
- Anemoria (,an•em•oh•'reye•ə): A town in Phocis
- Antea (an•'tee•ə): Wife of Proetus
- Antenor (an•'ten•or): A Trojan elder
- Anthea (an•'thee•ə): A town in Agamemnon's realm
- Anthedon (an•'thee•don): A town in Boeotia
- Anthemion (an•'thee•mi•on): Father of Trojan Simoisius
- Antilochus (an•'til•o•khush): A son of Nestor
- Antimachus (an•'ti•ma•khush): A Trojan
- Antiphates (an•'ti•fa•tees): A Trojan
- Antiphonus (an•'ti•fo•nus): A son of Priam
- Antiphus ('an•ti•fus): (1) A son of Priam; (2) a Maeonian leader; (3) a leader of Greek allies from islands west of Lycia
- Antrone (an•'troh•nee): A town in northern Euboea
- Apaesus (a•'pee•sus): A town in Mysia
- Aphareus (a•'far•ee•us): A Greek
- Aphrodite (,af•roh•'deye•tee): Goddess of love; daughter of Zeus and goddess Dione
- Apisaon (a•pi•'say•on): (1) A Greek; (2) a Trojan
- Apollo (a•'pol•oh): God of archery, plague, and prophecy; son of Zeus and goddess Leto
- Apseudes ('aps•yoo•dees): A nereid
- Araethyria (a•,ree•thi•'ree•ə): A town in Agamemnon's domain
- Arcadia (ar•'kay•di•ə): A region in the central Peloponnese
- Arcesilaus (,ar•ke•si•'lay•us): A Boeotian leader
- Archelochus (ar•'khel•o•khush): Trojan son of Antenor
- Archeptolemus (,ar•khep•'tol•e•mus): Hector's charioteer
- Areilycus (a•ree•'il•i•kus): (1) Boeotian father of Prothoënor; (2) a Trojan
- Areithous (a•ree•'ith•oh•us): (1) a Boeotian club-fighter; (2) a Thracian charioteer
- Arene (a•'ree•nee): A town in Nestor's realm
- Ares ('a•rees): War god; war personified; son of Zeus and Hera
- Aretaon (a•re•'tay•on): A Trojan
- Aretus (a•'ree•tus): A son of Priam
- Argissa (ar•'gis•ə): A town south of Olympus on river Peneus
- Argive ('ar•,geyev): Pertaining to Argos or, generalized, to all of Greece

- Argos ('ar•gos): A region ruled by Agamemnon; a city in Diomedes' domain
Argus ('ar•gus): A hundred-eyed monster killed by Hermes
Ariadne (a•ree•ad•nee): Daughter of former Cretan king Minos
Arima (a•rim•ə): A region in Asia Minor south of the Troad
Arion (a•reye•on): A horse of legendary speed owned by Sicyon king Adrestus
Arisbas (a•ris•bas): A Greek
Arisbe (a•ris•bee): A town in the Troad
Arne ('ar•nee): A city in Boeotia
Arsinous (ar•sin•oh•us): Father of Nestor's female slave Hecamede
Artemis ('ar•tem•is): Goddess of the hunt; daughter of Zeus and Leto
Asaeus (a•see•us): A Greek
Ascalaphus (as•kal•a•fus): A Boeotian leader; son of Ares
Ascania (as•kan•i•a): A district in Phrygia or Mysia
Ascanius (as•kan•i•us): A Phrygian leader
Asclepius (as•klep•i•us): A renowned healer; father of Machaon and Podalirius
Asine (as•eye•nee): A town in Diomedes' realm
Asius ('ay•si•us): (1) A Phrygian, brother of Hecuba; (2) a Trojan ally
Asopus (a•soh•pus): A river in Boeotia
Aspledon (a•splee•don): A town in Boeotia
Assaracus (a•sa•ra•kus): Son of Tros; great-grandfather of Aeneas
Asterion (a•ster•i•on): A town southwest of Olympus, on river Peneus
Asteropaeus (as•ter•oh•pee•us): A Paeonian leader; grandson of river Axius
Astyalus (a•steye•a•lus): A Trojan
Astyanax (a•steye•a•nax): Trojans' name for Hector's son: "City Master"
Astynous (a•stin•oh•us): Two different Trojans
Astyochaea (a•sti•oh•khee•ə): Mother of Tlepolemus, by Heracles
Astyoche (a•steye•oh•khee): Mother of Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, by Ares
Astypylus (a•stip•i•lus): A Paeonian
Ate ('ah•tee): A goddess; folly personified
Athena (a•thee•nə): Goddess of arts and war; motherless daughter of Zeus
Athens ('a•thens): A city south of Boeotia
Athos ('a•thos): A mountain in the three-fingered peninsula east of Axios
Atreus ('ay•tree•us): Grandson of Hermes; father of Agamemnon and Menelaus
Atrides (a•treye•dees): Son of Atreus (Agamemnon or Menelaus)
Atymnius (a•tim•ni•us): (1) Paphlagonian father of Mydon; (2) a Carian
Augeae (ow•jee•ee): Towns in Locris and Lacedaemon
Augeas (ow•jee•as): A king in Elis
Aulis ('ow•lis): A town in Boeotia where the Greek army assembled to sail
Autolychus (ow•tol•i•khush): Source of cap worn by Odysseus on nighttime mission
Automedon (ow•to•me•don): Achilles' charioteer
Autonomous (ow•ton•oh•us): (1) A Greek; (2) a Trojan

- Autophon ('ow•toh•fon): Father of Cadmean leader Polyphontes
- Axius ('ax•i•us): A river in Paeonia
- Axylus ('ax•i•lus): An Arisbean ally of Troy
- Balius ('bal•i•us): One of Achilles' horses
- Bathycles ('bath•i•klees): A Myrmidon
- Batiae ('bat•i•ee): A hill near Ilium
- Bellerophon (bel•'er•oh•,fon): Grandfather of Lycian leader Glaucus
- Bessa ('bess•ə): A town in Locris
- Bienor (beye•'ee•nor): A Trojan
- Boagrius (boh•'ag•ri•us): A river in Locris
- Boebe ('bee•bee): A town and lake west of Mount Pelion
- Boeotia (bee•'oh•shə): A region in mainland Greece, north of Athens
- Boreas ('boh•ree•as): The north wind personified
- Borus ('boh•rus): (1) A Maeone; (2) nominal father of Achilles' nephew Menes-theus (actually fathered by river Spercheus)
- Briareus (breye•'ar•ee•us): Water giant with one hundred arms
- Briseis ('breye•see•is): Captive woman whom Greeks awarded to Achilles
- Briseus ('breye•see•us): Father of Briseis; a king in Lyrnessus
- Bryiae ('breye•si•ee): A town in Lacedaemon
- Bucolion (boo•'kol•i•on): A son of Laomedon
- Bucolus ('boo•ko•lus): Grandfather of Athenian leader Iasus
- Budion (boo•'deye•on): A town in Phthia
- Buprasion (boo•'pras•i•on): A town in Elis
- Cabesan (ka•'bee•san): A resident of Cabesus, a town in Thrace
- Cadmean ('kad•mee•an): Another name for Theban, after Thebes' founder Cadmus
- Caeneus ('kee•nee•us): A king of the Lapiths
- Calchas ('kal•khas): The preeminent Greek prophet
- Calesius (ka•'lees•i•us): An Arisbean charioteer
- Caletor (ka•'lee•tor): (1) Father of Greek Aphareus; (2) a cousin of Hector
- Callianasa (,kal•i•a•'nas•ə): A nereid
- Callianira (,kal•i•a•'ni•rə): A nereid
- Calliarus (kal•'eye•a•rus): A town in Locris
- Callicolone (,kal•i•koh•'loh•nee): A hill near Ilium
- Calydnae (kal•'id•nee): Islands near Cos
- Calydon ('kal•i•don): A town in southern Aetolia
- Camirus (kam•'eye•rus): A town on island Rhodes
- Capaneus (ka•'pay•nee•us): One of the Seven against Thebes; father of Sthenelus
- Capys ('kap•is): Son of Assaracus; father of Anchises
- Cardamile (kar•'dam•i•lee): A town in Agamemnon's realm
- Caresus (ka•'rees•us): A river arising in Ida

- Caria ('ka•ri•ə): A region north of Lycia
- Carystus (ka•'ris•tus): A town in southern Euboea
- Casos ('kas•os): An island east of Crete
- Cassandra (ka•'san•drə): A clairvoyant daughter of Priam
- Castianeira (kas•ti•a•'nee•rə): A wife of Priam; mother of Gorgythion
- Castor ('kas•tor): A mortal son of Zeus; brother of Pollux and Helen
- Cauconians (kow•'kohn•i•ans): A tribe from Paphlagonia
- Cayster ('kay•ster): A river south of the Troad
- Ceas ('see•as): Grandfather of Ciconian leader Euphemus
- Cebriones (se•'breye•oh•nes): Hector's brother and charioteer
- Centaur ('sen•tawr): Mythical man-beast with a horse's trunk and legs and a man's chest and head
- Cephallenies; Cephallenians (,sef•a•'leen•ees; ,sef•a•'leen•i•ans): Subjects of Odysseus on Ithaca and the mainland
- Cephisus (sef•'eye•sus): A river in Phocis
- Cerinthus (ser•'in•thus): A town in Euboea
- Chalcis ('khal•sis): A town in Euboea
- Chalcodon ('khal•koh•don): A king of the Abantes
- Chalcon ('khal•kon): A Myrmidon
- Charis ('kha•ris): Grace personified; divine wife of Hephaestus
- Charops ('kha•rops): A Trojan
- Charopus (kha•'roh•pus): A king on Syme
- Chersidamas (kher•'sid•a•mas): A son of Priam
- Chimaera (khi•'mee•rə): A monster: part lion, part goat, part serpent
- Chiron ('khey•ron): A centaur skilled at healing
- Chromis ('kroh•mis): A Trojan or ally
- Chromius ('kroh•mi•us): (1) A son of Priam; (2) a Pylian; (3) a Lycian; (4) a Trojan; (5) a Mysian leader
- Chryse ('khreye•see): A port in the Troad
- Chryseis ('khreye•see•is): Female captive of Agamemnon
- Chryses ('khreye•sees): Father of Chryseis; a priest of Apollo
- Chrysothemis (khreye•'soth•em•is): Daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnaestra
- Ciconia (si•'kohn•i•ə): A region in Thrace
- Cilicians (sil•'is•i•əns): A tribe in Phrygia, ruled by Eëtion
- Cilla ('sil•ə): A town in the Troad
- Cinyrus ('sin•i•rus): A king in Cyprus
- Cisseus ('sis•ee•us): Father of Trojan priestess Theano
- Cleobulus (klee•'o•boo•lus): A Trojan
- Cleonae (klee•'oh•nee): A town in Agamemnon's realm
- Clitus ('kleye•tus): (1) A Greek; (2) a Trojan
- Clonius ('kloh•ni•us): A Boeotian leader
- Clymene ('kleye•men•ee): (1) A nereid; (2) a handmaid of Helen

- Clytemnaestra (kleye•tem•'nest•rə): Wife of Agamemnon
- Clytius ('klit•i•us): A brother of Priam
- Clytomedes (kleye•toh•'mee•dees): A boxer once beaten by Nestor
- Cnossos ('knoss•os): A city in Crete
- Coeranus (see•'ran•us): (1) A Lycian; (2) Meriones' Cretan charioteer
- Coön ('koh•on): Trojan son of Antenor
- Copae ('koh•pee): A town in Boeotia
- Copreus ('koh•pree•us): Father of Eurystheus' herald Periphetes
- Corinth ('kor•inth): A city in the eastern Peloponnese
- Coronea (kor•oh•'nee•ə): A city in Boeotia
- Cos (kos): An island west of Lycia
- Cranae ('kra•nee): An island; site of tryst between Paris and Helen
- Crapathus (kra•'path•us): An island near Rhodes
- Creon ('kree•on): A Boeotian
- Crete (kreet): A large island southeast of, and allied with, Greece
- Crethon ('kree•thon): A Trojan
- Crisa ('kri•sə): A town in Phocis
- Croesmus ('krees•mus): A Trojan
- Cromna ('krom•nə): A district in Paphlagonia
- Cronus ('kroh•nus): A Titan; father of Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, and Hera
- Crosylia (kro•si•'leye•ə): An Ithacan island or village
- Cteatus (ktee•'ay•tus): One of Molione's twin sons fathered by Poseidon
- Curetes (koo•'ree•tees): An ancient tribe near Aetolia
- Cyllene (si•'leen•ee): A mountain chain in Arcadia
- Cymodoce (si•'mod•oh•see): A nereid
- Cymothoa (si•'moth•oh•ə): A nereid
- Cynus ('seye•nus): A harbor town in Locris
- Cyparisseis (sip•a•'ri•see•is): A town in Elis
- Cyparissus (sip•a•'ri•sus): A town in Phocis
- Cyphus ('seye•fus): A town in the Peraebia region
- Cythera ('sith•e•rə): An island south of the Peloponnese
- Cytorus ('si•tor•us): A town in Paphlagonia
- Daedalus ('dee•da•lus): A Cretan craftsman
- Daetor ('dee•tor): A Trojan
- Damasas (da•'ma•sas): A Trojan
- Damastor (da•'mas•tor): Father of Lycian Tlepolemus
- Danaë ('dan•a•ee): Mother of Perseus, by Zeus
- Dardan; Dardanian ('dar•dan, dar•'day•ni•an): (1) An inhabitant of the Dardania area; the Dardanians were close Trojan allies because of family ties through Dardanus; (2) the name of one of Ilium's city gates
- Dardania (dar•'day•ni•ə): A city founded on Ida by Dardanus

- Dardanus ('dar•da•nus): A son of Zeus; founder of Dardania; progenitor of the Trojans and Dardanians through his grandson Tros
- Dares ('da•rees): A Trojan priest of Hephaestus
- Daulis ('dow•lis): A town in Phocis
- Dawn: Dawn personified (when capitalized)
- Deīcoön (dee•'ik•oh•on): A Trojan
- Deīochus (dee•'i•oh•khus): A Greek
- Deīopites (dee•i•oh•'peye•tees): A son of Priam
- Deiphobus (dee•if•oh•bus): A son of Priam and Hecuba
- Deīpylus (dee•ip•i•lus): A comrade of Diomedes' aide Sthenelus
- Deīpyrus (dee•ip•i•rus): A Greek
- Demeter (de•mee•ter): Goddess of the earth's produce, especially corn; mother of Persephone by Zeus
- Democoön (de•mok•oh•on): A natural son of Priam
- Demoleon (de•moh•lee•on): A son of Trojan Antenor
- Demuchus (de•moo•kus): A Trojan
- Deucalion (doo•'kal•i•on): (1) A son of Cretan king Minos and father of Idomeneus; (2) a Trojan
- Dexamene (dex•'a•mee•nee): A nereid
- Dexius ('dex•i•us): Greek father of Iphinous
- Diocles ('deye•oh•klees): A Greek
- Diomedē (deye•o•'mee•dee): One of Achilles' slaves
- Diomedes (deye•o•'mee•dees): A king in Argos; a preeminent Greek warrior
- Dion ('deye•on): A town in Euboea
- Dione (deye•'oh•nee): Divine mother of Aphrodite, by Zeus
- Dionysus (deye•o•'neye•sus): God of wine
- Diores (deye•'or•ees): (1) An Epean leader; (2) father of Greek Automedon
- Disenor (deye•'see•nor): A Lycian
- Dodona (do•'doh•na): A town in far northwestern Greece, sacred to Zeus
- Dolon ('doh•lon): A Trojan spy
- Dolopes; Dolopions ('dol•o•pees, dol•'oh•pi•ons): A tribe on Phthia's border
- Dolops ('dol•ops): (1) A Trojan; (2) a Greek
- Dorion ('doh•ri•on): A town in Nestor's realm
- Doris ('doh•ris): A nereid
- Doryclus ('doh•ri•klus): A natural son of Priam
- Doto ('doh•toh): A nereid
- Dracius ('dray•si•us): An Epean leader
- Dresus ('dree•sus): A Trojan
- Dryas ('dreye•as): (1) A king of the Lapiths; (2) father of Lycurgus
- Dryops ('dreye•ops): A son of Priam
- Dulichion (doo•'li•khi•on): An island southeast of Ithaca

- Dymas ('deye•mas): Phrygian father of Hecuba
- Dynamene (deye•na•'mee•nee): A nereid
- Echeclies ('ekh•e•klees): A Myrmidon
- Echeclus (e•'khe•klus): Two different Trojans
- Echemmon (e•'khem•on): A son of Priam
- Echepolus (e•'khe•poh•lus): (1) A Greek; (2) a Trojan
- Echinades (e•'khin•a•dees): A group of islands near Dulichion
- Echius ('ekh•i•us): (1) Father of Meriones' aide Mecisteus; (2) two different Lycians
- Eëtion (ee•'et•i•on): (1) Father of Andromache, a king in Thebe; (2) an Imbrian; (3) a Trojan
- Eilyssion (ay•'lis•i•on): A town in Boeotia
- Eilythia (ay•'lith•i•ə): Goddesses of childbirth
- Eionae (ee•'eye•oh•nee): A town in Diomedes' realm
- Eioneus (ee•eye•'oh•nee•us): A Greek
- Elasus (e•'lay•sus): A Trojan
- Elatus (e•'lay•tus): A Trojan ally
- Elean ('ee•lee•an): An inhabitant of Elis
- Eleon ('ee•lee•on): A town in Boeotia
- Elephenor (e•lef•'ee•nor): An Abante leader
- Elis ('ee•lis): A district in the western Peloponnese
- Elone (ee•'loh•ne): A town near Olympus
- Emathia (e•'may•thi•ə): An area north of Greece
- Enetia (e•'nee•shə): A district in Paphlagonia
- Enienes (e•ni•'ee•nees): A tribe around Dodona
- Eniopeus (en•'eye•o•pyoos): A charioteer of Hector
- Enispe (e•'nis•pee): A town in Arcadia
- Ennomus ('en•oh•mus): (1) A Mysian prophet; (2) a Trojan
- Enope ('en•oh•pee): A town in Agamemnon's realm
- Enops ('ee•nops): (1) A Mysian; (2) an Aetolian
- Enyeus (en•'eye•ee•us): A king in Phrygian Scyros
- Enyo (en•'eye•oh): Battle personified
- Epaltes (ep•'al•tees): A Lycian
- Epeans (ep•'ee•ans): A tribe in northern Elis
- Epeius (ep•'ay•us): A Greek boxer
- Ephialtes (ef•i•'al•tees): A giant; brother of Otus; tormenter of Ares
- Ephyra ('ef•i•rə): (1) Ancient name for Corinth; (2) a city in northern Elis
- Ephyri ('ef•i•reye): A tribe once fought by Ares
- Epicles ('ep•i•klees): A Lycian
- Epidaurus (ep•i•'dow•rus): A town in the Peloponnese, southeast of Mycenae
- Epigeus (ep•i•'jee•us): A Myrmidon
- Epistor (ep•'i•stor): A Trojan

- Epistrophus (*ep•i•stroh•fus*): (1) A Phocian leader; (2) a Halizonian leader; (3) a fighter in Lyrnessus
- Erechtheus (*er•eekh•thee•us*): An Athenian patriarch
- Eretria (*er•e•tree•ə*): A town in Euboea
- Ereuthalion (*er•oo•thal•i•on*): An Arcadian killed by Nestor in Nestor's youth
- Eriboea (*er•i•bee•ə*): Stepmother of giants Otus and Ephialtes
- Erichthonius (*er•ikh•thoh•ni•us*): Son of Dardanus, father of Tros
- Eriopis (*er•i•oh•pis*): Wife of Oileus
- Erylaus (*er•i•lay•us*): A Trojan
- Erymas ('er•i•mas): (1) A Trojan; (2) a Lycian
- Erythini (*er•i•thi•ni*): A place in Paphlagonia
- Erythrae (*er•ith•ree*): A place in Boeotia
- Eteocles (*et•ee•oh•klees*): A king in Thebes; son of Oedipus
- Eteonus (*et•ee•oh•nus*): A town in Boeotia
- Euaemon (yoo•'ee•mon): Greek father of Eurypylus
- Euboea (yoo•'bee•ə): An island adjoining Boeotia
- Euchenor (yoo•'khee•nor): Greek son of Corinthian prophet Polyidus
- Eudorus (yoo•'dor•us): A Myrmidon leader
- Euenus (yoo•'ee•nus): Father of Lyrnessians Epistrophus and Mynes
- Euiippus (yoo•'ip•us): A Lycian
- Eumedes (yoo•'mee•dees): A Trojan herald
- Eumelus (yoo•'mee•lus): A Greek leader and horseman
- Euneus (yoo•'nee•us): A son of Jason; a king on Lemnos
- Euphemus (yoo•'fee•mus): A Ciconian leader
- Euphetes (yoo•'fee•tees): A king in Ephyrta in Elis
- Euphorbus (yoo•'for•bus): A Trojan
- Euryalus (yoo•'reye•a•lus): A Greek
- Eurybates (yoo•'rib•a•tees): (1) A herald of Agamemnon; (2) a herald of Odysseus
- Eurydamas (yoo•'rid•a•mus): A Trojan
- Erymedon (yoo•'rim•e•don): (1) Agamemnon's charioteer; (2) a servant of Nestor
- Eurynome (yoo•'rin•o•mee): A daughter of Ocean
- Eurypylus (yoo•'rip•i•lus): (1) A Greek; (2) lord of a city on the island of Cos
- Eurystheus (yoo•'ris•thee•us): A former king in Mycenae, with power over Heracles
- Eurytus (yoo•'reye•tus): Epean son of Actor (or Poseidon)
- Eussorus (yoo•'sor•us): A Thracian
- Eutresis (yoo•'tree•sis): A town in Boeotia
- Exadius (ex•'ad•i•us): A Lapith
- Furies: Goddesses who punish crimes and fulfill curses

- Galatea (gal•a•’tee•ə): A nereid
Ganymede (’gan•i•,meed•ee): A son of Tros; Zeus’s cupbearer
Gargarus (’gar•gar•us): Ida’s highest peak
Gerenia (ger•een•i•ə): A region near Pylos and identified with Nestor
Glaphyrae (’gla•fi•ree): A town in Lacedaemon
Glaucha (’glow•kə): A nereid
Glaucus (’glow•kus): (2) A Lycian leader; (2) his great-grandfather
Glisas (’gleye•sas): A town in Boeotia
Gonoëssa (gon•oh•’es•ə): A town in the northern Peloponnese near Pellene
Gorgon (’gor•gon): One of three maidens with faces frightful to look upon; a glance at one, Medusa, turned mortals to stone
Gorgythion (gor•’gith•i•on): A son of Priam
Gortyn (’gor•tin): A city in Crete
Graces: Handmaids of Aphrodite
Graea (’gree•ə): A town in Boeotia
Grenicus (’gren•i•kus): A river forming on Ida
Guneus (’goon•ee•us): A leader of tribes from Peraibia
Gyge (’geye•gee): A lake in Maeonia
Gyrtius (’gurt•i•us): A Mysian leader
Gyrtone (gurt•’oh•ne): A town near Olympus, on river Peneus
Hades (’hay•dees): God of the underworld
Halia (’hay•li•ə): A nereid
Haliartus (hal•i•’art•us): A town in Boeotia
Halius (’hal•i•us): A Lycian
Halizonians (hal•i•’zoh•ni•ans): A tribe from east of Phrygia, Trojan allies
Harma (’harm•ə): A town in Boeotia
Harpalion (har•’pal•i•on): A Paphlagonian
Hebe (’hee•bee): A goddess, servant to other immortals
Hecamede (hek•a•’meed•ee): A female slave of Nestor
Hector (’hek•tor): The preeminent Trojan warrior; Priam’s son
Hecuba (’hek•u•bə): Priam’s wife; Hector’s mother
Helen (’hel•en): A mortal daughter of Zeus; wife of Trojan prince Paris, formerly of Menelaus
Helenus (hel•’een•us): (1) A prophet, son of Priam; (2) a Greek
Helicaon (hel•i•’kay•on): Trojan son of Antenor
Helice (’hel•i•see): A town in Achaea
Helios (’heel•i•os): The sun
Hellas (’hel•as): A city in Phthia
Hellespont (’hel•es•pont): The strait north of Ilium (now “the Dardanelles”)
Helos (’heel•os): (1) A city in southern Peloponnese; (2) a town in Pylos
Hephaestus (he•’fest•us): God of fire and metallurgy; son of Zeus and Hera; born lame

- Heptarorus (hep•tar•'oh•rus): A river flowing from Ida into Mysia
- Hera ('hee•rə): Wife of Zeus; daughter of Cronus and hence Zeus's sister
- Heracles ('her•a•klees): A legendary hero (Hercules); a son of Zeus
- Hermes ('her•mees): A god, messenger for other gods and guide for mortals
- Hermione (her•'mey•oh•nee): A town near Argos
- Hermus ('her•mus): A river in Phrygia and Mysia
- Hicetaon (hik•a•'tay•on): A Trojan
- Hippasus (hi•'pay•sus): (1) Father of Greek Hypsenor; (2) father of Trojans
Charops Socus, and Apisaon
- Hippemolgi (hi•pe•'mol•gi): Mare-milking tribe from region north of Black Sea
- Hippocoön (hi•'pok•oh•on): A Thracian
- Hippodamas (hi•'pod•a•mas): A Trojan
- Hippodamia (hi•pod•a•'mey•ə): A daughter of Anchises
- Hippolochus (hi•'pol•o•khus): (1) A Trojan; (2) Lycian father of Glaucus
- Hippomachus (hi•'pom•a•khus): A Trojan
- Hipponous (hi•'pon•oh•us): A Greek
- Hippothous (hi•'poth•oh•us): (1) A son of Priam; (2) a Pelasgian leader
- Hippotion (hi•pot•'eye•on): A Trojan
- Histiaeia (his•ti•'ee•ə): A city in Euboea
- Hours: Goddesses of seasonal change; gatekeepers of Olympus
- Hurtacus ('hur•ta•kus): Father of Trojan Asius
- Hyades ('hey•a•dees): A constellation
- Hyampolis (hey•e•'am•poh•lis; hey•e•'am•plis): A town in Phocis
- Hyde ('hey•dee): A town on Mount Tmolus in Paeonia
- Hyle ('hey•lee): A town in Boeotia
- Hyllos ('hil•os): A river in Maeonia
- Hyperenor (hey•e•per•'ee•nor): A Trojan
- Hyperesia (hey•e•per•'ees•i•ə): A town in Achaea
- Hyperia (hey•e•per•ee•ə): A spring in Argos
- Hyperion (hey•e•per•i•on): A Titan; father of the sun (Helios)
- Hypirochus (hi•'peye•roh•khus): A Trojan
- Hypiron (hi•'peye•ron): A Trojan
- Hypothebe (hey•e•poh•'thee•bee): A town in Boeotia
- Hypsenor (hip•'see•nor): (1) A Greek; (2) a Trojan
- Hypsipyle (hip•'si•pi•lee): Wife of Jason; daughter of Thoas, a king on Lemnos
- Hyria ('hey•ri•ə): A town in Boeotia
- Hyrmine (hur•'mey•nee): A town in Elis
- Hyrtacus ('hur•ta•kus): Father of Trojan ally Asius
- Hyrtius ('hurt•i•us): A Mysian
- Iaera (eye•'ee•rə): A nereid
- Ialmenus (eye•'al•men•us): A Boeotian leader; son of Ares
- Ialyssus (eye•a•'leye•sus): A district on Rhodes

- Iamenus (eye•'a•men•us): A Trojan
Iapetus (eye•'a•pet•us): A Titan
Iardanus (eye•'ar•dan•us): A river in Elis
Iasus (eye•'ay•sus): An Athenian leader
Icarian (eye•'kar•i•an): A sea between Crete and Lycia
Ida ('eye•də): A mountain near Ilium
Idaeus (eye•'dee•us): (1) Trojan herald and Priam's charioteer; (2) another Trojan
Idas ('eye•das): A legendary archer
Idomeneus (i•'dom•e•nyoos): The king in Crete
Ilioneus (eye•li•'on•ee•us): A Trojan
Ilium ('il•i•um): The city of Troy
Ilus ('eye•lus): Son of Tros, father of Laomedon
Imbrasus (im•'bray•sus): Thracian father of Pirous
Imbrius ('im•bri•us): A Trojan, son-in-law of Priam
Imbros ('im•bros): An island northwest of Ilium
Iolcus (eye•'ol•kus): A town in Lacedaemon
Ionians (eye•'oh•ni•ans): Probably refers to Greek force from Cos and other islands southwest of Lycia; perhaps forerunners of the later Ionian colonization of mainland Asia Minor
Ipheus ('i•fee•us): A Trojan
Iphianassa (i•fi•a•'nas•ə): A daughter of Agamemnon
Iphiclus ('i•fi•klus): A Greek
Iphidamas (i•'fi•da•mas): Trojan son of Antenor and Theano
Iphinous (i•'fin•oh•us): A Greek
Iphis ('eye•fis): A female slave of Patroclus
Iphition (i•'fit•i•on): A Trojan
Iphitus (i•'feye•tus): A Phocian
Iris ('eye•ris): (1) Zeus's messenger; (2) a rainbow
Isander (eye•'sand•er): Great-uncle of Lycian leader Glaucus
Isus ('eye•sus): A natural son of Priam
Ithaca ('ith•a•kə): An island and city west of Aetolia, home of Odysseus
Ithaemenes (i•'thee•me•nees): A Lycian
Ithome (i•'thoh•mee): A town north of Phthia
Iton ('eye•ton): A town in Protesilaus' realm, north of Euboea
Itymoneus (i•'ti•mon•yoos): An Epean killed by Nestor in his youth
Ixion ('ix•i•on): Lapith husband of a woman Zeus claims to have seduced
Janassa (ja•'nas•ə): A nereid
Janira (ja•'nir•ə): A nereid
Jason ('jay•son): Leader of the Argonaut quest for the golden fleece
Laas ('lay•as): A town in Lacedaemon
Lacedaemon (la•sed•'ee•mon): A region in the southern Peloponnese
Laerces (lay•'er•sees): A Myrmidon

- Laertes (lay•'er•tees): Father of Odysseus
- Lampus ('lamp•us): (1) Trojan father of Dolops; (2) one of Dawn's horses; (3) one of Hector's horses
- Laodamas (lay•'od•a•mas): A Trojan son of Antenor
- Laodamia (lay•oh•dam•'eye•ə): Mother of Sarpedon; Glaucus' first cousin once removed
- Laodice (lay•'od•i•see): (1) A daughter of Agamemnon; (2) a daughter of Priam
- Laodocus (lay•'od•o•kus): (1) A Trojan; (2) a Greek
- Laogonus (lay•'og•o•nus): Two different Trojans
- Laomedon (lay•'om•ed•on): Father of Priam
- Laothoë (lay•'oth•oh•ee): Mother of Trojan Lycaon
- Laphiths ('lap•iths): A tribe dwelling between Mounts Olympus and Pelion
- Larisa (lar•'is•ə): A district held by Pelasgians near Troy
- Lectos ('lek•tos): A promontory on the Mysian coast opposite Lesbos
- Leitus (lee•'eye•tus): A Boeotian leader
- Leleges; Lelegians ('lel•e•gees; lel•'ee•gi•ans): A tribe in Caria, south of the Troad
- Lemnos ('lem•nos): An island west of Ilium
- Leocritus (lee•'o•krit•us): A Greek
- Leonteus (lee•'on•tee•us): A Lapith
- Lesbos ('les•bos): An island west of Mysia
- Lethus ('lee•thus): A Pelasgian from the Troad region
- Leto ('lee•toh): Divine mother of Apollo and Artemis, by Zeus
- Leucus ('loo•kus): A comrade of Odysseus
- Lilaea (li•'lee•ə): A town in Phocis
- Limnoria (lim•'nor•i•ə): A nereid
- Lindus ('lin•dus): A town on Rhodes
- Locrians ('lok•ri•ans): Inhabitants of the Locris region, northwest of Boeotia
- Lycaon ('lik•ay•on): (1) Father of Trojan ally Pandarus; (2) a son of Priam
- Lycastus (lik•'ast•us): A town on Crete
- Lycia ('lis•i•ə): (1) A region south of Troy; (2) a district north of Troy
- Lycimnius (li•'sim•ni•us): Aged Rhodesian killed by his nephew Tlepolemus
- Lycomedes (lik•o•'mee•dees): A Boeotian
- Lycon ('lik•on): A Trojan
- Lycophontes (lik•oh•'fon•tees): A Trojan
- Lycophron ('lik•oh•fron): A Greek
- Lyctus ('lik•tus): A city in Crete
- Lycurgus (li•'kur•gus): (1) A Thracian king, antagonist of Dionysus; (2) a Greek
- Lynnessus (lur•'nes•us): A town in Mysia
- Lysander (leye•'san•der): A Trojan
- Machaon (ma•'khay•on): One of two Greek healers (with his brother Podalirius)
- Maeander (mee•'and•er): A river between Maeonia and Caria
- Maemelus ('mee•me•lus): Father of Myrmidon leader Pisander

- Maeon ('mee•on): A Theban
- Maeonia (mee•'oh•ni•ə) : A region south of Troy
- Maeones (may•'oh•nees): Inhabitants of Maeonia
- Maera ('mee•rə): A nereid
- Magnesians (mag•'nee•si•ans): Inhabitants of region around Mount Pelion
- Mantinea (man•ti•'nee•ə): A city in Arcadia
- Maris ('mar•is): A Lycian
- Marpessa (mar•'pes•ə): Wife of Idas, who retrieved her from abductor Apollo
- Mases ('may•sees): A town in Diomedes' domain
- Mastor ('mas•tor): Father of Ajax's comrade Lycophron
- Mecisteus (me•'sis•tee•us): Two different Greeks
- Medeon ('me•dee•on): A town in Boeotia
- Medesicaste (,me•de•si•'kast•ee): A natural daughter of Priam
- Medon ('mee•don): (1) A Myrmidon leader, stepbrother of Ajax Oïleus; (2) a Lycian
- Meges ('mee•gees): Nephew of Odysseus
- Melanippus (mel•a•'nip•us): (1) An Achaean leader; (2) three different Trojans
- Melanthius (mel•'an•thi•us): A Trojan
- Melas ('mel•as): A great-uncle of Diomedes
- Meleager (mel•ee•'ay•ger): A hero of Calydon; slayer of the Calydonian boar
- Meliboea (mel•i•'bee•ə): A town in Magnesia
- Melita (mel•'eye•tə): A nereid
- Menelaus (men•e•'lay•us): Son of Atreus; brother of Agamemnon; the king in Sparta; former husband of Helen
- Menesthes (men•'ees•thees): A Greek
- Menestheus (men•'ees•thee•us): An Athenian leader; nephew of Achilles
- Menesthius (men•'ees•thi•us): (1) Greek son of club-fighter Areïthous; (2) a Myrmidon son of river Spercheus
- Menoetius (men•'ee•shus): Father of Patroclus
- Menon ('men•on): A Trojan
- Mentes ('men•tees): A Ciconian leader
- Mentor ('men•tor): Father of Priam's son-in-law Imbrius
- Meriones (mer•'eye•oh•nees): A Cretan charioteer and comrade of Idomeneus
- Mermer ('mer•mer): A Mysian
- Merops ('mer•ops): A prophet of Percote, a town in the Troad
- Messe ('me•see): A town in Lacedaemon
- Messeïs (me•'see•is): A spring near Hellas in Phthia
- Mesthles ('mes•thlees): A Maeonian leader
- Mestor ('mes•tor): A son of Priam
- Methone (meth•'oh•nee): A city in Magnesia
- Mideia (mi•'dee•ə): A town in Boeotia
- Miletus (meye•'lee•tus): Cities in Crete and Caria

- Minos ('meye•nos): Grandfather of Idomeneus; a king in Crete
- Minyans ('mi•ni•ans): Inhabitants of district around Boeotian Orchomenus
- Minyeos (mi•ni•ee•os): A river in Elis
- Mnesus ('mnee•sus): A Paeonian
- Molion (moh•leye•on): A Trojan
- Molione (moh•leye•oh•nee): Mother of Epeans Cteatus and Eurytus
- Molus ('moh•lus): Father of Meriones
- Morys ('moh•ris): A Mysian
- Mulius ('moo•li•us): (1) Two different Trojans; (2) an Epean killed by Nestor in his youth
- Muses ('myoo•ses): Daughters of Zeus; the sources of song and inspiration
- Mycale (meye•'kal•ee): A mountain near Maeander's mouth, opposite the island of Samos
- Mycalessus (meye•kal•'es•us): A town in Boeotia
- Mycenae (meye•'see•nee): A city in Achaea, home of Agamemnon
- Mydon ('meye•don): (1) A Paphlagonian; (2) a Paeonian
- Mygdon ('mig•don): A king in Phrygia
- Mynes ('meye•nees): A fighter in Lyrnessus
- Myrine (meye•'rin•ee): An Amazon
- Myrmidons ('mur•mi•dons): A Phthian tribe; Achilles' force at Troy
- Myrsimus ('mur•si•mus): A village in Elis
- Mysia ('mi•si•ə): A region southeast of Troy
- Naiad ('neye•ad): A nymph (inferior goddess), e.g., of a lake or brook
- Nastes ('nas•tees): A Carian leader
- Naubolus ('now•bo•lus): Father of Phocian Iphitus
- Neleus ('nee•lee•us): Father of Nestor
- Nemertes (nee•mer•tees): A nereid
- Neoptolemus (,nee•op•'tol•em•us): Son of Achilles
- Nereids ('nee•ree•ids): Sea nymphs (inferior goddesses), daughters of Nereus
- Nereus ('nee•ree•us): An old sea god
- Neriton ('nee•ri•ton): A mountain on Ithaca
- Nesaea ('nee•see•ə): A nereid
- Nestor ('nest•or): Greek elder; the king in Pylos
- Night: Darkness personified, respected by gods and men alike
- Niobe (neye•'oh•bee): Theban mother of twelve children slain by Apollo and Artemis
- Nireus ('ni•ree•us): The handsomest Greek at Troy, after Achilles
- Nisa ('ni•sa): A village in Boeotia
- Nisyros ('ni•si•ros): An island near Cos
- Noëmon (noh•'ee•mon): (1) A Lycian; (2) a Pylian
- Nomion ('noh•mi•on): Father of Carian leader Nastes
- Nysa ('neye•sə): A legendary mountain where Dionysus originated

- Ocalea (oh•ka•'lee•ə): A village in Boeotia
- Ocean: The water bounding the known world, progenitor of all seas and water courses; sometimes personified
- Ochesius (oh•'khee•si•us): An Aetolian
- Odius ('oh•di•us): (1) A Greek herald; (2) a Halizonian leader
- Odysseus (o•'dis•ee•us): The king on Ithaca; leader of the Cephallenians
- Oechalia (ee•'khay•li•ə): A town north of Phthia near Tricca and Ithome
- Oedipus ('ee•dip•us): A king in Thebes
- Oeneus ('ee•nee•us): A king in Calydon; father of Meleager and Tydeus (Diomedes' father)
- Oenomaus (een•oh•'may•us): (1) An Aetolian; (2) a Trojan
- Oenops ('ee•nops): Father of Greek Helenus
- Oetylus ('ee•til•us): A town in Lacedaemon
- Oileus (oh•'il•ee•us): (1) A king in Locris, father of the smaller Ajax; (2) a Trojan charioteer
- Olenian rock (oh•'leen•i•an): A rocky outcropping or peak in Elis
- Olenus (oh•'leen•us): A town in Aetolia
- Olizon ('oh•liz•on): A town in Magnesia
- Oloöson (oh•loh•'os•on): A town west of Olympus
- Olympus (oh•'limp•us): A mountain in northern Greece; home of the gods
- Onchestus (on•'khest•us): A town in Boeotia
- Onetor (oh•'nee•tor): A Trojan priest of Zeus
- Ophelestes (oh•fel•'est•ees): (1) A Trojan; (2) a Paeonian
- Opheltius (oh•'felt•i•us): (1) A Greek; (2) a Trojan
- Opites (oh•'peye•tees): A Greek
- Opus ('oh•pus): A city in Locris
- Orchomenus (or•'khom•e•nus; or•'khom•nus): (1) An ancient Boeotian city of legendary wealth; (2) a town in Arcadia
- Oresbius (or•'es•bi•us): A Boeotian
- Orithia (or•'ith•i•ə): A nereid
- Ormenion (or•'mee•ni•on): A town in Magnesia
- Ormenus (or•'mee•nus): Two different Trojans
- Orniae ('or•ni•ee): A town in Agamemnon's domain
- Orsilochus (or•'sil•o•khus): (1) A son of river Alpheus and grandfather of a Greek also named Orsilochus; (2) a Trojan
- Orthaeus (or•'thee•us): A Trojan
- Orthe ('or•thee): A town south of Olympus
- Orus ('or•us): A Greek
- Othryoneus (o•'threy•on•yoos): A Trojan ally from Cabesus
- Otreus ('oh•tree•us): A king in Phrygia
- Otrynteus (o•'trin•tee•us): A king in Hyde, Maeonia; Trojan ally
- Otus ('oh•tus): (1) Tormenter (with Ephialtes) of Ares; (2) Epean leader

- Paeon ('pee•an): The gods' healer
- Paeon ('pee•on): Father of Trojan Agastrophus
- Paeonia (pee•oh•ni•ə): A region north of Greece, allied with Troy
- Paesus ('pee•sus): A town in Phrygia
- Palmys ('pal•mis): A Trojan leader
- Pammon ('pam•on): A son of Priam
- Pandarus ('pan•da•rus): An archer; Trojan ally, from the Lycian district north of Troy
- Pandion ('pan•di•on): A Greek
- Pandocus ('pan•do•kus): A Trojan
- Panope ('pan•oh•pee): A nereid
- Panopeus ('pan•oh•pyoo•s): (1) Father of Greek Epeius; a city in Phocis
- Panthous ('pan•thoh•us): Trojan elder; father of Polydamas and Euphorbus
- Paphlagonia (paf•lag•'oh•ni•ə): A district north and west of Phrygia
- Paris ('pa•ris): Son of Priam; seducer of Helen
- Parrhasia (pa•'rhay•si•ə): A town in Arcadia
- Parthenius (par•'thee•ni•us): A river in Paphlagonia
- Pasithea (pas•i•'thee•ə): One of the Graces
- Patroclus (pa•'trok•lus): Achilles' closest comrade and friend
- Pedaea (ped•'ee•ə): A place near Troy
- Pedaeus (ped•'ee•us): Trojan son of Antenor and Theano
- Pedasus (ped•'ay•sus): (1) A town in the Troad; (2) a town in Agamemnon's realm; (3) a Trojan; (4) one of Achilles' horses
- Peisenor (peye•'see•nor): Father of Trojan Clitus
- Pelagon ('pel•a•gon): (1) Asteropaeus' father, son of river Axius; (2) a Pylian; (2) an aide to Sarpedon
- Pelasgian (pel•'as•gi•an): Term applied to tribes in various parts of Greece, and to some Trojan allies
- Pelasgian Argos: Phthia
- Peleus ('pee•lee•us): Father of Achilles; son of Aeacus; a king of the Myrmidon tribe in Phthia
- Pelias ('pee•lee•as): Grandfather of Greek leader and horseman Eumelus
- Pelion ('pee•lee•on): A mountain northeast of Phthia
- Pellene (pel•'ee•nee): A town in Achaea
- Pelops ('pee•lops): Grandfather of Agamemnon
- Peneleus (pen•'ee•lee•us): A Boeotian leader
- Peneus ('pee•nee•us): A river emptying near Olympus
- Peraebians (per•'ee•bi•ans): Inhabitants of Peraibia region, north of Olympus
- Percote (per•'koh•tee): A coastal town in the Troad
- Perea (per•'ee•ə): Place where Apollo reared mares driven by the Greek leader Eumelus
- Pergamus ('per•gam•us): The high citadel of Ilium

- Pergasus ('per•gas•us): Father of Aeneas' comrade Deīcoön
- Periboeia (per•i•'bee•ə): Grandmother of Asteropaeus, by river Axius
- Perimedes (per•i•'mee•dees): Father of Phocian Schedius
- Perimus ('per•i•mus): A Trojan
- Periphas ('per•i•fas): (1) A giant Aetolian; (2) a Trojan herald
- Periphetes (per•i•'fee•tees): (1) A Greek, Eurystheus' herald; (2) a Trojan
- Persephone (per•'sef•on•ee): Daughter of Demeter by Zeus, Hades' consort
- Perseus ('per•see•us): A son of Zeus
- Peteon ('pee•tee•on): A village in Boeotia
- Peteus ('pee•tee•us): Father of Athenian leader Menestheus
- Phaenops ('fee•nops): Father of Trojans Xanthus and Thoön
- Phaestus ('fest•us): A city in Crete
- Phalces ('fal•sees): A Trojan
- Pharis ('fa•ris): A town in Lacedaemon
- Phausius ('fow•si•us): Father of Trojan Apisaon
- Phegeus ('fee•jee•us): A Trojan priest of Hephaestus
- Pheia ('feye•ə): A town in Elis
- Pheidas ('feye•das): An Athenian leader
- Pheidippus (feye•'dip•us): A leader of Greeks from Cos and surrounding isles
- Pheneos ('fee•nee•os): A town in Arcadia
- Phera ('fee•ra): A town in the southwest Peloponnese
- Pherae ('fee•ree): A city southwest of Mount Pelion
- Phereclus (fer•'eek•lus): A Trojan
- Pheres ('fe•rees): Father of Admetus and grandfather of Greek Eumelus
- Pherousa (fe•'roos•ə): A nereid
- Philetor (feye•'lee•tor): Father of Trojan Demuchus
- Philoctetes (fil•'ok•te•tees): Leader of Greeks from the peninsula southeast of Mount Pelion; bitten by sea monster en route to Troy
- Phlegyans ('flej•i•ans): Ancient settlers in Phocis
- Phobos ('foh•bos): A son of Ares; flight or fear personified
- Phocian ('foh•si•an): Resident of Phocis region, northwest of Boeotia
- Phoebus ('fee•bus): Alternate name for Apollo
- Phoenicians (fe•'nee•si•ans): A maritime people inhabiting what are now Lebanon and Syria
- Phoenix ('fee•nix): (1) Aged companion of Achilles; (2) grandfather of Zeus's sons Minos and Radamanthus
- Phorbas ('for•bas): (1) A king on Lesbos, father of Diomedes; (2) wealthy father of Trojan Ilioneus
- Phorcys ('for•sis): A Phrygian
- Phrontis ('fron•tis): Mother of Trojans Polydamas and Euphorbus, by Panthous
- Phrygia ('fri•ji•ə): A region east of Troy
- Phthia ('ftheye•ə): A region north of Aetolia; fatherland of Achilles

- Phthiron ('fθey•ron): A mountain in Caria
- Phylace ('feye•la•see): A town near Pteleos, north of Euboea
- Phylacus ('feye•lak•us): A Trojan
- Phylas ('feye•las): A king in Ephyra in Elis
- Phyleus ('feye•lee•us): Father of Greek leader Meges; once beaten by Nestor at spear throwing
- Phylomedusa (feye•loh•me•'doos•ə): Mother of Greek Menesthius, by Areithous
- Pidtyes (pid•'eye•tees): A Trojan
- Pieria (pi•'er•i•ə): A seacoast district in Peraibia
- Pirithous (pi•'rith•oh•us): A former king of the Lapiths, claimed by Zeus as a mortal son
- Pirous ('pir•oh•us): A Thracian leader
- Pisander (pi•'sand•er): (1) Two different Trojans; (2) a Myrmidon leader
- Pitheus ('pit•thee•us): Father of Helen's handmaid Aethre
- Pityea (pit•i•'ee•ə): A town in Mysia
- Placus ('plak•us): A mountain above Thebe in Mysia
- Plataea (plat•'ee•ə): A town in Boeotia
- Pleuron ('ploo•ron): A town in Aetolia
- Podalirius (poh•dal•i•'reye•us): One of two Greek healers (with his brother Machaon)
- Podarces (poh•'dar•sees): A Greek leader
- Podarge (poh•'darg•ee): A harpy; mother of Achilles' horses
- Podargus (poh•'darg•us): (1) One of Hector's horses; (2) one of Menelaus' horses
- Podes ('poh•dees): A Trojan
- Polites (poh•'leye•tees): A son of Priam
- Pollux ('pol•ux): A mortal son of Zeus; brother of Castor and Helen
- Polyaemon (pol•i•'ee•mon): Father of Trojan Amopaon
- Polybus ('pol•i•bus): A son of Trojan Antenor
- Polyctor (pol•'ict•or): A Myrmidon
- Polydamas (pol•i•da•mas): A prominent Trojan
- Polydore (pol•i•'dor•ee): Daughter of Peleus (Achilles' sister); mother of Menes- theus by river Spercheus, though Borus acted as father
- Polydorus (pol•i•'dor•us): (1) Youngest son of Priam; (2) a Greek once beaten by Nestor at spear throwing
- Polyidus (pol•i•'eye•dus): (1) A Trojan; (2) a prophet in Corinth
- Polymele (pol•i•mel•ee): Mother of Myrmidon leader Eudorus, by Hermes
- Polymelus (pol•i•mel•us): A Lycian
- Polynices (pol•i•'neye•sees): A son of Oedipus; one of the Seven against Thebes
- Polyphemus (pol•i•'feem•us): A Lapith
- Polyphontes (pol•i•'fon•tees): Leader of Cadmean ambush against Tydeus
- Polypoetes (pol•i•'pee•tees): A Lapith
- Polyxeinus (pol•ix•'ay•nus): An Epean leader

- Portheus ('por•thee•us): A king in Calydon
- Poseidon (poh•'seye•don): God of sea and earthquake
- Practius ('prak•ti•us): A town north of the Troad
- Pramnian ('pram•ni•an): A type of wine
- Prayers: Prayer personified; daughters of Zeus who, if beseeched, can overcome folly caused by Ate
- Priam ('preye•am): The king in Troy
- Proetus ('pree•tus): A former king in ancient Ephyra, later called Corinth
- Promachus ('proh•ma•khus): A Boeotian leader
- Pronous ('proh•noh•us): A Trojan
- Protesilaus (proh•ti•si•'lay•us): The first Greek to step on Trojan soil
- Prothoënor (proh•thoh•'ee•nor): A Boeotian leader
- Prothoön (proh'•thoh•on): A Trojan
- Prothous ('proh•thoh•us): A Magnesian leader
- Proto ('proh•toh): A nereid
- Prytanis ('preye•tan•is): A Lycian
- Pteleos ('ptee•lee•os): (1) A harbor town east of Phthia; (2) a town in Nestor's realm
- Ptolemaeus (ptol•em•'ee•us): Father of Agamemnon's comrade Eurymedon
- Pylaemenes (peye•'lee•me•nees): A king in Paphlagonia
- Pylaeus (peye•'lee•us): A leader of Trojan-allied Pelasgians
- Pylartes (peye•'lar•tees): Two different Trojans
- Pylene (peye•'lee•nee): A town in Aetolia
- Pylian ('pil•ee•an): Of or pertaining to Pylos
- Pylon ('peye•lon): A Trojan
- Pylos ('peye•los): A region and town in the southwestern Peloponnese; ruled by Nestor
- Pyraechmes (peye•'rekh•mees): A Paeonian leader
- Pyrasus (peye•'ray•sus): (1) A Trojan; (2) a town in Protesilaus' realm
- Pyris ('peye•ris): A Lycian
- Pytho ('peye•thoh): Ancient name for Delphi, Phocian site of Apollo's temple and oracle
- Radamanthus (.rad•a•'man•thus): A son of Zeus; brother of Minos
- Rhea ('rhee•ə): Titan wife of Cronus; mother of Zeus, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon
- Rhene ('rhee•nee): Unwed mother of Myrmidon leader Medon, by Oileus
- Rhesus ('rhee•sus): A king in Thrace
- Rhigmus ('rhig•mus): A Trojan ally from Thrace
- Rhipe ('rhey•pee): A town in Arcadia
- Rhodes (rho•hds): An island off southwest Asia Minor
- Rhodius ('rho•di•us): A river flowing from Ida to the Troad
- Rhytiium ('rhi•ti•um): A town in Crete
- Salamis (sa•'lam•is): An island west of Athens; home of great Ajax

- Samos ('sa•mos): (1) An island between the mouths of rivers Cayster and Maeander; (2) an island near Ithaca
- Samothrace ('say•moh•thrays): An island in the northern Aegean, near Thrace
- Sangarius (san•'gar•i•us): A river in Phrygia
- Sarpedon (sar•'pee•don): Lycian leader; mortal son of Zeus; cousin of Glaucus
- Satniois (sat•ni•'oh•is): A stream in Mysia
- Satnius ('sat•ni•us): A Trojan
- Scaeans ('see•an): A major city gate of Ilium
- Scamander (Xanthus) (skam•'and•er): A river flowing from Ida through the Troad
- Scamandrius (skam•'and•ri•us): (1) Son of Hector; (2) a Trojan
- Scarphe ('skar•fee): A place in Locris
- Schedius ('skhe•di•us): Two different Phocians
- Schoenus ('skee•nus): A town and river in Boeotia
- Scolus ('skoh•lus): A place in Boeotia
- Scyros ('skeye•ros): (1) An island west of Lesbos; (2) a town in Phrygia
- Selagus (se•'lay•gus): Father of Trojan Amphius
- Selepius (se•'lee•pi•us): Grandfather of Troad fighters Mynes and Epistrophus
- Selleis (se•'lee•is): (1) A river in the Troad; (2) a river in Elis
- Selli (sel•'eye): Priests of Zeus at Dodona
- Semele ('se•me•lee): Mother of Dionysus, by Zeus
- Sesamus (se•'say•mus): A town in Paphlagonia
- Sestos ('ses•tos): A town in Thrace opposite Abydos
- Sicyon ('sis•i•on): A city in Agamemnon's realm
- Sidonian (sid•'oh•ni•an): People of Sidon, a chief Phoenician city
- Simois ('sim•oh•is): A river flowing from Ida into Scamander
- Simoisius (sim•oh•'is•i•us): A Trojan
- Sintians ('sin•ti•ans): Ancient inhabitants of Lesbos
- Sipylus ('sip•i•lus): A mountain range in Magnesia
- Sleep: God of sleep; brother of Death
- Socus ('so•kus): A Trojan
- Solymi (,so•li•'meye): A tribe in Lycia
- Sparta ('spar•tə): A city in the Peloponnese, ruled by Menelaus
- Spercheus ('sper•khee•us): A river in Phthia
- Sphelus ('sfee•lus): Father of Athenian leader Iasus
- Spio ('speye•oh): A nereid
- Stentor ('stent•or): A mythical Greek herald
- Sthenelaus (sthen•e•'lay•us): A Trojan
- Sthenelus ('sthen•e•lus): (1) Diomedes' aide and charioteer; (2) son of Perseus
- Stichius ('stikh•i•us): An Athenian leader
- Stratia ('strat•i•ə): A town in Arcadia
- Strife: Strife personified
- Strophius ('stroh•fi•us): Father of Trojan Scamandrius

- Stymphalus (stim•'fay•lus): A town in Arcadia
Styra ('steye•rə): A town in Euboea
Styx (stiks): A river bounding Hades' realm; the underworld
Syme ('seye•mee): An island between Rhodes and Caria
Sysiphus ('sis•i•fus): Great-grandfather of Lycian Glaucus
Talaemenes (ta•'lee•men•ees): Father of Maeonian leaders Mesthles and Antiphus
Talaus (ta•'lay•us): Grandfather of Greek Euryalus
Talthybius (tal•'thib•i•us): A herald of Agamemnon
Tarne ('tahr•nee): A city on Mount Tmolus
Tarphe ('tahr•fee): A town in Locris
Tartarus ('tahr•ta•rus): An abyss where Titans are imprisoned
Tecton ('tek•ton): A Trojan craftsman, builder of Paris' ship
Tegea (te•'gee•ə): A city in Arcadia
Telamon ('tel•a•mon): Brother of Peleus; father of great Ajax
Telemachus (tel•'em•akh•us): Son of Odysseus
Tenedos ('ten•e•dos): An island west of the Troad
Tenthredon (ten•'three•don): A Magnesian leader
Tereia (ter•'ay•ə): A mountain in Mysia
Tethys ('teth•is): Wife of Ocean
Teucer ('too•ser): The preeminent Greek archer; brother of great Ajax
Teutamus ('too•tam•us): A Pelasgian Trojan ally
Teuthras ('too•thras): (1) Father of Arisbean Axylus; (2) a Greek
Thalia ('thay•li•a): A nereid
Thalpius ('thal•pi•us): An Epean leader
Thamyris ('tham•i•ris): A Thracian musician
Thaumacia (thow•'may•si•ə): A town in Magnesia
Theano (thee•'ay•no): Trojan priestess of Athena; wife of Antenor
Thebaeus (the•'bee•us): Father of Hector's charioteer Eniopaeus
Thebe ('thee•bee): A town in the Troad, perhaps in Phrygia
Thebes (theebs): (1) A Boeotian city founded by Cadmus; (2) a city in Egypt
Themis ('thee•mis): A goddess; law or custom personified
Thersilochus (ther•'sil•o•khus): (1) A Trojan; (2) a Paeonian
Thersites (ther•'seye•tees): A Greek considered ugly and obnoxious
Theseus ('thee•see•us): A legendary king in Athens
Thespia ('thes•pi•ə): A town in Boeotia
Thessalus ('thes•al•us): Father of Greek leaders Pheidippus and Antiphus
Thestor ('thes•tor): (1) A Trojan; (2) father of Greek Alcmaon
Thetis ('thet•is): A nereid; mother of Achilles
Thisbe ('this•bee): A town in Boeotia
Thoa ('thoh•ə): A nereid
Thoas ('thoh•as): (1) An Aetolian leader; (2) a king on Lemnos, father of Jason's wife Hypsipyle; (3) a Trojan

- Thoön ('thoh•on): Three different Trojans
- Thrace (thrays): A region north of Troy, reaching west to Paeonia
- Thracians ('thray•si•ans): A people who spread beyond Thrace into Greece
- Thrasius ('thray•si•us): A Trojan
- Thrasymedes (thras•i•'mee•dees): A son of Nestor
- Thrasymeles (thras•i•'mee•lees): Sarpedon's charioteer
- Thronion ('throh•ni•on): A town in Locris
- Thryon ('threye•on): A town in Elis
- Thyestes (theye•'est•ees): Brother of Atreus; uncle of Agamemnon
- Thymbraeus (thim•'bree•us): A Trojan
- Thymbre ('thim•bree): A district in the Troad
- Thymoetes (theye•'mee•tees): A Trojan elder
- Tiryns ('ti•rins): An ancient Argive city
- Titans ('teye•tans): A race of immortals; initial possessors of the heavens until exiled and imprisoned in Tartarus
- Titanus (teye•'tay•nus): A mountain in Argos
- Titaressus (ti•ta•'ress•us): A river flowing from Olympus into the Peneus
- Tithonus (ti•'thoh•nus): Husband of the goddess Dawn
- Tlepolemus (tle•'pol•em•us): (1) Son of Heracles, a king in Rhodes, a Greek ally; (2) a Lycian
- Tmolus ('tmoh•lus): A mountain in Maeonia
- Trachis ('tray•khis): A town in Phthia
- Trechus ('tree•khus): An Aetolian
- Tricca ('trik•ə): A city north of Phthia on the Peneus
- Troad ('troh•ad): The region surrounding Ilium
- Troezen ('tree•zen): A town in Diomedes' realm
- Troezenus (tree•'zee•nus): Grandfather of Ciconian leader Euphemus
- Troilus ('troh•i•lus): A son of Priam
- Trojans: Residents of Ilium; broadly includes residents of the Troad and sometimes all the forces allied with Troy
- Tros (trohs): (1) Trojan and Dardanian progenitor: son of Erichthonius, grandson of Dardanus, father of Ilus, Assaracus, and Ganymede; (2) A Trojan
- Troy: Another name for Ilium
- Tychius ('teye•khi•us): A Boeotian
- Tydeus ('teye•dee•us): Diomedes' father; son of Aetolian king Oeneus; member of legendary expedition of the Seven against Thebes
- Typhoeus (teye•'fee•us): A legendary monster
- Ucalegon (yoo•'kal•e•gon): A Trojan elder
- Uranus ('yoo•ran•us): Divine personification of the sky
- Xanthus ('zan•thus): (1) Gods' name for river Scamander; (2) one of Achilles' horses; (3) one of Hector's horses; (4) a river in Lycia; (5) a Trojan
- Zacynthus (za•'sin•thus): An island in Odysseus' realm

Zelea (zel•'ee•ə): A town east of Ilium in the northern Lycia district

Zephyrus ('zef•i•rus): The west wind personified

Zeus (zoos): The supreme god; son of Cronus; husband of Hera; father of Athena, Apollo, Hephaestus, and Ares, among many other immortal and mortal children

INDEX OF SIGNIFICANT SIMILES

(Similes Extending Two Lines or More)

Laborate similes are one of the most distinctive characteristics of Homer's epics. The similes, which are often used in the *Iliad* to describe war or warriors, tend to employ images drawn from Homer's peacetime experiences and observations of a society of herders, plowmen, hunters, and mariners.

In the center column of this index, a colon between nouns indicates that they bear the same relation to each other as the nouns in the left-hand column. For example, "Antilochus: Hector" indicates that the simile is used to portray Antilochus retreating from Hector like a beast slinking away from hunters.

The line numbers in the "Location" column are the lines where the similes begin.

Image	Applied to	Location
9,000 or 10,000 men shouting	Wounded Ares' shout	5.860
	Poseidon's shout	14.148
Ball rolling across plain	Imbrius' head	13.204
Beans jumping in winnowing wind	Arrow bouncing	13.588
Beast slinking away from hunters	Antilochus: Hector	15.586
Bees or wasps from roadside nest	Lapith gatekeepers	12.167
Bees swarming on spring flowers	Greek army	2.87
Bewildered fawns	Reluctant Greeks	4.243
Bird feeding unfledged young	Achilles: Agamemnon	9.323
Birds (cranes) attacking pygmies	Trojan army	3.2
Birds flocking in Asian meadows	Greek army	2.459
Boar, cocky (or leopard or lion)	Euphorbus boasting	17.20
Boar dispersing dogs and youths	Ajax: Trojans	17.281
Boar keeping men and dogs at bay	Odysseus: Trojans	11.414
Boar or vicious lion	Hector	12.41
Boar yearning to take on hunters	Idomeneus: Aeneas	13.472

Boars attacking dogs	Diomedes and Odysseus	11.324
Boars attacking men and dogs	Lapith gatekeepers	12.146
Boars or lions, trapped but strong	Retreated Greeks	5.782
Boars or ravenous lions	Ajax and Hector dueling	7.256
Boulder thundering through woods	Hector	13.137
Boys pelting donkey	Trojans: Ajax	11.558
Branches crashing in rival winds	Men around Cebriones	16.765
Breeze relieving becalmed oarsmen	Hector and Paris: Trojans	7.4
Bull bellowing as dragged to altar	Hippodamas	20.403
Bull dominating oxen	Agamemnon: Greek army	2.480
Bull groaning in lion's jaws	Sarpedon dying	16.487
Chaff, windblown	Dust from hooves	5.499
Chariot's wheel, distance to horse	Menelaus: Antilochus	23.517
Child kicking sand castle	Apollo: Greek fort	15.362
Child running to mother	Teucer: Ajax's shield	8.271
Childbirth, pangs of	Agamemnon's wound	11.269
City blaze ravaging citizens	Achilles: Trojans	21.522
Cliff withstanding wind and waves	Greeks: Trojans	15.618
Cloud, dense and dark	Greek phalanxes	4.275
Clouds blown by tempest	Trojans in flight	16.364
Cows or sheep stampeding	Greeks retreating	15.323
Crickets chirping in woods	Trojan elders	3.151
Deer, timid, leopards' prey	Trojans	13.102
Dike holding back flood	Ajaxes: Trojans	17.747
Discus, distance of throw	Menelaus keeps his nerve	23.431
Distance, man gazing from cliff	Hera's team's stride	5.770
Dog harrying lion or boar	Hector chasing Greeks	8.338
Dog leaping on wounded fawn	Antilochus: Melanippus	15.579
Dogs and men fleeing lion	Greeks: Hector	15.271
Dogs fleeing wounded boar	Trojans: Ajaxes	17.725
Dogs, weary but awake and watchful	Greek sentries	10.183
Dogs, wild, cutting doe off	Diomedes and Odysseus	10.360
Dove fleeing hawk	Artemis: Hera	21.493
Dream of never-ending pursuit	Achilles and Hector	22.199
Eagle attacking waterfowl	Hector: Greek ship	15.690
Eagle plunging at hare or lamb	Hector: Achilles	22.308
Eagle spotting hare	Menelaus: Antilochus	17.674
Eagle's hunting dive	Achilles fleeing river	21.252
Eagles screaming and fighting	Patroclus and Sarpedon	16.428
Ewes jostling in fold	Trojan army	4.433
Farmer warming to ripening corn	Menelaus: Antilochus	23.598
Father mourning son's bones	Achilles: Patroclus	23.222

Fawn failing to elude dog	Hector: Achilles	22.189
Fig juice, curdling milk	Salve healing Ares	5.902
Fire blazing on mountain farm	Achilles' shield	19.375
Fire boiling fat	Hephaestus: Xanthus	21.362
Fire bright as dog star	Diomedes' helmet	5.4
Fire raging on forested slope	Hector	15.605
Fire thundering in forest ravine	Armies bellowing	14.394
Fire, wind-driven in woods	Agamemnon in Trojans	11.155
Fire, wind-driven on mountain	Achilles on plain	20.490
Fires, beacons from besieged city	Fire on Achilles' head	18.207
Fish hiding from whale	Trojans: Achilles	21.22
Fish thrashing in shallows	Euryalus, outboxed	23.692
Fisherman drawing in catch	Patroclus: Thestor	16.406
Flies swarming sheepfold	Men: Sarpedon's corpse	16.641
Floodwaters roaring to sea	Trojan teams in flight	16.384
Floodwaters sweeping trees	Ajax: Trojans	11.492
Fog on peak	Dust cloud	3.10
Foliage of trees	Clans of men	6.146
Furrow's length, plowed by mules	Dolon's distance	10.351
Gates of wealthy man, width	Eagle's wingspread	24.317
Girl crying, running to mother	Patroclus	16.7
Gold and silver in Graces' braids	Blood: Euphorbus' hair	17.51
Grain field whipped by west wind	Greek army	2.147
Hawk attacking starlings, jackdaws	Patroclus: enemies	16.582
Hawk diving on pigeon	Apollo's drop from Ida	15.237
Hawk on dove's tail	Achilles: Hector	22.139
Hawk shooting to plain	Poseidon disappearing	13.62
Heddle rod near woman's chest	Odysseus behind Ajax	23.760
Herdsmen failing to drive off lion	Ajaxes: Hector	18.161
Herdsmen killing young lions	Aeneas killing	5.554
Herdsmen sorting goats	Greek chiefs marshaling	2.474
Hornets bursting onto road	Myrmidons, from ships	16.259
Horse racing	Achilles, toward Ilium	22.22
Horses racing around turn	Achilles and Hector	22.162
Horsefly's tenacious boldness	Menelaus' daring	17.570
Host when strange guest appears	Achilles: Priam	24.480
Hunter inciting dogs	Hector: Trojans	11.292
Husks piling under threshing bulls	Corpses: Achilles	20.495
Iris in portentous dark veil	Athena in mist	17.547
Ivory dyed crimson	Menelaus' bloody legs	4.141
Jackals circling wounded deer	Trojans: Odysseus	11.474
Javelin cast, longest	Causeway width	15.358

Lead, sinking bait to fish	Iris diving to Thetis	24.80
Leaves and blossoms of spring	Greek army's numbers	2.468
Leopard (or lion or cocky boar)	Euphorbus boasting	17.20
Leopardess taking stand	Agenor facing Achilles	21.573
Lightning bolt	Idomeneus, armed	13.242
Line stretched by shipbuilder	Battle lines	15.410
Lion (or leopard or cocky boar)	Euphorbus boasting	17.20
Lion attacking untended flock	Diomedes: Thracians	10.485
Lion crushing newborn fawns	Agamemnon killing	11.113
Lion determined to ravage fold	Sarpedon	12.299
Lion finding carcass	Menelaus seeing Paris	3.23
Lion, furious, attacking men	Achilles: Trojans	20.164
Lion, hesitant leaving fold	Menelaus: Patroclus	17.109
	Menelaus: Patroclus	17.657
Lion leaving well-guarded oxen	Ajax retreating	11.548
Lion overwhelming tireless boar	Hector: Patroclus	16.823
Lion seizing helpless cattle	Achilles: Hector	24.41
Lion snapping bull's neck	Diomedes killing	5.161
Lion stampeding cows	Agamemnon: Trojans	11.172
Lion stampeding oxen	Hector: Greeks	15.630
Lion, vicious, or boar	Hector	12.41
Lion, wary	Aeneas guarding Pandarus	5.299
Lion, wounded in sheepfold	Furious Diomedes	5.136
Lion's bloody paws ripping an ox	Automedon's hands	17.542
Lioness bereft of lost cubs	Achilles: Patroclus	18.318
Lioness protecting cubs	Ajax: dead Patroclus	17.133
Lions fighting for fallen deer	Patroclus and Hector	16.756
Lions or boars, ravenous	Ajax and Hector dueling	7.256
Lions or boars, trapped but strong	Retreated Greeks	5.782
Lions with goat in jaws	Ajaxes: Imbrius	13.198
Locusts falling on river	Trojans: Xanthus	21.12
Man retreating from snake	Paris hiding in ranks	3.33
Men and dogs keeping away from lion	Trojans: Menelaus	17.61
Men disputing boundary	Armies: wall's breach	12.421
Mist rising against white clouds	Ares rising to Olympus	5.864
Monument, marble	Achilles' horses	17.434
Mother flicking fly	Athena diverting spear	4.130
Mountain summit freed of fog	Greeks: ship fire out	16.297
Mules on mountain trail with beam	Corpse carriers	17.742
Ox, gasping, dragged by herdsmen	Adamas dying	13.571
Ox hearing her calf whimper	Menelaus and Patroclus	17.4
Ox, killed, lunging and falling	Aretus	17.520

Oxen united against common yoke	Ajaxes taking stand	13.703
Ox-herder's staff, distance thrown	Polypoetes' weight-put	23.845
Panther, overconfident	Patroclus	16.752
People stretching bull's hide	Men tugging Patroclus	17.389
Poppy's head bowing under rain	Gorgythion's head	8.306
Potter's wheel	Dancers spinning	18.600
Rafters	Wrestlers' bodies	23.712
Reapers	Armies killing	11.67
Rider leaping from horse to horse	Ajax: ship to ship	15.679
Ripples covering sea after calm	Legions covering plain	7.63
River, rain-swollen	Diomedes covering plain	5.87
Rivers roaring in ravines	Armies' clash	4.452
Rivulets from dark spring	Agamemnon's tears	9.14
Sailors trembling at roaring wind	Greeks: Hector	15.624
Scales, poised, measuring wool	Evenly balanced battle	12.433
Sea heaving in clashing winds	Greeks' hearts	9.4
Sheep or cows stampeding	Greeks retreating	15.323
Shepherd carrying fleece	Hector: heavy stone	12.451
Shepherd seeing sheep follow ram	Aeneas: men following	13.492
Snake, coiled, awaiting men	Hector: Achilles	22.93
Snow, heavy on windless day	Boulder barrages	12.278
Snow, wind-driven	Flying boulders	12.156
Snowflakes flying	Iris' speed	15.170
Snowflakes flying before Boreas	Helmets leaving ships	19.357
Stallion, grain-fed	Paris striding	6.506
Star (Sirius)	Hector revived	15.263
Star, cloud-hidden sometimes	Achilles' breastplate	22.26
Star, evening	Hector's shield	11.62
Star, shooting	Achilles' spearpoint	22.317
Stars piercing still air	Athena descending	4.75
Starlings fleeing falcon	Trojan watch fires	8.555
Stone pillar or beamy oak	Greeks: Aeneas and Hector	17.755
Stone wall, laid tight	Alcathous standing	13.437
Stream chasing ditch-digger	Myrmidon ranks	16.212
Thoughts flickering across world	Xanthus: Achilles	21.257
Thunderheads, motionless	Hera's speed	15.80
Tree (felled oak, poplar, or fir)	Greeks	5.522
Tree (oak, poplar, or towering fir)	Asius falling	13.389
Tree falling (poplar)	Sarpedon falling	16.482
Tree (oak) felled by thunderbolt	Simoisius falling	4.482
Tree (ash) felled on mountain	Hector falling	14.414
	Imbrius	13.178

Tree (beamy oak), or stone pillar	Alcathous standing	13.437
Trees (twin mountain oaks)	Lapith gatekeepers	12.132
Trees' leaves	Mortals	21.464
Trumpet warning of invaders	Achilles' voice	18.219
Wanderer, startled by torrent	Diomedes, seeing Ares	5.597
Wasps or bees from roadside nest	Lapith gatekeepers	12.167
Water from sunless spring	Patroclus' tears	16.3
Wave pouring over ship's rails	Trojans: Greek wall	15.381
Wave roaring upstream	Trojans bellowing	17.263
Waves, Boreas-driven on headlands	Greek army	2.394
Waves breaking on coast	Greek ranks	4.422
Waves crashing on rocks	Armies bellowing	14.394
Waves folding Icarian Sea	Greek army	2.144
Waves heaving high seas	Nestor's mind	14.16
Waves on boiling sea	Greek army	2.209
Waves surging before wind blasts	Trojans surging	13.795
Wildfire on wooded peak	Greek armor gleaming	2.455
Wind felling olive tree	Menelaus: Euphorbus	17.53
Wind, hail, or snow, ceaseless	Agamemnon's sighs	10.5
Wind scattering seafoam	Hector: Greeks	11.305
Wind shrieking in tall oaks	Armies bellowing	14.394
Wind, sudden, buffeting sea	Hector sweeping field	11.297
Wind, summer, drying fruit groves	Hephaestus: plain	21.346
Winds churning dust	Armies clashing	13.334
Wolves attacking each other	Men fighting	4.471
Wolves dismembering stag	Myrmidons assembling	16.156
Wolves ravening lost lambs, kids	Greeks: Trojans	16.352
Woodcutter's mealtime	Noon	11.86
Woodmen shouting in mountains	Battle din	16.633