The Iliad

Homer

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Book One
The Quarrel by the Ships

[The invocation to the Muse; Agamemnon insults Apollo; Apollo sends the plague onto the army; the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon; Calchas indicates what must be done to appease Apollo; Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles; Achilles prays to Thetis for revenge; Achilles meets Thetis; Chryseis is returned to her father; Thetis visits Zeus; the gods converse about the matter on Olympus; the banquet of the gods.]

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

Start at the point where Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
that king of men, quarrelled with noble Achilles.
Which of the gods incited these two men to fight?

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

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

All the Achaeans roared out their support:
"Respect the priest. Take the generous ransom."
Displeased, Agamemnon dismissed Chryses roughly:

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

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

"God with the silver bow,
protector of Chryse, sacred Cilla,
mighty lord of Tenedos, Sminthean Apollo,
hear my prayer:* If I've ever pleased you
with a holy shrine, or burned bones for you—
bulls and goats well wrapped in fat—
grant me my prayer. Force the Danaans
to pay full price for my tears with your arrows."

So Chryses prayed. Phoebus Apollo heard him.
He came down from Olympus top enraged,
carrying on his shoulders bow and covered quiver,
his arrows rattling in anger against his arm.
So the god swooped down, descending like the night.
He sat some distance from the ships, shot off an arrow—
the silver bow reverberating ominously.

First, the god massacred mules and swift-running dogs,

then loosed sharp arrows in among the troops themselves.
Thick fires burned the corpses ceaselessly.

For nine days Apollo rained death down upon the troops.
On the tenth, Achilles summoned an assembly.
White-armed Hera put that thought into his mind,
concerned for the Danaans, seeing them die.
The men gathered. The meeting came to order.
Swift-footed Achilles rose to speak:

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

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

"Achilles, friend of Zeus, you ask me to explain
Apollo's anger, the god who shoots from far.
And I will speak. But first you listen to me.
Swear an oath that you will freely help me
in word and deed. I think I may provoke
someone who wields great power over Argives,
a man who is obeyed by everyone.
An angry king overpowers lesser men.

Even if that day his anger is suppressed,
resentment lingers in his chest, until one day
he acts on it. So speak. Will you protect me?"

In response to Calchas, swift-footed Achilles said:
"Take courage. State what your powers tell you.
By Apollo, whom Zeus loves, to whom you, Calchas,
pray in prophesy to the Danaans, I swear this—
while I live to look upon the light of day,
no Achaean will raise violent hands against you,
no, not even if you name Agamemnon,
who claims he's by far the best Achaean."

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

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

"Prophet of evil, when have you ever said
good things to me? You love to predict the worst,
always the worst! You never show good news.
Now, in prophecy to the Danaans,
you say archer Apollo brings us pain
because I was unwilling to accept

fine ransom for Chryses' daughter, Chryseis.
But I have a great desire to take her home.
In fact, I want her more than Clytaemnestra,
the wife I married. Chryseis is just as good
in her shape, physique, intelligence, or work.
Still, I'm prepared to give her back, if that's best.
I want the people safe, not all killed off.
But then you'll owe me another prize.
I won't be the only Argive left without a gift.
That would be entirely unfair to me.
You all can see my spoils are going elsewhere."

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

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

Mighty Agamemnon then said in reply:

"Achilles, you're a fine man, like a god.
But don't conceal what's in your heart.
You'll not trick me or win me with your words.
You intend to keep your prizes for yourself,
while the army takes my trophy from me.
That's why you tell me to give Chryseis back.
Let Achaeans give me another prize,
equal in value, something I'll enjoy.
If not, then I'll take a prize myself by force,
something from you or Ajax or Odysseus.

The man I visit is going to be enraged.
But let's postpone discussion of all this.
Let's drag a black ship to the sacred sea,
select a crew, load oxen on for sacrifice,
and Chryseis, that fair-complexioned girl.
Let's have as leader some wise counsellor—
Idomeneus, Ajax, godlike Odysseus,
or you, Peleus's son, most eminent of all,
so with a sacrifice we may appease
the god who shoots from far away."

Scowling grimly, swift-footed Achilles interposed:
"You insatiable creature, quite shameless.
How can any Achaean obey you willingly—
join a raiding party or keep fighting
with full force against an enemy?
I didn't come to battle over here
because of Trojans. I have no fight with them.
They never stole my bulls or horses
or razed my crops in fertile Phthia,
where heroes grow. Many shady mountains
and the roaring sea stand there between us.
But you, great shameless man, we came with you,
to please you, to win honour from the Trojans—
for you, dog face, and for Menelaus.
You don't consider this, don't think at all.
You threaten now to confiscate the prize
I worked so hard for, gift from Achaea's sons.
When we Achaeans loot some well-built Trojan town,
my prizes never match the ones you get.
The major share of war's fury rests on me.
But when we hand around the battle spoils,
you get much larger trophies. Worn out in war,
I reach my ships with something fine but small.
So I'll return home now to Phthia.
It's far better to sail back in my curved ships.
I don't fancy staying here unvalued,

to pile up riches, treasures just for you."

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

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

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

"Child of aegis-bearing Zeus,

why have you come now?* Do you wish to see
how overbearing Agamemnon is?
I'll tell you where all this is going to lead—
that arrogance will soon cost him his life."

Glittery-eyed Athena then spoke in reply:

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

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

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

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

"You drunken sot, dog-eyed, deer-timid coward,
you're never strong enough within yourself
to arm for war alongside other comrades,
or venture with Achaea's bravest on a raid.

To you that smells too much like death.
No. You'd much prefer to stroll around
throughout the wide Achaean army,
to grab gifts from a man who speaks against you.
A king who gorges on his own people!
You lord it over worthless men. If not,
son of Atreus, this would be your last offence.
I'll tell you, swear a great oath on this point,
by this sceptre, which will never sprout
leaves and shoots again, since first ripped away
from its mountain stump, nor bloom any more,
now that bronze has sliced off leaf and bark.
This sceptre Achaea's sons take in hand
whenever they do justice in Zeus' name.
An oath on this has power. On this I swear—
the time will come when Achaea's sons
all miss Achilles, a time when, in distress,
you'll lack my help, a time when Hector,
that man killer, destroys many warriors.
Then grief will tear your hearts apart,
because you shamed Achaea's finest man."

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

Then Nestor stood up, clear, sweet orator from Pylos.
Sweeter than honey the words flowed from his tongue.
In his own lifetime two generations of mortal men
had come and passed away, all those born and raised
with him so long ago in sacred Pylos.
Now he ruled a third generation of his people.
Concerned about their common good, he said:

"Alas, this is great sorrow for Achaeans.
Priam and Priam's children will be glad,
the hearts of other Trojans swell with joy,

should they find out about such quarrelling,
a fight between you two, among Danaans
the very best for counsel or combat.
But listen. You are both younger men than I.
And I've been colleague of better men than you,
men who never showed me any disrespect,
men whose like I have not seen again,
[290] and never will—like Peirithous, Dryas,
a shepherd to his people, Caeneus,
Exadios, god-like Polyphemus,
Theseus, son of Aegeus, all god-like men—
the mightiest earthborn men, the strongest.
And the enemies they fought against were strong,
the most powerful of mountain centaurs.
But they destroyed those creatures totally.
Associate of theirs, I came from Pylos,
a long way from that land, summoned personally.
[300] I fought on my own behalf, by myself.
No man alive on earth could now fight them.
Yet they heard me and followed my advice.
So listen, both of you. That's what's best now.
Agamemnon, you're an excellent man,
but do not take Briseis from Achilles.
Let that pass. Achaea's sons gave her to him first.
And you, Peleus' son, don't seek to fight the king,
not as your enemy. The sceptre-bearing king,
whose powerful authority comes from Zeus,
[310] never shares honours equally. Achilles,
you may be stronger, since your mother was divine,
but he's more powerful, for he rules more men.
But you, son of Atreus, check your anger.
Set aside, I urge you, your rage against Achilles,
who provides, in the middle of war's evils,
a powerful defence for all Achaeans."

Mighty Agamemnon then replied to Nestor:

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

Achilles, interrupting Agamemnon, shouted:

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

Thus the pair of them continued arguing.
Then they stood up, dissolving the assembly by the ships.
Peleus's son went back to his well-balanced ships and huts,
along with Patroclus, Menoetius' son, and friends.

Agamemnon dragged a swift ship down the shore,
chose twenty sailors, loaded on the oxen,
offerings for the god, and led on fair-cheeked Chryseis.
Shrewd Odysseus shipped on as leader. All aboard,
they set off, carving a pathway through the sea.

Atreus' son ordered troops to cleanse themselves.

The men bathed in the sea, washed off impurities.
They then made sacrificial offerings to Apollo—
hundreds of perfect bulls and goats—beside the restless sea.
Savoury smells curled up amid the smoke high into heaven.

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

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

With these firm orders, he dismissed the men, who moved off,
heavy hearted, along the shore of the restless sea.
They reached the huts and ships of the Myrmidons.
There they found Achilles seated by his hut
and his black ship. As he saw them approach,
Achilles felt no joy. The two heralds, afraid,
just stood in silence, out of deference to the king.
In his heart Achilles sensed their purpose. He called them.

"Cheer up, heralds, messengers for gods and men.
Come here. I don't blame you, but Agamemnon.
He sends you both here for the girl Briseis.
Come, Patroclus, born from Zeus, fetch the girl.
Give her to these two to take away.
Let them both witness, before blessed gods,
mortal men, and that unfeeling king,
if ever there's a need for me again
to defend others from a shameful death.
That man's wits are foolish, disastrously so—
he's not thinking about past or future,
how Achaeans may fight safely by their ships."

Patroclus did as his dear comrade had requested.
He led out fair-cheeked Briseis from the hut
and gave her up to be led off. The heralds went back,
returning to Achaean ships, Briseis with them,
but against her will.

Achilles then, in tears,
withdrew from his companions, sat by the shore,
staring at the wide grey seas. Stretching out his hands,
he cried aloud, praying repeatedly to Thetis,
his beloved mother.*

"Mother, since you gave me life—
if only for a while—Olympian Zeus,
high thunderer, should give me due honour.
But he doesn't grant me even slight respect.
For wide-ruling Agamemnon, Atreus' son,
has shamed me, has taken away my prize,
appropriated it for his own use."

As he said this, he wept.
His noble mother heard him from deep within the sea,
where she sat by her old father. Quickly she rose up,
moving above grey waters, like an ocean mist,
and settled down before him, as he wept. She stroked him,
then said:

"My child, why these tears? What sorrows
weigh down your heart? Tell me, so we'll both know.
Don't hide from me what's on your mind."

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

"You know. Why should I tell you what you know?
We came to Thebe, Eëtion's sacred city,
sacked it, taking everything the city had.
Achaea's sons apportioned it all fairly

amongst themselves. Agamemnon's share
was fair-skinned Chryseis. Then Chryses arrived
at the swift ships of bronze-armed Achaeans.
Archer god Apollo's priest sought out his daughter.
He brought with him an enormous ransom,
carried in his hands the sacred golden staff
with the shawl of archer god Apollo.
He begged Achaeans, above all Atreus' two sons,
the people's leaders. All Achaeans called on them
to respect the priest, accept the splendid ransom.
But that didn't please Agamemnon in his heart.
He sent him roughly off with harsh abusive orders
The old man went away again, enraged.
He prayed to Apollo, who loved him well.
The god heard him and sent his deadly arrows
against the Argives. The troops kept dying,
one by one, as the god rained arrows down
throughout the wide Achaean army.
The prophet Calchas, understanding all,
told us Apollo's will. At once I was the first
to recommend we all appease the god.
But anger got control of Agamemnon.
He stood up on the spot and made that threat
which he's just carried out. So quick-eyed Achaeans
are sending Chryseis in fast ships back to Chryse,
transporting gifts for lord Apollo, and heralds came
to take away Briseis from my huts,
the girl who is my gift from Achaea's sons.
So now, if you can, protect your son.
Go to Mount Olympus, implore Zeus,
if ever you in word or deed have pleased him.
For often I have heard you boast in father's house
that you alone of all the deathless gods
saved Zeus of the dark clouds from disgraceful ruin,
when other Olympians came to tie him up,
Hera, Pallas Athena, and Poseidon.
But you, goddess, came and set him free,

by quickly calling up to high Olympus
that hundred-handed monster gods call Briareos,
and men all name Aigaion, a creature
whose strength was greater than his father's.*
He sat down beside the son of Cronos,
exulting in his glory. The sacred gods, afraid,
stopped tying up Zeus. So sit down right by Zeus,
clasp his knee, remind him of all that,
so he'll want to help the Trojans somehow,
corner Achaeans by the sea, by their ships' prows,
have them destroyed, so they all enjoy their king,
so the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon,
himself may see his foolishness, dishonouring
Achilles, the best of the Achaeans."

Thetis, shedding tears, answered her son, Achilles:

"O my child, why did I rear you,
since I brought you up to so much pain?
Would you were safely by your ships dry-eyed.
Your life is fated to be short—you'll not live long.
Now, faced with a quick doom, you're in distress,
more so than any other man. At home,
I gave you life marked by an evil fate.
But I'll tell these things to thunder-loving Zeus.
I'll go myself to snow-topped Mount Olympus,
to see if he will undertake all this.
Meanwhile, you should sit by your swift ships,
angry at Achaeans. Take no part in war.
For yesterday Zeus went to Oceanus,
to banquet with the worthy Ethiopians.
The gods all journeyed with him. In twelve days,
when he returns and comes home to Olympus,
I'll go to Zeus' bronze-floored house, clasp his knee.
I think I'll get him to consent."

Thetis spoke.

Then she went away, leaving Achilles there,
angry at heart for lovely girdled Briseis,
taken from him by force against his will.

Odysseus sailed to Chryse, bringing with him
the sacrificial animals as sacred offerings.
When they had sailed into deep anchorage,
they took in the sails and stowed them in the ship.
With forestays they soon set the mast down in its notch,
then rowed the ship in to its mooring place.
They threw out anchor stones, lashed stern cables,
and clambered out into the ocean surf.
They brought off the offerings to archer god Apollo.
Then Chryseis disembarked from the ocean ship.
Resourceful Odysseus led her to the altar,
placed her in her beloved father's hands, then said:

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

After saying this, he handed the girl over.
Chryses gave his daughter a joyful welcome back.
And then around the well-built altar, they arranged
the splendid sacrifice. They washed their hands,
and picked up the barley grain for sprinkling.
Raising his arms, Chryses prayed out loud on their behalf:

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

this wretched evil, from the Danaans."

So Chryses spoke. Phoebus Apollo heard him.
Once they had prayed and scattered barley grain,
they pulled back the heads of sacrificial beasts,
slit their throats, flayed them, sliced the thigh bones out,
and hid them in twin layers of fat, with raw meat on top.
Old Chryses burned them on split wood, poured wine on them.
Young men beside him held out five-pronged forks.
Once the thighs were well burned, they sampled entrails,
then sliced up all the rest, skewered the meat on spits,
roasted it carefully, and drew off every piece.
That work complete, they then prepared a meal and ate.
No heart was left unsatisfied. All feasted equally.
And when the men had had their fill of food and drink,
young boys filled the mixing bowl with wine up to the brim,
and served it, pouring libations into every cup.
Then all day long young Achaean lads played music,
singing to the god a lovely hymn of praise,
honouring in dance and song the god who shoots from far.
Hearing them, Apollo felt joy fill his heart. At sunset,
as dusk came on, by the ship's stern they went to sleep.
But when early born, rose-fingered Dawn appeared,
they set off, once more back to the wide Achaean camp.
Far-shooting Apollo sent them favourable winds.
They raised the mast and then the sails. The wind blew,
filling out the body of the sail—on both sides of the prow
the purple waves hissed loudly as the ship sped on its way,
its motion carving a path through the ocean swell.
When they reached the broad Achaean army,
they hauled the black ship high up on the sand,
pushed long props tight beneath it, then dispersed,
each man returning to his own huts and ships.

Meanwhile, Achilles, divinely born son of Peleus,
sat down in anger alongside his swift ships. Not once
did he attend assembly where men win glory

or go out to fight. But he pined away at heart,
remaining idle by his ships, yearning
for the hue and cry and clash of battle.

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

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

Thetis finished. Cloud gatherer Zeus did not respond.
He sat a long time silent. Thetis held his knees,
clinging close, repeating her request once more:

"Promise me truly, nod your head, or deny me—
since there's nothing here for you to fear—
so I'll clearly see how among the gods
I enjoy the least respect of all."

Cloud gatherer Zeus, greatly troubled, said:

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

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

Zeus went inside his house. Their father present,
all the gods at once stood up from their seats.
No one dared stay put as he came in—all rose together.
Zeus seated himself upon his throne. Looking at him,
Hera sensed he'd made some deal with Thetis,
silver-footed daughter of the Old Man of the Sea.
At once she spoke up accusingly:

"Which god has been scheming with you, you crafty one?
You always love to work on things in secret,
without involving me. You never want
to tell me openly what you intend."

The father of gods and men replied:

"Hera,
don't hope to understand my every plan.

Even for my own wife that's dangerous.
What's appropriate for you to hear about,
no one, god or man, will know before you.
But when I wish to hide my thoughts from gods,
don't you go digging after them,
or pestering me for every detail."

Ox-eyed queen Hera then replied to Zeus:

"Most dread son of Cronos, what are you saying?
I have not been overzealous before now,
in questioning you or seeking answers.
Surely you're quite at liberty to plan
anything you wish. But now, in my mind,
I've got this dreadful fear that Thetis,
silver-footed daughter of the Old Man of the Sea,
has won you over, for this morning early,
she sat down beside you, held your knees.
I think you surely nodded your agreement
to honour Achilles, killing many soldiers,
slaughtering them by the Achaean ships."

Zeus, the cloud gatherer, spoke out in response:

"My dear lady, you're always fancying things.
Your attention picks up every detail.
But you can't do anything about it,
except push yourself still further from my heart,
making matters so much worse for you.
If things are as they are, then that's the way
I want them. So sit down quietly.
Do as I say. If not, then all the gods
here on Olympus won't be any help,
when I reach out to set my hands on you,
for they're invincible."

Zeus finished speaking.

Ox-eyed queen Hera was afraid—so she sat down,
[640] silently suppressing what her heart desired.
In Zeus' home the Olympian gods began to quarrel.
Then that famous artisan, Hephaestus, concerned
about his mother, white-armed Hera, spoke to them:

"A troublesome matter this will prove—
unendurable—if you two start fighting
over mortal men like this, inciting gods to quarrel. .
If we start bickering, we can't enjoy the meal,
our excellent banquet. So I'm urging mother,
though she's more than willing, to humour Zeus,
[650] our dear father, so he won't get angry once again,
disturb the feast for us. For if Zeus,
the Olympian lord of lightning, was of a mind
to hurl us from our seats, his strength's too great.
But if you talk to him with soothing words,
at once Olympian Zeus will treat us well."

Hephaestus spoke, then stood up, passed a double goblet
across to his dear mother, saying:

"Stay calm, mother, even though you are upset.
If not, then, as beloved as you are,
[660] I may see you beaten up before my eyes,
with me incapable of helping out,
though the sight would make me most unhappy.
It's hard to take a stand opposing Zeus.
Once, when I was eager to assist you,
Zeus seized me by the feet and threw me out,
down from heaven's heights. The entire day
I fell and then, right at sunset, dropped
on Lemnos, almost dead. After that fall,
men of Sintes helped me to recover."

[670] As he spoke, the white-armed goddess Hera smiled.
She reached for her son's goblet. He poured the drink,

going from right to left, for all the other gods,
drawing off sweet nectar from the mixing bowl.
Then their laughter broke out irrepressibly,
as the sacred gods saw Hephaestus bustling around,
concerned about the feast. All that day they dined,
until sunset. No one's heart went unsatisfied.
All feasted equally. They heard exquisite music,
from Apollo's lyre and the Muses' beautiful song
[680] and counter-song. When the sun's bright light had set,
the gods all went to their own homes. Hephaestus,
the famous lame god, with his resourceful skill,
had made each god a place to live. Olympian Zeus,
god of lightning, went home to his own bed,
where he usually reclined whenever sweet sleep
came over him. He went inside and lay down there,
with Hera of the golden throne stretched out beside him.

Book Four
The Armies Clash

[The Council of the Gods on Olympus; Zeus sends Athena to break the truce; Athena persuades Pandarus to fire an arrow at Menelaus; Menelaus is wounded; Machaon tends to Menelaus; Agamemnon tours the battlefield rallying his troops; the battle starts again]

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

"Menelaus has two goddesses
assisting him, Hera of Argos
and Athena of Alalcomene.
But they sit far away, looking on,
enjoying themselves, while Aphrodite,
who loves laughter, helps Paris all the time,
protecting him from death. Now, for instance,
she's just rescued him from certain death.
For war-loving Menelaus was the victor,
no doubt of that. But why don't we discuss
how this warfare is going to finish up—
whether we should re-ignite harsh combat,
this horrific strife, or make both sides friends.
If this second option pleases all of us,
if we find it sweet, then king Priam's city
remains inhabited, and Menelaus
takes Argive Helen home with him."

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

unable to contain her anger, burst out:

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

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

"Dear wife, what sort of crimes have Priam
or Priam's children committed against you,
that you should be so vehemently keen
to destroy that well-built city Ilion?
If you went through its gates or its huge walls,
you'd gorge on Priam and his children,
other Trojans, too, swallow their flesh raw.
That's what you'd do to slake your anger.
Do as you wish. We shouldn't make this matter
something you and I later squabble over,
a source of major disagreements.
But I'll tell you this—keep it in mind.
Whenever I get the urge to wipe out
some city whose inhabitants you love,
don't try to thwart me. Let me have my way.
I'll give in to you freely, though unwillingly.
For of all towns inhabited by earth's peoples,
under the sun, beneath the heavenly stars,
sacred Ilion, with Priam and his people,
expert spearmen, stands dearest in my heart.
My altar there has always shared their feasts,
with libations and sacrificial smoke,
offerings we get as honours due to us."

Ox-eyed Hera then said in reply to Zeus:

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

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

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

Zeus' words stirred up Athena's earlier desires.
She darted from Olympus summit, sped off,
like a comet sent by crooked-minded Cronos' son,
a beacon for sailors and the wide race of men,
showering sparks behind her as she flew.
That's how Pallas Athena shot to earth, then dropped

right down into the middle of the soldiers.
Horse-taming Trojans looked on in amazement,
well-armed Achaeans, too. As they saw her,
each man said to the person next to him:

"There's going to be more war, more wretched combat,
or else great Zeus, who serves up war to men,
[100] will make the troops on both sides friends."

That's what troops muttered, both Trojan and Achaean.
Athena went down into the Trojan crowd,
looking like Laodocus, Antenor's son,
a strong spearman, seeking godlike Pandarus.
She met Pandarus, Lycaon's powerful son,
a fine man, standing there with his sturdy soldiers,
shield-bearing troops who'd come from the river Aesopus.
Standing near him, Athena spoke. Her words had wings:

"Fiery hearted son of Lycaon,
[110] why not do as I suggest? Prepare yourself
to shoot a swift arrow at Menelaus.
You'd earn thanks and glory from all Trojans,
most of all from prince Alexander.
He'd be the very first to bring fine gifts,
if he could see warlike Menelaus,
son of Atreus, mounted on his bier,
his bitter funeral pyre, killed by your arrow.
So come, then, shoot an arrow at him—
at splendid Menelaus. Promise Apollo,
[120] illustrious archer born in Lycia,
you'll make fine sacrifice, some new-born lambs,
once you get back to your city, holy Zeleia."

Athena spoke and thus swayed his foolish wits.
Pandarus took up his bow of polished horn,
made from a nimble wild goat he himself once shot
under the chest, as it leapt down from a rock.

He'd waited in an ambush and hit it in the front.
The goat fell down onto the rocks, landing on its back.
Horns on its head were sixteen palm widths long.
A man skilled in shaping horn had worked on them,
to fit the horns together to create a bow.
He'd polished it all over, adding gold caps
snugly fitted on the tips. Pandarus stooped down,
strung the bow, then set it on the ground.
His brave companions held their shields before him,
just in case Achaea's warlike sons attacked them,
before he could shoot Menelaus, Atreus' warrior son.
Then, removing the cover from his quiver,
Pandarus took out an arrow, a fresh-winged courier
bearing dark agony. Next he quickly set
the keen arrow on the string, swearing an oath
to the archer god, Lycian-born Apollo,
that he would make splendid sacrifice, first-born lambs,
when he got back to his city, holy Zaleia.
Gripping the arrow notch, the ox-gut bowstring,
he pulled back, drawing the string right to his nipple,
iron arrow head against the bow. Once he'd bent
that great bow into a circle, the bow twanged,
the string sang out, the sharp-pointed arrow flew away,
eager to bury itself in crowds of men.

But, Menelaus, the immortal sacred gods
did not forget you.* Athena, Zeus' daughter,
goddess of war's spoils, was first to stand before you,
to ward off the piercing arrow—she brushed it from your skin,
just as a mother brushes a fly off her child
while he lies sweetly sleeping. Athena led the arrow
to the spot where the gold buckles on the belt
rest on the joint in the double body armour.
The keen arrow dug into the leather strap,
passed right through the finely decorated belt,
through the richly embossed armour, the body mail,
his most powerful guard, worn to protect his flesh,

by blocking spears and arrows. The arrow pierced it,
going through that mail, and grazed the skin of Menelaus.
Dark blood at once came flowing from the wound.
Just as when some woman of Meonia or Caria
stains white ivory with purple dye, making a cheek piece
for a horse, and leaves it in her room—an object
many riders covet for themselves, a king's treasure
with double value—horse's ornament and rider's glory—
that's how, Menelaus, your strong thighs, shins and ankles
were stained with your own blood below the wound.

When Agamemnon saw dark blood flowing from the wound,
that king of men shuddered. And Menelaus,
who loved war, shuddered, too. But when he saw
barbs of the arrow head, its binding, still outside,
not underneath the skin, his spirits rose, and courage
flowed back into his chest. Mighty Agamemnon,
taking Menelaus by the hand, with a bitter groan,
spoke to his companions, all grieving with him:

"Dear brother, that oath I swore to was your death—
letting you step forward to fight Trojans,
as Achaea's champion. For now the Trojans
have shot you, walking roughshod on their oaths,
that treaty they swore to in good faith. But still,
the oath, lambs' blood, unmixed libations,
handshakes, things in which we placed our trust—
all these will not go in vain. For if Zeus,
the Olympian, does not fulfil them now,
later on he will. Trojans will pay much—
with their heads, their wives, their children.
I know in my mind and heart that day will come
when holy Troy, Priam, and his people,
fine spearmen, will be annihilated,
when high-ruling Zeus, son of Cronos,
who dwells in the sky, angry at their lies,
will shake his dark aegis against them all.

These things will be fulfilled. But, Menelaus,
I'll be in dreadful pain on your account,
if you die, if Fate now ends your life,
if I return to arid Argos totally disgraced.
For Achaeans immediately will think of home,
leaving Priam and his Trojans here in triumph,
abandoning Helen, an Argive woman.
Your bones will lie rotting here in Trojan soil,
recalling the work we failed to finish.
Then some arrogant Trojan, leaping up
onto the tomb of famous Menelaus,
will shout:

'May Agamemnon's anger
always end like this. His Achaean army
he brought here in vain. He returned home,
back to his native land in empty ships,
abandoning courageous Menelaus.'

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

Then Menelaus, to cheer up Agamemnon, said:

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

Mighty Agamemnon answered:

"My dear Menelaus, I hope that's true.
But a healer must inspect your wound,
apply his medicine to relieve black pain."

Agamemnon ordered Talthybius, his godlike herald:

"Talthybius, as quickly as you can,
get Machaon here, son of Asclepius,
healer without equal, to look over
warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus,
shot by someone's arrow, a skilled archer,
Trojan or Lycian—to his glory and our grief."

Once he heard the order, Talthybius obeyed.
He set off among bronze-clad Achaeans,
seeking heroic Machaon. He saw him there,
standing among the ranks of his strong warriors,
shield-bearing men who'd come with him from Tricca,
land where horses breed. Standing close to him,
Talthybius spoke. His words had wings.

"Son of Asclepius, rouse yourself.
For mighty Agamemnon calls for you
to look at warrior Menelaus, Achaea's leader,
shot by someone's arrow, a skilled archer,
Trojan or Lycian—to his glory and our grief."

At Talthybius' words Machaon's spirits
were stirred up in his chest. They set off together,
through the wide Achaean army's crowded ranks.
They came where wounded fair-haired Menelaus lay.
Around him all the noblest men had gathered in a circle.
Machaon, godlike man, strode into the middle,
drew the arrow from the belt without delay,
twisting back the sharp barbs as he pulled the arrow out.
He undid the finely decorated belt and armour,
then, under that, the chain mail forged in bronze.
Next, he inspected the wound the keen arrow made,
sucked out the blood, then skilfully applied his potions,
soothing medicines which Cheiron gave his father.*

While the Achaeans were looking after Menelaus,

lord of the loud war shout, Trojan ranks advanced,
shields ready, once more armed with all their weapons,
fully charged with passionate desire for battle.
Then you'd not have seen lord Agamemnon sleeping,
hiding, or not keen to fight. Quite the reverse,
he was moving out to combat, to man-ennobling war.
He left his horses and ornate bronze chariot
with his aide Eurymedon, son of Ptolemaeus,
son of Peiraeus, who held the panting horses at a distance.
For Agamemnon had ordered him repeatedly
to keep the horses ready for the time his limbs
grew tired from moving through so many soldiers.
He went around on foot, inspecting warrior ranks.
When he saw Danaans coming up with horses,
he'd approach them, shouting words of encouragement:

"Argives, don't lose your warlike spirit.
Father Zeus will never help those liars.
By attacking us, these Trojans were the first
to violate their oaths. Vultures will gnaw away
their tender flesh, while we lead off their wives
and their dear delicate children to our ships,
when we've destroyed their city."

But when Agamemnon saw soldiers holding back
from hateful war, he'd lash out at them in anger:

"You cowards, worthless Argives, aren't you ashamed?
What are you doing just standing here,
like dazed fawns exhausted after running
over a large plain, now motionless,
hearts drained of spirit—that's how you stand,
in a trance, not marching up to battle.
Are you waiting for Trojans to come closer,
up to the fine sterns of our ships beached here,
on the grey sea shore, so you can see
if the hand of Cronos' son will shield you?"

In this way, Agamemnon moved around the army,
exerting his authority throughout the ranks.
Going past crowds of men, he met the troops from Crete,
as they armed themselves around Idomeneus,
their fiery-hearted leader at the front,
fierce as a wild boar. In the rear, Meriones
roused the ranks for action. Looking at these two,
Agamemnon, king of men, rejoiced. He spoke out,
[300] talking straight to Idomeneus in a friendly tone:

"Idomeneus, above all Danaans,
with their swift horses, I value you in war,
in all other things, and at banquets,
when Achaea's finest prepare gleaming wine,
the kind reserved for kings, in mixing bowls.
Other long-haired Achaeans drink their portion,
the amount allotted to them, but your cup
always stands full of wine, as does mine,
so you can drink any time your heart desires.
[310] Set off to battle, then—show you're a man,
the fine man you claimed to be before."

Idomeneus, Cretan leader, answered Agamemnon:

"Son of Atreus, indeed I'll prove myself
a loyal comrade to you, as I promised
that first time long ago. But you should rouse
other long-haired Achaean men to action,
so we may fight at once, without delay.
Since Trojans have broken their sworn promises,
death and sorrow will come to them at last,
[320] for they attacked us first, breaking their oaths."

At these words, the son of Atreus felt joy fill his heart.
Then he moved off. As he continued on his way,
he met both men called Ajax, arming themselves

among the hordes of troops, with crowds of men on foot.
Just as a goatherd high on a lookout sees a cloud
coming down across the sea, driven by West Wind's force—
something which at a distance seems pitch black
as it moves across the sea, driving a huge storm,
and, shuddering at the sight, he takes his flocks
into a cave—that's how the dense ranks of young men,
gods' favourites, marched around both Ajaxes,
ready for war, all dressed in black, with shields and spears.
Seeing them, powerful Agamemnon felt great joy—
he shouted out to them in words with wings:

"You two Ajaxes,
leaders of the Argives armed in bronze,
for you I have no orders. It's not right
for me to urge you forward—both of you
are rousing men to fight with all their force.
By Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo,
I wish such spirit would fill each man's chest.
Then king Priam's city would soon fall,
we'd capture it, destroy it utterly."

With these words, he left them there, going on to others.
He met Nestor, clear-voiced orator from Pylos,
setting his troops in order, urging them to fight
under huge Pelagon, Alastor, Chromius,
Haemon, and mighty Bias, his people's shepherd.
Nestor set horses, chariots, and charioteers in front.
In the rear, he placed his many brave foot soldiers,
a battle wall. In the middle he placed his poorer troops,
to force them to keep fighting on against their will.
First, he told the charioteers to control their horses,
to avoid confusing the entire battle line:

"In your eagerness to engage the Trojans,
don't any of you charge ahead of others,
trusting in your strength and horsemanship.

And don't lag behind. That will hurt our charge.
Any man whose chariot confronts an enemy's
should thrust with his spear at him from there.
That's the most effective tactic, the way
men wiped out city strongholds long ago—
their chests full of that style and spirit."

Thus that old man, skilled in war's traditions, roused his men.
Seeing him, mighty Agamemnon was elated.
He spoke to Nestor. His words had wings.

"Old man,
how I wish the power in those knees of yours
could match the spirit in your chest, your strength
remain unbowed. But old age, our common enemy,
has worn you down. If only that had happened
to some other man and left you in place,
among the ranks of younger warriors."

To these words Geranian horseman Nestor said:

"Son of Atreus, yes, indeed, I wish
I were the man I used to be back then,
when I cut down lord Ereuthalion.
But gods don't give men everything at once.
Then I was young. Now old age follows me.
But I'll be with my horsemen, advising them,
giving them their orders, an old man's right.
Fighting with spears is for the younger men
born after me, men who rely on strength."

Nestor spoke. Filled with joy, Atreus' son moved on.
Next, he came upon Menestheus, Peteos' son,
a charioteer, standing still among Athenians,
famous for their battle cries. Close by them,
resourceful Odysseus stood among his troops,
Cephallenian soldiers, powerful fighting men.

These men had not yet heard the call to battle.
For the armies of horse-taming Trojans
and Achaeans had only just begun to march
against each other. So Odysseus' soldiers
stood waiting for the rest of the Achaeans
to charge against the Trojans and begin the fight.
Seeing this, Agamemnon, king of men, spoke out,
rebuking them. His words had wings.

"Son of Peteos, god-given king, and you,
Odysseus, skilled in sly deception,
crafty minded, why are you holding back,
standing apart? Are you waiting for the rest?
By rights you two should be with those in front,
sharing the heat of battle. At banquets,
when we Achaeans feast our senior men,
you hear me call your name out first.
Then you like to have roast meat and cups of wine,
honey sweet, to your heart's content.
But now you'd be quite happy looking on
if ten Achaean groups were fighting here
with ruthless bronze before your very eyes."

Resourceful Odysseus, scowling grimly, then replied:

"Son of Atreus, how can you say such things?
How can you claim I'm hanging back from battle
each time we Achaeans rouse ourselves for war
against horse-taming Trojans? If you want,
if it's of interest to you, then you'll see
Telemachus' dear father battling
horse-taming Trojans at the very front.
What you've been saying is clearly nonsense."

Mighty Agamemnon saw the anger in Odysseus.
He smiled at him and took back what he'd just said:

"Odysseus, you resourceful man,
divinely born son of Laertes,
I'm not finding serious fault with you.
I'm issuing no orders to you.
I know that spirit in your loyal chest
is well disposed. We both are of one mind.
If I've said something bad we'll make it good.
May the gods bring all of this to nothing."

With these words, Agamemnon left Odysseus there,
moving on to other men. He met Diomedes,
Tydeus' high-spirited son, standing by his horses
and his well-made chariot. Beside him stood Sthenelus,
son of Capaneus. Seeing them, Agamemnon
spoke out in rebuke. His words had wings.

"Alas, Diomedes,
son of fiery-hearted, horse-taming Tydeus,
why are you hiding, just watching battle lanes?
Tydeus was not a man to shirk like this.
He fought his enemies in front of his companions.
That's what they say, those who saw him work.
I never saw him for myself. People claim
he ranked above the rest. Once he came to Mycenae
as a peaceful guest with godlike Polyneices,
mustering men to assault the sacred walls of Thebes.
They begged us to give them worthy comrades.
Mycenaeans, willing to comply, agreed.
But then Zeus later changed their minds,
revealing an unlucky omen to them.
So Tydeus and Polyneices left.
On their way, they reached the river Asopus,
its lush grassy meadows full of reeds.
Sent by Achaeans as envoy to Thebes,
Tydeus went there. He found Cadmeans
feasting in large numbers in the palace,
home of great Eteocles.* Though a stranger,

all by himself in that Cadmean crowd,
chariot fighter Tydeus was not afraid.
He challenged them in various contests.
Athena helped, so he won them all with ease.
Horse-breaking Cadmeans were upset with him.
They organized a strong ambush against him
as he returned—fifty young men, with two leaders,
that godlike hero Maeon, Haemon's son,
and warlike Polyphontes, son of Autophonus.
But these men came to fatal shameful ends.
For Tydeus killed them, all but one.
He let Maeon go home, sent him away,
in obedience to an omen from the gods.
That's the man Aetolian Tydeus was.
But his son is a lesser man than he,
though better when it comes to talking."

Mighty Diomedes did not reply to Agamemnon's words,
shamed at the rebuke from a king whom he respected.
But Sthenelus, son of famous Capaneus, answered:

"Son of Atreus, don't spread lies. You know the truth.
We claim we're far better than our fathers.
We captured Thebes, city of seven gates,
leading smaller forces over stronger walls,
trusting signs sent by the gods and Zeus' aid.
The others died through their own foolishness.
So don't give our fathers honours high as mine."

Powerful Diomedes, frowning, spoke to Sthenelus:

"My friend. Stay quiet. Follow my advice.
For I'm not hurt that Agamemnon,
the army's shepherd, urges armed Achaeans
on to battle. For he will get the glory,
if Achaeans annihilate the Trojans
and capture sacred Ilion. And he'll get

great sorrow, if Achaeans are wiped out.
But come, let's get our two minds working
to rouse our spirits for this coming fight."

[490] Diomedes spoke. Then with his weapons he jumped
from his chariot down to the ground. Around his chest
the bronze rang fearfully, as he moved into action,
a sound to make even brave warriors afraid.

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

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

When the two armies came to one common ground,

they smashed into each other—shields, spears, fierce angry men
encased in bronze. Studded shields bashed one another.
A huge din arose—human cries of grief and triumph,
those killing and those killed. Earth flowed with blood.
Just as streams swollen with melting snows pour out,
flow downhill into a pool, and meet some torrent
from a great spring in a hollow gully there,
and the shepherd in the distant hills hears the roar—
so the shouts and turmoil resounded then from warriors,
as they collided.

Antilochus was the first to kill a man—
a well-armed Trojan warrior, Echepolus,
son of Thalysius, a courageous man,
who fought in the front ranks. He hit his helmet crest,
topped with horsehair plumes, spearing his forehead.
The bronze point smashed straight through the frontal bone.
Darkness hid his eyes and he collapsed, like a tower,
falling down into that frenzied battle. As he fell,
powerful Elephenor, son of Chalcodon,
courageous leader of the Abantes, seized his feet,
and started pulling him beyond the range of weapons,
eager to strip him of his armour quickly.
But Elephenor's attempt did not go on for long.
Great-hearted Agenor saw him drag the dead man.
He stabbed Elephenor with his bronze spear,
right in his exposed side, where his shield left him
vulnerable as he bent down. His limbs gave way,
as his spirit left him. Over his dead body,
Trojans and Achaeans kept fighting grimly on,
attacking like wolves, man whirling against man.

Then Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Simoeisius,
Anthemion's son, a fine young warrior.
He was born on the banks of the river Simoeis,
while his mother was coming down Mount Ida,
accompanying her parents to watch their flocks.

That's why the people called him Simoeisius.
But he did not repay his fond parents for raising him.
His life was cut short on great Ajax's deadly spear.
As he was moving forward with the men in front,
Ajax struck him in the chest, by the right nipple.
The bronze spear went clean through his shoulder.
He collapsed in the dust, like a poplar tree,
one growing in a large well-watered meadow,
from whose smooth trunk the branches grow up to the top,
until a chariot builder's bright axe topples it,
bends the wood, to make wheel rims for a splendid chariot,
letting the wood season by the riverbank.
That's how godlike Ajax chopped down Simoeisius,
son of Anthemion.

Then Antiphus, Priam's son,
with his shining helmet, hurled his sharp spear at Ajax
through a crowd of men. He missed Ajax, but hit Leucus,
a brave companion of Odysseus, in the groin,
as he was dragging Simoeisius away.
His hands let go. He fell down on the corpse.
Enraged at Leucus' slaughter, Odysseus strode up,
through the front ranks, armed in gleaming bronze. Going in close,
he took his stand. Looking round, he hurled his glittering spear.
As he threw, Trojans moved back, but the spear found a mark.
It hit Democoön, Priam's bastard son, who'd come
from Abydos, where he bred horses for their speed.
Angry for his friend, Odysseus speared him in the temple.
The sharp bronze pressed on through the other side,
coming out his forehead. Darkness fell on his eyes,
and he collapsed with a crash. The armour on him echoed.

Trojans in the front ranks, among them noble Hector,
backed away. Raising a huge shout, the Argives
hauled off the corpses and charged ahead much further.

Looking down from Pergamus, Apollo grew annoyed.

He called out to the Trojans, shouting:

"Charge ahead, you horse-taming Trojans.
Don't make Argives happy. Their skin's not made
of stone or iron. Once you strike at them
it can't stop flesh-ripping bronze. And Achilles,
son of lovely Thetis, isn't in this fight.
He's sitting by his ships, nursing his anger."

So the fearsome god spoke out from the city.
Athena Tritogeneia, mighty Zeus' daughter,
rushed among Achaeans, urging companies on,
if she saw men holding back, hesitant to fight.*

Death then came to Diores, son of Amarynceus.
He was hit by a jagged rock on his right shin,
beside the ankle. It was thrown by Peirous,
son of Imbrasus, captain of the Thracians,
who'd come from Aenus. The cruel rock crushed both tendons
and the bone. He fell onto his back down in the dust.
There he reached out with both hands for his companions.
His spirit left his body with each gasp he took.
Peirous, who'd thrown the rock, ran up and speared his gut.
His bowels spilled out onto the ground. Darkness hid his eyes.

As Peirous moved off, Thoas, an Aetolian, hit him,
his spear striking him above the nipple. The bronze spear point
bit into his lungs. Thoas moved in to close quarters,
pulled the heavy spear out from his chest, drew his sharp sword,
then drove it straight into the middle of his belly,
destroying Peirous' life. But Thoas couldn't strip
the armour off. For Peirous' companions,
Thracian men whose hair is piled atop their heads,
rallied round, holding out long spears, forcing Thoas
away from them. Thoas was big, strong, and brave,
but he fell back, shaken. And so those two warriors
lay stretched out in the dirt beside each other—

[620] one Thracian chief, one captain of bronze-clad Epeians.
And many other men lay dead around them.

At that point, no man who joined in the battle there
could take it lightly, not even one who strolled unhurt
through the middle of the fight, untouched by that sharp bronze,
with Pallas Athena escorting him by hand,
shielding him from flying weapons. For on that day,
many Trojans and Achaeans lay there side by side,
stretched out together, face down in the dust.

Book Nine
Peace Offerings to Achilles

[The Argives in despair; Agamemnon proposes they go home; Diomedes responds, rebuking Agamemnon; Nestor proposes a reconciliation with Achilles; Agamemnon agrees, outlines his offer; Phoenix, Odysseus, and Ajax go to Achilles with the offer; he welcomes them with a meal; Odysseus outlines Agamemnon's offer; Achilles refuses; Phoenix urges Achilles to accept, tells the story of Meleager; Achilles refuses Phoenix; Ajax speaks last; Achilles makes a slight concession; the envoys return with Achilles' answer; Achaeans retire for the night.]

Meanwhile, as the Trojans maintained their careful watch,
Panic, chilling Fear's dread comrade, gripped Achaeans,
their best men suffering unendurable anguish.
Just like those times two winds blow in from Thrace—
North Wind and West Wind suddenly spring up
and lash the fish-filled seas—black waves at once rise up,
then fling seaweed in piles along the shoreline—
so spirits in Achaean chests were now cast down.
Atreus' son, heart overwhelmed with painful sorrow,
[10] went to give out orders for clear-voiced heralds
to summon all the warriors to assembly,
calling them one by one, not with a general shout.
He himself, with his heralds, carried out the task.
The counsellors sat heart sick. Agamemnon stood,
his face shedding tears like a black water spring
whose dark stream flows down a sheer rock precipice.
With a sigh, Agamemnon addressed the Argives:

"My friends, leaders, Argive counsellors,
Zeus, son of Cronos, has snared me badly
[20] in grievous folly. Deceptive god,
he promised me—he nodded his assent—
that I'd lay waste to well-built Ilion,
before I went back home. Now he tricks me
He's devised a cruel deceit for me,

telling me to return to Argos in disgrace,
after the deaths of so many warriors.
That's what now delights all-powerful Zeus,
who has hurled down so many lofty towns,
and who'll still demolish many more—
such is his power, irresistible.
But come, let's all follow what I propose—
let's sail back to our dear native land.
For we're never going to capture Troy."

He finished. All those there stayed silent, stunned.
Achaea's sons just sat there, speechless with grief.
At last Diomedes, skilled in battle cries, spoke out:

"Son of Atreus, I'll be the first to challenge
your foolishness, as is my right, my lord,
in our assembly. So don't be angry.
First of all, you slighted my bravery
in front of all Danaans, when you claimed
I was no soldier, an unwarlike man.
Achaeans, young and old, all know this.
The son of crooked-minded Cronos gave you
a two-edged gift—he gave you honour
to govern all men with your sceptre,
but he didn't give the strongest power,
courage. My misguided king, do you think
Achaea's sons are really fearful cowards,
as you state? If your heart wishes to go home,
then go. The road lies there in front of you.
The many ships which sailed here with you
from Mycenae stand ready by the sea.
But the rest of the long-haired Achaeans
will stay here, until we demolish Troy.
If they flee back to their dear native land
in their ships, too, then Sthenelus and I
will fight on to our goal, to take Ilion.
For the gods were with us when we came."

With a roar, all Achaea's sons endorsed his words,
pleased with the speech made by horse-taming Diomedes.
Then horseman Nestor, standing up before them, said:

"Son of Tydeus, you're excellent in battle
and the best Achaean of your age in council.
No Achaean will fault what you've just said
or oppose it. But your speech is incomplete.
You are still young—you might well be my son,
my youngest born. Still, you spoke sensibly,
in what you said to the Achaean king.
For you spoke justly and kept to the point.
But come, I can claim to be your senior,
so I shall explain this matter fully.
Let no one take issue now with what I say,
not even mighty Agamemnon.
Any man who's keen on civil war
is an evil outlaw, without a heart,
without a home. So for the time being,
now that night has come, let's do what we must.
Let's get dinner ready, something to eat.
And let's have sentries camp beside that trench
we dug outside the wall. I'm saying young men
should do this. Then, issue your instructions,
son of Atreus, for you are chief king here.
Prepare a meal for senior counsellors—
that's the right and proper thing to do.
You've got lots of wine stockpiled in your huts,
which Achaea's sons bring here every day
over the wide sea from Thrace—you've got
all you need to show such hospitality,
for you are ruler over many men.
Once many people have assembled there,
you should follow whoever offers you
the best advice. All we Achaeans need
good practical advice, especially now,

when enemies are burning many fires
right beside our ships. Who finds that pleasant?
This night saves our army or destroys it."

Nestor spoke. Those present listened carefully,
then followed what he'd said. Armed sentinels went out,
led by Thrasymedes, Nestor's son, his people's shepherd,
with Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, strong fighters,
and Meriones, Aphareus, and Deïpyrus,
along with noble Lycomedes, Creion's son.
These seven were captains of the sentinels.
A hundred young men, all armed with their long spears,
went with each of them. They marched off and took positions
half way between the ditch and wall. Then the men lit fires
and prepared their meals. Atreus' son led his advisors
to his hut and gave all of them a generous meal.
They ate the food prepared and set before them,
and each man ate and drank to his full heart's content.
Old Nestor, whose previous advice had seemed the best,
was the first to begin explaining what he thought.
Keeping in mind their common good, he spoke out:

"Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,
king of men, I'll begin and end my speech
with you, for you are lord of many men.
Zeus gave you sceptre and laws to rule them.
Thus, you, above all, should speak and listen,
then act upon what other men may say,
if their spirit prompts them to speak well.
You'll get the credit for what they begin.
So I'll say what seems to me the best advice.
No one else has set out a better scheme
than the one which I've been mulling over
a long time now, ever since you, my lord,
made Achilles angry by taking back
that young girl Briseis from his hut,
against my judgment. Repeatedly,

[130] I urged you not to do it. But then you,
surrendering to your arrogant spirit,
shamed our strongest man, honoured by the gods.
You still have that prize you took. So now let's think
how we may make amends, win him back with gifts
and gracious speeches, and be friends once more."

Agamemnon, king of men, then answered Nestor:

"Old man, you expose my folly justly.
I was deluded. I don't deny that.
The man whom Zeus loves in his heart is worth
[140] whole armies. And this man Zeus now honours
by destroying an army of Achaeans.
Since my delusion made me follow
my mistaken feelings, I'm now willing
to make amends, to give in recompense
immense treasures. I'll list these rich gifts
in presence of you all—seven tripods
which fire has not yet touched, ten gold talents,
twenty shining cauldrons, twelve strong horse
whose speed has triumphed and earned them prizes.
[150] A man who has as much as I have won
from racing these sure-footed animals
would not be poor, or lack possessions,
or need precious gold. And then I'll give him
seven women of Lesbos, skilled in crafts,
whom I chose for myself when he captured
well-built Lesbos. They surpass all women
for their beauty. These I shall present to him.
With them the one I seized from him, Briseis,
daughter of Briseus. I'll solemnly swear
[160] I never once went up into her bed
or had sex with her, as is men's custom,
where men and women are concerned.
All these things he will receive immediately.
If gods grant we destroy Priam's great city,

when we Achaeans allocate the spoils,
let him come and load his ship with gold,
with bronze, as much as he desires. He may choose
twenty Trojan women for himself,
the loveliest after Argive Helen.
If we get back to the rich land of Argos,
he can then become my son-in-law.
I'll honour him just as I do Orestes,
my son, whom I dearly love. He's being raised
in great prosperity. In my well-built home,
I have three daughters—Chrysothemis,
Iphianessa and Laodice.
He can take whichever one he chooses
back home as his wife to Peleus' house
and pay no bridal gift. I'll give much more
to bring about our reconciliation,
a dowry bigger than any man so far
has ever handed over with his daughter.
I'll give him seven populous cities,
Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,
holy Pherae, fertile Antheia,
lovely Aepea, and vine-rich Pedasus,
all near the sea, beside sandy Pylos.
People living in these places own a lot,
many sheep and cattle. They will honour him
and give him gifts, as if he were a god.
Under his laws and sceptre they'll do well.
I shall give all this if he will abate
his anger. Let him concede. Only Hades
is totally relentless and unyielding.
That's why of all the gods, he's the one
men hate the most. And let him acknowledge
my authority, for I'm the greater king.
In age I can claim to be his senior."

Geranian horseman Nestor then said in reply:

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

Nestor spoke. All present approved of what he'd said.
Attendants then poured water on their hands.
Young men filled mixing bowls with wine up to the brim
and passed them round. With every cup they made libations.
Once they'd made offerings and drunk their fill of wine,
they left the hut of Agamemnon, son of Atreus.
Geranian horseman Nestor, looking at each man,
especially at Odysseus, kept encouraging them
to persuade Achilles, Peleus' excellent son.

Along the shore of the tumbling, crashing sea,
the envoys made their way, offering up their prayers
to world-circling Earthshaker Poseidon to help them
more easily convince the great heart of Achilles.
They came to the ships and huts of the Myrmidons.
There they found Achilles. He was easing his spirit
with a tuneful finely decorated lyre.
It had a silver cross-piece. He'd seized it as a prize
when he'd destroyed the city of Eëtion.
With the lyre he was bringing pleasure to his heart,
singing about the celebrated deeds of men.
Patroclus, his sole companion, sat there facing him,
waiting in silence until Achilles finished singing.

The envoys approached, lord Odysseus in the lead.
They stood in front of him. In astonishment,
Achilles got up off his chair and stood up quickly,
still holding the lyre. Patroclus did the same,
standing up as soon as he saw the embassy.
Swift-footed Achilles greeted them and said:

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

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

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

Achilles spoke. Patroclus obeyed his dear companion.
Then in the firelight he set down a large chopping block,
placed on it slabs of mutton, goat, and the chine
of a plump hog, swimming in fat. Achilles carved,
while Automedon held the meat. He sliced up
small pieces, then got them ready on the spits.
The son of Menoetius, godlike man, stoked the fire,
a huge one. Once the blaze died down and flames subsided,
Patroclus spread the glowing embers, laid the spits
lengthwise on top, setting them in place on stones
and sprinkling on the sacred salt. When the meat was cooked,
he laid it out on platters. Patroclus took the bread,
then passed it in fine baskets round the table.
Achilles served the meat and sat down by the wall,
directly opposite godlike Odysseus.

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

"Good health, Achilles.
We have not had to go without our share
of feasts, either in Agamemnon's hut,
Atreus' son, or here, for you've prepared
a richly satisfying meal. But now
our business is not pleasant banqueting.
For we are staring at a great disaster.
And, my lord, we are afraid, in a quandary,
whether we can save our well-decked ships,
or whether they will be destroyed, unless
you put on your warlike power once again.
For haughty Trojans and their famous allies
have camped close to the ships and barricade
and lit many fires throughout their army.
They claim nothing can prevent them now
from attacking our black ships. And Zeus,
son of Cronos, has sent them his signal,
on their right a lightning flash. Hector,
exulting hugely in his power,
in a terrifying manic frenzy,
puts his faith in Zeus, fears neither man nor god.
A killing passion now possesses him.
He prays for holy dawn to come quickly,
vowing he'll hack apart the high sterns
of our ships, burn them in destructive fire,
and by those very ships kill the Achaeans
driven out in desperation by the smoke.
I have a dreadful fear deep in my heart

that the gods will make good all his boasting,
seal our fate, to perish here in Troy,
far away from Argos, where horses breed.
So rouse yourself, late though it may be,
if you've a mind to save Achaeans
from their suffering at this Trojan onslaught.
If not, you'll suffer future agonies.
You won't find any cure for such despair.
Before that happens, you should think about
how to help Argives at this evil hour.
My friend, that day your father, Peleus,
sent you off, away from Phthia,
to join Agamemnon, didn't he say this,

'My son, Athena and Hera will give you
power, if they so wish, but you must check
that overbearing spirit in your chest.
It's better to show good will, to give up
malicious quarrelling. Then Achaeans,
young and old, will respect you all the more'?

That's what your old father said, advice
which you've forgotten. So even now
you should stop, cease this heart-corroding rage.
For if you will mitigate your anger,
Agamemnon will give you worthy gifts.
If you will hear the list, then I'll repeat
what Agamemnon has promised to you.
All gifts are in his huts—seven tripods
which fire has not yet touched, ten gold talents,
twenty shining cauldrons, twelve strong horses
whose speed has triumphed, earned them prizes—
a man who's won as much as Agamemnon
from racing these sure-footed animals
would not be poor or lack possessions
or precious gold. Then he will add to this
seven women of Lesbos, skilled in crafts,

whom he chose for himself when you captured
well-built Lesbos. They surpass all women
for their beauty. These he will present to you,
with them the one he seized from you, Briseis,
daughter of Briseus. He'll solemnly swear
he never once went up into her bed
or had sex with her, as is men's custom,
where men and women are concerned.
All these things you will receive immediately.
If gods grant that we destroy Priam's great city,
when we Achaeans allocate the spoils,
you may come and load your ship with gold,
with bronze, as much as you desire. You may choose
twenty Trojan women for yourself,
the loveliest after Argive Helen.
If we get back to the rich land of Argos,
you can then become his son-in-law.
He'll honour you just as he does Orestes,
his son, whom he dearly loves. He's being raised
in great prosperity. In his well-built home
he has three daughters—Chrysothemis,
Iphianessa, and Laodice.
You can take whichever one you choose
back home as your wife to Peleus' house
and pay no bridal gift. He'll give much more
to bring about your reconciliation,
a dowry bigger than any man so far
has ever handed over with his daughter.
He'll give you seven populous cities,
Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,
holy Pherae, fertile Antheia,
lovely Aepea, and vine-rich Pedasus,
all near the sea, beside sandy Pylos.
People living in these places possess
many sheep and cattle and will honour you
and give you gifts, as if you were a god.
Under your laws and sceptre they'll do well.

He will give all this, if you will abate
your anger. But if your heart still resents
Atreus' son and his gifts, then take pity
on all Achaeans, our exhausted soldiers.
They will pay you honours like a god.
Among them you'll earn enormous glory,
for now you might kill Hector, who may well
[380] approach you—he's so obsessed with slaughter,
he thinks there's not a warrior his equal
among Danaans brought here in our ships."

Swift-footed Achilles then answered Odysseus:

"Divinely born son of Laertes,
resourceful Odysseus. I must be blunt
about what I think, where all this will lead,
so you do not sit there and, one by one,
try to entice me with sweet promises.
I hate like the gates of Hell any man
[390] who says one thing while thinking something else
which stays hidden in his mind. So I'll declare
what, in my view, it's best for me to say—
I don't believe that Agamemnon,
Atreus' son, or any other Argive
will persuade me, for no thanks are given
to the man who always fights without rest
against the enemy. Whether one fights
or stays behind, the shares are still the same
Coward and brave man both get equal honour.
[400] Death treats idle and active men alike.
I've won nothing for all I've suffered,
battling on, pain in my heart, with my life
always under threat. Just as a bird
takes scraps of food, whatever she can find,
to her fledglings, but herself eats little,
so have I lain without sleep many nights,
persevered through bloody days of fighting,

in battling men in wars about their wives.
With ships, I've seized twelve towns and killed their men.
On land, in the area of fertile Troy,
I claim eleven more. From all these
I took fine treasure, lots of it, brought it
to Agamemnon, Atreus' son—I gave it
all to him. He stayed back, at the swift ships.
He shared very little of what he got,
keeping most of it for his own use.
He gave prizes to the best of men, the kings,
and they hung on to them. From me alone
he stole away a prize, a woman I love.
Let him have his pleasure in bed with her.
Why must Argives fight against the Trojans?
Why did Atreus' son collect an army
and lead it here if not for fair-haired Helen?
Are Atreus' sons the only mortal men
who love their wives? Every good and prudent man
loves his wife and cares for her, as my heart
loved that girl, though captured with my spear.
Since he's taken my prize out of my hands
and cheated me, let him not try to take
another thing from me. I know him too well.
He'll never persuade me to agree.
But, Odysseus, let him rely on you
and other kings as well to save his ships
from fiery destruction. He has done much
without me already. He's built a wall,
constructed a large wide ditch around it,
and fixed stakes inside. But for all these things,
he's not been able to check the power
of man-killing Hector. When I fought
beside Achaeans, Hector wasn't eager
to push the battle far from his own walls.
He came out only to the Scaean Gates
and to the oak tree. Once he met me there
alone. He barely got away from my attack.

But now I don't want to fight lord Hector.
Tomorrow I'll make holy sacrifice
to Zeus, to all the gods, and load my ships,
once I've dragged them down into the sea.
You'll see, if you wish, if you're interested,
tomorrow my ships will be sailing off,
on the fish-filled Hellespont, men rowing
with great eagerness. And if Poseidon,
famous Earthshaker, gives us fair sailing,
in three days I'll reach fertile Phthia.
There I own many things I left behind
when I made this disastrous trip to Troy.
I'll take back from here more gold, red bronze,
fair women, and grey iron—all I captured.
But mighty Agamemnon, Atreus' son,
in his arrogance, seized back from me
the prize which he awarded. Tell him that.
Repeat in public everything I say,
so other Achaeans will grow angry,
if he, still clothed in shamelessness, hopes
at any time to deceive some Argive.
Cur that he is, he doesn't dare confront me
face to face. I'll discuss no plans with him,
no actions. He cheated me, betrayed me.
His words will cheat no more. To hell with him!
Let him march to his death by his own road,
for Counsellor Zeus has stolen his wits.
I hate his gifts. And he's not worth a damn.
Not even if he gave me ten times, no,
twenty times more than all he owns right now,
or will possess in future, not even
all the wealth amassed in Orchomenus,
or Egyptian Thebes, where huge treasures sit
piled up in houses—that city of gates,
one hundred of them, through each can ride
two hundred men, horses and chariots
all together—not even if he gave me

gifts as numerous as grains of sand
beside the sea or particles of dust,
not for all that would Agamemnon win
my heart, not until he satisfies me
in full for all my heartfelt bitter pain.
I'll never take as wife any daughter
of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
not even if her beauty rivals that
[490] of golden Aphrodite, or her skill
in crafts equals bright-eyed Athena's.
I will not marry her. Let him select
another Achaean, someone like himself,
a more prestigious king than me. For me,
if the gods keep me safe and I get home,
Peleus himself will find me a wife.
There are plenty of Achaean women
in Hellas and in Phthia—daughters of lords,
men who govern cities. From them I'll choose
[500] the one I want to make my cherished wife.
My heart has often felt a strong desire
to take a woman there as my own wife,
someone suitable for marriage, to enjoy
the riches which old Peleus has acquired.
Life is worth more to me than all the wealth
they say was stored in well-built Ilion
some time ago, when they were still at peace,
before the sons of Achaea came here,
more than all the treasures of the archer,
[510] Phoebus Apollo, stacked on the stone floor
in rocky Pytho. Men can steal cattle,
fat sheep, get tripods, herds of sorrel horses.
But no man gets his life back, not by theft
or plunder, once it has flown out from him,
passed beyond the barrier of his teeth.
My goddess mother, silver-footed Thetis,
has said two fates may bring about my death.
If I remain here, continuing the fight

against the Trojans' city, that means
I won't be going home, but my glory
will never die. But if I go back home,
my fame will die, although my life will last
a long time—death will not end it quickly.
And so I encourage all the rest of you
to sail back home. You'll not attain your goal,
steep Ilion, because far-seeing Zeus
shields that city with his hand. Its people
have confidence in that. Thus, you should go.
Report this message to Achaean leaders—
that's the privilege of senior men—
their minds must come up with some better plan
to save the Achaean fleet and army
beside the hollow ships. The one they've got
won't work, since anger still keeps me away.
Let Phoenix stay here with me, sleep here,
so tomorrow he may join our voyage
to his dear native land, if that's his wish.
For I will not take him back by force."

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

"Glorious Achilles, if your mind
is really set on going back, if you
are totally unwilling to protect
our swift ships from destructive fire,
because that anger has consumed your heart,
how can I remain here, dear lad, alone,
away from you? Old horseman Peleus
sent me with you, on that day he shipped you
from Phthia to join Agamemnon.
You were young, knowing nothing about war,
which levels men, or about public debates,
where men acquire distinction. So Peleus

sent me to teach you all these things,
so you could speak and carry out great actions.
Given all this, dear lad, how can I wish
to be alone and separated from you?
No, not even if god himself promised
to cast off my old age, to make me young,
the man I was when I first left Hellas,
land of beautiful women, running off
from my angry father, Amyntor,
Ormenus' son. He was incensed with me
about his fair-haired mistress. He loved her,
thus dishonouring his wife, my mother,
who begged me constantly—on her knees—
to have sex with that mistress, so she'd hate
my father. I obeyed, did what she asked.
My father soon found out what I had done—
he cursed me many times repeatedly,
praying to dread Furies that no dear son
born from me would ever sit upon his knees.
The gods made sure his curses took effect,
underworld Zeus and dread Persephone.
I planned to murder him with my sharp bronze.
Some god checked my anger, putting in my heart
what men would say, their great contempt—
how among all Achaeans I'd be called
the man who'd slaughtered his own father.
My heart no longer felt the slightest wish
to stay in my father's house with him so angry.
My friends and relatives who lived around me
begged me repeatedly to stay right there.
And then they butchered many well-fed sheep,
shuffling cattle with crumpled horns, and laid out
many hogs, swimming in fat, to be singed
in Hephaestus' flames. They drank many jugs
of the old man's wine. For nine nights,
they kept watch over me throughout the night,
taking turns as guards. Fires always burned,

one underneath the enclosed portico,
another in the hallway right outside
my bedroom doors. Ten nights later, as night fell,
I broke through the tight-closed bedroom doors,
went out, and jumped with ease across the wall
around the outer court, without being seen
by men and women checking up on me.
I ran away through all of spacious Hellas,
then came a suppliant to fertile Phthia,
where flocks are bred, to king Peleus.
He received me hospitably, loved me,
as a father dearly loves his only son,
heir to all his goods. He made me wealthy,
assigning me to govern many people.
I lived in the borderlands of Phthia,
reigning as king over the Dolopes.
And I was the one, godlike Achilles,
who raised you up to be the man you are.
You would refuse to attend a banquet
with anyone or eat in your own home,
unless I set you on my knees, fed you,
cut the meat, and held the wine cup for you.
Often you soaked the tunic on my chest,
slobbering your wine, a helpless baby.
I've gone through a lot for you, worked hard,
bearing in mind that gods had taken care
I'd never have some children of my own.
Godlike Achilles, I made you my son,
so that if I ever met disaster,
you'd protect me. So, Achilles, subdue
your giant passion. It's not right for you
to have an unyielding heart. Gods themselves
are flexible, and they have more honour
than we possess, more power, too. Men pray
when they go wrong or make mistakes,
propitiating gods with offerings,
gentle prayers, libations, and sacrifice.

Prayers are the daughters of almighty Zeus.
Lame, wrinkled, cross-eyed, they try to follow
[630] behind Folly, who, because she's strong and quick,
runs far in front of them, appearing
all over the world, bringing harm to men.
Far behind, Prayers carry on their healing.
If a man honours these daughters of Zeus
as they come near, they will help him greatly,
paying attention to him as he prays.
If someone spurns them, rudely rejecting them,
they go to Zeus, son of Cronos, begging
for Folly to pursue that man, who then
[640] harms himself and suffers punishment.
For that reason, Achilles, you should give
Zeus' daughters your respect. They have changed
the minds of other men, even great ones.
If Agamemnon were not bringing gifts—
and naming more to come—but persisting,
inflexibly angry, I wouldn't tell you
to cast aside your rage and help the Argives,
no matter how painful their distress.
But he's giving plenty now, more later.
[650] He has sent out his greatest warriors,
selected from the whole Achaean army,
your finest friends among the Argives.
Don't show contempt for what they have to say
or insult their coming here. Up to now,
your resentment has been justified.
But we learn this from previous actions
of heroic men—when furious anger
came over some of them, they were swayed
by gifts and by persuasive speeches.
[660] I recall an old tale from long ago.
Since you are all my friends, I'll tell it.
The Curetes and staunch Aetolians
were fighting and killing one another,
around Calydon, with the Aetolians

defending Calydon and the Curetes
eager to destroy the place in war.
Golden-throned Artemis had driven them to fight,
in her rage that Oeneus hadn't given her
a harvest-offering, first fruits of his orchard.
Other gods had received their sacrifices,
but he'd failed to offer anything to her,
a daughter of great Zeus. He forgot, or else
grew careless, a lapse within his foolish heart.
The archer goddess, in her rage, incited
a savage white-tusked wild boar against him.
This beast from the gods reached Oeneus' orchard
and was causing serious damage there,
knocking tall plants to the ground, entire trees,
including roots and flowering apples.
Meleager, Oeneus' son, killed the beast.
First he gathered huntsmen and hunting dogs
from many cities, for a small group
could not subdue such an enormous boar.
It had killed many men and sent them off
to their funeral pyres in agony.
Artemis began a war about this beast,
that battle between the Curetes
and the Aetolians, courageous men
fighting for the boar's head and bristly hide.
So long as war-loving Meleager
was in the fight, the Curetes did not do well.
For all their numbers, they could not hold
their ground outside the city walls.
But then anger swept through Meleager,
just as it forcibly swells up in chests
of other men, including wise ones, too.
His heart was angry with his dear mother,
Althea. So he stayed home with his wife,
Cleopatra, the attractive daughter
of the lady with the lovely ankles,
Maripessa, daughter of Euenus

and Ides, strongest of all men then alive.
He was the one who took his bow to make
a stand against a god, Phoebus Apollo,
fighting for the girl with lovely ankles.
Cleopatra's father and noble mother
at home called her by the name Alcyone.
Her mother shared the same fate as that bird,
the mournful halcyon, for she cried
when Apollo, the far shooter, seized her.
Beside this Cleopatra Meleager lay,
brooding on the rage that pained his heart,
infuriated by his mother's curses.
In her grief over her brothers' killing,
she prayed to the gods, beating fertile earth
with her hands over and over, kneeling down,
her breasts wet from crying, begging Hades
and fearful Persephone to kill her son.*
The night-walking Furies, with their stone hearts,
listened to her prayers from Erebus.
Then around the gates of Calydon
the battle din grew loud, war's turmoil.
The gates were being demolished. The old men
of the Aetolians begged Meleager
to come to their assistance. They sent
their gods' most important holy priests.
They promised him great gifts, telling him
he could take for himself, from anywhere
on the richest plain of lovely Calydon
fifty acres of the finest farm land,
half for a vineyard and half for farming,
open fields for ploughing. Oeneus,
the old horseman, kept imploring him,
standing at the threshold of his high room,
beating on the firmly bolted doors,
begging his son. His sisters and his mother
often entreated him. But he refused.
His companions, those most faithful to him,

his closest friends of all, added their prayers.
But they could not overcome those passions
in his chest, not until his own room
was under fierce attack, once the Curetes
had scaled the tower and begun to burn
that great city. Then his lovely wife,
in her grief, implored Meleager,
telling him the evils which can overtake
men whose town is violently seized—
how men are butchered and the city burned,
with women and children seized by strangers.
Once he'd heard of these disasters, his heart stirred.
He went outside, put his shining armour
around his body—and thus averted
a disastrous day for the Aetolians,
by following his heart. But the Aetolians
did not give him the many splendid gifts,
although he'd saved them from catastrophe.
My friend, don't think like Meleager.
Don't let some god make you choose that way.
Once the ships catch fire, it will be harder
to defend them. So accept the gifts.
Achaeans are honouring you like a god.
If you return to man-killing battle
without the gifts, you'll never get such honour,
even though you may push the conflict back."

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

"Phoenix, dear old father, noble lord,
I don't need such honours, for I possess
honour in the will of Zeus. That will keep
me here beside my own hollow ships,
so long as there is breath within my body,
strength in my limbs. But I'll say this to you—
bear it in mind—do not confuse my heart
with these laments, these speeches of distress,

all serving that heroic son of Atreus.
You should not love him, in case I hate you,
who are now my friend. You would be noble
to join with me, and so injure the man
who injures me. Be equal king with me.
Take half my honours. These men report back.
You stay here. Sleep in your soft bed. At dawn,
we shall consider whether to go back
to our own land, or whether to remain."

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

"Noble son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus,
let's be off. I don't think we'll bring this talk
to a successful end, not on this trip.
We must report this news, though it's not good,
to the Danaans waiting to receive it.
For Achilles has turned his great spirit
into something savage in his chest.
He's cruel and doesn't care for friendship
of his comrades, how we honoured him
above all others there beside the ships.
He has no pity. Any man accepts
reparations for a murdered son or brother.
The man who killed them pays a large amount
to stay there in his own community.
The other man's angry heart and spirit
are checked, once he takes the compensation.
But with you, gods have put inside your chest
unchanging evil passions, and all this
over a single girl. Now we are offering
seven of the best we have and much more.
You should turn your passion into kindness,
the hospitality of your own house.

For we are guests here under your own roof,
chosen from the Argive host. We believe
that we, of all Achaeans, are the ones
most dear to you, your closest friends,
far more so than all the others."

Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:

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

So Achilles spoke. The men each took a goblet
with two handles, gave offerings, and went back to the ships,
with Odysseus in the lead. Patroclus ordered
his companions and the women slaves to set up
a sturdy bed without delay for Phoenix.
They obeyed his orders and prepared a bed,
with sheepskin fleece and rug and fine linen sheets.
The old man lay down, to stay till morning.
Achilles slept in a corner of the well-built hut.
Beside him lay a woman he'd seized from Lesbos,
fair Diomede, one of Phorbas' daughters.
Patroclus slept opposite Achilles. Beside him
lay lovely Iphis, whom Achilles gave him

after capturing steep Scyros, Enyeus' city.

The others reached the huts of Atreus' son.
Achaea's sons stood up and welcomed them with toasts
in golden cups, one after another, asking questions.
The first to speak was Agamemnon, king of men:

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

Lord Odysseus,
who had endured much, replied:

"King of men,
mighty Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
that man's unwilling to let go his rage.
He's full of anger, more so now than ever.
He despises you, your gifts, and tells you
to sort out for yourself with the Argives
how you may save Achaean ships and men.
As for him, he made this threat—at first light
of dawn, he'll drag his trim balanced ships
down to the sea. He said he would encourage
others to sail home, for you'll not attain
your goal of lofty Ilion, since Zeus,
whose gaze ranges far and wide, holds his hand
over Troy, whose people now have confidence.
That's what he said. The others who went with me
will confirm this for you—Ajax and two heralds,
both prudent men. Old Phoenix stayed there,
to go to sleep, as Achilles told him,
so that he may go away with him
in his ships back to their dear native land,
if he wants, for he won't take him by force."

Odysseus spoke. They all were silent and disheartened,
especially by the force with which Achilles had refused.
Achaea's sons sat a long time speechless, troubled.
At last, Diomedes, skilled in war cries, spoke:

"Mighty Agamemnon, king of men,
you should not have begged noble Peleus' son,
offering countless gifts. At the best of times,
he's a proud man Now you've encouraged him
to be prouder still. Let's leave him alone,
whether he goes or stays. For he'll fight
when the spirit in his chest moves him,
or when god drives him to it. But come on,
let's all follow what I now propose.
We've had our fill of food and wine. So now,
you should get some sleep, for strength and stamina.
When fair rosy-fingered Dawn appears,
you should range your army—men and horses—
before the ships, then rouse their spirits,
with you fighting at the front in person."

All the kings applauded horse-taming Diomedes.
They poured libations. Then each man went to his hut,
where he lay down and stretched out to take the gift of sleep.

Book Sixteen
Patroclus Fights and Dies

[Patroclus begs Achilles to send him back to the war to help the Achaeans; Achilles agrees but sets conditions; Hector breaks Ajax's spear, sets fire to the ship; Achilles sends Patroclus to war with the Myrmidons; Patroclus arms himself, Achilles organizes the Myrmidons in fighting groups; Achilles prays to Zeus; Patroclus goes into battle, driving Trojans back from the ships; Trojans retreat; Sarpedon rallies the Lycians, fights Patroclus; death of Sarpedon; Apollo cures Glaucus' wound; the fight over Sarpedon's body; Trojans are driven back towards Troy, Hector kills Patroclus]

While the men kept on fighting at the well-decked ships,
Patroclus went to Achilles, his people's shepherd,
shedding warm tears, like a fountain of dark water
whose stream flows over the lip of a sheer rock face.
Looking at him, swift-footed, godlike Achilles
felt pity. So he spoke to him—his words had wings:
"Why are you crying, Patroclus, like some girl,
an infant walking beside her mother,
asking to be picked up. She pulls the robe
[10] and stops her mother strolling on ahead,
looking up at her in tears, until the mother
lifts her up. You're crying just like that girl,
Patroclus. Is there something you need to say
to the Myrmidons or me? Some news
from Phthia that only you have heard?
People say Menoetius, Actor's son,
is still living, and Peleus is alive,
Aeacus' son, among his Myrmidons.
If these two had died, then we'd have something
[20] real to grieve about. Or are you feeling sad
for Argives as they're being obliterated
among the hollow ships for all their pride?
Speak up. Don't conceal what's on your mind.
Then we'll both understand."

With a heavy sigh,

horseman Patroclus, you then replied:

"Achilles,
Peleus' son, by far the strongest of Achaeans,
don't be angry with me. Such great despair
has overcome the Argives. For all those
who used to be the bravest warriors
[30] are lying at the ships with sword and spear wounds—
powerful Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
hit by a spear, famous spearman Odysseus
with a stab wound, and Agamemnon, too.
An arrow struck Eurypylus in the thigh.
Many healers, exceptionally skilled
in various medicines, are with them now,
tending their wounds. But it's impossible
to deal with you, Achilles. I hope anger
like this rage you're nursing never seizes me.
[40] It's disastrous! How will you be of use
to anyone in later generations,
if you won't keep shameful ruin from the Argives?
You're pitiless. Perhaps horseman Peleus
was not your father, nor Thetis your mother—
the grey sea delivered you, some tall cliff,
for you've an unyielding heart. If your mind
shuns some prophecy, or your noble mother
has told you news from Zeus, at least send me,
and quickly, with the others in our troop
[50] of Myrmidons. I could be a saving light
for the Danaans. Give me your armour
to buckle round my shoulders, so Trojans,
mistaking me for you, may stop the fight.
Then Achaea's warrior sons could get some rest.
They're worn out. War doesn't offer much relief.
We're fresh, so we should easily repulse
the Trojans tired of the battle noise
back from our ships and huts towards the city."
Patroclus finished his entreaty. How wrong he was!

[60] He was praying for his own death, his dreadful fate.
Swift-footed Achilles, with some heat, replied:
"My dear divinely born Patroclus,
what are you saying? I'm not concerned
with any prophecy I know about,
nor has my noble mother said a thing
from Zeus. But dreadful pain came in my heart
and spirit when that man wished to cheat
someone his equal and steal away that prize,
and just because he's got more power.
[70] That really hurt, given that I've suffered
in this war so many pains here in my chest.
Achaea's sons chose that girl as my prize.
I won her with my spear, once I'd destroyed
her strong-walled city. Lord Agamemnon
took her back, out of my hands, as if I were
some stranger without honour. But let that be—
it's over, done with. Besides, my spirit
didn't mean to stay enraged for ever,
although I thought I wouldn't end my anger
[80] until the cries of warfare reached my ships.
Come, put my famous armour on your shoulders
and lead war-loving Myrmidons to battle,
since black clouds of Trojans now surround the ships,
expecting victory, and Argives stand
crammed in by the sea shore, with little space,
while a city full of Trojans comes at them
without fear, because they don't see near them
my helmet with its glittering front. Soon enough,
they'd be running back, filling the gullies
[90] with their dead, if mighty Agamemnon
treated me with kindness—but now they fight
all through our camp. For there's no spear raging
in the fists of Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
to protect Danaans from disaster.
I've not heard the voice of Agamemnon
crying out in his vile head. As for Hector,

that man-killer's voice echoes everywhere,
shouting at Trojans, who fill all the plain
with their noise, as they defeat Achaeans
in this battle. Even so, Patroclus,
you must stave off disaster from the fleet.
Go after them in force—they may fire those ships
and rob us of the journey home we crave.
Now, pay attention to what I tell you
about the goal I have in mind for you,
so you'll win me great honour and rewards,
so all Danaans will send back to me
that lovely girl and give fine gifts as well.
Once you push Trojans from the ships, come back.
If Zeus, Hera's mate, who loves his thunder,
gives you the glory, don't keep on battling
those war-loving Trojans with me absent.
You would decrease my honours. Don't let
the joy of fighting and of killing Trojans
lead you on to Ilion, just in case
some deathless Olympian god attacks you.
Apollo, the far-worker, loves his Trojans.
So make sure you come back here again,
once your saving light has reached our ships.
Let others keep on fighting in the plain.
O Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo—
if only no single Trojan or Achaean
could escape death, and just we two alone
were not destroyed, so that by ourselves
we could take Troy's sacred battlements!"
As these two were talking on like this together,
Ajax was losing ground, under attack from spears,
overcome by the will of Zeus and Trojans,
who kept throwing weapons. The bright helmet on his head
rattled dangerously as it was struck. Many hits
landed on the well-made armour on his cheeks.
His left shoulder was worn out from always holding up
his shining shield. But for all the onslaught with their spears,

the Trojans couldn't budge him. Still, he was in trouble,
breathing heavily, sweat pouring down in rivulets
from every limb. He'd had no time for any rest.
In every way, his desperate plight was getting worse.
Tell me now, you Muses living on Olympus,
how the fire first got tossed onto Achaean ships.
It was Hector. He came up close to Ajax,
then with his great sword hacked at Ajax's ash spear,
right behind the point. He cut straight through it.
Telamonian Ajax still gripped the spear,
but it was useless without its bronze spear head,
which fell some distance off, clanging on the ground.
The heart in mighty Ajax recognized gods' work.
He shuddered, for he perceived how high-thundering Zeus
was denying completely all his fighting skill,
wanting the Trojans to prevail. Ajax backed off,
out of range. Then onto that swift ship the Trojans threw
untiring fire, which spread itself immediately
in a fiery blaze that no one could extinguish.
The ship's stern started to catch fire.

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

"Up now,
divinely born Patroclus, master horseman.
In the ships I see destructive flames going up.
Trojans must not seize our ships and leave us
with no way to escape. Put armour on—
and quickly. I'll collect the soldiers."
Achilles spoke. Patroclus dressed in gleaming bronze.
First, he fixed on his shins the beautiful leg armour,
fitted with silver ankle clasps. Around his chest
he put on the body armour of Achilles,
swift-footed descendant of Aeacus—finely worked
and glittering like a star. On his shoulders he then slung
his bronze silver-studded sword and a large strong shield.

On his powerful head he set the famous helmet
with its horsehair crest. The plume on top nodded
full of menace. Then Patroclus took two strong spears
well fitted to his grip. He'd didn't choose Achilles' spear,
for no Achaean man could wield that weapon,
so heavy, huge, and strong, except for brave Achilles.
It was made of ash wood from the peak of Pelion.
Cheiron gave it to Achilles' father to kill warriors.
Patroclus told Automedon to yoke the horses quickly,
the man he most esteemed after Achilles,
breaker of men, and the one he trusted most
to carry out his orders in a battle.
For Patroclus Automedon put swift horses
in the harnesses, Xanthus and Balius, who flew along
as swiftly as the wind. These horses Podarge,
the harpy, had conceived with West Wind, as she grazed
in a meadow beside the stream of Oceanus.*
In the side traces he set Pedasus in harness,
a fine horse Achilles had taken for himself,
when he'd captured the city of Eëtion.
Though mortal, it kept pace with his deathless horses.
Meanwhile Achilles went to and fro among the huts,
getting all his Myrmidons to arm themselves.
They rushed out, like flesh-eating wolves, hearts full
of unspeakable fury, beasts which in the mountains
have caught and ripped apart some huge antlered stag.
Then in a pack they charge off, jaws all dripping blood,
to lap black surface water with their slender tongues
in some dark spring, vomiting up clots of blood
from their crammed bellies, while in their chests their hearts
are resolute. That's how the leaders and commanders
of the Myrmidons rushed around brave Patroclus,
comrade of swift Achilles, Aeacus' descendant,
who stood among them there, urging on the horses
and the warriors carrying their shields.
Achilles had brought fifty ships to Troy—
in each were fifty men, his own companions.

He'd picked five leaders whom he trusted to give orders.
His great power gave him overall command.
The first contingent was led by Menesthius,
with his flashing breastplate, son of Spercheius,
the river fed from heaven. Lovely Polydora,
Peleus' daughter, had conceived Menesthius
with timeless Spercheius, a woman copulating
with a god. But in name Borus was his father,
son of Perieres, who'd married her in public,
after paying out a huge price for the bride.
The second group was led by warrior Eudorus,
a bastard child of Polymele, Phylus' daughter,
a lovely dancer. The god who slaughtered Argus,
mighty Hermes, fell in love when he noticed her
among the singing maidens in the chorus
dancing for Artemis, the golden-arrowed goddess
in the echoing hunt. Hermes the helper,
going at once into her upper room in secret,
had sex with her. She bore him a fine son, Eudorus,
outstanding as a warrior and speedy runner.
But when Eileithyia, goddess of labour pains,
brought him into the light and he saw sunshine,
then strong Echecles, Actor's son, took Polymele
to his home, after giving an enormous bride price.
Old man Phylus was very kind to the young boy.
He looked after him, surrounding him with love,
as if he were his son. The third commander
was warlike Peisander, son of Maemalus,
a man pre-eminent among the Myrmidons
for spear fighting, second only to Patroclus.
Phoenix led the fourth contingent, and Alcimedon,
splendid son of Laerces, was leader of the fifth.
Once Achilles had set all the ranks in order
behind their leaders, he addressed them sternly:
"My Myrmidons, let none of you forget
those threats you spoke about by our swift ships,
while I was angry—you'd go on and on

against the Trojans. Each of you blamed me:
'Cruel son of Peleus, surely your mother
suckled you with bile, you pitiless man,
who keeps his comrades by their ships
against their will. Why don't we go home
in our seaworthy ships, since evil rage
has fallen on your heart?'

That's what you men
complained about me in your meetings.
Now a great work of war awaits you,
the sort of enterprise you used to love.
So make sure each man's heart is resolute,
as you go to battle with these Trojans."
With these words, Achilles stirred the spirit in each man.
As they heard their king, the ranks bunched up more closely.
Just as a man constructs a wall for some high house,
using well-fitted stones to keep out forceful winds,
that's how close their helmets and bossed shields lined up,
shield pressing against shield, helmet against helmet,
man against man. On the bright ridges of the helmets,
horsehair plumes touched when warriors moved their heads.
That's how close they were to one another. In the front,
ahead of all of them, two men stood fully armed—
Automedon and Patroclus—sharing a single urge,
to fight in the forefront of their Myrmidons.
Achilles went into his hut and opened up the lid
on a beautifully decorated chest
placed on board his ship by silver-footed Thetis
for him to take. She'd packed it with cloaks and tunics,
and woollen blankets, too—protection from the wind.
There he kept an ornate goblet. Other than Achilles
no one used it to drink gleaming wine. With this cup
Achilles poured libations to no god but Father Zeus.
Taking this out of the chest, first he purified it
with sulphur, then rinsed it out in streams of water.
He washed his hands and drew some gleaming wine.

Standing in the middle of the yard, he poured it out,
gazing up at heaven. Thunder-loving Zeus looked on.
"Zeus, king, lord of Dodona, Pelasgian,
you who live far off, ruling cold Dodona,
around whom live the Selli, your prophets,
with unwashed feet, who sleep upon the ground,
you heard me when I prayed to you before.
You gave me honour then by striking hard
at the Achaean army. So grant me now
what I still desire. I intend to stay
beside this group of ships, but I'm sending out
my comrade and my many Myrmidons.
Send glory with him, all-seeing Zeus.
Strengthen the heart inside his chest, so Hector
sees if Patroclus can fight on alone
or if his hands are always conquering
only when I'm with him in the raging war,
in the centre of the havoc Ares brings.
But when he's pushed the fight and battle noise
back from the ships, let him return to me,
here at my hollow ships, without a scratch,
with all his weapons and companions,
men who battle in the killing zone."

So Achilles prayed.
Counsellor Zeus heard his prayer. He granted part of it,
part he denied. Father Zeus agreed that Patroclus
should drive the battle fighting from the ships,
but not that he'd return in safety from the war.
Once Achilles had made his libation and prayed
to Father Zeus, he went back into his hut,
put the goblet in the chest, came out, and stood there,
before his hut, still wishing in his heart
to see the fatal clash of Trojans and Achaeans.
The armed warriors who went with brave Patroclus
marched out in formation, until, with daring hearts,
they charged the Trojans, immediately swarming out,

like wasps beside a road, which young lads love to torment,
constantly disturbing them in their roadside nests—
those fools make mischief for all sorts of people.
If some man going past along the road upsets them
by accident, they all swarm out with fearless hearts
to guard their young—with that same heart and spirit
the Myrmidons then poured out from their ships
with a ceaseless roar. In a loud shout, Patroclus
called out to his companions:
"You Myrmidons,
[320] companions of Achilles, son of Peleus,
be men, my friends, recall your fighting strength,
so we may honour the son of Peleus,
by far the best Achaean at the ships,
with the finest comrades in a close combat.
Wide-ruling Agamemnon, Atreus' son, will see
his folly in not honouring Achilles,
the best of the Achaeans."

With these words,
Patroclus spurred the strength and heart in every soldier.
Then, in a massed group, they fell upon the Trojans.
[330] Terrifying cries came from Achaeans by their ships.
When Trojans saw the brave son of Menoetius
with his attendant, both in glittering armour,
all their hearts were shaken and their ranks fell back.
They thought Peleus' swift-footed son by his ships
had set aside his anger and made friends again.
Each man glanced around, checking how he might escape
his own complete destruction.

Patroclus was the first
to throw his bright spear right at the central mass
where most troops clustered, by the stern part of the ship
[340] of great-hearted Protesilaus. He hit a man,
Pyraechmes, who'd led Paeonian charioteers
from Amydon, by the broad flowing Axius.

Struck by that spear in his right shoulder, he fell down
screaming on his back there in the dust. Comrades round him,
his Paeonians, ran off—Patroclus terrified them,
now he'd killed their leader and best fighter.
He drove them from the ships and doused the blazing fire.
The half-burnt ship he left there. The Trojans scattered,
making a tremendous noise. Danaans poured out
from among the ships throughout the constant uproar.
Just as from a high peak of some massive mountain,
Zeus, who gathers lightning, shifts a bulky cloud,
once more revealing all the peaks, high headlands,
and mountain glades, while from heaven the huge bright sky
breaks open—that's how Danaans saved their ships
from fire and could rest, if only for a moment,
since the fighting was not over yet. At this point,
Achaean troops had not fully pushed the Trojans
from the ships. They'd been forced back from the sterns,
but they still stood there, facing the Achaeans.
The leaders then began to slaughter one another
in the scattered fighting. First, Menoetius' brave son
with his sharp spear struck Areilycus in the thigh,
as he was turning. He drove the bronze straight through,
breaking the bone. Areilycus fell face down in the dirt.
Then warlike Menelaus hit Thoas in the chest,
in a place where it was open right beside his shield.
The blow collapsed his limbs. Meges, Phyleus' son,
saw Amphiclus charging at him, but hit him first,
spearing the top of his leg, where a man's muscle
is the thickest. The spear point sliced his tendons,
and darkness closed his eyes. Then the sons of Nestor
went into action. Antilochus jabbed his sharp spear
at Atymnius, driving the bronze point in his side,
so he fell forward. Maris, who was close by,
angry about his brother, charged Antilochus
holding his spear, and then stood by his brother's body.
But godlike Thrasymedes moved too quickly for him.
Before Maris could thrust, he lunged out at his shoulder.

He didn't miss. The spear point sheared off muscle
at the bottom of his arm and broke the bone in two.
Maris fell with a crash, and darkness veiled his eyes.
Thus, these two, slaughtered by two brothers, went off
to Erebus. They'd been Sarpedon's brave companions,
spearmen sons of Amisodarus—he'd reared
the raging Chimera, who'd killed so many men.*
Ajax, son of Oïleus, jumped out at Cleobulus,
captured him alive, stuck in that confusion. Even so,
Ajax struck him with his sword across the neck,
draining his fighting strength. The sword grew warm with blood.
Dark death closed up his eyes, and strong Fate embraced him.
Then Peneleus and Lycon charged each other.
Each had thrown his spear and missed, wasting the throw.
So they went at one another once again with swords.
Lycon struck the helmet ridge on its horse-hair crest,
but his sword shattered at the hilt. Then Peneleus
slashed Lycon's neck below the ear. The sword bit deep,
sinking the entire blade, so Lycon's head hung over,
held up on one side only by the uncut skin.
His limbs gave way.

Meriones, with quick strides,
caught up with Acamas, then hit him with his spear
in his right shoulder, as he was climbing in his chariot.
He tumbled out. A mist descended on his eyes.
Idomeneus' pitiless bronze then struck Erymas
right in his mouth—the spear forced itself straight through,
below his brain, splitting his white skull apart,
smashing out his teeth. His eyes filled up with blood.
More blood spurted from his nose and open mouth.
Then death's black cloud enveloped Erymas.
Thus these Danaan leaders each killed his man.
Just as ravenous mountain wolves suddenly attack
young goats or lambs and seize them from the flock,
when in the mountains an inattentive shepherd
lets them wander off—once the wolves see them,

they attack at once, for those young lack the heart to fight—
that's how Danaans then went after Trojans,
whose minds now turned to shameful flight, for they'd lost
their will to battle on.

Great Ajax kept on trying
to throw his spear at bronze-armed Hector.
But Hector's battle skills kept his broad shoulders hidden
behind his bull's hide shield, as he watched arrows
and thudding spears flying past. Hector realized
the tide of victory in that fight was changing,
but he stood there, trying to save his loyal companions.
Just as those times a cloud comes from Olympus,
moving from the upper air across the sky,
when Zeus brings on a rain storm—that's how Trojans
fled yelling from the ships, crossing the ditch again
in complete disorder. Hector's swift-footed horses
carried him and his weapons back, leaving behind,
against their will, the Trojans held up at the trench
dug by Achaeans. In that ditch many swift horses
lost their master's chariots when poles snapped at the end.
In pursuit, Patroclus, intent on killing Trojans,
yelled fierce orders to Danaans. Meanwhile, the Trojans,
shouting and scattering in panic, were jammed up
in every pathway. Under the clouds a high dust storm rose,
as sure-footed horses strained to get away,
leaving the huts and ships and rushing for the city.
Wherever Patroclus saw the biggest crowd
of soldiers in retreat, with a yell he charged at them.
Bodies kept rolling underneath his axle,
as men fell out when chariot cars rolled over.
His swift horses, those immortal beasts the gods gave
as a priceless gift to Peleus, flew straight on
across the ditch, charging forward. Patroclus' heart
was set on finding Hector, eager to strike him down.
But Hector's own swift horses carried him away.
Just as in late summer rainstorms, the dark earth

is all beaten down, when Zeus pours out his waters
with utmost violence, when he's enraged with men
who have provoked him with their crooked judgments,
corrupting their assemblies and driving justice out,
not thinking of gods' vengeance, so all the rivers
crest in flood, their torrents carving many hillsides,
as they roar down from the mountains in a headlong rush
toward the purple sea, destroying the works of men—
that's how, as they sped on, the Trojan horses screamed.
When Patroclus had cut the Trojans' front ranks off,
he pushed them back again towards the ships,
keeping them from the city they were trying to reach.
Between the ships, the river, and the lofty wall,
in that middle ground, he kept charging at them,
killing them, avenging deaths of many comrades.
There he first struck Pronous with his shining spear,
where Pronous' shield had left his chest exposed.
His limbs gave way, and he fell down with a thud.
Patroclus next rushed at Thestor, son of Enops,
who just sat crouching in his polished chariot,
paralyzed with terror, reins slipping from his hands.
Coming up, Patroclus struck him with his spear
right on the jawbone, smashing through his teeth.
Patroclus pulled his spear back, dragging Thestor
out across the chariot rail. Just as a man
sitting on a rocky point hauls up a monstrous fish
out of the sea, using a line and bright bronze hook—
that's how Patroclus dragged Thestor from his chariot,
mouth skewered on the shining spear. He threw him down,
face first. As Thestor fell, his spirit abandoned him.
Then Erylaus rushed up, but Patroclus struck him
with a rock right on his head, smashing the entire skull
inside his heavy helmet. Erylaus collapsed
face down in the dirt.

Death, who destroys men's hearts,
flowed all around Patroclus, as he slaughtered

Erymas, Amphoterus, Epaltes,
Tlepolemus, son of Damastor, Echius,
Pyris, Ipheus, Euippus, and Polymelus,
son of Argeas—all these Patroclus laid out,
one by one, on the earth, which nourishes all men.
When Sarpedon observed his Lycian companions,
who wear no belt around their tunics, being cut down
by the hands of Menoetius' son Patroclus,
he called out to reprimand his godlike Lycians:
"Shame on you Lycians! Where are you running?
Now's the time for you to fight on bravely.
I'll stand up to this man, so I'll find out
who it is that fights so well, who brings with him
so much destruction for the Trojans,
breaking the limbs of many fearless soldiers."
Sarpedon finished. He jumped out of his chariot
down to the ground holding his weapons. On the other side,
when Patroclus saw him, he leapt from his chariot.
Then they rushed at each other, screaming like vultures
fighting with hooked talons and curved beaks, screeching
on some rocky height.

Looking down on the two men,
the son of crooked-minded Cronos pitied them.
He spoke to Hera, his sister and his wife:
"Alas—Sarpedon, dearest of all men,
is fated now to die, killed by Patroclus,
son of Menoetius. My heart's divided,
as I think this over. Should I snatch him up
while still alive and place him somewhere else,
in his rich land of Lycia, far distant
from this wretched fighting, or have him killed
at the hands of Menoetius' son."
Ox-eyed queen Hera then replied to Zeus:

"Dread son of Cronos,
how can you say this? The man is mortal,

doomed long ago by Fate. Now you desire
to rescue him from miserable death.
Do as you wish. But we other gods
will not all agree with you. And I'll tell you
something else—make sure you remember it.
If you send Sarpedon home alive,
take care some other god does not desire
to send his dear son from the killing zone.
Around Priam's great city, many men,
sons of the immortals, are now fighting.
You'll enrage those gods and make them bitter.
But if Sarpedon's dear to you, if your heart
feels pity for him, then let him be killed
in a fierce combat at Patroclus' hands,
son of Menoetius. Once his living spirit
has abandoned him, send Death and sweet Sleep
to carry him away, back to the spacious land
of Lycia, where his brother and his kinsmen
will bury him with a mound and headstone.
That's what appropriate for those who die."
Hera spoke. The father of gods and men agreed.
But he shed blood rain down upon the ground, tribute
to his dear son Patroclus was about to kill
in fertile Troy, far from his native land.
The two approached within range of each other.
Patroclus threw and struck renowned Thrasymelus,
lord Sarpedon's brave attendant, low in the gut.
His limbs gave way. Then Sarpedon charged Patroclus.
His bright spear missed him, but it struck a horse,
Pedasus, in its right shoulder. The horse screamed,
gasping for life, then fell down in the dust, moaning
as the spirit left him. The two other horses reared,
their yoke cracked, and their reins got intertwined
with the trace horse Pedasus lying in the dust.
But famous spearman Automedon cleared the tangle.
Pulling out the long sword on his powerful thigh,
he dashed in and, without a pause, cut the trace horse loose.

The two other horses straightened out, then pulled
together in their harness. The two men kept going,
taking up again their heart-destroying combat.
Once more Sarpedon failed with his bright spear. Its bronze point
sailed past Patroclus' left shoulder, missing him.
Then Patroclus, in his turn, threw his bronze spear,
which did not leave his hand in vain. It struck
right between Sarpedon's midriff and his beating heart.
Sarpedon toppled over, as an oak tree falls,
or poplar or tall mountain pine which craftsmen cut
with sharpened axes, to harvest timber for a ship—
that's how he lay there stretched out before his chariot
and horses, groaning and clawing at the bloody dust.
Just as a lion moves into a herd, then kills a bull,
a sleek great-hearted steer among the shambling cattle,
which bellows as it dies right in the lion's jaws—
that's how Sarpedon, leader of the Lycian spearmen,
struggled as he died, calling to his dear companion:
"Glaucus, my friend, you warrior among men,
now you must really show yourself a spearman,
a true courageous fighter. You must now
embrace this evil war, if you're brave enough.
First, move round and urge the Lycian leaders
to make a stand here by Sarpedon. And then,
you fight over me in person with your bronze.
I'll be a source of misery to you,
and shame as well, for all your days to come,
if Achaeans strip my armour now I'm down
among the fleet of ships. So hold your ground
with force. Spur on the army."

As he said this,
death's final end covered Sarpedon's eyes and nostrils.
Then Patroclus set his foot upon Sarpedon's chest,
pulled his spear out of the body. The guts came with it.
So in the same moment he tugged out the spear point
and took Sarpedon's life. Myrmidons reined in the horses,

[590] snorting in their eagerness to bolt, now they'd left
their master's chariot.

When Glaucus heard Sarpedon's voice,
he was overcome with savage grief, his heart dismayed
that he could not have come to his assistance.
With his hand he grabbed and squeezed his wounded arm,
still painful from being hit by Teucer's arrow,
as he'd attacked him on that high defensive wall.
Teucer had been defending his companions
from disaster. So Glaucus prayed then to Apollo:
"Hear me, my lord. You may be in Lycia,
[600] somewhere in that rich land, or here in Troy.
But you can hear a man's distress from anywhere.
Bitter grief has now come in my heart.
For I have this cruel wound. Sharp pains
run up and down my arm, the flow of blood
won't stop. The wound wears out my shoulder,
so I can't grip my spear with any force,
or move to fight against our enemies.
And our finest man has perished—Sarpedon,
child of Zeus, who would not assist his son.
[610] But, my lord, heal my savage wound at least,
and ease my pain. Give me strength, so I can call
my Lycian comrades, urge them on to war,
and I can fight in person by the corpse
of our Sarpedon now he's dead."

So Glaucus spoke in prayer.
Phoebus Apollo heard him. He eased the pains at once,
stopped the dark blood flowing from the cruel wound,
and filled his chest with fighting strength. In his heart
Glaucus recognized with joy that the great god
had quickly heard his prayer. First, he moved around
[620] and spurred on Lycia's leading men in every spot
to rally round Sarpedon. Then, with long strides,
he went among the Trojans—to Polydamas,

son of Panthous, and brave Agenor. He searched out
Aeneas and Hector dressed in bronze. Approaching him,
he spoke—his words had wings:

"Hector,
now you're neglecting all your allies,
men who for your sake are far away from friends,
their native land, wasting their lives away.
You've no desire to bring assistance.
[630] Sarpedon, leader of Lycian spearmen,
lies dead, the man who protected Lycia
with his judgment and his power—slaughtered
by Ares on the bronze spear of Patroclus.
My friends, stand by him, keep in your hearts
your sense of shame, in case the Myrmidons
strip off his armour and mutilate his corpse,
in their anger at the dead Danaans,
the ones killed by our spears at their fast ships."
Glaucus finished. Trojans were completely overwhelmed
[640] with grief—unendurable and inconsolable.
For Sarpedon had always fought to guard their city,
although he was a distant stranger. Many soldiers
followed him, and he was pre-eminent in war.
Full of furious passion, they went at Danaans,
Hector in the lead, angry about Sarpedon.
But Patroclus, Menoetius' son, with his strong heart,
rallied the Achaeans. He spoke first to the Ajaxes,
both eager for the fight:

"You two Ajaxes,
now you must get your joy protecting us,
[650] as you've done before, but even better.
The man who was the first to jump inside
Achaea's wall lies dead—Sarpedon.
We must try to mutilate the body,
to seize and strip armour off its shoulders,
slaughtering with our pitiless bronze

any of his comrades who defend him."
Patroclus spoke. The Ajaxes both were fiercely eager
to fight off the enemy in person. Then both sides
reinforced their ranks—Trojans and Lycians,
Achaeans and Myrmidons. These forces struggled,
with terrific shouts across the dead man's corpse.
The warriors' armour rang out harshly. Then Zeus,
to make the fight for his dear son more difficult,
spread ominous darkness over that fierce battle.
At first the Trojans pushed bright-eyed Achaeans back,
for they hit a man who was by no means the worst
among the Myrmidons—noble Epeigeus,
son of great-hearted Agacles. He'd once been king
of populous Boudeum, but he'd killed a man,
a noble relative. So he came a suppliant
to Peleus and silver-footed Thetis, who'd sent him
to follow man-destroying Achilles, to sail with him
to Troy and fight the Trojans. Glorious Hector
struck him as he grabbed the corpse—with a rock
he hit his head and split the skull completely open
inside his heavy helmet. Epeigeus collapsed,
face down on the corpse. Death, who destroys men's hearts,
flowed over him.

Grief for his dead companion
filled Patroclus. He moved through those fighting in the front,
like a swift hawk swooping down on daws or starlings.
That's how fast, Patroclus, master horseman, you charged
the Lycians and Trojans then, with anger in your heart
for your companion. With a rock he hit Sthenelaus,
dear son of Ithaemenes, squarely in the neck,
snapping the tendons. Those fighting in the ranks in front,
including glorious Hector, moved back somewhat,
as far as a long javelin flies when it's been thrown
by a man in competition showing off his strength,
or in a battle with a murderous enemy—
that's how far Achaeans forced the Trojans to move back.

Glaucus, leader of the Lycian spearmen, was the first
to turn around. He killed great-hearted Bathycles,
Chalcon's dear son, who lived at home in Hellas,
a man pre-eminent among the Myrmidons
for a wealthy and successful life. With his spear,
Glaucus turned suddenly, as Bathycles came up
in pursuit, then struck him in the middle of his chest.
He fell down with a crash. Achaeans felt keen sorrow
that such a worthy man had fallen. But Trojans,
elated, gathered in a crowd to make a stand
around him. Achaeans did not forget their courage—
they brought their fighting spirit to the Trojans.
Meriones killed a well-armed Trojan warrior,
Laogonus, daring son of Onetor, a priest
of Zeus at Ida, honoured by his people like a god.
Meriones threw and hit him underneath the jaw.
His spirit swiftly left his limbs, and he was carried off
by hateful darkness. Then Aeneas, hoping
to hit Meriones as he advanced under his shield,
threw his bronze spear at him. But Meriones,
looking right at Aeneas, evaded that bronze spear
by bending forward. The long spear impaled itself
behind him in the ground, its shaft still quivering,
until strong Ares took away its power.
With anger in his heart, Aeneas then called out:
"Meriones, you're a lovely dancer,
but if my spear had hit you, your dancing days
would have ended for all time to come."
Famous spearman Meriones then replied:

"Aeneas,
you may be brave, but it's hard for you
to crush the fighting strength of every man
who stands to defend himself against you.
For you, too, are made of mortal stuff.
If I threw, if my bronze spear hit you
in the middle of your body, then no matter

what your courage, or how much trust you place
in your strong hands, you'd quickly give me glory,
and your life to famous horseman Hades."
Meriones spoke. But then Menoetius' noble son
reprimanded him:

"Meriones, why do you,
an honourable man, talk on like this?
My friend, Trojans won't move back from the corpse
because someone abuses them with words.
They won't budge until the earth holds many men.
Our task here is to battle with our hands.
The assembly is the place for speeches.
We don't need more talk. We need to fight."
Saying this, Patroclus led off, and Meriones,
that godlike man, went too. Then the turmoil started—
just like the din woodcutters make in mountain forests,
a noise heard far away—that's how it sounded then,
the clamour rising from the widely travelled earth,
a clash of bronze and leather, well-made ox-hide shields,
as they fought there with two-edged spears and swords.
Not even a man who knew Sarpedon very well
could recognize him then, covered with blood and dirt
and weapons, from the soles of his feet up to his head.
For men were swarming round the corpse like farmyard flies
clustering by buckets full of milk in springtime,
when milk overflows the pails—that how those warriors
buzzed around Sarpedon then.

Zeus' bright eyes never once
glanced from that brutal combat, gazing down
and thinking in his heart of many different things
about how lord Patroclus ought to meet his death,
wondering whether glorious Hector should cut him down
with his bronze in that bitter fighting there
over godlike Sarpedon and then strip the armour
from his shoulders, or whether he should multiply

grim misery for still more men. As Zeus pondered,
he thought the best plan would be to let Patroclus,
brave companion of Achilles, son of Peleus,
drive the Trojans and bronze-armed Hector back again
towards their city, destroying the lives of many men.
So Zeus first took the courage out of Hector's heart,
so that he jumped into his chariot and turned in flight,
calling to other Trojans to run back, for he knew
that Zeus' sacred scales were changing. The Lycians,
though brave, did not hold their ground. They all fled back,
once they'd seen their king struck through the heart, lying there
in the pile of bodies. Many men had fallen down
on top of him, when Cronos' son intensified
fierce conflict. So the Achaeans stripped Sarpedon,
pulling the gleaming bronze from off his shoulders.
Menoetius' brave son gave it to his companions
to carry to the hollow ships. At that moment,
cloud-gatherer Zeus spoke to Apollo:

"Up now,
dear Phoebus, and move Sarpedon out of range.
When you've cleaned the dark blood off his body,
take him somewhere far away and wash him
in a flowing river. Next, anoint him
with ambrosia, and put immortal clothes
around him. Then you must hand him over
to those swift messengers Sleep and Death,
twin brothers, to carry off with them.
They'll quickly place him in his own rich land,
wide Lycia, where his brothers and kinsmen
will bury him with mound and headstone,
as is appropriate for those who've died."
Zeus finished. Apollo did not disobey his father.
Descending from Mount Ida to that lethal war,
he carried lord Sarpedon quickly out of range.
Once he'd taken him a long way off, he washed him
in a flowing river. Next, he anointed him

with ambrosia and put immortal clothing round him.
Then Apollo gave Sarpedon up to Sleep and Death,
swift messengers, twin brothers, to take with them.
They quickly set him down in spacious Lycia,
his own rich land.

Patroclus then called to his horses
and to Automedon to pursue the Trojans,
the Lycians, as well. How blind he was, poor fool!
If he'd done what the son of Peleus had told him,
he'd have missed his evil fate, his own dark death.
But Zeus' mind is always stronger than a man's.
He can make even a brave man fearful, rob him
of his victory with ease. And Zeus can rouse a man
for battle, as he did then, putting desire to fight
into Patroclus' chest.

Who was the first warrior you killed,
Patroclus, and who the last, that time the gods
called you on to death? Adrestus was the first,
then Autonous, Echeclus, Perimus, son of Megas,
Epistor, and Melanippus. Then Patroclus killed
Elasus, Mulius, and Pylantes. The other Trojans,
each and every one of them, set their minds on flight.
At that point Achaea's sons would have captured Troy
and its high gates, at Patroclus' hands, as he raged
with his frenzied spear, but for Phoebus Apollo,
who stood there on the well-built wall, intending
to destroy Patroclus and assist the Trojans.
Three times Patroclus started to climb up a corner
on that high wall. Three times Apollo shoved him back,
his immortal hands repelling the bright shield.
But when Patroclus, for the fourth time, came on
like some god, Apollo, with a terrific cry,
shouted these winged words at him:

"Go back,

divinely born Patroclus. This city
of proud Trojans, according to its fate,
will not be ravaged by your spear, nor even
by Achilles, a far better man than you."
Apollo spoke. Patroclus drew back a little,
evading the anger of Apollo, the far shooter.
Meanwhile, Hector pulled his sure-footed horses up
beside the Scaean Gate, uncertain what to do—
drive back to the confusion and then battle on,
or tell his soldiers to gather there inside the walls.
As he was thinking, Phoebus Apollo approached
in the form of Asius, a strong young man,
horse-taming Hector's uncle, Hecuba's blood brother,
Dymas' son, who lived by the river Sangarius
in Phrygia. In that shape, Apollo, Zeus' son,
spoke out:

"Hector, why withdraw from battle?
That's not worthy of you. I wish I were
more powerful than you, as much as you're
superior to me. Then you'd quickly leave
this battle in disgrace. But come on,
drive your strong-footed horses at Patroclus,
so you can kill him, and then Apollo
can give you glory."

Saying these words, Apollo left,
a god among the toiling men. Glorious Hector
then told fiery Cebriones to lash the horses on,
drive them to battle. Apollo slipped into the throng
of fighting men. He totally confused the Argives,
conferring glory on Hector and his Trojans.
The rest of the Danaans Hector left alone,
not killing any of them. His sure-footed horses
were heading at Patroclus, who, for his part,
jumped down from his chariot to the ground, holding a spear
in his left hand. In his right hand, he gripped a stone,

a large jagged rock, his fingers wrapped around it.
Taking a firm stance, he went for Hector right away.
He threw the rock and didn't waste his throw—he hit
Cebriones, Hector's charioteer, a bastard son
of famous Priam, as he held onto the reins.
The sharp rock struck him on the forehead, bashing in
his eyebrows, breaking through the skull. His two eyes
dropped down onto the ground, in the dust right at his feet.
Like a diver, Cebriones toppled over,
out of the well-made chariot. His spirit left his bones.
Then, horseman Patroclus, you made fun of him:

"Well now,
there's an agile man! What a graceful diver!
If he were on the fish-filled seas somewhere,
he'd feed a lot of men by catching oysters,
jumping over in the roughest water,
judging from that easy dive he made
out of his chariot onto the plain. I suppose
these Trojans must have acrobats as well."
This said, Patroclus rushed at warrior Cebriones,
moving like a lion who, while savaging some farm,
is hit in the chest, so his own courage kills him.
That's how you, Patroclus, rushed at Cebriones,
in your killing frenzy. Opposing him, Hector
leapt from his chariot down to the ground. The two men
then battled over Cebriones, like two lions
struggling on a mountain peak over a slaughtered deer,
both ravenous, both filled with fighting fury—
that's how those two masters of the war shout fought,
Patroclus, Menoetius' son, and glorious Hector,
over Cebriones, both keen to slash each other's flesh
with pitiless bronze. Hector grabbed the corpse's head,
refusing to let go. At the other end, Patroclus
gripped the feet. A desperate struggle then ensued
among the Trojans and Danaans fighting there.
Just as East and South Winds challenge one another

in mountain forests, shaking up deep stands of oak,
ash, and tapering cornel trees, hurling slim branches
one against the other, with tremendous noise
as the branches snap—that's how Trojans and Achaeans
collided with each other in that conflict.
Neither side had any thought of ruinous flight.
Around Cebriones many spears were driven home,
[900] many winged arrows flew from bowstrings, many boulders
crashed on shields, as men kept fighting round him.
But the great man Cebriones, proud of his glory,
just lay there in the swirling dust, his horsemanship
now quite forgotten.

As long as the sun kept moving through
the middle sky, weapons from both sides found their mark—
men kept on dying. But when the sun came to the point
which shows the time has come to unyoke oxen,
then Achaeans, contravening Fate, were stronger.
They dragged warrior Cebriones out of range,
[910] away from shouting Trojans, and stripped the armour
off his shoulders. Then Patroclus charged the Trojans,
intent on slaughter. Three times he assaulted them,
like war god Ares, with terrific shouts. Three times
he killed nine men. But when he attacked a fourth time,
then, Patroclus, you saw your life end. For Phoebus,
a terrible god, in that grim fight came up against you.
Patroclus failed to see Apollo, as he moved
through the confusion, for he advanced towards him
hidden in thick mist. Apollo stood behind him.
[920] Then with the flat of his hand, he struck Patroclus
on his back, on his broad shoulders—that made his eyes
lose focus. Next, Phoebus Apollo knocked the helmet
from his head. The horsehair crest rolled with a clatter
under horses' feet. The dust and blood then stained
the helmet's plumes. Up to that time, gods had not let
that helmet with its horsehair plume get smudged with dirt,
for it was always guarding godlike Achilles' head,

his noble forehead, too. Later Zeus awarded it
to Hector to carry on his head, as his death loomed.
In Patroclus' hands, his heavy long-shadowed spear,
thick and strong, with its bronze point, was completely smashed.
His tasselled shield and strap fell from his shoulders
down on the ground. Next, Apollo, Zeus' son, loosened
the body armour on Patroclus. His mind went blank,
his fine limbs grew limp—he stood there in a daze.
From close behind, Euphorbus, son of Panthous,
a Dardan warrior, hit him in the back,
with a sharp spear between the shoulder blades.
Euphorbus surpassed all men the same age as him
in spear throwing, horsemanship, and speed on foot.
He'd already knocked twenty men out of their chariots,
and that was the first time he'd come with his own chariot
to learn something of war. Euphorbus was the first
to strike you, horseman Patroclus, but he failed
to kill you. Pulling the spear out of Patroclus' flesh,
Euphorbus ran back again to blend in with the throng.
He didn't stand his ground, even though Patroclus
had no weapons for a fight. So Patroclus,
overwhelmed by the god's blow and spear, withdrew,
back to the group of his companions, avoiding death.
But when Hector noticed brave Patroclus going back,
wounded by sharp bronze, he moved up through the ranks,
stood close to Patroclus and struck him with his spear,
low in the stomach, driving the bronze straight through.
Patroclus fell with a crash, and Achaea's army
was filled with anguish. Just as a lion overcomes
a tireless wild boar in combat, when both beasts
fight bravely in the mountains over a small spring
where they both want to drink, and the lion's strength
brings down the panting boar—that's how Hector,
moving close in with his spear, destroyed the life
of Menoetius' noble son, who'd killed so many men.
Then Hector spoke winged words of triumph over him:
"Patroclus, you thought you'd raze our city,

robbing our women of their life of freedom,
taking them in ships to your dear native land.
You fool! In front of them, Hector's horses,
swift of foot, came out to fight. With the spear
I'm the very best war-loving Trojan,
and I've saved them from their fatal day.
Now vultures will eat you here. You poor wretch,
even Achilles, for all his courage,
was no use to you. Though he stayed behind,
he must have given you strict orders as you left,
'Don't return to me, horseman Patroclus,
at the hollow ships, until you've slashed blood
all over man-killing Hector's tunic
from his own chest.'

That's what he must have said
to win you over to such foolishness."
Then you, horseman Patroclus, your strength all gone,
replied:

"Boast on, Hector, for the moment.
Zeus, son of Cronos, and Apollo
have given you victory. They overcame me
easily, for they personally removed
the armour from my shoulders. If twenty men
came to confront me, just like you,
all would have died, slaughtered by my spear.
But deadly Fate and Leto's son have slain me—
and Euphorbus. So you're the third in line
at my death. But I'll tell you something else—
bear this in mind—you'll not live long yourself.
Your death is already standing close at hand,
a fatal power. For you'll be destroyed
at brave Achilles' hands, descendant of Aeacus."
As Patroclus said these words to Hector,
the finality of death flowed over him.
His spirit fluttered from his limbs and went to Hades,

lamenting its own fate, the loss of youthful manhood.
As Patroclus died, splendid Hector spoke to him:
"Patroclus, why predict my own death for me?
[1000] Who knows? It may happen that Achilles,
son of fair-haired Thetis, is hit first
by a spear of mine and gives up his life."
As he said this, Hector set his foot down on the corpse,
pulled the bronze spear from the wound, and pushed the body
backwards. Then with that spear he set off at once,
going after Automedon, godlike attendant
to the swift-footed kinsman of Aeacus,
eager to strike at him. But he'd been carried off
by those swift immortal horses, the priceless gift
presented by the gods to Peleus.

Book Twenty Two
The Death of Hector

[The Trojans retreat into the city; Apollo reveals his deception to Achilles; Hector remains outside the gates; Priam and Hecuba appeal to Hector to come inside the walls; Hector debates what to do, then panics and runs away; Achilles chases Hector around Troy; the gods look on; Zeus holds up his golden scales; Athena intervenes to advise Achilles; Athena takes on the form of Deïphobus to get Hector to fight Achilles; Hector and Achilles fight; Hector is killed; the Achaeans mutilate Hector and Achilles dishonors the corpse; Priam and Hecuba see the corpse of Hector being dragged past the city; Andromache reacts to the sight of her dead husband]

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

Then Phoebus Apollo spoke out to Achilles:

"Son of Peleus, why are you, a mere human,
running so hard in an attempt to catch me,
an immortal god? You're still ignorant,
it seems, of the fact that I'm a god.
You keep coming at me with such anger.
But what about your battle with those Trojans
you put to flight? They're crowding in the city,
while you chase off on a diversion here.
But you will never kill me. I'm not someone
whose fate it is to die."

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

"You've tricked me,
god who shoots from far away, deadliest

of all the gods. You've turned me from the wall.
Otherwise, before reaching Ilion,
many men would have sunk their teeth in earth.
You've robbed me of great glory, saving them
with ease, since you don't have to be afraid
of future retribution. I'd make you pay,
if only I were powerful enough."

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

Meanwhile, old Priam
was the first to catch sight of Achilles, as he dashed
across the plain, blazing like that star which comes
at harvest time—its light shines out more brightly
than any of the countless lights in night's dark sky.
People call this star by the name Orion's Dog.
It's the brightest of the stars, but an unwelcome sign,
for it brings wretched mortals many fevers.
The bronze on Achilles' chest glittered like that star,
as he ran forward. With a cry, old Priam
struck his head with his hand, then, reaching up,
with many groans, he called out, pleading with his son,
who was still standing there before the gates,
firmly resolved to fight Achilles. The old man,
hands outstretched, appealed to Hector's sense of pity:

"Hector, my dear son, don't stand out there alone,
facing that man with no one else to help you,
or you will quickly meet your death, slaughtered
by Peleus' son, who's much more powerful.
Don't be obstinate. If only the gods
would love Achilles just as much as I do,
then dogs and vultures would soon gnaw at him

as he lay there. And then my heart might shed
its dreadful sorrow, for he's taken from me
many valiant sons. Some he's butchered.
Others he's sold in islands far away.
Right now, I can't see two of my young sons,
Polydorus and Lycaon, among those
who've gathered with the Trojans in the city,
both delivered to me from Laothoe,
queen among women. If they're still alive
in the Achaean camp, we'll ransom them,
with bronze and gold we have stored up at home.
For famous ancient Altes gave many gifts
when he gave me his daughter. But if they're dead
and already in that dwelling place of Hades,
that's a sorrow to my heart, their mother's, too,
their parents. But that's a briefer sorrow
for other people, unless you die as well,
slaughtered by Achilles. Come here, my child,
inside the walls, so you can help to save
Trojan men and women. Don't give that man,
that son of Peleus, great glory. He'll take
your own dear life. Have pity on me, too.
Though full of misery, I still can feel.
Father Zeus will kill me with a cruel fate
on the threshold of old age, once I've seen
so many dreadful things—my sons butchered,
my daughters hauled away, their houses ransacked,
their little children tossed down on the ground
in this murderous war, my daughters-in-law
led off captive in hard Achaean hands.
In the end, I'll be ripped by ravenous dogs,
in front of my own doors when some man strikes me
with his sharp bronze or throws his spear in me,
robbing my limbs of life—the same dogs I raised
at home beside my table to guard the doors.
They'll drink my blood, then lie there at the gates,
their hearts gone mad. When a young man dies in war

lying there cut down by sharp bronze, that's all right.
Though dead, he shows us his nobility.
But when the dogs disfigure shamefully
an old man, chewing his grey head, his beard,
his sexual organs, that's the saddest thing
we wretched mortals see."

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

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

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

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

'Hector, trusting his own power,
destroyed his people.'

That's what they'll say.
For me it would be a great deal better
to meet Achilles man to man, kill him,
and go home, or get killed before the city,
dying in glory. But what would happen,
if I set my bossed shield and heavy helmet
to one side, leaning my spear against the wall,
and went out to meet noble Achilles,
just as I am, promising that Helen,
along with all the goods shipped here to Troy
by Alexander in his hollow ships,
the origin of our hostilities,
would be given to the sons of Atreus,
to take away with them—in addition,
to give the Achaeans an equal share
of all this city holds. Then later on,
I'd get Trojan elders to swear on oath
that not a single thing would be concealed,
that all would be divided equally,
every treasure our lovely city owns.

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

That's what Hector thought as he stood there waiting.
But Achilles was coming closer, like Enyalius,
the warrior god of battle with the shining helmet.
On his right shoulder he waved his dreadful spear
made of Pelian ash. The bronze around him glittered
like a blazing fire or rising sun. At that moment,
as he watched, Hector began to shake in fear.
His courage gone, he could no longer stand there.
Terrified, he started running, leaving the gate.
Peleus' son went after him, sure of his speed on foot.
Just as a mountain falcon, the fastest creature
of all the ones which fly, swoops down easily
on a trembling pigeon as it darts off in fear,
the hawk speeding after it with piercing cries,
heart driving it to seize the prey—in just that way
Achilles in his fury raced ahead. Hector ran
under the walls of Troy, limbs working feverishly.
They ran on past the lookout and the wind-swept fig tree,
some distance from the wall, along the wagon track.
They reached the two fair-flowing well springs
which feed swirling Scamander's stream. From one of them
hot water flows, and out of it steam rises up,
as if there were a fire burning. From the other,
cold water comes, as cold as hail or freezing snow
or melting ice, even in summer. By these springs
stood wide tubs for washing, made of beautiful stone,

where, in peace time, before Achaea's sons arrived,
Trojan wives and lovely daughters used to wash
their brightly coloured clothing. The men raced past there,
one in full flight, the other one pursuing him.
The man running off in front was a brave warrior,
but the man going after him was greater. They ran fast,
for this was no contest over sacrificial beasts,
the usual prizes for a race. They were competing
for horse-taming Hector's life. Just as some horses,
sure-footed, prize-winning creatures, make the turn
around the post and race quickly as they strive to win
some splendid prize—a tripod or a woman
honouring a man that's died—that's how these two men raced,
going three times round Priam's city on their sprinting feet.
All the gods looked on. Among them the first one to speak
was Zeus, father of the gods and men:

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

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

"Father, lord of lightning and dark clouds,
what are you saying? How can you want
to snatch the man back from his wretched death.

He's mortal—his fate doomed him long ago.
Well, do as you wish, but we other gods
will not all approve your actions."

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered Athena:

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

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

Swift Achilles was still pressing Hector hard
in that relentless chase. Just as in the mountains
a hound startles from its cover some young deer,
then goes after it through glens and valley gorges—
and even if the fawn evades it for a while,
cowering in some thicket, the dog tracks it down,
always running till he finds it—that's how Hector
[240] could not shake off the swift-footed son of Peleus.
Every time he tried to dash for the Dardanian gates
to get underneath the walls, so men on top
could come to his assistance by hurling spears,
Achilles would intercept him and turn him back
towards the plain, always making sure he kept
running a line between Hector and the city.
Like a dream in which a man cannot catch someone
who's running off and the other can't escape,
just as the first man can't catch up—that's how
[250] Achilles, for all his speed, could not reach Hector,
while Hector was unable to evade Achilles.
But how could Hector have escaped death's fatal blow,
if Apollo had not for one last time approached,
to give him strength and make his legs run faster?
Godlike Achilles, with a shake of his head,

prevented his own troops from shooting Hector
with their lethal weapons, in case some other man
hit Hector, robbed him of the glory, and left him
to come too late. But when they ran past those springs
the fourth time, Father Zeus raised his golden scales,
setting there two fatal lots for death's long sorrow,
one for Achilles, one for horse-taming Hector.
Seizing it in the middle, Zeus raised his balance.
Hector's fatal day sank, moving down to Hades.
At once Phoebus Apollo abandoned him.
Then Athena, goddess with the glittering eyes,
came to Peleus' son. Standing close to him, she spoke—
her words had wings:

"Glorious Achilles,
beloved of Zeus, now I hope the two of us
will take great glory to Achaean ships,
by killing Hector, for all his love of war.
Now he can't escape us any longer,
even though Apollo, the far shooter,
suffers every torment, as he grovels
before Father Zeus, who bears the aegis.
Stay still now. Catch your breath. I'll go to Hector
and convince him to turn and stand against you."

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

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

Then Hector of the shining helmet answered her:

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

Goddess Athena with her glittering eyes replied:

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

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

"I'll no longer try to run away from you,
son of Peleus, as I did before, going
three times in flight around Priam's great city.
I lacked the courage then to fight with you,
as you attacked. But my heart prompts me now
to stand against you face to face once more,
whether I kill you, or you kill me.
So come here. Let's call on gods to witness,
for they're the best ones to observe our pact,
to supervise what we two agree on.

If Zeus grants me the strength to take your life,
I'll not abuse your corpse in any way.
I'll strip your celebrated armour off,
Achilles, then give the body back again
to the Achaeans. And you'll do the same."

Swift-footed Achilles, with a scowl, replied:

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

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

"You missed, godlike Achilles. So it seems
you learned nothing from Zeus about my death,

although you said you had. That was just talk.
You were telling lies to make me fear you,
so I might forget my strength and courage.
Well, with your spear you won't be striking me
in my back as I run away in fear.
You'll have to drive it through my charging chest,
as I come right at you, if a god permits.
Now, see if you can cope with my bronze point.
I hope you get this whole spear in your flesh.
This war would then be easier on Trojans
with you dead, for yyou're their greatest danger.

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

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

which those men yet to come will hear about."

Hector finished speaking. He pulled out his sharp sword,
that strong and massive weapon hanging on his thigh,
gathered himself, then swooped like some high-flying eagle
plummeting to the plains down through the murky clouds
to seize a tender lamb or cowering rabbit—
that's how Hector charged, brandishing his sharp sword.
Achilles attacked, as well, heart full of savage anger,
covering his chest with that richly decorated shield,
his shining four-ridged helmet nodding on his head,
the golden plumes Hephaestus had set there
shimmering around the crest. Just like that star
which stands out the loveliest among all those
in the heavenly night sky—the star of evening—
that's how the sharp point then glittered on the spear
Achilles hefted in his right hand, intent on
killing noble Hector. He inspected his fine skin,
to see where it was vulnerable to a blow.
But Hector's entire body was protected
by that beautiful armour he had stripped off
powerful Patroclus, once he'd killed him,
except for that opening where the collar bones
separate the neck and shoulders, at the gullet,
where a man's life is most effectively destroyed.
As Hector charged, noble Achilles struck him there,
driving the spear point through his tender neck.
But the heavy bronze on that ash spear did not cut
his windpipe, so he could still address Achilles
and reply to him. Hector fell down in the dust.
Lord Achilles then cried out in triumph:

"Hector,
I suppose you thought you could safely strip
Patroclus, without giving me a thought,
since I was far away. That was foolish!
By our hollow ships he'd left me behind,

I've drained strength from your limbs—now dogs and birds
will tear you into miserable pieces,
while Achaeans are burying Patroclus."

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

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

Scowling at Hector, swift-footed Achilles then replied:

"Don't whine to me, you dog, about my knees
or parents. I wish I had the heart and strength
to carve you up and eat you raw myself
for what you've done to me. So there's no one
who'll keep the dogs from going at your head,
not even if they bring here and weigh out
a ransom ten or twenty times as much,
with promises of more, or if Priam,
son of Dardanus, says he'll pay your weight
in gold. Not even then will your mother
set you on a funeral bed and there lament
the son she bore. Instead, the dogs and birds
will eat you up completely."

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

"I know you well. I recognize in you

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

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

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

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

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

With words like this, they came up close and wounded Hector.
When swift-footed godlike Achilles had stripped the corpse,
standing among Achaeans, he spoke these winged words:

"My friends, leaders and rulers of the Argives,
since gods have granted that this man be killed,

who's done much damage, more than all the rest,
let's test these Trojan by attacking them
with armed excursions round their city,
to see what they intend—whether they'll leave
their lofty city now that Hector's dead,
or stay there, still keen to fight without him.
But why's my fond heart discussing this?
By our ships lies a dead man—unwept,
unburied—Patroclus. I'll not forget him,
as long as I remain among the living,
as long as my dear limbs have motion.
If down in Hades men forget their dead,
even there I will remember my companion.
Come, young Achaeans, sing a victory song,
as we're returning to our hollow ships.
We'll take the body. We've won great glory,
killing noble Hector—Trojans prayed to him
in their own city, as if he were a god."

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

When she saw her son, his mother pulled her hair,
threw off her shining veil, and began to shriek.
His dear father gave a pitiful groan. Around them,
people were overwhelmed with wailing and laments
throughout the city. It was as if all Ilion

were engulfed in flames, all over the summit
of that towering rock. The people then had trouble
restraining the old man in his frantic grief,
his desperate wish to go through the Dardanian gate.
He begged them all, grovelling in the dirt, calling out,
naming each of them:

"My dear friends,
leave me alone. I know you care for me,
but let me leave the city by myself,
go to the Achaean ships, then beg him,
that ruthless man, that violent monster.
He may feel shame in front of comrades.
He may pity my old age. For he, too,
has a father, one just like me, Peleus,
who sired and raised him to butcher Trojans.
On me especially he's loaded sorrow,
more than on any other man. He's killed
so many of my sons, all in their prime.
But, despite that sorrow, I don't grieve
for all of them as much as I do for one,
for Hector. The sharp pain I feel for him
will bring me down to the house of Hades.
If only he had died here in my arms,
we could have had our fill of weeping,
of lamentation—me and his mother,
who gave birth to him, to her own sorrow."

As he said this, Priam wept. The townsfolk mourned.
Hecuba led Trojan women in their loud laments:

"My child, how can I live with this misery,
such wretched sorrow, now that you are dead?
You were my pride and joy, night and day,
and in the city, a blessing to us all,
to Trojan men and women in the state,
who received you like a god. To them

you were great glory when you were alive.
Now Death and Fate have overtaken you."

Hecuba spoke through her tears. But so far Hector's wife
knew nothing of all this, for no messenger
had come to tell her clearly that her husband
had remained outside the gates. She was in a room
[550] inside their lofty home, weaving purple fabric
for a double cloak, embroidering flowers on it.
She'd told her well-groomed servants in the house
to place a large tripod on the fire, so Hector
could have a hot bath when he came home from battle.
Poor fool! She'd no idea that a long way from that bath,
Athena with the glittering eyes had killed Hector
at Achilles' hands. Then she heard the wailing,
laments coming from the walls. Her limbs began to shake.
The shuttle fell out of her hands onto the floor.
[560] She spoke out once more to her well-groomed housemaids:

"Come here you two and follow me. Let's see
what's happened. For I've just caught the sound
of my husband's noble mother's voice. In my chest,
my heart leapt in my mouth, my lower limbs
are numb. Something disastrous has taken place
to Priam's children. I hope reports like these
never reach my ears, but I'm dreadfully afraid
that godlike Achilles may have cut off
my bold Hector from the city, driving him
[570] into the plain all by himself, then ended
that fearful courage which possessed him.
He's never one to hold back or remain
within the crowd of men—he always moves ahead,
well in front, second to none in fury."

Saying this, she hurried through the house, heart pounding,
like some mad woman, accompanied by servants.
Once she reached the wall crowded with men, she stopped,

stood there, and looked out from the wall. She saw Hector
as he was being dragged past before the city,
with swift horses pulling him ruthlessly away
to the Achaeans' hollow ships. At the sight,
black night eclipsed her eyes. She fell back in a faint,
gasping her life away. From her head she threw off
her shining headdress—frontlet, cap, woven headband,
the veil that golden Aphrodite gave her
when Hector of the shining helmet led her
from Eëtion's house as his wife, once he'd paid
an immense price for his bride. Around her
stood her husband's sisters and his brother's wives.
They all helped pick her up, almost dead from shock.
When she'd recovered and her spirit had returned,
she started her lament. In a sobbing voice,
she cried out to the Trojan women:

"Ah, Hector,
how miserable I am. We both seem born
to a single fate, you in Priam's house
in Troy, and I in Eëtion's home
in wooded Thebe. He raised me from childhood,
an ill-fated father and a child who's doomed.
How I wish he'd never fathered me!
Now you go to Hades' house deep underground,
abandoning me to bitter sorrow,
widowed in our home. Our son's an infant,
born to wretched parents, you and me.
No good will come to him from you, Hector,
now that you're dead, nor will he help you.
Even if he gets through this dreadful war
with the Achaeans, his life will always be
a constant pain and sorrow. For other men
will take away his lands. The day a child
becomes an orphan all his friends are gone.
He cannot hold up his head for anyone,
his cheeks are wet from crying. In his need,

the child goes to his father's comrades,
plucking one man's cloak, another's tunic.
Some pity him and then hold out a cup,
letting him for a moment wet his lips,
without moistening his palate. Another man
whose parents are still living pushes him
out of the feast, hitting him with his fist,
insulting him:

'Go away, just as you are.
You've no father at our feast.'

So, in tears,
the child returns to his widowed mother.
That child is our son Astyanax, who,
in earlier days on his father's knees,
ate only marrow and rich fat from sheep.
When sleep overpowered him and he'd stopped
his childish play, he'd lie in his own bed,
in his nurse's arms—on a soft couch,
his heart full of happy dreams. But now,
now that he's missing his dear father,
he'll suffer much, our dear son Astyanax,
Lord of the City. Trojans called him this,
because you alone kept their gates safe from harm,
their towering walls. But now by the beaked ships,
far from your parents, wriggling worms will eat you,
once dogs have had their fill of your bare corpse.
In your home are lovely well-made clothes,
produced by women's hands. In a blazing fire
I'll burn them all. They're no use to you,
since you can't wear them. So I'll honour you,
on behalf of Trojan men and women."

Saying this, she wept. The women added their laments.

Book Twenty Four
Achilles and Priam

[Achilles continues to mourn and to dishonour Hector's corpse; the gods debate his action; Zeus resolves to deal with the problem; Iris goes off to fetch Thetis; Zeus instructs Thetis to visit Achilles; Thetis tells Achilles Zeus' instructions; Achilles agrees to give up Hector's body for ransom; Iris visits Priam, telling him to go to the Achaean ships; Hecuba objects to the trip; Priam insults his sons, then collects the ransom and leaves with Idaios, the herald; Zeus sends Priam an omen and tells Hermes to guide Priam to Achilles; Hermes meets Priam on the road; Hermes takes Priam to the Achaean camp; Priam meets Achilles; Achilles agrees to give back Hector; Achilles and Priam have dinner; Priam sleeps overnight outside Achilles hut; Priam and Idaios return to Troy with Hector's body; the women lament over Hector; the Trojans bury Hector]

Once the funeral gathering broke up, the men dispersed,
each one going to his own ship, concerned to eat
and then enjoy sweet sleep. But Achilles kept on weeping,
remembering his dear companion. All-conquering Sleep
could not overcome him, as he tossed and turned,
longing for manly, courageous, strong Patroclus,
thinking of all he'd done with him, all the pain
they'd suffered, as they'd gone through wars with other men
and with the perilous sea. As he kept remembering,
he cried heavy tears, sometimes lying on his side,
sometimes on his back or on his face. Then he'd get up,
to wander in distress, back and forth along the shore.
He'd see Dawn's approach across the sea and beaches,
then he'd harness his fast horses to their chariot,
tie on Hector and drag him behind, driving
three times around the tomb of Menoetius' dead son.
Then in his hut he'd rest again, leaving Hector
stretched out, face down in the dust. But Apollo,
feeling pity for Hector, though he was dead,
guarded his skin from any lacerations,
covering his whole body with the golden aegis,
so as Achilles dragged him, he did not tear his skin.
Still Achilles kept dishonouring godlike Hector.

Then the blessed gods, looking on, pitied Hector.
So they urged keen-eyed Hermes, killer of Argus,
to steal the corpse, an idea that pleased them all,
except for Hera, Poseidon, and Athena,
the girl with glittering eyes, who kept up the hatred
they'd felt when they first started to loathe Ilion,
[30] Priam and his people, for Alexander's folly—
he'd been contemptuous of those goddesses,
when they were visiting his sheep-fold, choosing
the one who volunteered to serve his dangerous lust.*
But after the twelfth dawn had come since Hector's death,
Phoebus Apollo spoke out to the immortals:

"You gods are cruel and vindictive.
Did Hector never sacrifice to you,
burning thighs of perfect bulls and goats?
And can't you now rouse yourself to save him,
[40] though he's a corpse, for his wife, his mother,
and his child to look at, and for Priam, too,
his father, and the people, who'd burn him
with all speed and give him burial rites?
No, you want to help ruthless Achilles,
whose heart has no restraint. In that chest
his mind cannot be changed. Like some lion,
he thinks savage thoughts, a beast which follows
only its own power, its own proud heart,
as it goes out against men's flocks, seeking
[50] a feast of cattle—that's how Achilles
destroys compassion. And in his heart
there's no sense of shame, which can help a man
or harm him. No doubt, a man can suffer loss
of someone even closer than a friend—
a brother born from the same mother
or even a son. He pays his tribute
with his tears and his laments—then stops.
For Fates have put in men resilient hearts.

But this man here, once he took Hector's life,
[60] ties him behind his chariot, then drags him
around his dear companion's burial mound.
He's done nothing to help or honour him.
He should take care he doesn't anger us.
Though he's a fine man, in this rage of his
he's harming senseless dust."

Then Hera,
angry at Apollo, replied

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

Cloud gatherer Zeus then answered Hera, saying:

"Hera, don't get so angry with the gods.
[80] These two will not both share equal honours.
Still, of all mortal men in Ilion,
Hector was the favourite of the gods.
At least that's what he was to me.
He never failed to offer me fine gifts.
At their communal feasts, my own altar
never went without the proper offerings,
libations and sacrificial smoke,
as is our right. But we'll not let this corpse,
brave Hector's body, be taken secretly.

Achilles would for certain learn of it,
since his mother sees him all the time,
both day and night. But one of the gods
should tell Thetis to come here before me,
so I can put a useful plan to her,
how Achilles can get gifts from Priam
and then give Hector back to him."

Once Zeus had spoken, storm-swift Iris rushed away,
bearing Zeus' message. Half way between Samos
and rocky Imbros she plunged into the sea.
As waters roared above her, she sank way down,
just as a plummet sinks when fastened to a lure,
one fashioned out of horn from some farmyard ox
to bring death to hungry fish. She met Thetis
sitting in a hollow cave with other sea gods
thronging there around her. In the middle of them all,
Thetis was lamenting the fate of her fine son,
who would die in fertile Troy, far from his home.
Standing right beside her, swift-footed Iris spoke:

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

Silver-footed Thetis then said in reply:

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

Saying this,
Thetis, queen of goddesses, took a dark veil,
the blackest of her garments, then set off on her way.
Swift Iris, with feet like wind, went on ahead.
The surging sea parted round the two of them.

When they emerged on shore, they raced on up to heaven.
They found the wide-seeing son of Cronos in the midst
of all the other blessed gods, who live forever.
Once Athena had made room for her, Thetis sat
with Father Zeus. Hera placed a gold cup in her hand,
with words of welcome. She drank, then handed back the cup.
The father of the gods and men spoke first:

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

Silver-footed Thetis did not disagree with Zeus.
She went speeding from Olympus' peak to her son's hut.
She found him there, still mourning endlessly.
Around him, his close companions were all busy,
in a hurry to get their morning meal prepared.
Inside the hut they'd butchered a large woolly sheep.
His noble mother sat close by him, caressed him

with her hand, then spoke to him, saying:

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

Swift-footed Achilles
then replied to Thetis, saying:

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

Thus, among the assembled ships, mother and son
spoke to each other many winged words.

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

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

taking gifts to please Achilles' heart.
He must go alone. No other Trojan man
is to accompany him. One herald,
an older man, can make the journey with him,
to drive the mules and sturdy wagon
and bring back to the city the body
of the godlike man Achilles killed.
He mustn't think of death or be afraid.
A fitting escort will accompany him—
Hermes, killer of Argus—as a guide,
until he brings him to Achilles.
Once he's led him to Achilles' hut,
that man will not kill him—he'll restrain
all other men. For he's not stupid,
blind, or disrespectful of the gods.
He'll spare a suppliant, treat him kindly."

Zeus spoke. Storm-footed Iris rushed off with the message.
Reaching Priam's house, she found him weeping there
and mourning. His sons were sitting with their father
inside the courtyard, wetting garments with their tears.
The old man sat with them, cloak tightly wrapped around him.
Both his head and neck were covered with the dung
he'd grovelled in and grabbed up by the handful.
His daughters and sons' wives were crying through the house,
thinking of many noble warriors who'd been killed
at Achaean hands. Zeus' messenger approached.
Standing beside Priam, she spoke in a soft voice,
but nonetheless his limbs began to tremble.

"Let your heart be brave, Priam, son of Dardanus.
Don't be afraid. I've not come with news
of any harm to you, but to do good.
I am a messenger to you from Zeus—
he may be far off, but he looks out for you,
cares very much, and feels pity for you.
The Olympian is telling you to ransom

godlike Hector. Take presents to Achilles,
fine things his heart will find delightful.
You must go alone. No other Trojan man
is to go along with you. A herald,
an older man, may make the journey with you,
to drive the mules and sturdy wagon
and bring back to the city the body
of the godlike man Achilles killed.
You mustn't think of death or be afraid.
A proper escort will accompany you—
Hermes, killer of Argus—to guide you,
until he brings you to Achilles.
Once he's led you to Achilles' hut,
that man will not kill you—he'll restrain
all other men. For he's not stupid,
blind, or disrespectful of the gods.
He'll spare a suppliant, treat him kindly."

With these words, swift-footed Iris went away.
Priam told his sons to prepare a sturdy mule cart
and lash on a wicker box. Then he went in person
down to the sweet-smelling vaulted storage chamber
lined with cedar, which held many of his treasures.
He summoned Hecuba, his wife, then said:

"My lady,
a messenger has come to me from Zeus,
instructing me to ransom our dear son.
I'm to go to the Achaean ships, taking
gifts for Achilles to delight his heart.
So come, tell me what you feel about this.
My own heart and spirit are urging me,
in a strange and fearful way, to go there,
to the ships and wide Achaean camp."

At Priam's words, his wife cried out. Then she replied:

"Where's your mind gone, that wisdom you once had,
for which in earlier days you were well known
among your subjects and with strangers, too?
How can you want to visit the Achaean ships,
to go alone, before the eyes of the man
who's killed so many of your noble sons?
You've an iron heart. If he captures you,
once he sees you, that man's so savage,
so unreliable, he'll show no pity.
He'll not respect you. No, let's mourn here,
in our home, sitting far away from Hector.
That's what mighty Fate spun out for him
when he was born, when I gave birth to him—
that swift-running dogs would devour him
far from his parents beside that powerful man.
How I wish I could rip out that man's heart,
then eat it. That would be some satisfaction
for my son, who wasn't playing the coward
when he killed him. No, he was standing there,
defending deep-breasted Trojan women
and Trojan men, not thinking of his safety
or running off in flight."

The old man,
godlike Priam, then said in response to Hecuba:

"I want to go. Don't try to stop me.
Don't be a bird of ill omen in our house.
You won't convince me. If some other man,
some earthly mortal, had told me this,
a prophet who interprets sacrifices
or some priest, we'd think it false, reject it.
But this time I heard the goddess for myself.
I stared her in the face. So I will go.
Her message won't be wasted. If I'm fated
to die by the bronze-clad Achaeans' ships,
that's what I wish. Let Achilles kill me,

once I've embraced my son and satisfied
my desire to mourn."

Priam finished speaking.
Then he threw open fine lids on the storage chests.
From there he took twelve lovely robes, twelve single cloaks,
as many blankets, white coverlets, and tunics.
He brought gold, weighing out a total of ten talents,
then two gleaming tripods, four cauldrons, and a cup,
a splendid one given to him by men of Thrace,
when he'd gone there as an envoy, a fine treasure.
Even this cup the old man didn't leave at home—
he was so eager to pay ransom for his son.
Then Priam chased the Trojans from his courtyard,
shaming them with angry words:

"Go away,
you wretches! You ought to be ashamed.
Have you nothing to cry about back home,
so you come here tormenting me like this?
Isn't it enough that Zeus, Cronos' son,
gives me this grief, that I must lose my son,
the best one of them all? Well, you'll soon find out.
Now he's been killed, it will be easier
for Achaeans to kill you, too. As for me,
may I go down to Hades' home, before I see
this city plundered and destroyed."

With these words, Priam went at the people with his staff,
lashing out. They moved off, beyond the old man's rage.
Then he began shouting at his sons, cursing them—
Helenus, Paris, noble Agathon, Pammon,
Antiphonus, Polites, skilled in war shouts,
Deïphobus, Hippothous, and proud Dios.
To these nine, the old man yelled his orders.

"Hurry up, you useless children, my shame.

I wish you'd all been killed instead of Hector
by those swift ships—the entire bunch of you!
My life's so miserable and empty.
I fathered sons, the best in spacious Troy.
I don't think a single one of them is left—
not Mestor, or horseman Troilus, or Hector,
that god among men. He didn't seem to be
the child of any mortal man, but of a god.
Ares destroyed all those sons of mine.
The ones still left here are disgraceful—
liars, prancing masters of the dance floor,
who steal lambs and goats from their own people.
Will you not prepare a wagon for me—
and quickly? Put all those items in it,
so we can start out on our way."

Priam finished.
The sons, shaken by their father's torrent of abuse,
brought out the sturdy, well-made wagon, a new one.
They lashed the wicker basket on it, then took down
from its peg a box-wood yoke to fit a team of mules,
furnished with guiding rings and with a knob on top.
They brought out with the yoke the lashing for it,
a strap five metres long. They placed the yoke with care
across the polished pole at its front end, then set
the rope's eye on the peg and bound it up securely
with three twists round the knob. They lashed it to the pole,
twisting the end below the hook. Next, they brought out
from the storeroom and stowed in the well-polished cart
the huge ransom to be paid for Hector's head. The mules
they then put into harness, underneath the yoke,
strong-footed beasts, a splendid gift which Mysians
once gave Priam. Then to Priam's chariot they yoked up
the team the old man kept for his own personal use,
taking care of them in his own gleaming stables.

While harnessing these animals went on this way

in the lofty courtyard for Priam and his herald,
two men with wisdom in their hearts, Hecuba approached.
She came up to them with her heart in great distress.
In her right hand she held out in a golden cup
some honey wine, so the men could pour libations
before setting out. Standing there beside their horses,
she addressed them, saying:

"Take this wine.
Pour a libation out to Father Zeus,
and pray that you'll come home again,
back from your enemies, since your heart
urges you against my will to those swift ships.
So pray to Cronos' son, lord of dark clouds
and god of Ida, who sees the land of Troy,
and ask him to send a bird of omen,
that fast messenger which is to him
the favourite of all birds, the mightiest.
Let that bird appear over to your right,
so, once you witness it with your own eyes,
you can have faith, as you go to the ships
of those fast-riding Argives. But should Zeus,
who sees far and wide, not send that messenger,
I'd not urge you or advise you go there,
to Achaean ships, for all your eagerness."

Godlike Priam then said in reply to Hecuba:

"Wife, I'll not disregard what you advise.
It's good to extend one's hand to Zeus,
if he's inclined to pity."

Priam spoke.
Then the old man ordered his servant woman
to pour pure water on his hands. She came out,
bringing with her a basin and a water jug.
Priam washed his hands. Taking the cup from his wife,

[380] he prayed, standing in the middle of the courtyard.
Gazing up to heaven, he poured out some wine,
then spoke aloud, saying:

"Father Zeus,
lord of Ida, most glorious and great,
grant that when I come to Achilles' hut,
I'll be welcomed kindly and with pity.
Send me a bird as omen, a swift messenger,
the one that is your favourite, the strongest.
Let it appear to my right overhead,
so, once I witness it with my own eyes,
[390] I can have faith as I go to those ships
of the fast-riding Danaans."

So Priam prayed.
Counsellor Zeus heard him. At once he sent an eagle,
of all flying things the surest omen, a dark one,
which people call black eagle, with wings as wide
as doors on some rich man's vaulted store house,
one fitted well with bolts—that's how wide this eagle
spread its wings on either side, appearing on the right,
speeding across the city. When they saw that bird,
they all rejoiced. Hearts in their chests felt great relief.
[400] The old man, in a hurry, climbed in his chariot,
then drove out through the gate and echoing courtyard.
In front the mules drew on the four-wheeled wagon,
led by wise Idaios. The horses came behind.
The old man kept laying on the whip, urging them
swiftly through the city. All his family followed him
in tears, as if Priam were going off to his death.
When they'd passed the gate and reached the plain,
his sons and sons-in-law turned back to Ilion.
But as those two men came out into the plain,
[410] they did not go unobserved by wide-seeing Zeus.
Looking down on that old man, Zeus pitied him.
At once he spoke to Hermes, his dear son:

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

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, hearing Zeus,
did not disobey. At once he laced up on his feet
his lovely sandals, immortal golden shoes
which carry him across the seas and boundless earth
as fast as winds can blow. With him he took the rod
which puts to sleep the eyes of any man he wishes
or wakes up others who are slumbering.
With this rod in hand, mighty Hermes flew away.
He quickly came to Troy and to the Hellespont.
There he walked on in the form of a young prince
with his first hair on his lip, looking that age
when charms of youth are at their loveliest.

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

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

Idaios spoke.
The old man's mind was very troubled.

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

"Father, where are you going with these horses
and these mules through this immortal night,
when other living men are fast asleep?
Aren't you afraid of those Achaeans,
hostile, fury-breathing, ruthless soldiers—
they're not far off. If one of them should see you
bearing all this treasure in the swift black night,
what would you do then? You're not that young.
Your escort here is elderly, too old
to defend himself against someone
who wants to start a fight. But as for me,
I'll not harm you. In fact, I will protect you
from other men, because in you I see
my own dear father."

Old godlike Priam
then said to Hermes in reply:

"My dear child,
Things are indeed just as you say. But some god
holds his hand over me, to send me here
a traveller like you who comes to meet us,
an auspicious sign, with your handsome shape
and your fine common sense. Those parents of yours
who gave birth to you are surely fortunate."

Messenger Hermes, killer of Argus, then said:

"Old man, what you say is very true.
But come now, tell me—and tell me truly—
are you sending so much treasure out
for foreign people to keep safe for you,

or are you leaving sacred Ilion
in fear, now that the finest man's been killed,
your own son, who never was reluctant
in any battles with Achaeans."

Old godlike Priam spoke again to Hermes:

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

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, then replied:

"You want to test me, old man, by asking me
of godlike Hector. My eyes have seen him
many times in fights where men win glory.
And when he drove the Argives to their ships,
killing and butchering them with his sharp bronze,
we stood there astonished. For Achilles,
still in a furious rage with Agamemnon,
would not let us fight. I attend on him.
The same ship brought us here. I'm a soldier,
one of the Myrmidons. My father's Polyctor,
a man of substance, about as old as you.
He has six other sons—I'm the seventh.
By casting lots with them I was selected
to sail here. I've come now from our ships
here to the plain. At dawn bright-eyed Achaeans
will organize for battle round the city.
They're restless, just sitting idly there.
And it's impossible for Achaea's kings
to keep in check their eagerness for war."

Old godlike Priam then said to Hermes:

"If you, indeed, do serve with Achilles,
son of Peleus, then tell me the whole truth—
is my son still beside the ships, or has Achilles

already carved his body limb from limb
and thrown him to the dogs to eat?"

Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, answered:

"Old man, birds and dogs have not yet fed on him.
He's lying still beside Achilles' ship,
among the huts, the same as when he died.
For twelve days he's lain there, but his flesh
has not decayed. Worms are not eating him,
as they do with men who die in battle.
Each dawn, Achilles drags him ruthlessly
around his dear companion's burial mound,
but that does not lacerate the corpse.
It would amaze you, if you went in person,
to see how he lies there as fresh as dew,
with all blood washed away, no stain on him.
All the wounds he got have closed completely,
and many people stuck their bronze in him.
But that's how blessed gods care for your son,
though he's a corpse. For their hearts loved him."

At these words, the old man felt joy. He replied:

"My son, it's good to pay immortal gods
what's due to them. It's certainly the case,
as true as that my son was once alive,
he never once neglected in our home
the gods who hold Olympus. That's the reason
they now remember him for what he did,
even his dead body after death. Come now,
take this lovely goblet as my gift to you.
Protect me. Be my guide with the gods' help,
until I reach the hut of Peleus' son."

Messenger Hermes, killer of Argus, answered Priam:

"You're testing me, old man, because I'm younger.
You won't convince me when you ask me
to take your gift without Achilles' knowledge.
My heart fears that man, but I respect him
too much to rob him, in case something bad
comes to me later. But I'll be your guide—
even all the way to famous Argos—
attending to your every need on a swift ship
or else on foot. No man will fight against you
because he's thinks too little of your guide."

With these words, Hermes jumped up in the chariot
behind the horses, quickly grabbing reins and whip.
He breathed great strength into those mules and horses.

When they reached the ditch and towers round the ships,
the sentries there were starting to prepare their meal.
Hermes, killer of Argus, poured sleep on all of them,
then opened up the gates at once, pulling back the bars.
He led in Priam with the wagon load of priceless gifts.
They then reached the lofty hut of Peleus' son,
which Myrmidons had built there for their king, cutting
pine beams for it, then roofing it with downy reeds
gathered from the meadows. They'd built around it
a large courtyard for their king, strongly fenced with stakes.
A single beam of pine kept the gate securely closed.
It needed three Achaeans to push it into place,
and three to draw that great bolt from the door,
three of the rest of the Achaeans, for Achilles
could push it into place alone. Helper Hermes
opened the gate himself for old man Priam,
then brought in those splendid gifts for swift Achilles.
He climbed down from the chariot and said:

"Old man,
I am Hermes, an immortal god. I've come,
because my father sent me as your guide.

But I'll go back now. I won't approach
within sight of Achilles. There'd be anger
if an immortal god greeted mortal men
face to face. But you should go inside,
appeal to him in his father's name,
his mother with her lovely hair, his child,
so you may stir his heart."

With these words,
Hermes went on his way, back to high Olympus.
Priam then climbed from his chariot to the ground.
He left Idaios there to tend the mules and horses.
The old man went directly in the hut
where Achilles, dear to Zeus, usually sat.
He found Achilles there, with only two companions,
sitting some distance from him—warrior Automedon
and Alcimus, offshoot of the war god Ares—
busy attending him. He'd just completed dinner.
He'd had food and drink, but the table was still there.
The men did not see great Priam as he entered.
He came up to Achilles, then with his fingers
clasped his knees and kissed his hands, those dreadful hands,
man-killers, which had slain so many of his sons.
Just as sheer folly grips a man who in his own land
kills someone, then runs off to a land of strangers,
to the home of some rich man, so those who see him
are seized with wonder—that's how Achilles then
looked on godlike Priam in astonishment.
The others were amazed. They gazed at one another.
Then Priam made his plea, entreating:

"Godlike Achilles,
remember your own father, who's as old as me,
on the painful threshold of old age.
It may well be that those who live around him
are harassing him, and no one's there
to save him from ruin and destruction.

But when he hears you're still alive,
his heart feels joy, for every day he hopes
he'll see his dear son come back home from Troy.
But I'm completely doomed to misery,
for I fathered the best sons in spacious Troy,
yet I say now not one of them remains.
I had fifty when Achaea's sons arrived—
nineteen born from the same mother's womb,
others the women of the palace bore me.
Angry Ares drained the life of most of them.
But I had one left, guardian of our city,
protector of its people. You've just killed him,
as he was fighting for his native country.
I mean Hector. For his sake I've come here,
to Achaea's ships, to win him back from you.
And I've brought a ransom beyond counting.
So Achilles, show deference to the gods
and pity for myself, remembering
your own father. Of the two old men,
I'm more pitiful, because I have endured
what no living mortal on this earth has borne—
I've lifted up to my own lips and kissed
the hands of the man who killed my son."

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

When godlike Achilles had had enough of weeping,
when the need to mourn had left his heart and limbs,
he stood up quickly from his seat, then with his hand
helped the old man to his feet, feeling pity

for that grey head and beard. Then Achilles spoke—
his words had wings:

"You unhappy man,
your heart's had to endure so many evils.
How could you dare come to Achaea's ships,
and come alone, to rest your eyes on me,
when I've killed so many noble sons of yours?
You must have a heart of iron. But come now,
sit on this chair. Though we're both feeling pain,
we'll let our grief lie quiet on our hearts.
For there's no benefit in frigid tears.
That's the way the gods have spun the threads
for wretched mortal men, so they live in pain,
though gods themselves live on without a care.
On Zeus' floor stand two jars which hold his gifts—
one has disastrous things, the other blessings.
When thunder-loving Zeus hands out a mixture,
that man will, at some point, meet with evil,
then, some other time, with good. When Zeus' gift
comes only from the jar containing evil,
he makes the man despised. A wicked frenzy
drives him all over sacred earth—he wanders
without honour from the gods or mortal men.
Consider Peleus. The gods gave him gifts,
splendid presents, right from birth. In wealth,
in his possessions, he surpassed all men.
And he was king over the Myrmidons.
Though he was a mortal, the gods gave him
a goddess for a wife. But even to him
the gods gave evil, too, for in his palace
there sprang up no line of princely children.
He had one son, doomed to an early death.
I'll not look after him as he grows old,
since I'm a long way from my native land,
sitting here in Troy, bringing pain to you
and to your children. Think of yourself, old man.

We hear that you were fortunate in former times.
In all the lands from Lesbos to the south,
where Macar ruled, and east to Phrygia,
to the boundless Hellespont, in all these lands,
old man, they say that you surpassed all men
for wealth and children. But from the time
you got disaster from the heavenly gods,
man-killing battles round your city
[680] have never ceased. You must endure it all,
without a constant weeping in your heart.
You achieve nothing by grieving for your son.
You won't bring him to life again, not before
you'll have to suffer yet another evil."

Old godlike Priam then answered Achilles:

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

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

"Old man, don't provoke me. I myself intend
to give you Hector. Zeus sent me here
a messenger, the mother who bore me,
a daughter of the Old Man of the Sea.
And in my heart, Priam, I recognize—
it's no secret to me—that some god
[700] led you here to the swift Achaean ships.
No matter how young and strong, no living man
would dare to make the trip to our encampment.
He could not evade the sentries or push back
our door bolts—that would not be easy.

So don't agitate my grieving heart still more,
or I might not spare even you, old man,
though you're a suppliant here in my hut.
I could transgress what Zeus has ordered."

Achilles spoke. The old man, afraid, obeyed him.
Then Peleus' son sprang to the door, like a lion.
Not alone—his two attendants went out with him,
warrior Automedon and Alcimus, whom he honoured
the most of his companions after dead Patroclus.
They freed the mules and horses from their harnesses,
led in the herald, the old man's crier, sat him on a stool.
Then from the polished wagon they brought in
that priceless ransom for Hector's head, leaving there
two cloaks and a thickly woven tunic, so Achilles
could wrap up the corpse before he gave it back
for Priam to take home. Achilles then called out,
ordering his servant women to wash the body,
and then anoint it, after moving it away,
so Priam wouldn't see his son, then, heart-stricken,
be unable to contain his anger at the sight.
Achilles' own spirit might then get so aroused
he could kill Priam, disobeying Zeus' orders.
Servants washed the corpse, anointed it with oil,
and put a lovely cloak and tunic round it.
Achilles himself lifted it and placed it on a bier.
Then together he and his companions set it
on the polished wagon. Achilles, with a groan,
called to his dear companion:

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

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

"Old man, your son has been given back,
as you requested. He's lying on a bier.
You'll see him for yourself at day break,
when you take him. We should think of eating.
Even fair-haired Niobe remembered food,
with twelve of her own children murdered in her home,
her six young daughters and her six strong sons.
Apollo was so enraged at Niobe,
with his silver bow he killed the sons. The daughters
Artemis the Archer slaughtered, for Niobe
had compared herself to lovely Leto,
saying the goddess only had two children,
while she had given birth to many. Even so,
though only two, those gods killed all her children.
For nine days they lay in their own blood—
there was no one there to give them burial.
Cronos' son had turned the people all to stone.
The tenth day, the gods in heaven buried them.
That's when, worn out with weeping, Niobe
had thoughts of food. And now, somewhere in the rocks
in Sipylus, among the lonely mountains,
where, men say, goddess nymphs lie down to sleep,
the ones that dance beside the Achelous,
there Niobe, though turned to stone, still broods,
thinking of the pain the gods have given her.
But come, royal old man, let's think of food.
Later you can lament for your dear son,
when you have taken him to Ilion,
where you'll shed many tears for him."

Swift Achilles finished. Then, jumping up, he killed

a white-fleeced sheep. His companions skinned it,
then prepared the meat, slicing it skilfully
and putting it on spits. They cooked it carefully,
then pulled spits from the pieces. Taking bread,
Automedon set it in fine baskets on the table.
Achilles served the meat. Then their hands went to it,
taking the food prepared and set beside them.
When they'd satisfied their need for food and drink,
then Priam, son of Dardanus, looked at Achilles,
wondering at his size and beauty, like gazing
face to face upon a god. Achilles looked at Priam,
marvelling at his royal appearance and the words he heard.
Once they'd had their fill of looking at each other,
the first to speak was the old man, godlike Priam:

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

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

"Sleep here outside, my dear old man,
in case some Achaean counsellor arrives.

They always come to see me to make plans,
as is our custom. If one of them saw you
on this pitch black night, he might run off
to tell Agamemnon, his people's shepherd.
Then giving back the corpse might be delayed.
But come, tell me—and speak truthfully—
how many days do you require to bury
godlike Hector, so I can stop that long
and keep the troops in check?"

Old godlike Priam
then said in answer to Achilles:

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

Swift-footed Achilles then said to Priam:

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

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

with lovely Briseis stretched out there beside him.

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

"Old man, you're not expecting any harm,
as you sleep like this among your enemies,
since Achilles spared your life. Your dear son
is ransomed for that huge amount you paid.
But if Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
or all Achaeans learn that you are here,
those sons you've left behind will have to pay
a ransom three times greater for your life."

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

As Dawn spread her yellow robes over all the earth,
the two men drove their horses inside the city,
weeping and groaning. The mules pulled in the corpse.
No one noticed them, no man, no well-dressed woman,
except Cassandra, a girl as beautiful
as golden Aphrodite. She'd climbed up Pergamus.
She saw her father standing in his chariot,
together with his herald, the town crier.
In the mule cart she saw the corpse lying on the bier.
With a scream, Cassandra cried out to all the city:

"See, men and women of Troy, come and see—
look on Hector, if, while he was still alive,
you would rejoice when he came back from war,
for he was a great joy to all our city
and its people."

At Cassandra's shout,
no man or woman was left unaffected.
There in the city all were overcome with grief
beyond anyone's control. Close to the gates,
they met Priam bringing home the body.
First Hector's dear wife and his noble mother,
tearing their hair, ran to the sturdy wagon,
trying to touch Hector's head. People crowded round,
all weeping. They would have stayed there by the gates,
shedding tears for Hector the entire day
until the sun went down, but from the chariot
the old man cried out to the crowd:

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

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

"My husband—you've lost your life so young,
leaving me a widow in our home,
with our son still an infant, the child
born to you and me in our wretchedness.
I don't think he'll grow up to adulthood.
Before that, our city will all be destroyed.

For you, who kept watch over for us, are dead.
You used to protect our city, keeping
its noble wives and little children safe.
Now, soon enough, they'll all be carried off
in hollow ships. I'll be there among them.
And you, my child, you'll follow with me,
to some place where you'll be put to work
at menial tasks, slaving for a cruel master.
Or else some Achaean man will grab your arm
and throw you from the wall—a dreadful death—
in his anger that Hector killed his brother,
or his father, or his son. For Hector's hands
made great numbers of Achaeans sink their teeth
into the broad earth. In wretched warfare,
your father was not gentle. So in our city
they now weep for him. O Hector, what sorrow,
what untold grief you've laid upon your parents.
What painful sorrows will remain for me,
especially for me. As you were dying,
you didn't reach your hand out from the bed,
or give me some final words of wisdom,
something I could remember always,
night and day, as I continue my lament."

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

"Hector, dearest by far of all my children,
loved by the gods, as well, when you were living.
Now, at your death, they still take care of you.
When swift Achilles took my other sons,
he'd ship them off across the boundless seas,
to Samos, or Imbros, or foggy Lemnos.
When his long-edged bronze took away your life,
he dragged you many times around the mound
for his comrade Patroclus, whom you killed.
Yet even so, he could not revive him.

Now you lie here in our house, fresh as dew,
like someone whom Apollo of the silver bow
has just come to and killed with gentle arrows."

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

"Hector—of all my husband's brothers,
you're by far the dearest to my heart.
My husband is godlike Alexander,
who brought me here to Troy. I wish I'd died
before that happened! This is the twentieth year
since I went away and left my native land,
but I've never heard a nasty word from you
or an abusive speech. In fact, if anyone
ever spoke rudely to me in the house—
one of your brothers or sisters, some brother's
well-dressed wife, or your mother—for your father
always was so kind, as if he were my own—
you'd speak out, persuading them to stop,
using your gentleness, your soothing words.
Now I weep for you and for my wretched self,
so sick at heart, for there's no one else
in spacious Troy who's kind to me and friendly.
They all look at me and shudder with disgust."

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

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

Priam finished.
The people hitched up mules and oxen to their wagons
and then gathered before the city with all speed.
For nine days they brought in wood, an immense amount.
When the tenth dawn came, they brought brave Hector out,
then, all in tears, laid his corpse on top the funeral pyre.
They set it alight. When rose-fingered Dawn came up,
they gathered around that pyre of glorious Hector.
Once they'd all assembled there together,
first they doused the pyre with gleaming wine, every part
that fire's strength had touched. His brothers and comrades
collected Hector's ash-white bones, as they mourned him—
heavy tears running down their cheeks—and placed them
in a golden urn, wrapped in soft purple cloth.
They quickly set the urn down in a shallow grave,
covered it with large stones set close together,
then hurried to pile up the mound, posting sentries
on every side, in case well-armed Achaeans
attacked too soon. Once they'd piled up the mound,
they went back in, gathered together for a splendid feast,
all in due order, in Priam's house, king raised by Zeus.
And thus they buried Hector, tamer of horses.