

# The Iliad

## 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 Deiphobus 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,  
[10] 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,  
[20] 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  
[30] 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.  
[40] 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  
[50] 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  
[60] 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  
[70] 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,  
[80] 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,  
[90] 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,  
[100] 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.  
[110] 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.  
[120] 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,  
[130] 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,  
[140] 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  
[150] 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.  
[160] 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 Enyalios,  
the warrior god of battle with the shining helmet.  
On his right shoulder he waved his dreadful spear  
made of Pelian ash. The bronze around him glittered  
[170] 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  
[180] 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  
[190] 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,  
[200] 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  
[210] 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:

[220] “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  
[260] 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  
[270] 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  
[280] 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  
[290] 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.  
[300] 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,  
[310] 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,  
[320] 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.

[330] 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,  
[340] 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:

[350] "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.  
[360] I hope you get this whole spear in your flesh.  
This war would then be easier on Trojans  
with you dead, for you're their greatest danger.

With these words, Hector balanced his long-shadowed spear,  
then threw it. It struck the shield of Peleus' son,  
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,  
[370] 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,  
[380] 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  
[390] 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—  
[400] 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.  
[410] 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,

[420] a much greater man, to take out my revenge.  
I've drained strength from your limbs—now dogs and birds  
will tear you into miserable pieces,  
while Achaeans are burying Patroclus.”

His strength fading, Hector of the shining helmet  
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,  
[430] 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  
[440] 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.  
[450] 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!  
[460] 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  
[470] 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  
[480] 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,  
[490] 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,  
[500] 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  
[510] 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,  
[520] 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,  
[530] 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?  
[540] 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,  
[580] 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.  
[590] 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!  
[600] 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  
[610] 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:

[620] '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,  
[630] 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.