

The Iliad

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
- [100] 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.
- [110] 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.
- [120] 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
- [130] 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.

- [140] 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,
[150] 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."

- [160] 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
[170] 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
[180] 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.
[190] 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,
[200] 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
[210] 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
[220] 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 Echeclus, 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,
[230] 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,
[240] 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,
[250] 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,
[260] 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.
[270] 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,
[280] 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
[290] 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,
[300] 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,
[310] 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 Axios.

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
[350] 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,
[360] 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,
[370] 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.

- [380] He didn't miss. The spear point sheared off muscle
at the bottom of his arm and broke the bone in two.
Maris fell with a crash, and darkness veiled his eyes.
Thus, these two, slaughtered by two brothers, went off
to Erebus. They'd been Sarpedon's brave companions,
spearmen sons of Amisodarus—he'd reared
the raging Chimera, who'd killed so many men.*
Ajax, son of Oileus, jumped out at Cleobulus,
captured him alive, stuck in that confusion. Even so,
Ajax struck him with his sword across the neck,
[390] 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.
- [400] 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.
- [410] 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.

[420] 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

[430] 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.

[440] 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

- [450] 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,
[460] 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,
[470] 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.
[480] 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.

[490] 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.”

[500] 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,

[510] 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.

[520] 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

[530] 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

[540] 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,
Pegasus, 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,

[550] their yoke cracked, and their reins got intertwined
with the trace horse Pegasus 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.

[560] 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,

[570] 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.

[580] 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
Achaean’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,

[660] 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,

[670] 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,

[680] 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—

[690] 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, [700] 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, [710] 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, [720] 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:

- [730] "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—
[740] 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,
[750] 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,
[760] 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
[770] 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
[780] 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.
[790] 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,
[800] 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,
[810] then Autonomous, 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
[820] 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,
[830] 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:

[840] “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,
[850] 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.
[860] 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!
[870] 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,
[880] 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
[890] 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.
- [930] 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.
- [940] 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.
- [950] 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,
- [960] 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.

[970] 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:

[980] "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—

[990] 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.