# **The Iliad Book 24 Summary**

* When the games are over and the crowds disperse, Achilleus keeps grieving for Patroklos.
* Days pass, but his grief does not.
* Each day, he fastens Hektor's corpse to the back of his chariot, and drags him three times around the burial mound of Patroklos.
* Apollo, however, uses his divine power to prevent any damage to Hektor's corpse.
* The gods pity Hektor. They consider sending Hermes, god of trickery, down to earth to steal his body.
* Hera, Poseidon, and Athene refuse, however. They all hate Troy, though for different reasons. (Here the poet reminds us of Paris's fateful judgment in *Olympian Idol*. Check out our recap of The Backstory's Backstory in the summary of Book 2.)
* Countering them, Apollo argues that Hektor always honored the gods, that he shouldn't be deprived of a proper funeral, and that Achilleus's behavior is completely inappropriate.
* Hera doesn't like this one bit. She thinks it sounds as though Apollo were trying to make Hektor and Achilleus equal – even though Achilleus's mother is a god, whereas both Hektor's parents are mortal.
* Zeus tells Hera to cool it. He says that she's right, but that the gods still love Hektor. Then again, he says that they can't steal his body, because Thetis is constantly watching it. Instead, they've got to bring Thetis up to Olympos and tell her that Achilleus must give Hektor back to Priam in exchange for a ransom.
* Iris goes down under the sea, finds Thetis mourning for her son, and brings her up to Olympos.
* There, Zeus tells her that the gods had been considering sending Hermes down to steal the body, but have instead decided to give Achilleus a break. He also says that he has sent Iris down to tell Priam to go to the Achaian ships with gifts for Achilleus.
* Thetis descends to Troy and finds Achilleus on the beach while others are preparing breakfast.
* She says, "Wouldn't you rather be sleeping with a woman? It would make you feel better."
* Then she delivers Zeus's message.
* Achilleus says, "Whatever, fine."
* Then Zeus sends Iris down to Priam with the following message: "Go alone, with only a herald to drive the cart that will transport the body back to Troy. And have no fear. Achilleus honors the gods and will not hurt you."
* Iris goes down and finds Priam wallowing in dung in his misery. The whole palace is wailing. Iris delivers the message.
* Priam tells his sons to prepare the cart.
* When he tells his wife what he's doing though, she refuses, thinking it's pointless. Then she echoes Achilleus's rage at her son, saying how she wishes she could cut off Achilleus's flesh and eat it raw.
* Then Priam starts gathering treasure. He yells at the Trojans who are gawking at him. He also yells at his remaining sons, calling them worthless.
* Before he heads out, Hekabe makes him and the herald pour out libations and pray.
* Priam prays to Zeus for a sign, and he gets one: the god sends down an eagle, flying on the right.
* Then they head out. Zeus sends down Hermes to guide them.
* Hermes meets Priam and the herald on the plain, taking the form of a young Myrmidon warrior.
* He tells Priam that the body of Hektor has not been destroyed despite Achilleus's abuses. He offers to take them to Achilleus's lodging.
* Hermes leads them through the camp to the lodging, then reveals his true identity. He tells Priam to go in alone, then books it back to Olympos.
* Priam goes in to see Achilleus. He falls at his knees and begins kissing Achilleus's hands – the hands that killed so many of his sons.
* Achilleus is taken aback. He grasps Priam by the hand and gently pushes him back.
* Then they share a silent moment of grief, each thinking of his own loved ones.
* Achilleus sees his own father, Peleus, in Priam.
* Now Achilleus speaks, reflecting on the mix of happiness and sadness that Zeus gives to all mortals. Now, explicitly, he compares Peleus to Priam.
* Priam asks to go immediately with his son's body, but Achilleus refuses. He says "I know the gods sent you. Don't annoy me or I'll lose my temper and kill you."
* Priam settles down.
* Then Achilleus goes out of the room and tells the servant-women to bathe and clothe Hektor's body. He tells them to do it where Priam won't be able to see it. He is worried that if Priam sees Hektor's body and gets upset, he, Achilleus, will become enraged and will kill him – despite his divine protection.
* Then Achilleus comes back to rejoin Priam. Now he says they should eat together. Achilleus tells the mythological story of Niobe, who, even though she lost all her children, eventually began to eat again. Achilleus argues that they should follow suit.
* Achilleus goes over to the fire and prepares them a meal.
* Then he brings it over and they eat together. They share a moment of silence gazing at each other in admiration.
* Priam breaks the silence by saying that he's tired and has to go to bed.
* Achilles tells some servants to prepare a bed for the old men on the porch.
* He tells him that he wants him to sleep outside of the main shelter because Achaian captains keep coming in to confer with him. He doesn't want any of them seeing Priam and deciding he'd make a nice prisoner.
* Then Achilleus asks Priam how many days he will need to bury Hektor. He promises to hold the Achaians to a truce for the duration of that period.
* Priam says they will need nine days to mourn him, one day to burn him on his pyre, and another day to build a high grave mound over the body. He says that on the twelfth day they can fight.
* Achilleus promises to fulfill this request. The two men shake hands.
* Then Priam goes out to sleep on the porch. Achilleus goes to sleep beside Briseis.
* But then, a short time later, Hermes comes and wakes up the two Trojans on the porch. He says it's time for them to go.
* Hermes leads them in safety out of the Achaian camp, and back across the plain as far as the River Xanthos. Then he departs.
* Priam and the herald continue with the body back to Troy.
* The first to see them approaching is Priam's daughter Kassandra, who was watching from the rampart. As soon as she sees Hektor's body, she starts loudly wailing.
* When they get inside the city, the first to throw themselves upon Hektor's body are his wife Andromache and Hekabe his mother.
* Andromache laments that he has left her and their son. She predicts that she and her son will one day become slaves of some Achaian – either that or her son will be hurled to his death from the ramparts by some Achaian, just because Hektor killed someone dear to *him*. She recalls that Hektor himself was a merciless soldier.
* She laments that Hektor did not die in his bed, where he could have given her some last word to remember him by.
* The next to lament is Hekabe. Her sadness is mingled with relief that she has Hektor back in her halls, his body somehow preserved.
* Next is Helen. She laments at having been brought to Troy by Paris. She praises Hektor for always having been kind to her, and for always warding off the cruel words of others.
* Then Priam commands that wood be brought into the city for Hektor's funeral pyre. He announces the truce he had made with Achilleus.
* The closing lines of the poem recount the funeral rites for Hektor, just as Priam described them to Achilleus.
* The Trojans lament for nine days. On the tenth, they burn his body. On the eleventh, they gather what remains and heap a grave mound over it. They post sentries around it to make sure it isn't attacked by the Achaians. That night they have a feast.
* Then the poet concludes: "Such was their burial of Hektor, breaker of horses."