

Book 6

The grim strife of Achaians and Trojans was left then to itself:
now this way, now that, the battle kept shifting across the plain,
as each side aimed at the other their bronze-tipped spears,
between the Simoeis river and the waters of Xanthos.

Aias, Telamōn's son, the Achaians' bulwark, was first 5
to break through the Trojans' ranks, bringing hope to his comrades;
for he laid low the foremost fighter among the Thracians,
Eussōros's son Akamas, a big strong fellow—threw first,
caught the boss of Akamas's helmet with its horsehair crest:
the bronze spear-point stuck in his forehead, entered 10
the cranium, and darkness enveloped both his eyes.

Diomēdēs, good at the war cry, now slew Axylos,
Teuthras's son, whose home was in well-built Arisbē:
a person of wealth and substance, hospitable too,
for his house stood on the high road, was open to everyone. 15
Yet of these not one was there to save him from wretched death,
by facing the foe before him: Diomēdēs cut off both
him and his henchman Kalēsias, at that time
his charioteer; together they entered the underworld.

Euryalos slaughtered Drēsos and Opheltios, then went 20
after Aisēpos and Pēdasos, whom on a time a nymph,
a naiad, Abarbarea, bore to blameless Boukoliōn.
Boukoliōn was the offspring of noble Laomedōn,
his first-born, though his mother bore him in secrecy.
Tending his flocks he was when he lay with the nymph, 25
who conceived and delivered twin sons. It was of these
that Mēkisteus's son undid the power and the resplendent
limbs, and stripped off the armor from their shoulders.

Astyalos fell to the staunch fighter Polypoitēs;
Odysseus it was finished off Pidyētēs of Perkōtē 30
with his bronze spear, while Teukros killed noble Aretaōn.
Antilochos, Nestōr's son, with his shining spear laid low
Ablēros; Agamemnōn, lord of men, slew Elatos

who dwelt in steep Pēdasos by the banks of wide-flowing
 Satnioeis. The hero Lēitos caught Phylakos 35
 as he fled him; Eurypylos slaughtered Melanthios.

But Menelaös, good at the war cry, now took Adrēstos
 alive, for his two horses, stampeding across the plain,
 were snagged by a tamarisk branch, broke loose from the curved
 chariot at the pole's end, themselves made off for 40
 the city, to which all the rest were bolting, panic-stricken;
 but he himself was thrown from his chariot, over the wheel,
 headlong into the dust, on his face. Then stood over him
 Atreus's son Menelaös, with his far-shadowing spear,
 and Adrēstos clutched his knees and besought him, saying: 45
 "Take me alive, son of Atreus, accept a fitting ransom!
 Much treasure's laid up in the house of my rich father—
 bronze, gold, and iron worked with much toil: from these
 my father would gladly pay you ransom past counting
 should he learn I am still alive by the Achaians' ships." 50

These words moved the spirit in Menelaös's breast:
 indeed, he was on the point of having his henchman take
 Adrēstos to the Achaians' swift ships, but Agamemnōn
 ran up to confront him, crying out in rebuke:
 "Menelaös, dear brother, what makes you care so much 55
 for these people? Did you get the best treatment in your home
 from Trojans? Not one of them should escape sheer doom
 at our hands, no, not even the child whose mother still
 carries him in her belly: let the people of Ilion
 all perish together, unmourned, eradicated!" 60

Thus

the hero altered the mind-set of his brother, since what
 he urged had been destined. Menelaös with one hand
 thrust the hero Adrēstos away from him. Lord Agamemnōn
 stabbed him hard in the side. He collapsed. The son of Atreus,
 one heel on his chest, tore out the ash-wood spear. 65

Now Nestōr with a great shout cried out to the Argives:
 "My friends, you Danaän warriors, henchmen of Arēs,
 let no man now in his thirst for plunder hang back
 far in the rear, to let him bring most back to the ships:

no, let us rather kill foemen: that way you'll have leisure
to strip the armor from corpses scattered across the plain." 70

With these words he aroused each man's fury and spirit:
then would the warlike Achaians have once more driven the Trojans,
overcome by their craven spirit, back up into Ilion
had there not come forward to speak to Aineias and Hektōr 75

Helenos, Priam's son, far the best of the diviners:
"Aineias and Hektōr, on you, above all other Trojans
and Lycians, lies the weight of battle: you are the best
in every venture, both for fighting and counsel.
Stand firm, then, and rally your troops before the gates, 80
visit all ranks, before they run off and tumble
into their women's arms, a delight to their enemies!
Then, when you two have aroused all ranks to action,
we'll make our stand here, face the Danaāns in battle,
worn out though we are, since necessity forces us. 85
Hektōr, you should go into the city, carry back word to
your mother and mine: she's to assemble the older women
at the temple of grey-eyed Athēnē on the acropolis,
and when she's unlocked the doors of that sacred domain,
let her choose the robe that she deems the finest and largest 90
of those in her hall, the one that's most precious to her,
and spread it over the knees of fair-haired Athēnē, vow
to sacrifice in her shrine a dozen yearling heifers
that have never felt the goad, in the hope that she may pity
our town, and the Trojans' wives and infant children, 95
and hold back from sacred Ilion Tydeus's son,
that brutal spearman, that powerful source of rout,
who has, I declare, proved the strongest of all the Achaians.
Not even Achilles so scared us, the leader of men,
who they say was born of a goddess; this madman rages 100
over the mark, there's none can match him for violence."

So he spoke, and Hektōr did not disregard his brother,
but leapt to the ground from the chariot in his battle gear,
brandishing two sharp spears, and ranged widely through the ranks,
urging them on to fight, stirred up the clash of battle. 105
So they regrouped, stood firm, facing up to the Achaians,
and the Argives now gave ground, left off their killing,

thinking that some immortal from starry heaven
had come down to aid the Trojans, the way they'd rallied.

Now Hektōr with a great shout cried out to the Trojans: 110
“High-spirited Trojans, and you, our far-famed allies,
be men, my friends, bear in mind your fighting spirit
while I make my way to Ilion, exhort our elderly
counsellors and our wives to offer their prayers
to the immortals, to promise them ample sacrifice.” 115

After so saying, bright-helmeted Hektōr departed,
the rim of black hide that ran round the outer edge
of his bossed shield knocking on both neck and ankles.

Now Glaukos son of Hippolochos and the son of Tydeus
met between the two armies, impatient to fight; and when 120
they came close, advancing the one against the other,
Diomēdēs, good at the war cry, was the first to speak:
“Who are you, good sir, of all mortal men there are?
Never yet have I seen you in battle that brings men honor
before, yet now you’ve advanced far ahead of the rest 125
in daring, since you stand up to my far-shadowing spear.
Unhappy are those whose sons confront my strength!
But if you are some immortal come down from heaven,
then I will not myself do battle with the heavenly gods;
for not even the son of Dryas, mighty Lykourgos, 130
lived long after striving against the gods in heaven—
that time he harried the nurses of frenzied Dionysos
headlong down from Mount Nysa, and they all together
threw down their ritual wands, assailed by the ox-goad
of Lykourgos the killer, while Dionysos took flight, 135
plunged under the sea waves in terror, was received,
panicking at the man’s shouts, in the bosom of Thetis.
The gods, the easy livers, now took against Lykourgos,
and Kronos’s son made him blind; nor did he survive
much longer, since all the deathless gods hated him. 140
So I would not choose to fight these blessed divinities!
But if you are a mortal, who eats what the earth yields, then
come close, that you may the sooner enter destruction’s bounds.”

The illustrious son of Hippolochos answered him:
“Great-spirited son of Tydeus, why question my lineage? 145

As the generation of leaves, so is that of mankind:
 some leaves the wind scatters earthwards, but the fertile
 woodland grows others as spring returns in season.
 So with men: one generation grows, while another dies.
 But if you insist on knowing this too, the true facts 150
 of my ancestry—something familiar to many—there is
 a city, Ephyrē, back in horse-pasturing Argos,
 where Sisyphos dwelt, the most crafty of all mankind,
 Sisyphos, Aiolos's son; the son he begot was Glaukos,
 and Glaukos in turn begot the blameless Bellerophōn. 155
 On him the gods bestowed both good looks and seductive
 manliness, but against him Proitos plotted evil,
 drove him out of the realm, since he was far stronger,
 though Zeus had made him subject to Proitos's scepter.
 Now Proitos's wife was mad for him, queenly Anteia, 160
 yearned to lie with him secretly, yet could never
 overcome the high-minded refusals of steadfast Bellerophōn.
 So she made up a false story that she told to King Proitos:
 "Either die yourself, Proitos, or else kill Bellerophōn,
 who attempted to lie with me in love against my will." 165
 So she spoke, and the king was angered by what he heard.
 Kill Bellerophōn he would not: his conscience shrank from that.
 But he sent him to Lycia, and gave him fatal tokens,
 many murderous signs incised in a folded tablet,
 to be shown to his father-in-law, and secure his death.¹ 170
 So to Lycia he went, with the gods' faultless protection,
 and when he reached Lycia and the Xanthos river,
 the king of broad Lycia readily paid him honor:
 nine days he entertained him, sacrificed nine oxen,
 but when rosy-fingered Dawn appeared on the tenth day, 175
 then he questioned his guest, asked to see whatever
 message he'd brought him from his son-in-law, Proitos.
 Now after he got his son-in-law's wicked message,

1. This is the only clear reference to writing in Homer. Whether the poet thought of the "murderous signs" as Hittite hieroglyphs, Linear B symbols, or the new alphabet is quite uncertain. Kirk inclines to the alphabet on the basis of the "folded tablet" (Kirk 2: 181). West argues that Homer "composed the *Iliad* with the aid of writing and over a long period" (West 2011, 10–11). Powell denies that the "signs" are anything more than "marks" and claims that Homer, though aware of writing, "does not use or understand it" (*HE* 3.943–44). The debate continues.

first he ordered Bellerophōn to kill the invincible
 Chimaira, a beast of divine, not earthly lineage, 180
 a lion in front, a serpent behind, a goat in the mid-part,
 fearsomely breathing forth the fury of blazing fire.
 Her Bellerophōn slew, fulfilling the gods' portents;
 next he battled the far-famed Solymoi, calling this
 the toughest engagement of warriors in which he'd ever fought; 185
 thirdly, he slaughtered the Amazons, women well-matched
 against men.
 Then, as he was returning, the king wove another smart trick:
 choosing from all broad Lycia the very best troops
 he set up an ambush. But none of these men came back home,
 for every last one was slain by blameless Bellerophōn. 190
 Then, when the king recognized him as a god's strong scion,
 he kept him there, offered him his own daughter, gave him
 half of all his royal entitlements; and the Lycians
 measured him out an estate, the best land there was,
 fine acres of orchard and plowland for him to possess. 195
 His consort bore three children to warlike Bellerophōn:
 Isandros, Hippolochos, and Laodameia.
 With Laodameia Zeus the counselor lay in love,
 and she bore him godlike Sarpēdōn, he of the bronze helm.
 But finally even Bellerophōn, hated by all the gods, 200
 became a solitary wanderer on the Aleian plain,
 eating his heart out, avoiding the trodden paths of men.
 Isandros his son was killed by Arēs, that glutton for war,
 on a campaign against the far-famed Solymoi;
 and his daughter golden-reined Artemis slew in anger. 205
 Hippolochos, though, begot me: I declare myself his son.
 He sent me to Troy, and repeatedly urged upon me
 always to be the best, preeminent over others,
 nor ever to shame the line of my ancestors,
 by far the finest in Ephyrē and in all broad Lycia. 210
 This is the bloodstock, the lineage I'm proud to claim as mine."

 So he spoke: Diomēdēs, good at the war cry, rejoiced,
 planted his spear-point deep in the nurturing earth,
 and in friendly terms addressed the shepherd of the people:
 "Then you are my family's guest-friend, from way back! 215
 For noble Oineus once did entertain blameless

Bellerophōn in his halls, kept him there for twenty days,
 and the two gave each other the fine gifts of guest-friendship—
 from Oineus a baldric gleaming with scarlet, and from
 Bellerophōn a gold cup, two-handled, the same one 220
 I left back at home when I travelled here! But Tydeus
 I don't remember, being still a little child when
 he departed, that time the Achaian force perished at Thēbē.
 That makes me your friend and host in the Argive heartland,
 and you mine in Lycia, when I visit that country. Therefore 225
 let us, even in the close fighting, avoid each other's spears,
 seeing I have many, both Trojans and far-famed allies,
 to kill—anyone a god grants me, or I can run down, while you
 have Achaians in plenty to cut down—if you can catch them!
 Now let's exchange armor, so that these men too may know 230
 we declare ourselves to be guest-friends from ancestral times."

After thus speaking they sprang down from their chariots,
 clasped one another's hands, gave pledges of friendship;
 but Zeus son of Kronos robbed Glaukos of his senses,
 for the armor he exchanged with Tydeus's son Diomēdēs 235
 was gold for bronze, one hundred oxen's worth for nine.

When Hektōr reached the Skaian gates and the oak tree,
 there ran out and gathered round him the Trojans'
 wives and daughters,
 enquiring about their sons and brothers, their neighbors
 or husbands; each one of them in turn he urged 240
 to pray to the gods, for mourning was to be the lot of many.

But when he came to Priam's resplendent palace,
 with its polished stone colonnades—and in it there were
 fifty bedchambers, also of polished stone,
 set close each to the next; and in them there all the sons 245
 of Priam slept, by the side of their wedded wives,
 while opposite in the courtyard were his daughters'
 dozen roofed bedchambers, also of polished stone,
 set close each to the next; and there the sons-in-law
 of Priam slept, by the side of their wedded wives— 250
 there his bountiful mother came out to meet him,
 bringing with her Laodikē, her most beautiful daughter,
 and she clasped him by the hand, and thus addressed him:

“Why have you left the rough fighting to come here, my child?
 These accursed Achaians’ sons must be pressing you hard 255
 in the struggle around our city: did your spirit drive you here
 to pray with raised hands to Zeus from the topmost ramparts?
 Wait here, let me bring you honey-sweet wine, to pour
 a libation to Zeus the Father and the other immortals
 first—then enjoy it yourself, if you feel like drinking. 260
 When a man is worn out—just as you are worn out from fighting
 to save your fellows—wine greatly augments his strength.”

Then great bright-helmeted Hektōr answered her:
 “Bring me no mind-soothing wine, my lady mother, lest
 you unstring my limbs, and I forget my strength and courage; 265
 besides, with unwashed hands I dare not pour out libations
 of fire-bright wine to Zeus; no prayers to the lord of storm clouds,
 Kronos’s son, by a man who’s smeared with blood and filth!
 But you should go to the shrine of Athēnē, the spoil-bringer,
 bearing burnt offerings, when you’ve assembled the older women; 270
 and choose the robe that you deem the finest and largest
 of those in your hall, the one that’s most precious to you,
 and spread it over the knees of fair-haired Athēnē, vow
 to sacrifice in her shrine a dozen yearling heifers
 that have never felt the goad, in the hope that she may pity 275
 our town, and the Trojans’ wives and infant children,
 and hold back from sacred Ilion Tydeus’s son,
 that brutal spearman, that powerful source of rout!
 So, off with you to the shrine of Athēnē, the spoil-bringer,
 and I’ll go in search of Paris, require his presence, see if 280
 I can make him listen to me! Ah, how I wish that the earth
 would gape where he stands! The Olympian reared him to be
 a bane to the Trojans, to great-hearted Priam and Priam’s sons.
 Should I see him going down to the house of Hādēs, then
 I’d say that my mind had forgotten its wretched grief.” 285

So he spoke. She went into the palace, summoned her handmaids,
 sent them out through the city to collect the older women.
 She herself went down to the fragrant storeroom where
 her robes were kept, the fine work of Sidonian women,
 whom Aléxandros himself, divinely handsome, 290
 had fetched back from Sidon, sailing the wide seas—
 that voyage on which he brought high-born Helen home.

From these robes Hekabē picked her gift to bring to Athēnē—
 the finest for its embroidery, and the largest,
 that shone like a star, and lay beneath all the others. 295
 Then she set out, accompanied by a crowd of older women.

When they reached Athēnē's temple, high on the citadel,
 the doors were opened for them by fair-cheeked Theanō,
 Kissēs' daughter, and wife of Antēnōr the horse breaker,
 since the Trojans had made her Athēnē's priestess. Then 300
 they all, with ecstatic cries, raised up their hands to Athēnē,
 while fair-cheeked Theanō took the robe and laid it
 across the knees of Athēnē, the fine-tressed goddess,
 and invoked in prayer great Zeus's daughter: "Lady
 Athēnē, our city's protector, queen among goddesses, 305
 now break Diomēdēs' spear, now grant that he himself
 fall prone in front of the Skaian Gates, and at once
 we'll sacrifice in your shrine a dozen yearling heifers
 that have never felt the goad, in the hope that you may pity
 our town, and the Trojans' wives and infant children." 310
 So she prayed; but Pallas Athēnē shook her head in denial.

Such were these women's prayers to great Zeus's daughter;
 but Hektōr had made his way to the house of Aléxandros,
 the fine house that he himself had built with the very best
 craftsmen then to be found in rich-soiled Troy: they'd made him 315
 a bedchamber, main hall, and courtyard close beside
 the houses of Priam and Hektōr, high on the citadel.
 There Hektōr, dear to Zeus, entered, grasping a spear
 eleven cubits long: its bronze point in front of him
 gleamed bright; round the shaft there ran a golden ferrule. 320
 He found the man in his chamber, cleaning his splendid armor,
 his shield and corselet, and handling his back-bent bow,
 while Argive Helen sat there among her serving women,
 assigning to each her rare and delicate handiwork.
 Hektōr took one look, and rebuked him with shaming words: 325
 "Wretched fellow, it isn't decent for you to sit and sulk!
 Your people are fighting and dying outside the citadel
 and its sheer walls: it's you who set the din of battle
 as a flaming noose round this township. You'd be quick yourself
 to attack those you saw holding back from loathsome warfare! 330
 So up with you, or too soon deadly fire will scorch the city!"

To him then Aléxandros, divinely handsome, replied:
 You rebuke me justly, Hektōr, not more than is proper;
 so let me too tell you something: listen, and mark my words.
 Not so much out of rage or vexation at the Trojans 335
 did I come and sit here: I wished to surrender to my sorrow.
 But now my wife, working on me with gentle words,
 has been urging me back to the fighting, and I myself feel
 that this would be better. Victory shifts from man to man.
 So just wait while I put on my battle gear, or else 340
 go, and I'll follow: I'm sure I can overtake you."

So he spoke, but bright-helmeted Hektōr answered not one word,
 and him now Helen addressed with words of conciliation:
 "My brother-in-law, I'm a bitch, a horrible mischief-maker!
 How I wish that on the same day my mother first bore me 345
 a grim blast of the storm wind had carried me off
 to some mountaintop, or else to some wave of the thunderous sea
 where the wave would have swept me away before any of this
 could happen! But no, since the gods ordained these troubles,
 then I wish I'd been bedfellow to a better man, who could feel 350
 the righteous wrath of his fellows, their manifold insults.
 But his mind is not stable now, nor will ever be hereafter:
 for this, too, I foresee, he will reap his just reward.
 So come in now, my brother-in-law, relax in this chair,
 since it's you above all whose mind is beset with troubles 355
 because of me, the bitch, and Aléxandros's blind folly:
 on us Zeus has settled a wretched fate: now and forever
 to be subjects of song for listeners as yet unborn."

Then great bright-helmeted Hektōr answered "Don't try
 to make me sit, Helen: though you love me, you'll not persuade me. 360
 My spirit's already spurring me on to bring help to
 the Trojans, who greatly long for me in my absence.
 So, you rouse up *him* there, let him stir himself to action,
 soon enough to catch up with me while I'm still in the city:
 for I'm going first to my own house, in order to visit 365
 my household, my dear wife, my infant son—who knows
 if I'll ever come safely home to them again,
 or whether the gods will destroy me at the hands of the Achaians?"

That said, bright-helmeted Hektōr went on his way,
 and quickly came to his well-built house, but did not 370
 find white-armed Andromachē there at home: she'd gone,
 taking her child, together with one fine-robed attendant,
 to stand high up on the ramparts, wailing and shedding tears.
 So Hektōr, on not finding his blameless wife inside,
 went and stood at the threshold, and spoke with her handmaidens: 375
 "Come now, you handmaidens, answer me truly—where
 did white-armed Andromachē go when she left the house?
 To visit one of my sisters, or a brother's wife? Or was it
 to Athēnē's shrine, where the other fair-tressed Trojan
 women have gone to propitiate the awe-inspiring goddess?" 380

In reply to his question a busy housekeeper said:
 "Hektōr, since you urgently need a truthful answer,
 she's not gone to one of your sisters, nor to any brother's wife;
 nor to Athēnē's shrine, where the other fair-tressed Trojan
 women have gone to propitiate the awe-inspiring goddess, 385
 but up onto Troy's great rampart, since she'd heard
 the Trojans were weary, the Achaians in great strength.
 So she hurried off to the wall, as fast as she could,
 like a crazy woman, along with a nurse to hold the child."

So spoke the woman, the housekeeper. Hektōr hurried back 390
 from his house, the way he'd come, down the well-paved streets.
 When he'd traversed the great city and reached the Skaian Gates,
 through which he'd have to pass to return to the plain,
 there his bountiful wife came running to meet him,
 Andromachē, the daughter of great-hearted Ēētiōn— 395
 Ēētiōn, whose home lay under wooded Plakos,
 in Thēbē below Plakos, lord of the Cilician people,
 whose daughter was the wife of bronze-clad Hektōr.
 She it was who now met him, and with her the servant
 clutching to her breast the tender child, still a baby, 400
 Hektōr's beloved son, like some beautiful star,
 whom he called Skamandrios, but all others Astyanax,
 the city's king, since Hektōr alone guarded Ilion.
 Now he smiled as he looked at the child, saying not a word,
 but Andromachē came up beside him, still shedding tears, 405
 and clasping his hand in hers addressed him in these words:

“Crazed man, your might will destroy you: you show no pity
 for your infant son, or for me, luckless woman, who’ll soon
 become your widow; too soon will all the Achaians
 set upon you and kill you! More profitable for me, 410
 bereft of you, would it be to sink into the earth: no other
 consolation I’ll have, once you’ve met your destiny:
 nothing but grief. I’ve no father, no lady mother:
 my father was slain by noble Achilles, when
 he sacked that teeming city of the Cilician people, 415
 high-gated Thēbē: yes, he cut down Ēētiōn, though
 he would not strip him—he shrank back from that as shameful—
 but cremated him there in his fine inlaid armor, heaped
 a funeral mound over him, and round it mountain nymphs,
 daughters of Zeus of the aegis, planted elm trees. 420
 And of my seven brothers that were in our halls
 each one on the same day entered the realm of Hādēs,
 for all were slaughtered by noble swift-footed Achilles
 as they tended their white sheep and their shambling oxen.
 My mother, who was queen below wooded Plakos, 425
 he brought back here, along with the rest of the plunder,
 and freed her again in return for ransom past counting;
 but in her father’s halls archer Artemis struck her down.
 Hektōr, you are my father, my lady mother,
 my brother too, as well as my young strong husband— 430
 I beg you, show some compassion, stay here on the wall,
 don’t make your son an orphan, your wife a widow!
 Station your troops by the fig tree, where the city’s most open
 to scaling, where the ramparts are vulnerable to assault—
 Three times has a picked force come there to make the attempt, 435
 led by both Aiases, and by famous Idomeneus,
 with the sons of Atreus and Tydeus’s valiant offspring:
 someone, perhaps, well skilled in soothsaying told them,
 or else it’s their own spirit that drives them, urges them on.”

 Then great bright-helmeted Hektōr answered her: “Wife, 440
 all this is my concern too, but I’d be deeply ashamed
 before the Trojan men and deep-robed Trojan women
 if like a coward I hang back, far from the fighting. No,
 my spirit won’t let me, I’ve trained myself to excel
 always, to battle among the foremost Trojans, striving 445

to win great glory both for my father and for myself.
 For this I know well, in my heart and in my mind:
 A day will come when sacred Ilion will perish,
 with Priam, lord of the fine ash spear, and Priam's people.
 Yet it's not the Trojans' coming miseries that so concern me— 450
 not what Hekabē will endure, or our sovereign Priam,
 or my brothers, so many, so valiant, who all may end up
 trodden into the dust by their hate-filled enemies—no,
 it's your grief I think of, when some bronze-corseleted Achaian
 will lead you away, weeping, your day of freedom gone, 455
 to work the loom, maybe in Argos, for some other mistress,
 or fetch water back from the spring—Messeis or Hypereia—
 resentful, unwilling, but burdened by harsh necessity.
 And someone may say, when he sees you shedding tears:
 'Why, this is the wife of Hektōr, the very best warrior 460
 of all the horse-breaker Trojans, when they fought around Ilion!'
 That's what they'll say, and for you there'll come still further
 sorrow,
 widowed of such a man who could spare you the day of enslavement!
 But may the heaped-up earth obliterate my corpse
 before I hear your cries, see them dragging you away." 465

So saying, illustrious Hektōr reached out to his son,
 but the child shrank back, screaming, into his fine-sashed
 nurse's bosom, distraught at the sight of his dear papa,
 terrified by the bronze, and the horsehair crest
 he glimpsed nodding scarily from the helmet's top. At this 470
 his dear father and lady mother both burst out laughing,
 and at once illustrious Hektōr took off the helmet
 and laid it, bright-gleaming, on the ground, and then
 kissed his beloved son, and rocked him in his arms,
 and uttered a prayer to Zeus and the rest of the gods: 475
 "Zeus and you other gods, grant that this my child
 may also become, like me, renowned among the Trojans,
 my equal in strength, and rule with might over Ilion; so
 one day may someone claim 'He's far better than his father'
 as back he comes from the wars, bearing the bloodied gear 480
 of the foe he has killed, and may his mother's heart rejoice."

So saying, he placed in the arms of his beloved wife
 his son, and she took him to her sweet-scented bosom,

laughing and crying. At the sight her husband felt pity,
 caressed her with his hand, and spoke these words to her: 485
 “My sad wife, don’t grieve at heart for me overmuch:
 no man shall send me to Hādēs before my fated day—
 though that day, I must tell you, no man has ever escaped,
 be he coward or hero, when once he’s born to this world!
 Go back to the house now, attend to your proper tasks, 490
 the loom and the distaff, give your handmaids their orders,
 set them to work. But warfare shall be the business of men:
 all those—and myself above all—who are native to Ilion.”

So speaking, illustrious Hektōr picked up his helmet
 with its horsehair crest, and his dear wife went off homeward, 495
 often turning to look back, and shedding big tears. But then
 quickly she reached home, the well-built house of Hektōr,
 killer of men. Inside she found her many handmaidens,
 and now she stirred them all to sad lamentation: so while
 Hektōr still lived, in his own house they mourned him, 500
 for they thought he would never again come back from the war
 alive, or escape the rage and hands of the Achaians.

Nor did Paris stay long there in his own lofty house, but when
 he’d put on his splendid armor, inlaid with bronze,
 he hurried out through the city, trusting his nimble feet. 505
 As when some stalled horse, grain-fed at the manger, snaps
 his halter and gallops, hooves clattering, over the plain,
 off to bathe in the flow of his favorite river, proudly
 holding his head high, while about his shoulders
 his mane streams loose, and he trusts in his splendid strength 510
 while his knees carry him swiftly to the haunts and pastures
 of mares, so Priam’s son Paris went striding down from lofty
 Pergamos,² gleaming bright in his armor like the sun,
 laughing aloud as his swift feet carried him on, and quickly
 he overtook noble Hektōr, his brother, just as he was 515
 turning back from the place where he’d conversed with his wife.
 First to speak was Aléxandros, the godlike: “My brother,
 I fear I’m holding you up, when you want to be moving,
 by my lateness: I didn’t come at the time you told me to.”

2. Not to be confused with the Mysian city of Pergamon; Pergamos was the highest quarter of Troy, its acropolis, where Apollo’s temple stood (5.446).

In answer to him bright-helmeted Hektōr said: 520
“Look, no one in his right mind would choose to disparage
your work in battle: your courage is not in question.
But you choose to hang back, not to fight, and it pains me to
the quick of my heart when I hear those shaming comments about you
from the Trojans, who face much harsh combat on your behalf. 525
Well, let’s be off: all this we’ll make right later, should Zeus
let us set out one day, for the deathless gods of heaven,
in our halls the wine bowl of freedom, when at last
we’ve driven the well-greaved Achaians from the land of Troy.”