

Book 9

So the Trojans kept watch, but the Achaians were possessed
by an awesome panic, the fellow of icy terror:
all their best men were assailed by unendurable grief.
As two winds whip up the deep sea, flush with fish,
winds of the north and west, a gale from Thrace 5
tearing in suddenly, and at once the dark wave swells
and crests, strewing much seaweed along the water's edge:
just so the Achaians' spirit was shredded in their breasts.

The son of Atreus, heart-stricken with great sorrow,
went to and fro, commanding the clear-voiced heralds 10
to call every man by name to the place of assembly, but not
to shout names aloud; and himself went to work among the foremost.
So they sat in assembly, much troubled, and Agamemnōn
stood up, shedding tears, like a blackwater spring that pours
down some sheer rock face its dark cascade: just so, 15
heavily sighing, he addressed the Argives in these words:
“My friends, you leaders and lords of the Argives, Zeus,
great son of Kronos, has snared me in a vile deception—
harsh god, who once promised me, gave his nod to it,
that I'd not return home until I'd sacked strong-walled Ilion; 20
but now he's thought up this mean trick, commands me to go
back in dishonor to Argos, when I've lost so many men.
This, I suppose, is almighty Zeus's idea of a joke—
he who's brought down the high ramparts of so many cities,
and will bring down still more, since his is the greatest power. 25
Come, then, let us all agree to do as I declare:
Let us flee in our ships, sail back to our own country,
for now we'll never capture Troy of the wide ways.”

Such his words: hushed in silence were all the Achaians' sons.
For a long time, deeply concerned, they said nothing. But at last 30
Diomēdēs of the great war cry spoke up among them:
“Son of Atreus, with you and your folly I'll first contend—
here, king, as is my right, in assembly, so curb your anger!
My courage, first, you slighted in front of the Danaäns,

calling me weak and unwarlike: with these accusations 35
 the Argives both young and old are familiar. You received
 a double-edged gift from the son of Kronos, devious schemer:
 with the scepter he granted you honor above all others,
 yet courage, the highest power, he did not give you.
 Wretched man, do you really suppose the Achaians' sons 40
 to be as weak and unwarlike as you proclaim them?
 If your own heart is truly so set on returning home,
 then go! The way lies before you, your ships are drawn up
 by the sea, all those many that came with you from Mykēnai!
 But the other long-haired Achaians will stay on here 45
 until we've sacked Troy. Suppose even these likewise
 choose to flee in their ships, sail back to their own country,
 yet we two, I and Sthenelos, will fight on till we attain
 our object in Ilion, since a god it was brought us here."

So he spoke, and all the Achaians' sons roared approval, 50
 applauding the words of the horse breaker Diomēdēs.
 Then next there rose and addressed them Nestōr the horseman:
 "Son of Tydeus, in warfare you're strong above all others,
 and the wisest man in counsel among those of your age:
 of all the Achaians not one man will disparage your words 55
 or dismiss them; yet your speech did not conclude the matter.
 Well, you're still young: you could even be my son,
 my youngest-born! Even so, there was shrewdness in your advice
 to the Argive princes: what you said was fairly stated.
 But now I, who can claim to be older than you, will speak out 60
 and go through each point: nor will any man treat my words
 lightly—no, not even our lordly Agamemnōn!
 Outlaw from clan, hearth, society is the man
 who's in love with the chilling horrors of civil conflict.
 But let us for now submit ourselves to night's darkness, 65
 and prepare our meal; let the guards man their several stations
 along the length of the ditch we dug outside the ramparts.
 This is my charge to our younger men. But after that you,
 son of Atreus, must take the lead, for you are the most royal.
 Set up a feast for the elders: that's proper, not unbecoming. 70
 Your huts are filled with wine that the ships of the Achaians
 bring you in daily across the wide sea from Thrace—
 all entertainment's your province; you're lord over many.

When many are gathered together you'll follow whoever
 offers the best advice; and sore need have the Achaians 75
 of shrewd and close counsel, since enemies near our ships
 are lighting numerous watch fires. Who could be pleased at that?
 This night will either shatter our army or preserve it."

So he spoke; they listened attentively, carried out his orders.
 The sentries hurried forth, dressed in their war gear, 80
 Nestōr's son Thrasymēdēs, his people's shepherd, leading,
 and Askalaphos and Ialmenos, sons both of Arēs,
 together with Mērionēs and Aphareus and Dēïpyros,
 and Kreiōn's son, the illustrious Lykomēdēs.
 These seven commanded the sentries, and with each 85
 a hundred youths sallied forth, all clutching their long spears.
 They went and sat themselves down between ditch and ramparts,
 and lit their fires there, and each man prepared his meal.

But Atreus's son led all the Achaian elders together
 to his hut, and set before them a feast to warm their hearts. 90
 So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for them;
 but when they'd satisfied their desire for food and drink
 the first to set about weaving a web of counsel for them
 was old Nestōr, whose past advice too had proven the best.
 He with friendly intent now spoke before the assembly: 95
 "Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnōn, lord of men,
 with you I'll begin, with you end, since over many men
 is your royal rule, and Zeus to you has entrusted
 both scepter and precedent, to make good judgments for them.
 So you must, above all others, both speak and listen, 100
 and implement for another whatever his spirit may bid him
 declare for our good: yours to finish whatever he begins.
 Now I shall speak out as it seems to me to be best.
 No other man will conceive a better idea than the one
 that I've long had in mind—and which I still hold now— 105
 ever since you, Zeus's scion, went and took that girl,
 Briseïs, away from the hut of the furious Achilles—
 not something I approved of: for my part I tried hard
 to dissuade you; but you were swayed by your proud spirit,
 and on a most noble man, whom the very immortals honored, 110
 you heaped dishonor by taking, and keeping, that prize of his.

Yet even now let's consider how we still might make amends,
persuade him with winning gifts and conciliatory words."

To him the lord of men, Agamemnōn, then replied:

"Old sir, there was nothing amiss in your telling of my blindness. 115

Deluded I was: I admit it. Worth a whole crowd
of common folk is the man whom Zeus cherishes in his heart,
as now he's honored that man and routs the Achaian forces.

But since I was blinded, a slave to my wretched passions,
I'm willing to make amends, to pay boundless compensation. 120

Let me, before you all, name my splendid gifts:
seven tripods untouched by fire, ten talents of gold,
twenty shining cauldrons, and a dozen horses—
sturdy race winners, whose speed has brought them prizes.

Not landless would be that man, nor lacking in possession 125

of precious gold, to whom there accrued the amount of wealth
brought to me by my whole-hoofed racehorses' prizes.

I'll give him, too, seven women, skilled in fine handiwork,
from Lesbos, whom—when he took that well-built island
himself—I picked out: they surpassed all women in beauty. 130

These will I give him, including her whom I took away,
Briseus's daughter; and, further, I'll swear a great oath
that I never went up to her bed nor lay with her, as is
the custom of humankind, between men and women.

All these things will be given him now; and if hereafter 135

the gods grant that we take down Priam's great city,
let him go in and load up his ship with gold and bronze
when we, the Achaians, are dividing up the spoils,
and choose for himself a score of Trojan women—

the most beautiful, after Argive Helen herself! And if 140

we get back to Achaian Argos, rich mother of plowland,
my son-in-law he can be, I'll honor him like my own son,
Orestēs, late-born, reared in the midst of plenty.

Three daughters of mine there are in my fine-built hall—
Chrysothemis, Laodikē, and Iphianassa: of these 145

let him take whichever he pleases, no bride-price paid,
to Pēleus's house; and I'll offer him richer bride-gifts
than any man ever yet provided with his daughter.

Seven well-established townships I will give him: 150

Kardamylē, Enopē, and Hirē with its grasslands,

sacred Phērai, together with deep-meadowed Antheia,
 lovely Aipeia and Pēdasos of the vineyards—
 all of them near the sea, and bordering sandy Pylos,
 their inhabitants men who are rich in sheep and cattle,
 who'll honor him like a god, shower him with gifts, 155
 and under his sway will fulfill his beneficent ordinances.
 All this will I do for him if he'll only give up his wrath!
 Let him yield! Look at Hādēs: unbending, implacable—why
 of all gods he's the one that mortals hate the worst—
 and acknowledge himself as lower than me, who am 160
 of far superior ancestry, so much more royal.”

To him then answered Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman:
 “Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnōn, lord of men,
 these gifts cannot be faulted that you now offer Lord Achilles.
 Come then, let us choose delegates, send them quickly 165
 to the hut of Achilles, Pēleus's son—no, rather
 let those on whom my eye falls undertake this mission:
 First and foremost, Phoinix, Zeus's favorite, should be leader,
 and next I'd choose great Aias and noble Odysseus,
 and of the heralds let Odios and Eurybatēs go with them. 170
 Bring water now for our hands, and order holy silence,
 so we can pray to Zeus, son of Kronos, for his compassion.”

So he spoke, and they all were pleased with what he said.
 At once the heralds poured water over their hands,
 and young men filled mixing bowls to the brim with wine, 175
 dripped libations into the cups, then served it to all,
 and when they had poured libations, and drunk all they wanted,
 then they set out from the hut of Atreus's son Agamemnōn;
 and Nestōr, Gerēnian horseman, kept giving them instructions—
 eyeing each one of them, but Odysseus most of all— 180
 as to how they should try persuasion on Pēleus's blameless son.

So the two¹ set off down the shoreline with its thunderous surf,
 making many a heartfelt prayer to the earth-holding Earth-Shaker

1. The use of the dual rather than the plural here and elsewhere in this scene indicates *two* characters only. These are clearly Odysseus and Aias. But there is also Phoinix to be considered, as well as a couple of heralds. Several explanations have been offered, of which the most plausible is that we have here the incomplete reshaping (perhaps by Homer himself: West 2011, 13–14) of an earlier version in which only the two acknowledged leaders of the embassy took part.

to easily sway the great mind of Aiakos's grandson.²
 They made their way to the Myrmidons' huts and ships, 185
 and found him delighting his heart with a clear-toned lyre,
 fine and inlaid, with a silver bridge set on it,
 that he'd got from the spoils when he laid waste Ēetiōn's city.³
 With this he was cheering his heart, and he sang of men's great
 deeds:
 only Patroklos was there, sitting opposite him, silent, 190
 waiting till Aiakos's grandson should finish his singing.
 Now the two came forward, led by noble Odysseus,
 and stood there before him. Surprised, Achilles sprang up
 still clutching the lyre, from the seat on which he'd been sitting,
 and so too Patroklos, when he saw these men, stood up. 195
 Then swift-footed Achilles greeted them with these words:
 "Welcome! As good friends you've come—surely some urgent need
 brings you? Despite my wrath, you're still to me the dearest
 of all the Achaians."

 So saying, noble Achilles
 led them in, and sat them down on purple-draped chairs, 200
 and quickly told Patroklos, still standing at hand there:
 "Son of Menoitios, fetch out a larger bowl now,
 mix the wine stronger, fill a cup for each one of them,
 for these men under my roof are my dearest friends."

 So he spoke,
 and Patroklos did as his dear companion told him. 205
 He set down a great chopping block in the light of the fire,
 and on it laid the backs of a sheep and a fat goat,
 and the chine of a grown hog, glistening with lard:

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2. In Homer, Aiakos, the father of Pēleus, seems to be associated with the latter's kingdom of Phthiē in Thessaly; but a parallel early tradition makes him a native of the island of Aigina, indeed its first human inhabitant. The Myrmidons ("ant people") were allegedly created for Aiakos by Zeus there, but were later relocated to Phthiē.
3. Ēetiōn was the father of Hektōr's wife, Andromachē: he and his sons were killed by Achilles at the sacking of his city, Cilician Thēbē, and Achilles honored him with a proper funeral (6.417–19). In addition to the lyre, Achilles also had from him a horse, Pēdasos (16.152–54), and the mass of iron that was one of the prizes offered at Patroklos's funeral games (23.826–27). Achilles is the only hero in the *Iliad* who is seen singing or playing an instrument.

Automedōn held them for him, and noble Achilles carved.
 He chopped the meat skillfully, spitted it on skewers, 210
 while Menoitios's godlike son stoked the fire to a blaze.
 Then, when the fire burned down and the flames died out,
 he spread the embers and laid the spits over them,
 resting on firedogs, then sprinkled sacred salt on the meat.
 When the roasting was done, and the bits set out on platters, 215
 Patroklos brought bread and put it on the table
 in handsome baskets, while Achilles shared out the meat.
 He himself chose to sit down facing noble Odysseus
 against the opposite wall, told his comrade to offer the gods
 sacrifice, and Patroklos threw the firstlings in the fire. 220
 So they reached out their hands to the good things ready for
 them;
 but when they'd satisfied their desire for food and drink,
 Aias nodded to Phoinix. Noble Odysseus saw this,
 and filling his cup with wine he thus toasted Achilles:
 "Greetings, Achilles! We've not lacked our fair share of feasting, 225
 both in the hut of Atreus's son Agamemnon
 and now here: there's rich plenty, all that our hearts could want
 to dine on. Still, tasty food is not our business now.
 It's over-great trouble we're looking at, Zeus's nursing—
 we're terrified, it's a toss-up whether we'll save or lose 230
 our well-benched ships—unless you array yourself in your might!
 For it's close by our ships and the wall that their camp is now
 pitched
 by the high-spirited Trojans and their far-famed allies;
 they've lit a great number of fires there, claim they'll no longer be
 held back, but are going to descend upon our black ships, 235
 and Zeus, son of Kronos, shows them good omens—lightning
 sent on their right—while Hektōr, exulting in his power,
 rampages fearsomely, trusting in Zeus, respecting
 neither men nor gods: a strong battle lust has possessed him.
 He prays that the bright dawn may come up with all speed, 240
 for he's threatening to lop off the tops of our ships' sternposts
 and to burn the ships themselves with devouring fire and slay
 the Achaians, panic-stricken because of the smoke, beside them.
 This is my deep private dread, that the gods may bring
 his threats to pass, and our destiny may be to perish 245

here, far away in Troy, remote from horse-pasturing Argos.
 Up, then, if you're now minded, though late, to rescue the sons
 of the Achaians, worn out by the Trojans' noisy onslaught!
 Grief will be yours, too, hereafter: there's no cure to be found
 for this evil once it's inflicted. Rather, long before that 250
 think how to save the Danaäns from this day of evil!
 My friend, your father Pēleus surely laid this charge upon you,
 that day he sent you out from Phthiē to Agamemnōn:
 'My son, strength is something that Hērē and Athēnē
 will give you if they're so minded. You must hold back 255
 the pride in your breast: a friendly approach is better.
 Steer clear of strife that breeds trouble: that way the Argives
 both young and old will accord you the greater honor.'
 That's what he advised: you're forgetful. But even now
 stop, let go of your heart-aching wrath! Agamemnōn 260
 offers you worthy gifts if you'll only cease your wrath.
 Just hear me out, and I'll catalogue all the gifts
 that back in his hut Agamemnōn promised he'd give you:
 seven tripods untouched by fire, ten talents of gold,
 twenty shining cauldrons, and a dozen horses— 265
 sturdy race winners, whose speed has brought them prizes.
 That man would not be landless, not indeed unpossessed
 of precious gold, to whom there accrued all the wealth
 that Agamemnōn's prize horses have brought him by their speed.
 He'll give you, too, seven women, skilled in fine handiwork, 270
 from Lesbos, whom—when he took that well-built island
 himself—he picked out: they surpassed all women in beauty.
 These he will give you, including her whom he took from you,
 Briseus's daughter; and, further, he'll swear a great oath
 that he never went up to her bed or lay with her in love, 275
 as is the custom, my lord, between men and women.
 All these things will be given you now; and if hereafter
 the gods grant that we lay low Priam's great city, then
 you can go in and fill your ship's holds with gold and bronze
 when we, the Achaians, are dividing up the spoils, 280
 and yourself choose twenty Trojan women—those who are
 the most lovely, save only for Argive Helen! And if
 we get back to Achaian Argos, rich mother of plowland,
 his son-in-law you can be, he'll honor you like his own son,
 Orestēs, late-born, reared in the midst of plenty. 285

Three daughters of his there are in his fine-built hall—Chrysothemis,
 Laodikē, and Iphianassa;⁴ of these
 you can take whichever you please, paying no bride-price,
 to Pēleus's house; and he'll offer you richer bride-gifts
 than any man ever yet provided with his daughter. 290
 Seven well-established townships he will give you:
 Kardamylē, Enopē, and Hirē with its grasslands,
 sacred Phērai, together with deep-meadowed Antheia,
 lovely Aipeia and Pēdasos of the vineyards—
 all of them near the sea, and bordering sandy Pylos, 295
 their inhabitants men who are rich in sheep and cattle,
 who'll honor you like a god, shower you with gifts,
 and under your sway will fulfill your beneficent ordinances.
 All this he will do for you if you'll only cease your wrath!
 But if Atreus's son still leaves too much hatred in your heart, 300
 both himself and his gifts, yet pity the rest of the Achaians,
 hard pressed throughout their ranks, men who'll hold you in honor
 like a god, for you could win great glory in their eyes,
 since you might now take down Hektōr, who'd surely make for you
 in his murderous fury: he claims no man is his match 305
 among all the Danaāns who came here in their ships.”

In answer to him swift-footed Achilles then said:
 “Scion of Zeus, Laertēs's son, resourceful Odysseus,
 I must choose my words bluntly, say straight out, regardless,
 what's on my mind, the way things are going to be, 310
 so you don't all sit coaxing me, in your different ways:
 for hateful to me as the gates of Hādēs is that man
 who hides one thought in his mind, but speaks another.
 So I shall say exactly what I believe to be right.
 I'll not, I think, yield to Atreus's son Agamemnōn, 315
 nor to the other Danaāns, since gratitude there was none
 for my battling against the enemy without any respite.
 Equal the lot of the skulker and the bravest fighter;
 courage and cowardice rank the same in honor;

4. The number of Agamemnōn's daughters was disputed in antiquity (no mention here of Electra). If, as seems likely, Iphianassa is a variant form of Iphigeneia (or Iphimēdē), then Homer, here as elsewhere, characteristically makes no mention of that daughter's human sacrifice at Aulis in order to obtain a favorable sailing wind to Troy for the Greek fleet: she is safe at home, and available for marriage (one tradition has Agamemnōn send for her at Aulis ostensibly to marry Achilles).

death comes alike to the idler and to the hardest worker. 320
 No profit to me that I suffered agonies at heart,
 constantly risking my life in warfare. Just as a bird
 brings back to her unfledged chicks whatever morsel
 she can find, yet herself will suffer a heap of troubles,
 so I too have kept vigil many a sleepless night, 325
 and spent bloodstained days engaged in battle, fighting
 warriors for their women. Twelve cities of men
 have I laid waste with my ships; on land as well
 I claim eleven more, throughout Troy's rich territory,
 and from all I took many splendid items of treasure, 330
 and carried them back, turned them over to Atreus's son,
 Agamemnōn: he, waiting back there, beside his swift ships,
 took them, shared out a little, kept the bulk for himself.
 Some he bestowed as prizes upon leaders and princes:
 these gifts still hold good. From me, alone of the Achaians, 335
 he took, and keeps, a heart-warming wife. Let him lie with her
 and take his pleasure! But why must the Argives wage war
 against the Trojans? Why did Atreus's son gather an army
 and bring it here, if not on account of fair-haired Helen?
 Do they, then, alone of mankind, have love for their wives, 340
 these sons of Atreus? Don't all decent and sensible men
 love their own wives and care for them, just as I loved mine
 with all my heart, my spear-captive though she was?
 But since he's cheated me, snatched my prize from my hands,
 let him not tempt me: too well I know him, he'll not 345
 persuade me! Rather, Odysseus, with you and the other princes
 let him figure how to ward off consuming fire from the ships!
 Indeed he's done much hard work here during my absence—
 even built a wall, and dug out a ditch beside it,
 wide and deep, and bristling with stakes—yet not 350
 even so can he hold back the might of Hektōr, killer of men!
 So long as I was out there, battling among the Achaians,
 Hektōr had no stomach for fighting far out from the wall,
 would advance no further than the Skaian Gates and the oak tree—
 he met me alone there once, only just survived my attack. 355
 But now, since I have no wish to fight against noble Hektōr,
 tomorrow I'll offer sacrifice to Zeus and all other gods,
 then haul my ships down to the sea and load them up,
 and you'll see—if you want to, if it concerns you at all—

at first light, sailing over the teeming Hellespont, 360
 my flotilla, its rowers all eagerly plying their oars;
 and if the renowned Earth-Shaker gives me good sailing,
 on the third day I should arrive at rich-soiled Phthië. I own
 much that I left behind when, to my cost, I came here,
 and more that I'll take back home with me: gold, red bronze, 365
 women with their fine sashes, grey iron, everything
 I got by lot; but my prize—that, he who gave it me
 has outrageously taken back, he, the lord Agamemnōn,
 the son of Atreus! To him declare all, just as I charge you,
 openly, so that other Achaians may be incensed 370
 if perhaps, ever clad in shamelessness, he's hoping
 to cheat one more Danaän yet! But he wouldn't dare,
 shameless dog though he is, to look me straight in the face.
 I will have no part in his counsels or his actions,
 so much has he cheated and failed me. Never again 375
 let him beguile me with words: once is enough! Let him coast
 at his ease to perdition: Zeus the counsellor's stolen his wits.
 Hateful to me are his gifts, him I rate at a split chip's worth!
 Not if he offered me ten, no, twenty times as much
 as his total possessions, and from somewhere threw in more, 380
 or all the wealth that comes in to Orchomenos, or Egyptian
 Thēbē, where private houses are chockablock with treasure,
 that has a hundred gates, from each of which go forth
 two hundred warriors with their horses and chariots—
 not even were his gifts as countless as sand or dust, 385
 no, not even then would Agamemnōn change my heart,
 until he'd paid the full price for all my bitter shaming!
 Nor would I marry a daughter of Atreus's son Agamemnōn,
 not even if her beauty outshone golden Aphroditē's
 and her handiwork was a match for grey-eyed Athēnē's. No, 390
 not even so would I wed her! Let him choose another Achaian,
 one who suits him better, who's more kingly! For if
 the gods indeed preserve me, and I get home safely,
 then Pēleus himself will seek out a wife for me.
 There are many Achaian women in Hellas and Phthië, 395
 daughters of leading men, their citadels' guardians,
 and of these whichever I want I shall make my own dear wife.
 Often enough back home my manly heart would urge me
 to take on a wedded wife, a suitable bedmate,

get the joy of those treasures old Pēleus had made his own. 400
 For me, to be alive has nothing to match it, not all
 the fabled wealth of Ilion—once a flourishing city
 in peacetime, before the coming of the Achaians' sons;
 not even all that's stored beyond the marble threshold
 of the archer, Phoibos Apollo, in rocky Pythō!⁵ 405
 Cattle and fat sheep can be lifted by raiders;
 tripods and chestnut bloodstock are winnable; but to bring
 a man's life back neither raiding nor victories suffice
 once it has fled beyond the barrier of his teeth.
 My mother, silver-footed Thetis the goddess, tells me 410
 that two contrary spirits go with me until the end that's death.
 If I stay here, and fight around the Trojans' city
 I'll lose my homecoming, but gain imperishable renown.
 On the other hand, if I return to my own dear country
 my fine renown will have perished, but my life will long endure, 415
 and the end of death will not find me any time soon.
 To the rest of you I would offer this piece of advice:
 Hoist sail, return home. You will never attain your goal
 of taking steep Ilion. Wide-thundering Zeus has strongly
 reached out his hand to protect it: its people are made bold. 420
 Go back now, and report to the leaders of the Achaians
 my message in full—free speech is the privilege of you elders—
 to make them think up in their minds some better plan:
 one that may save both their ships and the troops of the Achaians
 beside their hollow ships, since their present purpose cannot 425
 be implemented because of my implacable anger.
 But let Phoinix remain behind, and sleep here with us,
 so he can come with me by ship to our own dear country
 tomorrow—if he so wishes: I won't force him to go.”
 So he spoke, and they all became quiet and silent, amazed 430
 by what he had said, so forcibly did he refuse them.
 But at last there spoke up among them Phoinix, the old horseman,
 in a flood of tears, much concerned for the Achaians' ships:

5. Pythō was the ancient name for Delphi, the site of the Delphic Oracle, where fabulous votive offerings were amassed over the centuries. Homer has one explicit reference only to the Oracle itself (at *Od.* 8.79–82). But the allusion here implies success and wealth; and since the oracle got going no earlier than the eighth century B.C.E., we have a putative date for at least this passage, and text, of the *Iliad* (unless we assume a mere interpolation) of c. 750 B.C.E., which fits well with other calculations.

“If you truly mean to go home, bright-famed Achilles,
 and you’re not minded at all to keep off consuming fire 435
 from the swift ships, since rage has possessed your spirit,
 how then, dear child, could I stay here alone, without you?
 He had me go with you, did the old horseman Pēleus,
 the day that he sent you from Phthiē to Agamemnōn,
 just a child, with no knowledge yet of warfare’s common business, 440
 or of the assemblies where men achieve distinction.
 That was why he sent me, to teach you all these matters,
 to be both a speaker of words and a man of action.
 So I would never choose, dear child, to be left behind
 without you, not even should a god himself undertake 445
 to scrape off my years and make me a vigorous youth again,
 as I was when I first left Hellas, that land of fair women,
 running from strife with my father, Ormenos’s son Amyntōr,
 who was angry with me because of his fair-haired concubine,
 whom he was in love with, disregarding his wife, 450
 my mother—who kept imploring me, clutching my knees,
 to sleep with his concubine first, make her loathe the old man.
 I obeyed her and did it. But my father soon found out,
 heaped curses on me, invoked the dread Furies to ensure
 that he never held on his knees any son sired by me; 455
 and the gods indeed in due course fulfilled his curses—
 Zeus of the underworld and fearsome Persephonē.
 [I conceived a plan to kill him with the keen-edged bronze,
 but then an immortal curbed my fury with the reminder
 of how people would talk, of how much men would censure me, 460
 so I shouldn’t be labeled a patricide among the Achaians.]⁶
 But the heart in my breast could no longer bear the thought
 of daily life in a house where my father was thus angered—
 though indeed my fellows and cousins rallied round me,
 pleading with me to stay on there in his halls, 465
 and many fat sheep and sleek and shambling cattle
 they slaughtered, and many a hog, bulked up with lard,

6. Lines 458–61 are not in the MS tradition or the scholia. Plutarch (*Mor.* 26) guessed, wrongly, that they were expunged by Aristarchos out of shock at Phoinix having considered killing his father. Were they, as some believe, interpolated in a post-Aristarchan branch of the MS tradition? Or are they an improvisation by “Homer” to help motivate Phoinix’s flight (see Hainsworth 123)? The lines are convincingly Homeric, not only in language but also in style.

was stretched out by them to be singed in Hēphaistos's flame,
 and wine in plenty was swilled from the old man's jars.
 For nine whole nights they kept vigilant watch around me, 470
 relieving each other in relays. The fires were never let die—
 there was one by the portico of the well-walled courtyard,
 and one at the entrance, outside the door of my room.
 But when the tenth dark night arrived for me, then
 I burst through my room's close-fitted door, got out, 475
 vaulted easily over the courtyard wall, unnoticed
 by the men on guard and the household's women servants.
 Then I fled far away, through the broad realm of Hellas,
 and came to rich-soiled Phthiē, mother of flocks,
 to the lord Pēleus, and he most readily welcomed me, 480
 and loved me just as a father would love his only son,
 his last-born child, the heir to rich possessions.
 He made me wealthy, too, gave me rule over many,
 and I lived in Phthiē's borderland, the Dolōpians' lord.
 And what you are, I made you, godlike Achilles, 485
 loving you from my heart, for you'd go with no one else
 either to a feast, or to meals in your hall at home
 until I'd picked you up and settled you on my knees,
 and fed you the first cut of meat, put the wine to your lips.
 There were many times that you'd wet the front of my tunic, 490
 sputtering out the wine in your bothersome childishness.
 I've put up with plenty for you, had a lot of hard work,
 never forgetting the gods would not grant me a son of my own.
 So, godlike Achilles, it was you that I treated as my son
 so that one day you could ward off unseemly ruin from me. 495
 Achilles, please master this great passion of yours! Don't nurse
 a pitiless heart. Why, the gods themselves can be moved,
 whose dignity, honor, and power are far greater than ours,
 and whom, with sacrifices and propitiatory prayers,
 libations and piquant aromas, humankind wins over, 500
 imploring them, when anyone steps out of line, does wrong.
 There are, too, Prayers of Repentance, great Zeus's daughters,
 lame and wrinkled, these—eyes furtive, sidelong glances—
 their task to keep close on the heels of Blind Delusion;
 but Blind Delusion is strong and swift-footed, so she by far 505
 outstrips them all, goes ahead of them over the whole earth,
 harming mortals; the healing Prayers follow on behind her.

One who reveres these daughters of Zeus when they approach him
 they unstintingly help, pay attention to his prayers;
 but should a man deny and persistently reject them 510
 then they go and petition Zeus, the son of Kronos,
 for Blind Delusion to hunt him, so he's hurt, suffers retribution.
 Achilles, you too must ensure that the daughters of Zeus
 are met with such honor as bends other good men's minds.
 If you hadn't been offered gifts now, with more to come later, 515
 by Atreus's son, if he were still in a furious temper with you,
 I wouldn't be telling you now to cast aside your wrath
 and come to the aid of the Argives, great though their need is.
 But he offers you much at once, and has promised more later,
 and the men he's sent to plead with you he picked from the best 520
 of all the Achaians: men whom you hold as dearest
 among the Argives! Don't make a futility of their words,
 their visit! Earlier, true, your anger could not be questioned.
 Such tales from old times we've heard, famous deeds of heroic fighters,
 of how then too such furious rage would come upon them; 525
 but they could be turned by gifts, talked round with words.
 There's this affair I recall—from long ago, not recent—
 the way it was, and I'll tell you: we're all friends here.
 The Kourêtes and the Aitôlians, tough warriors, were fighting
 over the city of Kalydôn, and killing one another, 530
 the Aitôlians in defense of beautiful Kalydôn,
 the Kourêtes eager to storm and ravage it in battle.
 For golden-throned Artemis had sent them bad trouble,
 piqued that she hadn't been offered first-fruits by Oineus
 from his fertile orchard. The other gods savored rich offerings, 535
 but for great Zeus's daughter alone he did nothing, whether
 he'd forgotten, or hadn't thought to: a most grave omission.
 Irate, she, Zeus's offspring, the archer goddess,
 sent a wild boar out against him, savage, white-tusked,
 that did plenty of damage, trampling Oineus's orchard, 540
 uprooting and tossing about a whole lot of big fruit trees,
 roots, apple blossom, and all. This boar was killed
 by Oineus's son, Meleagros, only after he'd assembled,
 from many cities, a number of huntsmen, along with
 their hounds: it called for more than a few men to overcome 545
 such a huge brute, that already had been the death of many.
 The goddess whipped up a great outcry, angry shouting

over the dead boar's head and bristling hide, between
 Kourêtes and prickly Aitōlians. Now so long as
 Meleagros, that keen warrior, was in the battle, 550
 all that time the Kourêtes got nowhere, could not even
 hold firm ground outside the wall, despite their numbers.
 But when wrath possessed Meleagros—wrath that distorts
 the good sense in the breasts of even careful thinkers—
 he then, irate at heart with Althaiē, his own mother, 555
 was lying with his wedded wife, the lovely Kleopatra—
 child of neat-ankled Marpessa, Evēnos's daughter,
 and Idas, mightiest then among warriors on this earth,
 who took up his bow to fight against lord Phoibos
 Apollo, all for the sake of the neat-ankled maiden. So 560
 Kleopatra was known at home by her father and lady mother
 as Halcyonē, because Marpessa had suffered the fate
 of the sorrowful halcyon bird, ever weeping because
 Phoibos Apollo the archer had snatched her child away.
 —By her Meleagros lay now, brooding over his bitter rage, 565
 rage induced by his mother's curses. She to the gods
 made endless prayers, aggrieved by her brother's killing,
 kept beating the nurturing earth with her hands as she now
 called upon Hādēs, along with fearsome Persephonē—
 sitting crouched forward, breast soaked with tears—to bring 570
 death to her son. The Fury that walks in darkness,
 with the implacable heart, heard her from Erebos:
 soon from around the gates there came an uproar, the sound
 of men battering at the ramparts. The Aitōlian elders
 besought him—sending the best of the gods' priests— 575
 to come out and help them, promised a great reward:
 at the richest point on the plain of beautiful Kalydōn,
 they told him, he could make his own splendid estate,
 fifty acres, the half of it land for vines, the rest
 cleared plowland, all to be marked off from the plain. 580
 Urgently did the old horseman Oineus entreat him,
 standing there at his high-roofed chamber's threshold,
 shaking its bolted doors, while supplicating his son;
 urgently, too, did his sisters and his lady mother implore him
 to act—he refused them the more—as did his comrades, 585
 those who were closest and dearest to him of all,
 yet not even so could they move the heart in his breast,

till his room was being fiercely battered, while the Kourētes
 were mounting the ramparts and setting fire to the great city.
 It was only now that his fine-sashed bedfellow, weeping, 590
 pleaded with Meleagros, reminding him of all
 the griefs that befall a people when their city is captured—
 the menfolk slaughtered, the city destroyed by fire,
 their children and deep-sashed wives led captive by strangers.
 His heart was stirred then, hearing about these horrors: 595
 he got up to go, put on his bright body-armor.
 Thus he saved the Aitōlians from their day of evil,
 after yielding to his own heart. They never paid him
 the many fine gifts he'd been promised; he rescued them anyhow.
 So please, don't harbor such thoughts, don't let some maleficent 600
 spirit turn you that way! Indeed, it would be too hard
 to save ships already on fire. Come now, while gifts are still
 there to be had—the Achaians will honor you like a god.
 But if giftless you enter this murderous war, you will not
 enjoy the same honor, ward off war's perils though you may.” 605

In answer to him then spoke swift-footed Achilles:
 “Phoinix, old sir, Zeus's nursling, of this honor I have no need.
 Enough that I have been honored by Zeus's ordinance,
 that will still guard me here among the curved ships, for so long
 as there's breath in my body, and my knees have power. 610
 And another thing I'll tell you, and you take it to heart:
 Don't confuse my mind with lamentation and sorrow
 trying to please Atreus's son, that hero. Support him in nothing,
 lest my love for you be turned to hatred. Much better
 if you take my side in vexing the man who vexes me! 615
 So share my kingdom, enjoy the half of my honor!
 These men will take back my message: do you remain,
 take your rest on a soft bed; and tomorrow at daybreak
 we'll make our decision: whether to go back home or stay.”

With that he silently nodded an eyebrow to Patroklos, 620
 to spread a thick bed for Phoinix, a hint to the others
 to leave the hut soon, go back; and among them Aias,
 Telamōn's godlike son, now spoke up, saying:
 “Son of Laertēs, scion of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,
 let us be off: as I see it, the object of our coming 625
 won't be achieved on this visit. We must quickly report

his reply—though by no means a welcome one—to the Danaäns,
 who may well now be sitting awaiting it. But Achilles
 has turned his breast's great-hearted spirit to savage fury,
 stubborn man, nor does he in his ruthlessness show regard 630
 for the affection that we, his comrades, here by the ships
 have shown him above all others. A man accepts recompense
 even from his brother's or his own son's murderer—
 while the killer pays a steep price, and then stays in his home town,
 and the kinsman's emotional passion is duly tempered 635
 by the blood-price he has received. But obdurate and malign
 is the spirit the gods have put in your breast, and all because
 of just one girl! Yet now we're ready to give you seven,
 the best there are, and much else besides! Be gracious,
 respect your own house—we're guests under your roof 640
 representing the Danaän people, and we want to remain
 your closest and dearest friends, of all the Achaians."

In answer to him swift-footed Achilles then said:
 "Aias, scion of Zeus, son of Telamōn, lord of your people,
 all that you say seems in line with my own thinking; 645
 but my heart swells with rage whenever I remember
 this one fact: the vile treatment I got among the Argives
 from Atreus's son, as though I were some unhonored refugee.
 So you can go now, and announce my message: I shall not
 consider taking part in the bloody business of battle 650
 till the son of Priam the prudent, noble Hektōr,
 reaches the huts and ships of the Myrmidons, as he
 slaughters the Argives, and burns their vessels with fire!
 But around my own hut and my black ship I rather think
 Hektōr, though eager for battle, will find himself held up." 655

So he spoke. They each took a two-handled cup and poured
 a libation; Odysseus then led them back down the line of ships.
 Patroklos instructed his companions and the handmaids
 to make a thick bed for Phoinix as quickly as might be,
 and they obeyed, spread the bed just as he ordered, 660
 with fleeces, a rug, and sheets of the softest linen.
 There the old man lay down, and awaited the bright dawn.
 But Achilles slept in his well-built hut's back room,
 and with him a woman whom he had brought from Lesbos,
 the daughter of Phorbas, fair-cheeked Diomēdē. 665

Patroklos lay down on the other side, and likewise with him
was Iphis of the fine sashes, whom noble Achilles gave him
after he took steep Skyros, Enyeus's citadel.

Now when the others arrived at the huts of Atreus's son
they were pledged in golden cups by the sons of the Achaians, 670
who stood up, on this side and that, to greet and question them,
and the lord of men, Agamemnōn, was the first to ask:
"Come, tell me, storied Odysseus, great glory of the Achaians,
is he willing to fight off consuming fire from the ships,
or did he refuse, does wrath still own his great-hearted spirit?" 675

In answer to him much-enduring noble Odysseus declared:
"Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnōn lord of men,
that man will not quench his wrath, is rather filled
yet further with fury, rejects both you and your gifts:
you personally he tells to take counsel among the Argives 680
as to how you might save the ships and the Achaian army;
he himself now threatens he will, at daybreak tomorrow,
haul down to the sea his trim and well-benched vessels.
He would, he said, also advise all those remaining
to sail back home, since they would never attain the goal 685
of taking steep Ilion: wide-thundering Zeus has strongly
reached out his hand to protect it, its people are made bold.
That's what he said: these men who came with us can confirm it—
Aias and the two heralds, both men of good sense. But Phoinix,
the old man, is bedded down there, on Achilles' invitation, 690
so he can go with the ships to his own dear country
tomorrow, if he so wishes: Achilles won't force him to go."

So he spoke. They all became quiet and silent, amazed
by what he had said: very forcibly had he addressed them.
Long were they kept silent by their grief, these Achaians' sons, 695
but at last there spoke among them Diomēdēs, of the great war cry:
"Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnōn, lord of men,
I wish you had not gone begging to Pēleus's blameless son,
with that offer of countless gifts. The man's arrogant anyhow,
and now you've spurred him on to acts of yet greater arrogance. 700
For sure, we can let him be now: he's free to take off
or stay here; hereafter he'll join the fight whenever
the heart in his breast's so minded, or some god so stirs him.

So come now, let's all agree to do as I tell you!
You should go off to bed now, when you've pleased your hearts 705
with food and wine, our courage and our strength;
but at the first appearance of fair rosy-fingered Dawn,
quickly in front of the ships array both troops and horses,
and urge them on, and yourself join the battle amongst the foremost."

So he spoke, and all the princes assented, marveling 710
at these words of Diomēdēs, the horse breaker. Then they poured
a libation, after which each man went off to his hut
and lay down to rest there and got the good gift of sleep.