

Book 22

So these throughout the city, after fleeing like fawns,
were cooling their sweat and drinking and slaking their thirst,
leaning against the fine battlements, while the Achaians advanced
right up to the ramparts, shields resting on their shoulders.¹
But Hektōr's fatal destiny constrained him to remain 5
where he was, outside Ilion and the Skaian Gates.

Now to the son of Pēleus Phoibos Apollo spoke:
“Why, son of Pēleus, are you scampering after me when
you're a mortal, while I'm an immortal god? You've still
not recognized me for a god, so ceaselessly do you rage! 10
Aren't you concerned to deal with the Trojans you've routed—
who crowded into the city while you wandered off out here?
You'll never kill me: it's not in my destiny to die.”

Deeply incensed, swift-footed Achilles responded:
“You've fooled me, deadly archer, of all gods the most lethal, 15
by diverting me here from the wall: else many more men
would have bitten the dust before they ever reached Ilion!
Of great glory now you've robbed me, while these you've saved—
an easy task, with no fear of retribution to come,
though had I the power, I'd certainly be revenged on you.” 20

So saying he took off towards the city with high resolve,
dashing along like some prize-winning chariot horse,
one that easily gallops at full stretch across the plain—
so speedily now did he exert his feet and knees.

The aged Priam was first to set eyes upon Achilles 25
as he swept on across the plain, agleam like the star
that rises at harvest time, and brightly its rays shine out
among the myriad stars in the darkness of night,

1. Apparently a reference to advancing under the cover of a shield held horizontally over one's shoulders, to protect against missiles from the walls of a besieged city: a practice better known from Rome, where legionaries locked shields together in this way and advanced collectively: a protection known, aptly, as the “tortoiseshell” (*testudo*), which, seen from above, it must indeed have resembled.

and men call it the Dog of Orīōn, the brightest star of all;
 yet nevertheless it's a warning of trouble to come, 30
 and brings with it much fever to wretched mankind:
 so gleamed the bronze on Achilles' breast as he ran.
 Priam now groaned aloud, beat his head with his hands,
 lifting them high, and cried out in his distress,
 entreating his own son, who was standing outside 35
 the gates, dead set on battling it out with Achilles:
 to him the old man spoke pitifully, stretching out his arms:
 "Hektōr, dear child, for my sake don't stay there and face
 that man, alone, without backup: too soon you'd meet your fate,
 laid low by Pēleus's son, since he's by far the stronger, 40
 and pitiless—how I wish he were as dear to the gods
 as he is to me! Soon, then, would dogs and vultures devour him
 as he lay there, and sore grief would vacate my spirit
 over one who's deprived me of many valiant sons
 by killing or shipping them off to far distant islands. 45
 Even now two sons of mine, Lykaōn and Polydōros,
 I can't see among those Trojans penned up in the city—
 sons that Laothoē bore me, that queen among women.
 If they're alive, in the enemy camp, then for certain
 we'll pay ransom with gold and bronze—there's plenty stored here, 50
 all the gifts that far-famed old Altēs bestowed with his daughter.
 But if they're already dead, and down in Hādēs' realm,
 then there's grief for myself and for the mother who bore them!
 For others the pain will be briefer, so long as you too
 don't die now, slain by Achilles! So, my dear child, 55
 come back here, inside the walls! Do that, and you'll save
 the Trojans and Trojan women—while denying great glory
 to Pēleus's son—and not lose your own dear life. Besides,
 pity me, the unhappy one, while I'm still alive—
 an ill-fated wretch, whom the Father, Kronos's son, will slay, 60
 in a hard death, when I'm old, after seeing many horrors:
 my sons destroyed, my daughters forcibly taken,
 their chambers ransacked, and their infant children
 dashed to the ground, in warfare's savage conflict,
 my sons' wives dragged off as booty by cruel Achaian hands! 65
 Myself last of all my dogs, by my own front doorway,
 will tear and eat raw, when some man with the sharp bronze—
 stabbing or shooting—has parted the spirit from my limbs:

dogs that I reared at my table, trained to guard my home,
 and now, turned wild by the drinking of my blood, 70
 will lie out there in the forecourt. For a young man killed in battle
 it's seemly to lie dead, cut about by the sharp bronze:
 nothing, even in death, that's visible is repugnant.
 But when it's a slaughtered greybeard's grey head and private parts
 that dogs are shamefully worrying—that has to be 75
 the most piteous thing that can happen to wretched mortals.”

So spoke the old man, and with his hands tore and plucked
 the grey hairs from his head, yet could not shift Hektōr's will;
 and his mother in turn lamented, shedding tears,
 opened her dress with one hand, in the other held out her breast, 80
 as, weeping, she addressed him, speaking with winged words:
 “Hektōr, child, show this respect, have pity for me,
 if ever I gave you the breast to make you forget your pain!
 Think on these things, dear child, fend off this deadly man
 from inside our ramparts—don't face him alone out there, 85
 an obstinate champion: if he kills you, I shall never
 mourn you laid on a bier, dear sprig that I, myself, bore,
 nor will your cherished wife: no, far, far from both of us
 beside the ships of the Argives brisk dogs will devour you.”

So the two of them, weeping, called upon their dear son, 90
 with heartfelt entreaties, yet could not shift Hektōr's will,
 who stood firm while huge Achilles advanced towards him.
 As a mountain snake awaits a man beside its hole,
 well fed on poisonous herbs,² flush with bitter distemper,
 glaring terribly as it uncoils itself from its lair, 95
 so Hektōr, his might unquenchable, would not give ground
 but stood, bright shield propped against a jutting bastion;
 and deeply stirred he addressed his own proud spirit:
 “Ah me! If I now retreat within the gates and the ramparts,
 Poulydamas will be first to heap reproaches on me, 100
 having urged me to lead the Trojans into the city
 during this last cursed night, when noble Achilles took action.
 I would not obey him then—much better had I done so!

2. Snakes were apparently believed to derive their poison directly from the food they ate: Ael. *NA* 6.4, cf. Richardson 116. Pliny (*HN* 8.139) claims that they have no venom during hibernation, which, Richardson plausibly suggests, implies the same assumption.

Now, through my reckless folly I've ruined my own people,
 and feel shame before the Trojans and their long-robed women, 105
 lest maybe some other fellow, baser than me, may say:
 'Hektôr destroyed his people through trust in his own might.'
 So they will say; for me far better to meet Achilles
 face to face, and return home only should I kill him,
 or else myself to die gloriously out in front of the city. 110
 But supposing I lay aside my embossed shield,
 and my weighty helmet, prop my spear up against the wall,
 and go out alone to meet with peerless Achilles,
 guarantee him that Helen, and with her all the possessions,
 every last item Aléxandros in his hollow ships 115
 carried off Troywards—which was how this quarrel started—
 we'll return to the sons of Atreus to take home, and moreover
 will share out with the Achaïans all the goods this city contains;
 and I then have the Trojan elders swear me an oath
 that they'll hide nothing, will divide up all the treasure 120
 that this elegant citadel contains within its walls—
 But why is my dear heart debating these matters?
 Heaven forbid I approach him as suppliant, he'll not pity
 or show me respect, but slaughter me when I'm unweaponed
 and out of my armor, as though I were some defenseless woman. 125
 There's no way now, from oak tree or from rock,³
 to sweet-talk him, oh, like a girl and her young man—
 a girl and her young man!—flirting with one another:
 better to meet and fight him as soon as I can—
 Let's learn to whom the Olympian will grant glory." 130
 Thus he pondered, waiting, while Achilles approached him—
 the equal of Enyalios, that bright-helmed warrior!—
 above his right shoulder wielding his spear of Pêlian ash,
 so fearsome, while all about him the bronze now glinted
 like blazing fire or the rays of the rising sun. 135
 As Hektôr looked, trembling seized him, he no longer dared

3. If this was originally a proverbial phrase, its exact meaning has been lost: the scholia (Willcock 242–43) claim it had to do “with old stories about the origins of man.” Yet, as Richardson says (120) “to a modern reader the phrase conjures up a pastoral scene”, appropriate to the flirtation that follows, and (as so often with Homer) almost unbearably moving because of the grim context in which it is set. Willcock is right: “Hektor’s mind reverts to peacetime and the long private conversations of young lovers.”

to stand firm: the gates left behind him, he fled in terror,
 and Pēleus's son went after him, trusting his fleetness of foot.
 As up in the mountains a hawk, the fastest of winged creatures,
 swoops effortlessly in pursuit of a timorous dove: 140
 she seeks to escape him, but he, screaming shrilly, and close,
 keeps swooping at her, heart driving him on to kill—
 so Achilles raged straight after Hektōr, who ran for his life
 beneath the wall of the Trojans, knees pumping, going flat out.
 Past the lookout post and the windswept fig tree they sped, 145
 away from under the wall, and along the wagon track,
 to the two full-flowing springs, where gush up both
 the sources that feed the waters of eddying Skamandros.
 The one flows with warm water, and from it smoke
 goes up as though from a blazing fire, while the other, 150
 even in summer, still flows as chilly as hail,
 or freezing snow, or the ice that crystallizes from water.
 There, close to these springs, are spacious washing tanks,
 fine and stone-built, where the wives and lovely daughters
 of the Trojans would formerly wash their glistening garments 155
 in the days of peace, before the Achaians' sons arrived.
 Past these they ran, one in flight, the other hot on his heels:
 ahead, a fine warrior fleeing, a far better one in speedy
 pursuit—and neither for bull's hide nor for sacrificial beast
 were these now competing, a footrace's usual prizes: 160
 the two of them were now running for horse-taming Hektōr's life.
 As prize-winning whole-hoofed horses gallop lightly around
 the turning-points of a racetrack, where some great prize
 is displayed—a tripod or woman, to honor a warrior slain—
 so these two, quick-footed, thrice circled Priam's city, 165
 with all the gods watching them, amongst whom the first
 to express his thoughts was the Father of men and gods:
 "Alas, it's indeed a well-loved man that I see now
 being chased round the city's walls: my heart is sore grieved
 for Hektōr, who's burnt in my honor many thighs of oxen 170
 on the heights of many-ridged Ida, and at other times
 on the lofty citadel; but now here's noble Achilles
 pursuing him on swift feet round and round Priam's city!
 So, gods, consider this matter, give me your opinion—
 shall we save him from death, or let him be laid low, 175
 fine man though he is, at the hands of Achilles, Pēleus's son?"

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē, answered him thus:
 “Father, lord of bright bolt and black cloud, what’s this you’re
 saying?
 Here’s a man, a mortal, his fate long since determined—
 Do you mean to reverse that, release him from woeful death? 180
 Well, do it; but know this: we other gods don’t all approve.”

Replying to her then, Zeus the cloud-gatherer said:
 “Cheer up Trītogéneia, dear child: the things I just said
 were not meant seriously, and to you I’m kindly disposed.
 Act as your mind dictates, hold back no longer.” 185

So saying he urged on Athēnē—already eager to go—
 and down she darted from the heights of Olympus.

But swift Achilles kept on in relentless pursuit of Hektōr.
 As up in the mountains a dog will go after a hind’s fawn,
 starting it from its covert, chase it through glens and dells; 190
 and though it may hide for a time, crouching low in a thicket,
 that dog will still track it down, running steadily, till it’s found—
 so Hektōr could not shake off swift-footed Achilles:
 whenever he made a rush for the Dardanian gates,
 and tried to slip in past the strongly built bastions, 195
 hoping that those on the walls would cover him with their missiles,
 each time in anticipation Achilles would head him off, nudge him
 back to the plain, while himself pressing on by the city wall.
 As in a dream one can’t overtake the quarry one’s chasing—
 the fugitive can’t escape, nor his pursuer catch him— 200
 so Achilles could not catch up, nor Hektōr get clear away.
 How could Hektōr then have eluded the death-spirits,
 had Apollo not come to his aid, for the last, the final time,
 standing close, to arouse his strength, put speed in his knees?
 To his troops, too, noble Achilles, with a shake of the head, 205
 signaled they shouldn’t let fly their bitter shafts at Hektōr—
 a good shot might win the glory, leave himself as an also-ran!
 But when for the fourth time they came round to the springs,
 then Zeus, the Father, held up his golden balance
 and on it set two dooms of grief-laden death, 210
 one for Achilles, the other for horse-taming Hektōr.
 By the middle he grasped and raised it: Hektōr’s fated day
 sank, pointing down to Hādēs, and Phoibos Apollo left him.

To Pēleus's son now came the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē,
stood at his side, and addressed him in winged words: 215

“Now indeed I'm sure, Achilles, illustrious favorite of Zeus,
we two will bring back to the ships great glory for the Achaians
by killing Hektōr, great glutton for combat though he is!
No longer can he escape us, not even were it to be
that Apollo the deadly archer should suffer humiliation 220
by groveling on his behalf before Zeus of the aegis!
So stay here, and get your breath back, while I myself go
to Hektōr, and talk him into fighting you man to man.”

So spoke Athēnē: he obeyed, and was glad at heart,
and stood there, leaning upon his bronze-barbed ash-wood spear. 225
Athēnē now left him, and went over to noble Hektōr,
in appearance and speaking voice resembling Deïphobos.
She came up close, and addressed him with winged words, saying:
“Honored brother, swift Achilles is pressing you really hard
with this pursuit on foot all round Priam's city—so come, 230
let's make a stand, hold fast here and defend ourselves!”

Then great bright-helmeted Hektōr made her this answer:
“Deïphobos, in the past you've been far the dearest to me
of all my brothers, those born to Hekabē and Priam;
and now I'm minded to do you yet greater honor, 235
since you dared, for my sake, when you saw me, to come out
beyond the ramparts, while all the others are staying inside.”

To him then replied the goddess, grey-eyed Athēnē:
“Honored brother, indeed my father and lady mother
begged and implored me in turn, as did my comrades, 240
to stay back, so greatly do all of them fear Achilles;
but the heart within me was worn down by bitter grief.
Now let's both attack him head-on, let us fight it out
with no sparing of spears, and discover whether Achilles
will kill us both, and carry our bloodstained armor back 245
to the hollow ships—or rather fall victim to your spear.”
Speaking thus, with her cunning Athēnē led him on.

When the warriors came within close range of one another,
the first to speak was great bright-helmeted Hektōr:
“No longer, son of Pēleus, will I run from you, as before, 250

when thrice around Priam's great city I fled, and never
dared to await your attack! No, this time my heart tells me
I must stand and confront you, whether to slay or be slain.
So come, let's swear oaths by the gods, for they are the best
witnesses and protectors of our agreements: 255

I'll not mistreat you vilely, should it be that Zeus grant me
the endurance to win, and I deprive you of life;
but when I've stripped off your famous armor, Achilles,
I'll return your corpse to the Achaians—or you likewise mine.”

To him, with an angry glance, swift-footed Achilles replied: 260
“Hektōr, don't, damn you, make me speeches about agreements!

Between lions and men binding oaths do not exist,
nor are wolves and lambs ever like-minded at heart
but ceaselessly plotting trouble, each against the other.
So there's no way for us to be friends, we can't exchange 265
sworn oaths: no, before that one or the other must fall,
and glut Arēs, the oxhide-shield combatant, with his blood.

So summon up all your valor: you're going to need to be
both spearman and doughty combatant. There's no longer
any escape left for you—very soon will Pallas Athēnē 270
lay you low through my spear. Now you'll pay the full price
for the loss of my comrades, speared in your wild attack.”

With that he poised and let fly his far-shadowing spear,
but illustrious Hektōr, watching carefully, dodged it,
crouching down, and the bronze spear flew over him, 275
fixed itself in the ground; but Athēnē snatched it up,
gave it back to Achilles, unseen by Hektōr, the people's shepherd,
and Hektōr now exclaimed to the peerless son of Pēleus:

“You missed! And you haven't, it seems, O godlike Achilles,
yet found out my fate from Zeus, despite what you supposed! 280
Turns out you're just a glib talker, a tricky wordsmith, aiming
to scare me, make me forget all my strength and valor!

Now it won't be my fugitive back that you plant your spear in,
you'll have to aim for my breast as I charge you—if indeed
some god grants you that much! Your turn now to avoid 285
my bronze spear—may you catch the whole of it in your flesh!
The war would certainty be much easier for the Trojans
once you were dead, for you are their greatest trouble.”

With that he poised and let fly his far-shadowing spear,
 struck Pēleus's son's shield in the middle, didn't miss it. 290
 Yet the spear bounced back off the shield, left Hektōr enraged
 because the swift missile had flown in vain from his hand.
 He stood there downcast, and, having no second ash-wood spear,
 called out, in a carrying voice, to white-shielded Deiphobos,
 demanding a lance; but he was nowhere near at hand. 295
 Then Hektōr knew the truth in his heart, and exclaimed:
 "Alas! The gods have indeed now summoned me to my death!
 I thought the hero Deiphobos was here by my side,
 but he's inside the wall—it's Athēnē who's been here deceiving me!
 A vile death now awaits me—no longer distant, but close, 300
 and no escape: this must always have been what Zeus was after,
 he and his son, the deadly archer: at one time they
 were glad to protect me; but now my fate has caught up with me.
 So let me die—not ingloriously, or without a struggle,
 but having done some great deed for those unborn to learn of." 305
 So saying, he drew from its scabbard the keen-edged sword
 that hung at his side, a huge and solid weapon,
 collected himself, and charged, like a high-flying eagle
 that swoops down plainward, plummeting through dark clouds
 to snatch up in its claws a young lamb or a cowering hare: 310
 so Hektōr charged, his sharp sword flashing high,
 and Achilles rushed at him, heart full of wildly raging
 strength, with his shield—fine, intricately wrought—
 out in front to protect his body, while the bright helmet,
 four-plated, nodded above, and, waving all round it, 315
 the lovely gold plumes that Hēphaistos had set thick about its crown.
 Like that star that goes among other stars at nightfall,
 the star of evening, the loveliest star in the heavens,
 was the gleam that shone from the sharp spear that Achilles
 brandished in his right hand, planning trouble for noble Hektōr, 320
 studying his sweet flesh to see where it might best yield.
 Now all the rest of his body had its bronze battle gear,
 the fine armor he'd stripped from Patroklos after his killing,
 but one spot showed, where the collarbones held apart
 shoulders from neck—the gullet, where life's most quickly ended. 325
 Here, as Hektōr charged, was where noble Achilles speared him:
 clean through his tender neck drove the spear point, and yet
 the bronze-laden ash-wood spear never severed the windpipe,

so he could still frame words, could make a response
 when down in the dust, with Achilles exulting above him: 330
 “Hektōr, you doubtless thought, while stripping Patroklos,
 you’d be safe—I was elsewhere, to me you gave not a thought.
 You fool! His distant avenger, stronger by far,
 was left behind by the hollow ships: that was I, who have now
 unstrung your limbs! You the dogs and birds of prey 335
 will tear apart vilely, while he will get burial from the Achaians.”

To him bright-helmeted Hektōr faintly replied: “By your life
 I implore you, by your knees, by your parents, do not let
 the dogs make a meal of me beside the Achaians’ ships!
 Rather take the bronze and gold, unstinted, that my father 340
 and lady mother will give you, and return my body
 to be conveyed to my home, in order that the Trojans
 and Trojan wives may give me my share of fire in death.”

Then with an angry glance swift-footed Achilles said:
 “Don’t entreat me, you dog, by my knees or by my parents! 345
 I just wish there was a way for my raging heart to let me
 carve your flesh raw and eat it, in return for what you’ve done,
 as surely as there’s no man who’ll keep the dogs from your head,
 not though they bring here and weigh out ten or twenty
 times a fair ransom, and promise even more; 350
 not even if they were ordered to pay me your weight in gold
 by Priam, Dardanos’s son: not even so
 will your lady mother lay you, the son she bore, on a bier
 and mourn you: no, dogs and birds will eat every last scrap of you.”

Then, dying, bright-helmeted Hektōr said to him: 355
 “I know you too well, I foresee my fate: I could never
 persuade you. Truly the heart in your breast is of iron.
 Think on this, then: it may be I who provoke the gods’ wrath
 against you, that day when Paris and Phoibos Apollo
 kill you, for all your valor, before the Skaian Gates.” 360

When he’d spoken thus, death’s end enshrouded him,
 and the soul fled from his limbs, fluttered down to Hādēs,
 bewailing its fate, youth and manhood all abandoned.
 Yet noble Achilles still harangued him, even when dead:
 “Lie there, corpse! My own fate I’ll accept whenever 365
 Zeus may determine it—he, and the other immortal gods.”

With that he tore out his bronze spear from the body,
 and laid it aside, and began to strip from Hektōr's shoulders
 his bloodstained armor. The other sons of the Achaians
 ran up round him, gazed at the build and amazing beauty 370
 of Hektōr—yet not one failed to stab him as he stood there,
 and turning, would say to his neighbor as he did so:
 “Well, it's a great deal easier to deal with Hektōr now
 than when he burned up our vessels with blazing fire.”
 Thus a man would speak—then step up and stab the corpse. 375
 But swift-footed noble Achilles, after stripping him, stood up
 among the Achaians, and then addressed them in winged words:
 “My friends, you rulers and leaders of the Argives,
 since the gods have granted that we bring this man down
 who's done us more harm than all others put together, 380
 come, let's now make trial in arms around the city,
 and so more clearly learn what the Trojans have in mind—
 will they leave their high citadel now this man is fallen,
 or hold out regardless, even though Hektōr is no more?
 But why is my heart debating such matters with me? 385
 There lies by the ships a corpse unwept, unburied—
 Patroklos! Him I'll never forget, while I'm still
 among the living, my limbs still quick and active!
 And though men forget the dead in the realm of Hādēs,
 yet even there I'll remember my dear comrade. 390
 Come then, you young Achaians, chanting our victory paean
 let's go back to the hollow ships, take this fellow with us!
 We've achieved great glory: we've slain noble Hektōr, to whom
 the Trojans throughout their city prayed as to a god.”
 With that he devised vile treatment for noble Hektōr: 395
 in both feet behind he pierced holes along the tendons
 from heel to ankle, and through them then strung oxhide straps
 that he tied to his chariot, leaving the head to be dragged.
 Then he mounted, taking the famous battle gear with him,
 and whipped up his horses. They, nothing loath, took flight, 400
 and from the dragged body the dust rose up: on either side
 its dark hair was spread out, and all in the dust there lay
 the head that was once so handsome: now to his foes
 Zeus gave Hektōr for outrage on his own native soil.

So all his head was befouled with dust, and his mother
 tore at her hair, flung her glimmering veil far from her,
 and screamed out loud when she set eyes on her son,
 while his father groaned piteously, and the folk around them
 set up a great wailing and weeping throughout the city.
 This was what it was most like: as though all towering
 Ilion, top to bottom, were left smoldering with fire;
 and the people could barely restrain the old man, in his frenzy
 to break free and rush out through the Dardanian gates:
 he kept begging them all as he rolled about in the filth,
 calling out names, appealing to each man in turn:
 “Hold off, friends! If you care for me, leave me alone,
 to make my way out of the city, to the ships of the Achaians,
 where I’ll plead with that man—so violent, so ungoverned in act—
 if he’s any respect for my years, any pity for my old age!
 He too has a father, a man, surely, much as I am—
 Pēleus—who sired him and brought him up to work
 disaster upon the Trojans; me above all he’s saddened,
 so many the flourishing sons of mine he’s slaughtered!
 Yet for all these I mourn not so much, despite my sorrow,
 as for one, grief over whom will consign me to Hādēs’ realm—
 Hektōr! Ah, how I wish he’d died in my arms, for then
 we’d at least have had our fill of wailing and shedding of tears,
 the ill-fated mother who bore him, and I, myself.”

So he spoke,
 weeping: the citizens added their lamentation to his,
 and among the Trojan women it was Hekabē led the keening:
 “Ah, child, wretched me! How I’ve suffered! Why live on
 now you’re dead? For me, by day, by night, you were
 my pride and boast through the city, a comfort to all,
 both the men and the women of Troy, who would salute you
 like a god; for indeed to them you embodied great glory
 while you lived—but now death and your destiny have caught you.”

So she spoke, weeping. But Hektōr’s wife as yet
 knew nothing, for no honest messenger had so far arrived
 with the news that her husband had stayed on outside the gates.
 She was at her loom in a back room of their high house,
 weaving a red double cloak, with figured patterns on it.

Now she called out through the house to her neat-tressed handmaids
 to set on the fire a great cauldron, make sure that there was
 a hot bath for Hektōr when he came home from the fighting—
 unaware, in her folly, that far from all baths he'd been 445
 slain, through Achilles' hands, by grey-eyed Pallas Athēnē;
 but then she heard screams and wailing from the wall,
 and her limbs trembled, the shuttle dropped from her hand,
 and once more she spoke among her neat-tressed handmaids:
 "Two of you come and attend me, while I see what's happened— 450
 It was my husband's revered mother whose voice I heard, and in
 my own breast the heart leaps into my mouth, my knees
 are paralyzed: some disaster's at hand for Priam's children!
 May my ears never hear such tidings! Yet I'm sore afraid
 that noble Achilles may have cut off daring Hektōr 455
 alone, and have driven him from the city out to the plain,
 and by now may have put an end to the dangerous courage
 that always possessed him—he'd never stay back in the ranks,
 but always would charge out ahead, yield to none in his might."

 So saying, she rushed through the hall like a crazy woman, 460
 heart beating wildly, accompanied by her handmaids.
 But when she reached the crowd of men at the ramparts
 she stood on the wall, and looked round, and then perceived him
 being dragged in front of the city: the galloping horses
 were ruthlessly hauling him off to the Achaians' hollow ships. 465
 Then down came black night on her eyes, enshrouding them,
 and she sank backward, gasping out her vital breath,
 and far from her head she flung the shining headbands,
 the diadem, the hairnet, the plaited clasp, and lastly
 the veil that had been a present from golden Aphroditē, 470
 on the day that bright-helmeted Hektōr led her out as his bride
 from Ēētiōn's house, after bringing bride-gifts past counting;
 and round her thronged Hektōr's sisters and his brothers' wives,
 who held her between them, in shock to the verge of death.
 But when she recovered, and the spirit returned to her breast, 475
 then, between heaving sobs, she cried out before Troy's women:
 "Hektōr, how wretched I am! To one fate, then, we were born,
 both of us—you here in Troy, in the house of Priam,
 and I in Thēbē, down there under wooded Plakos,
 im the house of Ēētiōn, who brought me up from a baby— 480

luckless father, doomed child! Better he'd never had me!
 Now you're going to the realm of Hādēs, deep under the earth,
 but me you're abandoning to my hateful grief,
 a widow left in your halls! Our son's still an infant,
 the child you and I, so unlucky, created: you'll never, 485
 now you're dead, be a help to him, Hektōr, nor he to you,
 since even should he survive the Achaians' baleful war
 for ever thereafter toil and sorrow will be his lot,
 since others will set their boundary stones on his land.
 The day an orphan is made cuts him off from his age group: 490
 he goes with head downcast, tears moisten his cheeks.
 A needy child, he approaches his father's comrades,
 tugs at the cloak of one, the tunic of another.
 Some will pity him, briefly. One holds out his cup—
 long enough to wet his lips, yet not his palate. Then one 495
 with both parents alive will kick him out of the feast,
 punching him up, and reviling him in harsh terms:
 'Out of here, quick! You've no father feasting with us.'
 Then the child runs back weeping to his widowed mother—
 he, Astyanax, who before, on his father's knee, 500
 would eat nothing but marrow and the rich fat of sheep,
 and when sleep came on him, and he stopped his childish
 play, would sleep in a bed in the arms of his own nurse—
 in his own soft cot, his heart replete with good cheer. But now
 he may suffer much, being bereft of his dear father, 505
 my Astyanax, 'lord of the city', whom the Trojans speak of thus
 since you alone, Hektōr, preserved their gates and their lofty walls.
 But now beside the curved ships, and far from your parents,
 coiling worms will devour you when the dogs have had their fill
 of your nakedness, while your bedclothes lie unused in your halls— 510
 fine, closely woven, well-fashioned by women's hands.
 But all these things now I'll burn to ashes in blazing fire—
 they're no longer of use to you, you'll never lie on them—
 in honor of you, from the Trojans and from the women of Troy."
 So she spoke, weeping, and the women lamented with her. 515