

Homer's
Iliad:
A Retelling in Prose

David Bruce

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Dedicated to Carl Eugene Bruce and Josephine Saturday Bruce

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CHAPTER 1: The Rage of Achilles and the Quarrel by the Ships

Rage.

Goddess, use me to tell the story of the rage of Achilles, a Greek warrior who had the rage of a god. The rage of the son of Peleus made corpses of many men and sent their souls to the Land of the Dead. Dogs and birds feasted on warriors' flesh, all because of Achilles and the will of Zeus, king of gods and men.

Start telling the story, Muse, from the time when Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Greeks, and Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces against Troy, first quarreled by the Greek ships.

The actions of a god led them to quarrel. Apollo, Zeus' son, raged against Agamemnon and spread the plague throughout the Greek warriors. Many brave warriors died because Agamemnon had disrespected a priest of Apollo, the god of plague.

Chryses, the priest of Apollo, loved his daughter, whom the Greeks had captured when they conquered the city of Thebe, which was allied with Troy. To get his daughter back, he gathered shining treasure with which to ransom her. He took his shining treasure to the Greek ships while carrying a golden staff on which Apollo's wreaths were tied, clearly identifying Chryses as a priest of Apollo.

He did everything as he ought to have done. He begged the Greek warriors, and especially Agamemnon and his brother, Menelaus, to accept the shining treasure and give him back his daughter, Chryseis.

He said, respectfully, "Agamemnon, Menelaus, and all you Greek warriors! May Zeus and all the other gods of Mount Olympus allow you to conquer the city of Troy and sail safely home again! But set my beloved daughter free. I love her so much. Take this shining treasure as fair ransom for my daughter! I am the priest of Apollo — respect the archer god who is also the god of plague."

The ranks of the Greek warriors approved of the ransom; they shouted, "Respect the priest of Apollo! Respect the suppliant! Respect the old man! Accept the ransom!"

But Agamemnon would not.

He told the old father and priest, "Don't let me see you among the Greek ships. Leave immediately and don't come back. Even if you are a priest of Apollo, I will kill you. I won't give your daughter back to you. She will die of old age back in the city of Mycenae. She will die far from the land where she was born and raised. She will work as a slave weaving cloth, and I will force her to sleep with me. Leave immediately, or die!"

The old priest of Apollo was afraid and left. He turned and quietly went down to the shore. When he was a safe distance from Agamemnon, he prayed to Apollo, god of archery and of plague: "Hear me, Apollo. You are the god of the silver bow, and you walk in my city: Chryse. If I have ever built shrines for you, if I have ever sacrificed cattle to you and burned fat and bones on your altar, hear my prayer and answer it: Kill many Greek warriors. I have shed tears — now you shoot arrows!"

The prayer traveled in the air, and the archer god heard it on Mount Olympus. Gods have that power. Angry at how his priest had been treated, Apollo stormed from Olympus, traveling quickly to the Greek ships. His quiver was full of arrows. When he reached the Greek ships, he dropped to one knee and started shooting arrows. With each shot of an arrow, something or someone died.

First, Apollo shot at and killed mules and dogs, but then he started aiming at warriors, and they died of the plague. The Greeks burned the corpses of the dead warriors, and the corpse-fires stayed lit all day and all night.

Apollo was angry at Agamemnon, but other Greek warriors were the ones who died. Such is the anger of the gods.

For nine days, the plague killed many, many Greek warriors. On the tenth day, Achilles — the greatest warrior among the Greeks and the greatest warrior among all who fought at Troy — did what Agamemnon should have done and called a council to see how to stop the plague.

When everyone, including Agamemnon and Menelaus and the other kings of Greece who had come to wage war against Troy, had gathered, Achilles said, “Agamemnon, things are going badly. Unless we can figure out how to stop this plague, we might as well sail back home to Greece — or we will also die of the plague before we can set sail. The war and the plague are killing so many Greeks.

“But a prophet may know why the plague has come and what we can do to stop it. A prophet may know why Apollo has sent a plague to kill us. Perhaps we have not honored a vow we made to the god, or perhaps we need to make a sacrifice to him. Perhaps if we sacrifice lambs and goats to Apollo, the archer god may have mercy on us and take this plague away from us.”

Achilles spoke sensible words.

Calchas, the Greeks’ chief prophet, was a seer who can look at the flight of birds and interpret the will of the gods. A wise man, he knew the past, the present, and the future. He had let the Greeks know what they had to do in order to sail safely to Troy to make war. Apollo is also the god of prophecy, and Apollo had blessed Calchas with special sight.

Calchas wanted what was best for the Greek warriors. He said, “Achilles, the great god Zeus knows and respects you. You want me to say why this plague has come against us? You want me to explain why Apollo is angry at us? I can and will explain these things, but first swear to protect me.

“If I explain why Apollo is angry at us, I will make angry a powerful man among us. This powerful man gives orders that must be obeyed. This man is a powerful king. When a powerful man is angry at a man who is not powerful, the powerful man will win. Even if the powerful man is able to choke down his rage today, he will get his revenge later. Achilles, will you protect me against this powerful man?”

Achilles replied, “Yes. Have courage. Tell us why Apollo is angry at us. I swear by Apollo that I will protect you against anyone who becomes angry at you. No one will harm you. I swear that I will not allow even Agamemnon — who claims to be the best of all the Greeks — to harm you.”

Reassured by Achilles’ words, Calchas said, “Apollo is not angry at us because of a lack of sacrifice or a vow that we failed to fulfill. Instead, the god is angry because of the actions of Agamemnon. The priest of Apollo acted correctly when he tried to ransom his daughter, but Agamemnon disrespected the old priest. Agamemnon should have respected the old priest and the god — Apollo — he serves. Now, because of Agamemnon’s disrespect to him, Apollo shoots his arrows at us and kills us with plague. The deaths will not stop until we give the old priest his daughter — without taking shining treasure as ransom. She must be given back to her father with no price paid for her freedom. Both she and a hundred bulls need to be sent to the city of Chryse; the bulls must be sacrificed to Apollo. Only then will Apollo be appeased and stop the killing.”

Powerful Agamemnon, as Calchas had foreseen, was furious. He turned to Calchas and said, “You are a seer of misery. All you forecast is bad. With you, nothing is ever good news. Every prophecy is about disaster. This prophecy is more of the same. Why is Apollo angry at us? You say that it is because of me, because I refused to accept shining ransom for the priest’s daughter.

“It is true that I much prefer having the girl to having the treasure. I want her to be a slave in my house in the city of Mycenae. I value her more than I value Clytemnestra, my own lawfully wedded wife. The girl’s beauty, upbringing, mind, and skill in crafts are equal to Clytemnestra’s.

“Still, I am willing to return the girl to her father. That will be the best for all of us. Better than to have Greek warriors continue to die of the plague.

“She is the girl I won. Whenever we conquer a city, we gather the treasure, the cattle, and the women and children of the city, and we award them to the warriors who conquered the city. Each main warrior receives a prize of honor in recognition of that warrior’s strength in battle and leadership.

“But now my prize of honor is taken from me! I need a prize of honor to take her place. So give me another prize of honor, or I alone of all the Greek warriors will be without a prize. That would disgrace me. All of you know that my prize of honor is being taken away from me.”

Achilles replied to Agamemnon, “You are a great general, Agamemnon, but how can we give you a prize of honor now? If you were to cause that to happen, you would be the greediest man alive.

“We have no treasure, no cattle, no women, and no children to give as prizes of honor. All of those things have been awarded to warriors who deserve them. We have no prizes of honor that we can now award. Nothing is left to be awarded. For you to call back prizes of honor would be a deadly insult to your warriors.

“So give the girl back to her father, the old priest. We will pay you back for what you have lost. When we conquer Troy, we will give you three or four times what you lose today. Your loss of a prize of honor will be only temporary.”

Such words were wise, but Agamemnon’s response was not.

Agamemnon said to Achilles, “You are a brave man, and you are like a god, but I will not allow you to cheat me. You want to keep your own prize of honor while I go without one. Am I someone to be empty-handed? Am I someone to be without a prize of honor? No.

“If the Greek warriors will willingly give me a prize of honor, well and good. But if they won’t, I will take one without their and your consent.

“Maybe I will take your prize of honor. You are the greatest Greek warrior.

“Maybe I will take Great Ajax’ prize of honor. He is the second greatest Greek warrior.

“Maybe I will take Odysseus’ prize of honor. He is a master of rhetoric and a man of action.

“I am greater than any of you, and I will NOT go without a prize of honor. Anyone whose prize of honor I take can choke with rage, but I will still take his prize of honor.

“But enough for now. We can talk about this later. Right now, we have business to take care of. Let’s haul a ship from shore into the water, get oarsmen ready, and load the ship with cattle and with beautiful Chryseis, who was my prize of honor. A person of authority — Great Ajax, Idomeneus from Crete, Odysseus, or even you, Achilles — as violent as you are — can sail the ship to Chryses, give Chryseis to her father, perform the sacrifice, and appease Apollo.”

But Achilles was angry — Agamemnon had threatened to take his prize of honor.

Achilles — a man without tact — said to Agamemnon, “You are both shameless and greedy. Why should a Greek warrior obey your orders? Why should a Greek warrior do your errands? Why should a Greek warrior fight for you? I should not and will not.

“We are here to fight the Trojans, but the Trojans have never done anything to *me*. The Trojans did not steal *my* cattle. The Trojans did not steal *my* horses. The Trojans did not harm the crops in *my* fields.

“You and Menelaus — the sons of Atreus — have a quarrel with the Trojans. We other Greek warriors are fighting *your* fight — you dog. Paris took Helen away from Menelaus, and we are fighting to get back the honor of the House of Atreus.

“But do you care that we are dying and fighting for you? This is not the way to show it. You lack intelligence. You lack prudence. You don’t think ahead. You don’t consider the consequences of your actions.

“You are planning an act of outrage. You are threatening to take from me my prize of honor. I fought hard, and I was awarded a prize of honor because I fought hard.

“A good leader should reward his men. I fight hard — harder than you — but your prizes are greater than mine. Whenever we sack a city allied to Troy, I fight harder than anyone and I wreak the most damage, but you get loaded down with prizes of honor and I get something small, exhausted as I am from fighting.

“I won’t take it anymore! I will sail back home to my own country: Phthia. It is better to sail home than to stay here and be insulted by you despite all that I have done to make you richer.”

Agamemnon was also angry. He said to Achilles, “If you want to go home, then go home. Be a deserter. I will not beg you to stay and fight. Other warriors are here to fight, and Zeus, the king of gods and men, will know that I am in the right. I hate you the most of all the Greek warriors battling before Troy.

“You love battles, and you love war. You are a great warrior, but so what? Did you earn it? No. It’s simply a god’s gift to you. So go back home to Phthia and take your Myrmidons — your soldiers — with you. I don’t value you or respect your anger.

“But I will say this. I have lost my prize of honor — Apollo has taken her from me. To make up for my loss, I am going to take your prize of honor from you. Face-to-face with you at your tents, I will take your prize of honor — Briseis — from you. That way, you will know that I am more powerful than you are. And so will all Greek warriors who seek to challenge me.”

Achilles was furious. Hanging at his side was a long sword in a scabbard. He put his hand on its grip and started to draw it from its scabbard.

But the gods were watching from Mount Olympus. Hera, the wife of Zeus, did not want Achilles to kill Agamemnon. Neither did Athena, the daughter of Zeus, but not by Hera. Hera and Athena wanted Troy to fall, and if Achilles were to kill Agamemnon, the war of Troy would end and the Greeks would sail back home. The Trojans would be triumphant.

Hera, who was watching the quarrel from Mount Olympus, sent Athena to appear before Achilles and order him not to kill Agamemnon. Athena sped down from Olympus and grabbed Achilles’ hair. No mortal but Achilles saw or heard her. Gods have that power.

Achilles knew the fiery-eyed goddess Athena at once and said to her, “Why have you come to me now? Do you want to witness Agamemnon insulting me? I tell you now — he is going to pay for his insult to me!”

Athena replied, “I have come from Olympus to stop you from killing Agamemnon. Hera sent me. She cares for both you and Agamemnon — you are warriors who fight the Trojans. Don’t draw your sword. Don’t kill Agamemnon. Do tell him that he will suffer and pay for what he has done. I am a goddess, and I know the future. Soon, brilliant gifts will be brought to you — worth three times what you have lost today. The gifts will be the payment for Agamemnon’s insult to you. Do not kill Agamemnon. Obey both Hera and me.”

Achilles respected the two goddesses. He said to Athena, “I will obey. I must. When you two goddesses give commands, a mortal man must obey them no matter how angry he is. It is the best thing to do. Gods hear the prayers of a mortal man who obeys their commands.”

Achilles pushed his sword back in its scabbard. Athena flew back to Mount Olympus. Gods have that power.

But Achilles spoke again to Agamemnon, “You drink until you stagger, you have the eyes of a dog, you have the heart of a fawn, you lack courage in battle. When it is time for the best Greek warriors to ambush the Trojans, you are not present because you know how dangerous it is. Rather than fight and earn a prize of honor at the risk of losing your life, you find it safer to stay in your well-guarded camp and take the prize of honor of a warrior who fought well and who earned it but who dares to criticize you. You feed on your own people, as worthless as they are. If they were not worthless, they would not let your outrage of today stand and would not allow you to commit any new outrages.

“I swear an oath upon the scepter I hold. It is wooden, and never again will leaves sprout from it. In councils, whoever holds the scepter can speak. I swear that someday you will regret what you have done today. I swear that soon you and your warriors will want me to fight again for you. For without me fighting on your side, Hector — the greatest warrior of the Trojans — will kill and kill again. Then you will regret what you have done today. Then you will regret having disgraced me — the greatest warrior of the Greeks!”

Achilles threw the scepter on the ground. Agamemnon glared at him.

Nestor, the king of Pylos, was an old man and the wisest of the Greeks. He knew how to use rhetoric; he could speak persuasively. He said, “No more quarreling. If you continue to quarrel, great misery for the Greeks will be the result. Think of how the Trojans would rejoice if they heard you two quarreling. Priam — the King of Troy — and his sons would rejoice, as would all the Trojans. You two are the best of the Greeks: the best in our councils, and the best on the fields of battle.

“Stop quarrelling. Please. Listen to me. I am older than you, and I have more experience than you. I have known better men than you, and they were my colleagues and respected me. They were excellent men: Pirithous, Dryas, Caeneus, Exadius, Polyphemus, and Theseus.

“These men were strong, and they fought the half-man, half-horse Centaurs, who were wild and lived in the mountains. These strong men hacked down the Centaurs. I was a young man then, far away from my home in Pylos. They had sought me and enlisted me in their team. I fought, and fought well. These strong men were fighters whom no man of today could beat, but they listened to my words when I spoke up in councils.

“Now you should also listen to me. Sometimes, compromise is the best course of action. Agamemnon, don’t take Bryseis, Achilles’ prize of honor. We warriors awarded her to Achilles, so let Achilles keep her. She belongs to him.

“Achilles, don’t quarrel with Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces. He is the main Greek king before Troy, and he is the most powerful. Zeus, the king of gods and men, has given Agamemnon much glory. Achilles, you have a goddess for a mother, and you are the most physically strong of all the Greeks, but Agamemnon is more powerful than you are because he brought more warriors to Troy than you did and because he is the leader of the Greek forces against Troy.

“Agamemnon, stop being angry at Achilles. Listen to me — I am an old man. Achilles is the greatest Greek warrior. Don’t disrespect a man who fights well for you!”

Nestor spoke wise words, but Agamemnon’s words in reply were only partially wise.

Agamemnon said, “Everything that you say is wise, Nestor, but Achilles wants more respect than he deserves. He wishes to be the leader here. He wishes to give everyone orders and have his orders obeyed. But I will never allow that to happen. The gods have made him a great spearman, but that does not entitle him to abuse me, although he may think that.”

Achilles' words were not wise: "Yes, I do think that. If I submitted to your orders, I would be worthless and cowardly. Give other people orders, not me! I will never again yield to your orders.

"But I will not fight for Briseis. I will not fight you. The Greek warriors gave me Briseis, but now you, Agamemnon, are taking back my prize of honor. So be it. But everything else at my ship is mine. If you try to take any of it, Agamemnon, you will die. If you doubt me, just try to take something of mine. My spear will be in your body, and your blood will gush out!"

The quarrel of words ended, but the bad feelings continued. The council broke up, and Achilles returned to his camp and his best friend, Patroclus.

Meanwhile, Agamemnon prepared to send a ship to Chryses so the god Apollo would be appeased. He ordered men to drag a ship into the sea. He picked out twenty oarsmen to be the crew of the ship. He ordered one hundred bulls to be put on board the ship. He led Chryseis to the ship. Odysseus, ever competent, captained the ship. It sailed to the city of Chryse.

Agamemnon's men washed themselves in the sea to clean and purify themselves after being around the plague so long, and they sacrificed to the gods.

Agamemnon could have decided not to follow through on his threat to take Briseis away from Achilles. Agamemnon could have taken the advice of Nestor. Agamemnon could have restrained his anger.

But he did not.

Agamemnon called his two heralds, Talthybius and Eurybates, to him and said, "You two go to the camp of Achilles and get his prize of honor, Briseis, and bring her to me. If Achilles will not give her up, I will go to the camp of Achilles myself — with an army of warriors — and take her."

Reluctantly, the two heralds obeyed. They reached the camp of Achilles and found him. He was grim, but he was not murderous. He looked at the two heralds, and they were afraid and said nothing, but just stood in his camp.

But Achilles was courteous to them, saying, "Welcome! I am angry at Agamemnon, not at you, so come closer. You have not treated me badly, as Agamemnon has.

"Agamemnon sent you to get Briseis, and you shall have her. Patroclus, my friend, bring out Briseis, and give her to these two heralds.

"But, heralds, listen to my words. Agamemnon shall need me one day to keep death away from his men. Agamemnon is a man who forgets what I have done in the past and what I can do in the future. He does not know what he needs to do to keep his warriors safe."

Patroclus obeyed his friend's request. He brought out Briseis and handed her over to the two heralds, who led her to Agamemnon. She followed them, reluctantly. She wanted to stay with Achilles.

Achilles left his friends and went to the beach. Raising his arms, he prayed to his mother: the sea-goddess Thetis.

He prayed, "Mother, you gave me life. My life will be short, and so Zeus should give me honor as recompense, but he does not. I lack honor. Agamemnon has taken my prize of honor away from me!"

He wept.

Thetis, sitting by her father, the Old Man of the Sea, heard her son's prayer. She swam to him and rose up out of the surf and sat by him on the shore. She stroked him gently and said, "Achilles, you are my child. Tell me why you are crying. Tell me what is wrong. Share your pain with me."

Achilles said to his mother, "You already know what is wrong. We Greeks attacked Thebe, the city of King Eetion. We conquered the city, and we carried away its treasure, cattle,

women, and children.

“Agamemnon was awarded Chryseis, a beauty. But her father, a priest of Apollo, tried to ransom her with shining treasure. He carried the staff and wreaths that identified him as a priest of Apollo and approached Agamemnon and the Greek warriors. The Greek warriors wanted Agamemnon to respect the old priest and accept the shining ransom, but Agamemnon disrespected the old priest and ordered him to leave.

“The old priest prayed to Apollo, who — angered by the bad treatment given to his priest — answered his prayer by shooting arrows at the Greek warriors, killing them with plague. Our aged seer, Calchas, revealed the cause of the plague: the anger of Apollo.

“I wanted the anger of Apollo to be appeased. I was the first one to advocate appeasing his anger. But this made Agamemnon angry. Agamemnon made a threat to me, and he carried out his threat. His prize of honor, Chryseis, was returned to her father with sacrifices for Apollo. My prize of honor, Briseis, was taken from me and given to Agamemnon.

“Mother, help me to regain my honor! Go to Mount Olympus and plead with Zeus. Convince him to help me regain my honor.

“Zeus has never been conquered, although on occasion he has had to put down rebellions. On one occasion, he needed your help. Three gods — Hera, his wife; Poseidon, his brother who is the god of the sea; and Athena, his daughter — had succeeded in chaining him. But you were loyal to Zeus. You, alone of all the many gods, rushed to Zeus and broke the chains that bound him. In addition, you ordered the giant with a hundred hands to go to Zeus and protect him. The gods call the giant Briareus, and the mortals call him Aegaeon. Hera, Poseidon, and Athena saw the giant with the hundred hands. Terrified, they stopped their rebellion against Zeus.

“Remind Zeus of what you did for him. Sit by Zeus. Clasp his knees. Supplicate him. Convince him to allow the Trojans to be victorious for a while — to push the Greek warriors back to their ships and to kill and kill again. That way, the Greek warriors will understand — and Agamemnon will understand — how much they need me and how much they ought to respect me!”

Thetis wept, and she said, “Achilles, my son. You will die soon, and I do and shall grieve for you. You are doomed to have a short life. And now, you have both a short and an unhappy life. I want you to be happy in the life that remains to you. I will do as you ask, I will go to Mount Olympus, supplicate Zeus, and try to persuade him to allow the Trojans to kill and kill again.

“Achilles, stay here in your camp. Don’t fight in the battles against the Trojans.

“Zeus is not now on Mount Olympus. Yesterday, he went to Ethiopia to take part in a feast. All of the other Olympian gods went with him. But he shall return to Mount Olympus in twelve days, and I shall see him then. I think I can persuade him to do as you wish.”

Thetis left Achilles, who mourned in his camp for Briseis and for his lost honor.

Odysseus and the ship he captained reached the city of Chryse. The sail sailed into the harbor, docked, and unloaded the sacrificial animals for Apollo. Chryseis stepped on shore. Odysseus led Chryseis to her father, who was at the altar of Apollo. The old priest of Apollo hugged his daughter, and Odysseus said to him, “Chryses, Agamemnon sent me here. He wants you to have your daughter, and he wishes to sacrifice to Apollo, who has killed so many Greek warriors with plague. By doing these things, Agamemnon hopes to appease Apollo’s wrath.”

Odysseus left Chryses, and Chryses rejoiced with his daughter. Odysseus and his men prepared the cattle for sacrifice. They brought the cattle and barley to the altar. They rinsed their hands. Chryses raised his hands to the sky and prayed, “Apollo, earlier you heard and

answered my prayer. You brought plague to the Greek warriors and killed many of them. Now I pray to you again. Stop the plague. Stop killing the Greek warriors.”

Odysseus’ men scattered grains of barley. They cut the throats of the cattle and killed them. Then they skinned the cattle and carved away the meat from the thighbones. They wrapped the thighbones in fat — two layers — and put some strips of meat on top. Chryses burned these offerings to the god Apollo, and then he poured out some wine for the god.

They then roasted the meat on spits, and each man ate. Next they poured out wine for each man, who spilled a few drops for the god and then drank.

All day, they sang songs that pleased Apollo who brings plague and who drives away plague. Apollo was happy.

Odysseus and the men slept on the island that night. At dawn, they sailed away back to the Greek camps. Apollo sent them favorable winds. The sails filled out, and the ship sped as the water foamed up at its bow. Once they had returned to the Greek camps, they hauled the ship high up on the beach and then each man returned to his camp.

Achilles stayed away from the other Greeks. He no longer attended councils. He no longer fought in battles. Still angry, he stayed in his own camp. But although he was angry, he yearned to fight again.

Twelve days passed since Achilles had spoken with Thetis, and now Zeus and the other gods returned to Mount Olympus. Thetis rose up out of the ocean and flew to Mount Olympus. She found Zeus sitting alone, away from the gods, at the top of the mountain. He was looking down at the world.

Thetis supplicated him. She knelt at his feet, grasped his knees with her left hand, and held him under his chin with her right hand. Zeus had to pay attention to her.

She said to him, “Zeus, if I have ever been of service to you and have ever helped you when you needed help, answer my prayer now. Honor my son — Achilles. He is mortal, and his life will be short. And now Agamemnon has disgraced Achilles by taking away his prize of honor that he fought so hard to earn. But you, Zeus, can bring my son honor. You are the king of gods and men, and you have the power to bring honor to my son by allowing the Trojans to kill and kill again until Agamemnon realizes just whom he has dishonored and gives him the honor he deserves!”

Zeus did not immediately respond. Instead, he thought. Yes, he owed Thetis, and yes, if he agreed to honor Thetis’ request, his wife, Hera, who favored the Greeks, would try to make trouble for him and would probably succeed to some extent. He thought for a long time.

Thetis said to him, “Grant my prayer now, Father Zeus, and nod in assent. Swear an oath that is impossible for you to take back.

“Or, if you prefer, deny my prayer and let me know that you don’t value me at all — that you dishonor me more than any other goddess.”

Zeus replied, “If I agree to answer your prayer, it will be a disaster for me. Hera will be impossible. She and I will fight with each other. She will make me angry, and she will insult me. I have much experience with this. Even now, Hera accuses me of siding with the Trojans, of always taking their side. Leave now, before Hera sees you and guesses what you are asking me to do. But yes, I will answer your prayer. I will nod my head and make an inviolable vow to do what you are asking me to do. This is a vow that I *must* fulfill.”

He nodded his head, and earthquakes shook Mount Olympus.

Thetis left Zeus and returned to the sea. Zeus returned to his halls on Mount Olympus, and the other gods stood up to show respect to him.

Hera, however, had seen Thetis supplicate Zeus. She had seen him bow his head. She knew of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, and she could guess to what Zeus had

agreed.

Hera taunted Zeus, “So, my treacherous husband, with which god have you been plotting now? Whenever my back is turned, you make grand plans and never let me know about them.”

Zeus replied, “Hera, don’t bother me. You do not need to know everything I do. If you ever have a need to know my plans, I will tell them to you. But if I choose to make plans with another god and you do not need to know what we are planning, don’t expect me to tell you about our plans. So do not question me now.”

Hera widened her eyes and said, “Are you accusing me of probing and prying? I have not and am not doing any such thing! You can make whatever plans you wish, but right now I am worried that Thetis, the daughter of the Old Man of the Sea, has convinced you to honor her mortal son, Achilles. I am afraid that she has convinced you to allow the Trojans to kill and kill again and drive the Greek warriors back against their ships.”

Zeus replied, “And what if I have decided to allow the Trojans to be triumphant for a while? What can you do about it? Nothing. So sit down and be quiet. Even if all the gods on Olympus were to try to rescue you, I am powerful enough that I could still choke you with my strong hands.”

Hera was terrified. Zeus was physically and mentally capable of doing exactly what he said he could do. Hera did not speak.

The other Olympian gods were also terrified. Zeus was that powerful and that strong.

Hephaestus, the blacksmith god with the strong shoulders and the lame legs, wanted to lighten the mood. He said, “Zeus and Hera, don’t quarrel. Why fight over the doings of mortal men? Are they worth it? When you two quarrel, we gods are unable to enjoy the good life here on Mount Olympus.

“Mother, give in to the will of Zeus, my father. You two are my parents, and I want you to get along. Zeus is strong and powerful, and he can blast us gods with his lightning bolts. Better for you, Mother, to make Father happy. That way, he will be kind to us gods.”

Hephaestus held out a two-handed cup filled with nectar to his mother, Hera, so she could drink.

He said to her, “Give in to the will of Zeus. I do not want to see him beat you, as he is very capable of doing. I would not be able to help you. Once, I ran to help you, and he grabbed my foot and threw me from Mount Olympus. I fell for twenty-four hours. Finally, I fell on the island called Lemnos. I am immortal, but I was injured. The mortals on Lemnos took care of me and made me healthy again.”

Hera smiled and took the two-handed cup.

Hephaestus then poured out nectar to all of the other gods, exaggerating his limp and making jokes. The gods laughed and were happy again. They feasted on nectar and ambrosia and listened to Apollo’s lyre and the Muses’ singing until the sun went down.

The gods went to their own homes to sleep. Hephaestus had built their homes for them. Zeus slept, and Hera lay beside him.

Hera thought, *The cause of the Trojan War happened long ago. Thetis is a sea-goddess with whom Zeus, my husband, would normally want to sleep. He has many affairs with goddesses and with mortal women, and this drives me crazy. I am a jealous wife.*

But Thetis is a special case because of a prophecy. The prophecy about Thetis’ male offspring is that he will be a greater man than his father. This is something that would make most human fathers happy, but it would not make Zeus happy. Zeus was greater than his own father, and he overthrew his own father and became the king of gods and men. Zeus did not want to sleep with Thetis because if he did that, Thetis would give birth to a male who would be more powerful than he is and who would overthrow him.

Therefore, Zeus, my husband, wanted to get Thetis married off to someone else. A marriage to a human being for Thetis suited Zeus just fine. A human son may be greater than his father, but a mortal is still not going to be as great as a god, and so Zeus knew that he would be safe if Thetis gave birth to a human son.

Zeus got Thetis to marry the mortal man named Peleus. After Peleus married Thetis, he fathered Achilles. The marriage did not last. Peleus is now an old man, and Thetis has not lived with him for a long time.

When Peleus married Thetis, they invited many gods and many mortals to the wedding. One goddess whom they did not invite was Eris, goddess of discord. But even though Eris was not invited to the wedding feast, she showed up anyway.

Eris, goddess of discord, threw an apple on a table at the wedding feast. Inscribed on the apple was the phrase 'For the most beautiful female.'

Obviously, this apple was meant for me, and I claimed it. But Athena, who is my husband's daughter, and Aphrodite, who is the goddess of sexual passion, also claimed the apple — bitches! Each of them thinks that she is more beautiful than me.

Someone had to judge the beauty pageant of the goddesses and decide who is the most beautiful. This should have been an easy task, since I am the most beautiful by far!

Zeus would seem to be the perfect choice to judge the beauty pageant, but he was smart enough not to.

He knew that I would make his life miserable — as a simple matter of justice — if he did not choose me as the most beautiful.

He knew that he would make Athena — his favorite child — unhappy if he did not choose her as the most beautiful.

He knew that Aphrodite could make his life miserable by making him think with his penis rather than his brain — something he does a lot of anyway — if he did not choose her as the most beautiful.

Zeus is not a fool. He knew that if he judged the beauty contest, he would make two enemies. The two goddesses whom Zeus did not choose as the most beautiful would hate him and likely make trouble for him. I have to give my husband some credit here.

So Zeus found a mortal sap to judge the beauty contest. Paris is a prince of Troy, and Zeus allowed him to judge the divine beauty contest. Paris was not as intelligent as Zeus, or he would have tried to find a way out of judging the beauty contest. Plus, he chose the wrong goddess as the winner.

Each of us goddesses offered Paris a bribe if he would choose her.

I offered Paris political power: several cities he can rule. I did this because I knew that Athena and Aphrodite would offer Paris bribes — cheaters!

Athena offered Paris prowess in battle. Paris would become a mighty and feared warrior.

Aphrodite offered Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

Paris chose Aphrodite as the winner of the beauty contest.

Why? Her bribe was the poorest!

A person such as Achilles would choose to be an even greater warrior, if that is possible.

A person such as Agamemnon would likely choose more cities to rule.

To choose the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife is to choose the worst of the three choices!

The most beautiful woman in the world is Helen, who is legally married to Menelaus, the King of Sparta. Paris visited Menelaus, and he ran away with lots of Menelaus' treasure and with his wife. Paris treated his host abominably.

Did Helen run away with Paris willingly? I don't know. Helen is tricky and hard to figure out.

Running away with Helen was and is a terrible insult to Menelaus and to Menelaus' entire family. Menelaus and Agamemnon are the sons of Atreus. Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, is the older brother and the brother who rules a greater land, as seen by the number of ships the two kings brought to the Trojan War. Menelaus brought sixty ships, while Agamemnon brought one hundred ships.

Because Agamemnon is the older brother, he is the leader of the Greek troops in the Trojan War.

Agamemnon and Menelaus gathered many Greek ships and warriors to sail to Troy and make war against the Trojans.

When the Greek ships were gathered together and were ready to set sail against Troy, a wind blew in the wrong direction for them to sail. The goddess Artemis was angry at the Greeks because she knew that the result of the Trojan War would be lots of deaths, not just of warriors, but also of women and children. This is true of all wars, and it is a lesson that human beings forget after each war and relearn in the next war.

Artemis knew that Agamemnon's warriors will cause much death of children, so she made him sacrifice one of his own daughters so that he would suffer what he will make other parents suffer.

Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia. This was a religious sacrifice of a human life to appease the goddess Artemis.

On the day that he quarreled with Achilles, Agamemnon told the prophet Calchas that he always brings bad news to Agamemnon. This is true. Calchas is the prophet who told Agamemnon that he had to sacrifice his daughter in order to get favorable winds that would sail the ships to Troy.

After the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Menelaus set sail with all the Greek ships for Troy. They landed, and then the Trojan War started.

Aphrodite supports the Trojans during the war, while Hera and Athena support the Greeks.

Hera and Athena are happy for many Trojans to die during the Trojan War — all because of a beauty contest.

Such is the anger of the gods.

CHAPTER 2: Agamemnon's Dream and the Great Gathering of Armies

Most of the gods and the mortals slept all night, but Zeus woke up and stayed awake, thinking of what he had promised to Thetis: to allow the Trojans to be triumphant in battle for a while. How could he bring that about? How could he make that happen?

At last, he had an idea: He would send a lying dream to Agamemnon. Agamemnon had quarreled with Achilles, and he would love to be able to conquer Troy without the aid of Achilles, so Agamemnon was likely to believe a dream that stated that the gods had decided that now was the time for Troy to fall. Some dreams are true, and Agamemnon would at this time want to believe the dream although he had never been able to conquer Troy even with the help of Achilles, the Greeks' best warrior. As a leader and as a human being, Agamemnon has faults.

Zeus called a dream to him and told it, "Go to the Greek ships and find Agamemnon. Tell him what I tell you to tell him. Tell him to get his Greek warriors ready for a battle. Tell him to attack Troy because today is the day that he will conquer the city. Tell him that at last the gods have decided to allow Troy to fall and let the Greeks walk in its broad streets. At last Hera has persuaded all the gods to let fate take its course. All the gods agree: Today Troy will fall!"

The lying dream took flight and found Agamemnon asleep in his camp. The dream took the shape of Nestor, the oldest and the wisest of the Greeks at Troy. The dream told Agamemnon the lie that Zeus wanted Agamemnon to be told. In the form of Nestor, the dream said to Agamemnon, "Still asleep? You ought not to be sleeping, Agamemnon. You are the leader here. You ought to be thinking of the warriors under your command. They are the ones who die for you.

"I have a message for you from Zeus. He is far away, but he is thinking of you. He orders you to arm your warriors for battle, and to attack Troy with all your force. Zeus says that today Troy will fall! Hera has persuaded all the gods to agree to let fate take its course. Grief will come to the warriors of Troy. Remember this dream — do not forget it when you wake up."

The lying dream left Agamemnon, and he woke up. He believed the dream. Fool! If he could not conquer Troy even with the help of Achilles and all of Achilles' soldiers — the Myrmidons — why should he think that he could now conquer the city!

But Agamemnon got up, dressed himself, slung his sword and sheath over his shoulder, and took his scepter — whoever held it would be listened to — and then he went off to rouse the other Greek kings fighting at Troy.

Dawn arrived, and heralds cried out for all the common soldiers to assemble.

Before the general assembly, Agamemnon met with the other kings, telling them, "Good news. The gods have sent me a dream. Nestor appeared to be talking to me, telling me what the gods wanted me to know. Zeus wants us to attack Troy — this is the day that Troy will fall! The dream told me that Hera has convinced all the gods to let fate take its course. I then woke up. Now I am going to have an assembly of the common soldiers. In it, I will test the men. I will tell them that we are giving up the war against Troy and that we will now sail home. The men will shout that they want to stay and fight, and then we will go into battle."

Nestor then spoke. He told the kings, "You have heard what Agamemnon said about his dream. If anyone other than Agamemnon had spoken these things, we would say that he had had a lying dream. But this is Agamemnon. He is our leader, and we ought to obey him. Let's prepare the men for battle."

The kings and the common soldiers went to the general assembly. The common soldiers had been hearing rumors. They knew that Agamemnon and Achilles had quarreled, and they wondered whether the general assembly was about that quarrel. Had Agamemnon's plans for Troy changed?

So many soldiers were present that the land shook as they moved into position. They were like bees swarming. The soldiers were noisy, and nine heralds shouted for quiet — "Silence! Listen to your betters!" — so that Agamemnon could speak and be heard.

Agamemnon stood and held his scepter, a symbol of authority that Hephaestus himself had made. Hephaestus had given it to Zeus, who gave it to the messenger god Hermes, who gave it to the charioteer Pelops, who gave it to his son Atreus, who gave it to his brother Thyestes, who gave it to his nephew Agamemnon. Agamemnon leaned against the scepter, which was studded with golden nails, and he said, "Friends and warriors, Zeus made me insane. He tricked me. He vowed to me that I would not return to Mycenae, my home in Greece, until I had conquered Troy and seen its walls fall down.

"I know now that we will never conquer Troy. Zeus lied to me. Zeus wants me now to return to Greece. He simply wanted to have many Greeks killed before Troy; he did not want Troy to fall. Now he wants me to return to Greece in disgrace. This gladdens the heart of Zeus!

"Zeus is too powerful to resist. He has made a thousand cities fall, and he will make more cities fall — but not Troy, not yet.

"This is a humiliation. The Greek armies are vast and strong and outnumber the Trojans. Why should we lose? Why should future generations learn about our ignominious defeat? Suppose the Greeks were divided into groups of ten, and each group of ten was given one Trojan to pour the wine. Many Greek groups of ten would lack a Trojan to pour the wine — that is how much we outnumber the Trojans! That is the simple truth, although the Trojans do have allies from other cities. Their allies prevent me from conquering Troy.

"We have been fighting for nine years. Our ships are now so far gone that their timbers are rotting and the frayed ropes snap when pressure is applied to them.

"For nine years, our wives and children have been waiting for us to return home. And what about us? We have been laboring and warring for nine years, and the war is not yet over.

"Listen to me. Let's give up! Let's sail for home!"

Agamemnon expected the common soldiers to shout, "NO! LET'S KEEP ON FIGHTING!"

He had misjudged his troops. They ran for the ships, eager to sail home to wives and children, eager for the war to be over, even if the Greeks lost.

The common soldiers swarmed like big waves to the ships. They were like the winds of a hurricane as they ran to the ships. As they ran to the ships, a big cloud of dust rose in the air.

They shouted, "DRAG THE SHIPS TO THE SEA! GET THEM READY TO SAIL!"

The war could have been over right then, and the Greek common soldiers could have defeated fate, but Hera was watching from far away, and she alerted Athena: "Can you believe this? The Greeks are ready to sail for home! They are willing to let Priam, the King of Troy, glory in victory over them. They are willing to let Helen stay in Troy, a trophy for the Trojans to glory over.

"Go to the Greeks. Stop them from sailing home."

Athena obeyed. She flew to the Greek camps and found Odysseus, a man of words and action. He stood by his ship, but he was not preparing to sail home. He stood still, thinking and brooding.

Athena said to him, "Odysseus, what are you doing? Nothing! The common soldiers are rushing to sail home. They are willing to leave behind Helen, a woman for whom so many of

you Greeks have died. Now is not the time to give up. Go to the Greeks. Convince them to stay at Troy. Don't let them sail back home to Greece!"

Odysseus knew that the goddess Athena was speaking to him. He obeyed her. He flung off his cape, and the herald Eurybates picked it up for him. Odysseus ran to Agamemnon and took the scepter — the symbol of authority — from him and ran to the Greeks on the shore.

Odysseus was a master of rhetoric. He knew how to talk to kings, and he knew how to talk to common soldiers. Each time he met a king, he said, "My friend, I am not going to threaten you. You are a king. It would be wrong for me to threaten you. But I advise you to go back to the assembly and convince your men to go back. Agamemnon is not serious about returning home to Greece. You'll see. This is a test. You do not want to fail this test because he will be angry, and he is a powerful man. You and I and the other kings heard about his test in the council of kings. So avoid his anger. Come back to the council and bring your men with you. Zeus loves kings such as Agamemnon."

When Odysseus met a common soldier, he hit him with the scepter and yelled at him, "You fool! Obey the commands of your superiors. Don't be a coward and a deserter. You are a common soldier. You aren't a leader either on the battlefield or in council. You have one commander. Zeus chose him to be your leader."

Odysseus commanded the Greeks to return to the council, and they did return to the meeting ground, leaving their ships.

Almost everyone had returned to the meeting ground, but one man, a common soldier named Thersites, remained on the beach, still shouting. A favorite activity of his was criticizing the kings, men who were better than he was. He loved to get a laugh at the expense of a king.

Of all the Greeks who came to Troy, he was the ugliest. His legs were bowed, and one foot was crippled. His shoulders were narrow, and his chest was caved in. His head was pointed, with only a few tufts of hair keeping him from being completely bald-headed. Achilles despised him. So did Odysseus. Both had been victims of his insults. Now he was criticizing Agamemnon and alienating his fellow soldiers, who had regained their sense.

Thersites yelled, "Still complaining, Agamemnon? Why? You have stored away in your camp lots of bronze and lots of women. Whenever we sack a city, you get the most beautiful women. Do you want more gold than you already have? Do you want more ransom — the ransom a loving parent might pay for a captured warrior son? You get the ransom although I or another warrior captured the Trojan warrior. Or do you want yet another woman — a sex-slave to sleep with? You have messed things up royally here at Troy. The men you lead are not men but rather women. It's time to return home to Greece! We can leave Agamemnon here at Troy to see if we have done good service for him. Agamemnon has made Achilles angry, and Achilles is a better man than Agamemnon is. Agamemnon insulted Achilles, but Achilles was generous and did not kill him. The day you insulted Achilles could have been your last day alive on earth!"

Odysseus glared at Thersites and told him, "Shut up, Thersites! The nonsense you are yelling is excessive even for you! Who are you to criticize kings? Who are you to criticize Agamemnon? You are the least of all the Greek warriors who came to Troy. So shut up, and stop looking to return home to Greece. The war is not yet over. We don't know how it will end. We may be victorious, or we may end up being defeated.

"But here you are, flinging insults at Agamemnon, to whom we give much treasure and many women because he is our leader. Why are you outraged at him? You are the outrage! Listen to me carefully. If I hear you yelling like this and criticizing Agamemnon again, may my head be torn off my shoulders and may I never be called the father of my son, Telemachus,

if I don't strip your clothing from you, exposing the parts of your body that you keep hidden, and whip you naked out of the ranks of real soldiers!"

Odysseus then hit Thersites across the back with the scepter — hard! Thersites bent over. He cried. A bloody welt formed on his back.

The other Greek soldiers, relieved that they were not the objects of Odysseus' wrath, laughed. They did not like Thersites.

The other Greek soldiers shouted, "A hit! A terrific hit! One of many that Odysseus has dealt in his career as a warrior! He has done a good deed for us warriors! He has made Thersites shut up! I'll bet that Thersites will never again insult a king."

Odysseus stood in the center of the meeting ground. Athena was present. Like a herald, she made the Greek warriors be quiet so that they could hear Odysseus.

Odysseus, master of rhetoric, said loudly enough that all could hear him, "Agamemnon, your warriors seem intent on deserting you, on making you an object of scorn. They have forgotten that they swore an oath to you nine years ago when we sailed from Greece to Troy. They swore that they would not leave Troy until the city had fallen. But look at them! They are like weak boys and scared women. They want to go home.

"It's true, however, that they have been away a long time. It's true that they long for home. A man who is away from his wife for even a month will want to go home, and we have been here at Troy for nine years. We cannot blame the warriors for wanting to go home.

"But still we would be humiliated to go home after warring here for nine long years — unless we conquer Troy! Let us not sail home without treasure and women. Let us remember the prophecy that Calchas made. Let us stay long enough to find out whether the prophecy is true or false. All of us witnessed that prophecy.

"Our ships were at Aulis, in between the island of Euboea and the Greek mainland. We had gathered our sails there before we sailed the Aegean Sea to Troy. We were at a spring, making sacrifices to the gods at an altar to help ensure eventual success. A snake with a blood-red back appeared — an omen sent by Zeus himself! The snake came from under the altar and climbed a tree, where was the nest of a sparrow with eight nestlings. The snake swallowed all eight nestlings — the mother bird could not stop the killing — and then the snake coiled and bit the mother sparrow and swallowed her, too. Zeus then turned the snake into stone.

"Calchas interpreted the omen. He said, 'Zeus has revealed the future, long distant, to us. We shall be before the walls of Troy for nine long years, and then we shall conquer the city, bringing death and destruction to women and children as well as to warriors. Only in the tenth year of fighting will the city of Troy fall.'

"Thus Calchas interpreted the omen, and now the omen is coming true. All of you warriors, fight! Soon we will take the city of Troy!"

The warriors reacted to Odysseus' speech the way that Agamemnon had hoped that they would react to his speech. Morale restored, they were ready to fight, with or without Achilles.

Nestor, the oldest and wisest of the Greeks, also made a speech: "Words are important, but so is action. We have had many words, but we also need action. We have made oaths, and now we need to keep them with our actions.

"We need to avoid fighting with words.

"Agamemnon, you need to keep your eyes on the prize. Lead your troops into battle, just as you have planned. And if one or two warriors want to hang back, want to go home, let them go to hell. Those are the few who want to run home before we find out whether the omen is true and we will take Troy. Zeus has sent omens to us. Even as we sailed to Troy, Zeus sent us omens. He threw down thunderbolts that landed to the right side of the ships — the right side is the lucky side!

“We have had many positive omens. So let all men fight here at Troy and not sail for home — not until he’s slept with a woman who was faithful to her Trojan husband. We deserve that because of all we have suffered to get Helen back!

“And if any man still tries to sail for home, let’s kill him. As soon as he touches a ship, he dies.

“Agamemnon, listen to my advice. Form your warriors into ranks. Let men fight in their own tribes and in their own clans. You will be able to see which tribes and clans fight well and which are cowardly. If we fail to conquer Troy, you will know whether it is because of the will of the gods or because of the cowardice of your warriors.”

Agamemnon praised Nestor: “You are the first of the Greeks when it comes to speaking in public. If I had ten more men like you to advise me and help me form battle tactics, we would conquer Troy in a single day!

“But Zeus has other plans. He makes me engage in battles of words. He makes me wrangle with words with Achilles — and all because of a girl! I was the first to get angry. If Achilles and I could work and think together, Troy would quickly fall. Its day of death would quickly arrive.

“But now, let us eat. Get ready for battle. Sharpen your spears. Balance your shields. Feed your horses with grain so that they run fast. Make sure the chariots are in good repair.

“Prepare yourself to fight all day long. We will not rest until night falls. You will be fighting so hard that sweat will soak your shield-strap. You will be fighting so hard that the hand holding your spear will ache. You will be fighting so hard that your horses will lather as they pull your chariot.

“Let no one hang back from battle, staying by the ships. That man’s corpse will be food for dogs and birds!”

The warriors roared their approval of Agamemnon’s plan. They went back to their ships, ate a meal, and prepared for battle. Each man sacrificed to a god. Each man prayed to escape death and live another day.

Agamemnon prepared to sacrifice a bull to Zeus, and he called all the other kings to him. Nestor came first. Idomeneus, king of Crete, came. So did Great Ajax and Little Ajax. So did Diomedes, the youngest king fighting the Trojans. Odysseus, king of Ithaca, arrived sixth. Menelaus came without being called; he knew what Agamemnon was thinking.

With all the kings present, Agamemnon prayed to Zeus: “God of greatness, god of the sky, do not allow this day to end until we have conquered Troy! Let me take the city of Priam, the Trojan king — today! Let me set on fire the gates of Troy — today! Let me kill Hector, the greatest of the Trojan warriors — today!”

Zeus heard the prayer and accepted the sacrifice, but he would not grant Agamemnon’s wish. Zeus wanted the war to continue and many warriors to die.

Agamemnon and the others sacrificed the animals and prepared a feast. All ate and drank, and then Nestor said, “Agamemnon, now is not the time for words. Now is the time to call the warriors together and form them into tribes and clans. Let us review the troops before we go into combat.”

Agamemnon ordered the heralds to call the warriors together. The warriors formed ranks. Athena was present, carrying her shield. Her shield had one hundred golden tassels; each golden tassel was worth one hundred oxen. Athena put heart into each Greek warrior. Suddenly, they wanted to do battle more than they wanted to sail home.

Just like a fire burns brightly as it marches through a mountain forest and can be seen from miles away, the bronze armor of the Greek warriors shone brightly.

Just like flock upon flock of birds such as geese or cranes circle and then land in an Asian marsh, the Greek warriors poured out of their camps and took up their position upon the plain before Troy. Their feet made the sound of thunder as they — thousands and thousands of warriors — took up their positions.

Just as numerous as the swarms of countless flies that fill the stalls in spring when buckets are full of milk were the Greek warriors as they readied themselves to fight the Trojans and the Trojan allies.

Just like when flocks mingle together, experienced shepherds can separate them with ease, the commanders grouped their men together. Agamemnon watched. His eyes and head were like those of the sky-god Zeus, his waist was like that of the war-god Ares, and his chest was like that of the sea-god Poseidon.

Muses, sing now the tallies of the Greek warriors. As goddesses, you know. Human beings lack knowledge. I could not name every warrior — not even with ten tongues and ten mouths, a voice that never tires, and a heart made of bronze — unless I had your help. Now I can name only the commanders and tell how many ships they brought with them.

Briefly, these are the numbers of ships that the major heroes brought with them.

Agamemnon brought one hundred ships.

Nestor brought ninety ships.

Diomedes brought eighty ships.

Idomeneus brought eighty ships.

Menelaus brought sixty ships.

Achilles brought fifty ships.

Little Ajax brought forty ships.

Great Ajax brought twelve ships.

Odysseus brought twelve ships.

But many other kings brought many other ships.

Here are the tallies in more detail.

Leitus and Peneleos commanded the Boeotians, who sailed to Troy in fifty ships. In each ship were one hundred and twenty Boeotians.

Ascalaphus and Ialmenus commanded the Minyans, who sailed to Troy in thirty ships. The mother of Ascalaphus and Ialmenus was Astyoche, who when she was a young woman climbed up to the upper rooms of the palace, where the war-god Ares slept with her and made her pregnant with Ascalaphus and Ialmenus.

Schedius and Epistrophus commanded the Phocians, who sailed to Troy in forty ships. The Phocians lined up to the left of the Boeotians.

Little Ajax, the son of Oileus, commanded the Locrians, who sailed to Troy in forty ships. Little Ajax was much smaller than Great Ajax, but like Great Ajax, Little Ajax excelled at fighting with spears.

Elephenor commanded the Abantes, who sailed to Troy in forty ships. They cut their hair short in front and long in the back.

Menestheus commanded the Athenians, who sailed to Troy in fifty ships. Menestheus excelled at arranging horses and men in effective fighting units. No one was better at doing this except for Nestor, who had lived longer and experienced more.

Great Ajax, son of Telamon, commanded the warriors from the island of Salamis, who had sailed to Troy in twelve ships. Great Ajax was the second-best Greek warrior; Achilles was the best of all the warriors fighting at Troy.

Diomedes, King of Argos, commanded the warriors from his country, who sailed to Troy in eighty ships. Second in command was Sthenelus, and third in command was Euryalus.

Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, commanded the warriors from his country, who sailed to Troy in one hundred ships. Agamemnon was the supreme commander of all the Greek warriors. He was the greatest warlord, and he brought the greatest number of ships to Troy.

Menelaus, King of Lacedaemon, who ruled in the city of Sparta, commanded the warriors from his country, who sailed to Troy in sixty ships. Agamemnon was Menelaus' older brother. Paris, prince of Troy, had stolen Helen away from Menelaus.

Nestor commanded the Pylians, who sailed to Troy in ninety ships. He was the oldest and wisest of the Greeks.

Agapenor commanded the Arcadians, who sailed to Troy in sixty ships. Agamemnon had given Agapenor these ships; the Arcadians did not normally sail the sea but instead remained on land.

Four captains — Thalius, Amphimachus, Dioreus, and Polyxenus — commanded the Epeans, who had sailed to Troy in forty ships. Each captain commanded the warriors of ten ships.

Meges commanded the warriors from Dulichion and the Echinades, who sailed to Troy in forty ships.

Odysseus commanded the warriors from the island of Ithaca and the islands near it. These warriors sailed to Troy in twelve ships. Odysseus was a mastermind like Zeus.

Thoas led the Aetolians, who sailed to Troy in forty ships. Meleager, now dead, had been an Aetolian.

Idomeneus led the warriors from the island of Crete, who sailed to Troy in eighty ships. Idomeneus was a renowned spearman. Meriones was second in command.

Tlepolemus led the warriors from the island of Rhodes, who sailed to Troy in nine ships. His father was Heracles.

Nireus led the warriors from the island of Syme, who sailed to Troy in three ships. He was the best-looking Greek warrior except for Achilles, but Nireus commanded few warriors.

Antiphon and Phidippus, two grandsons of Heracles, commanded the warriors from the island of Cos and the islands near it, who sailed to Troy in thirty ships.

Muse, son of Achilles, who commanded the Myrmidons, who sailed to Troy in fifty ships. These warriors did not line up. Achilles was angry. He stayed in his camp, enraged over the loss of Briseis, whom Agamemnon had taken from him although Briseis had been given to Achilles after he had fought at the city of Lyrnessus, exhausting himself. Achilles would not fight now, but soon he would — magnificently.

Podarces had commanded the warriors from the city of Phylace, who sailed to Troy in forty ships. Protesilaus had been their commander, but a Trojan had killed him as the Greek warriors had landed at Troy. Protesilaus had been the first Greek killed at Troy, and now Podarces commanded his warriors.

Eumelus commanded the Thesalians from the city of Pherae, who sailed to Troy in eleven ships.

Philoctetes the master archer had commanded the Thesalians from the city of Methone, who sailed to Troy with seven ships. In each ship were fifty oarsmen. But Philoctetes had not made it to Troy. He was on the island of Lemnos, in agonizing pain caused by the bite of a water-viper. Soon, the Greeks would go to Lemnos and bring Philoctetes to Troy. In his absence, Medon commanded Philoctetes' warriors.

Two skilled physicians, Podalirius and Machaon, the two sons of the healer Asclepius, commanded the Thesalians from the cities of Tricca and Oechalia, who sailed to Troy in forty ships.

Eurypylos commanded the Thessalians from the city of Ormenion, who sailed to Troy in forty ships.

Polypoetes and Leonteus commanded the Lapiths from the city of Argissa, who sailed to Troy in forty ships.

Guneus commanded the Enienes and Peraebians from near the oracle of Dodona, who sailed to Troy in twenty-two ships.

Prothous commanded the Magnesians, who sailed to Troy in forty ships.

These were the Greek commanders and ships.

Muse, tell me now who were the best Greek warriors and whose were the best horses.

The best chariot-team of horses by far was the mares of Eumelus, commander of the Thessalians from the city of Pherae. These mares were as fast as birds. They were matched in age and matched in body size. Apollo had bred the mares.

With the exception of Achilles, Great Ajax was the best of the Greek warriors. But now Achilles stayed angry at Agamemnon, and he stayed with his warriors in his camp. His warriors stayed busy, practicing hurling the discus and spears and practicing archery. Their horses stood idle, waiting beside chariots. Achilles' own chariots were stored away under blankets; Achilles had no use for them now. Achilles' warriors wanted to fight, but Achilles was too angry to fight.

All the Greek warriors who were ready to fight marched on like a wildfire, and the ground thundered under their feet.

The Trojans and their allies also assembled.

Iris, goddess of the rainbow, who like Hermes bears messages from the other gods, now brought the Trojans a message from Zeus, king of gods and men. The Trojans gathered at their gates, and Iris spoke to them. She looked and sounded like Polites, a son of Priam, the King of Troy.

Polites had been at a Trojan gate, watching the Greeks and ready to give warning if they showed signs of attacking.

Iris said, "Priam, you often give speeches, but now war is upon us. I have fought often, but the Greek army is the biggest and most powerful that I have ever faced. Right now they are marching toward us, on and on, ready to fight. Hector, I urge you to gather our warriors together. We have many foreign allies in Troy, many foreign warriors. These foreign warriors speak many different languages from ours, which is the same language spoken by the Greeks. Let the commanders of each tribe give commands in the language they understand, and gather all the warriors together."

Hector was willing — he had recognized the goddess Iris. He ended the assembly, and the Trojans and their allies readied for battle. The gates of Troy were opened, and the Trojan and allied warriors marched out onto the fields of battle. The men on foot, men on horses, and men in chariots made a huge roar.

Hector, the crown prince of Troy and son of Priam, commanded the Trojans. He was the greatest warrior fighting for Troy, and his army was the greatest.

Aeneas, the son of Aphrodite, goddess of sexual passion, commanded the Dardanians. His father was mortal: Anchises. Also leading the Dardanians were Acamas and Archelochus.

Pandarus, who wielded a bow that Apollo himself had made, commanded the men who lived in Zelea under Mount Ida. Pandarus was the son of Lycaon.

Two sons of Merops — Adrestus and Amphius — commanded the men from the city of Adrestia. Merops was a prophet. He could foretell the future and did not want his sons to go to war, but they resisted him — black death and a deadly fate made them go to Troy.

Asius commanded the men from the city of Percote and the surrounding area. Huge stallions carried him to Troy.

Hippothous and Pylaeus commanded the men from the city of Larissa.

Acamas and Pirous commanded the Pelasgians.

Euphemus commanded the Cicones.

Pyraechmes commanded the Paeonians. The clear water of the broad river Axius flowed through their country.

Pylaemenes commanded the Paphlagonians, men from a country filled with wild mules.

Odius and Epistrophus commanded the Halizonians.

Chromis and Ennomus commanded the Mysians. Ennomus was a seer who could read bird-signs, but his knowledge could not keep him from death. Achilles would slaughter him at the river where Achilles would slaughter so many Trojans and their allies.

Ascanius and Phorcys commanded the Phrygians.

Mesthles and Antiphus, the two sons of Talaemenes, commanded the Maeonians.

Nastes and Amphimachus commanded the Carians. Nastes wore gold armor — the fool! He would not keep it. Achilles killed him later at the river ford where Achilles killed so many others. Achilles stripped away his gold armor.

Finally, Sarpedon and Glaucus commanded the Lycians.

As was his habit, Zeus was watching the Greeks and Trojans. This was a favorite entertainment for the other gods and him.

He thought, *Agamemnon's Greek warriors vastly outnumber Hector's Trojan warriors.*

Although he leads a vast army, Agamemnon is sometimes a bad leader. Agamemnon did not listen to his men when they wanted him to accept the shining ransom that the priest of Apollo brought to ransom his daughter. After losing his prize of honor, Agamemnon did not listen to Achilles when Achilles suggested a reasonable compromise — the Greeks would replace Chryseis with wonderful gifts when Troy fell. Agamemnon made his greatest warrior, Achilles, angry by taking Briseis away from him. Agamemnon did not listen to the reasonable attempt of Nestor to stop him and Achilles from quarreling. Agamemnon thought that the lying dream I sent was true. Agamemnon tested his men only to have the test backfire, and it took Odysseus to stop the men from sailing back home to Greece. Odysseus would be a better leader for the Greeks than Agamemnon. So would Nestor.

Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, is sometimes a bad leader. So why is he the leader of the Greeks? He is the leader of the Greeks because his family — the House of Atreus — suffered a violation of xenia.

Xenia is the guest-host relationship. Xenia carries with it an obligation to the gods and especially to me. When people abuse their sacred duty of xenia, they are disrespecting me.

Travelers knock on the door of a house or palace and ask for hospitality. The host feeds the guest, allows him to bathe, and gives him a place to sleep. Upper-class hosts also give the guest a gift, appropriately called a guest-gift. In return, the guest provides news and entertainment for the host. Also, of course, the guest does not kill the host, rob the host, or run away with the host's wife.

The Trojan War started because of a violation of xenia. Paris was traveling away from Troy, his home, and Menelaus became Paris' host at Sparta. Paris treated Menelaus badly by robbing him of some of his treasure, and by running away with Menelaus' wife, Helen.

Menelaus and his older brother, Agamemnon, gathered together a number of Greek armies, and they all sailed to Troy to get Helen back. Agamemnon, being the older brother, became the leader of the Greek warriors against Troy.

I am Zeus Xenios: Zeus, the god of xenia. Anyone who does not follow the rules of xenia is not doing my will. This offends me, and eventually the offender will pay for his transgression.

Troy is in the wrong here. The Trojans are fighting to defend their city, yes, but they are also fighting so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous love affair. Troy will eventually fall to the Greeks because the Trojans are in the wrong.

CHAPTER 3: Helen Reviews the Greek Champions

Now the two armies approached each other. The Trojans shouted as if they were aggressors invading a country to take it, while the Greeks marched silently, as if they were grimly defending their country.

In truth, although the Greeks had sailed across the Aegean Sea to attack the city of Troy, the Trojans were the aggressors. Paris, prince of Troy, had sailed across the Aegean Sea and stolen some of the treasure and the wife of Menelaus.

The South wind brings fog to mountains. Shepherds hate it and thieves love it because no one can see as far as they can throw a stone. Just like that fog, dust rose up as the armies marched toward each other.

Paris, prince of Troy, was in the front ranks. He dressed flashily. The skin of a leopard caressed his shoulders, a bow hung on his back, a sword hung at his hip, and he carried two spears.

He showed himself to the Greek warriors and challenged any one of them to fight him.

Menelaus saw him. Paris was boasting and showing himself to the Greeks.

Menelaus felt like a hungry lion that has discovered a carcass. He would eat his fill of the stag or goat even though hunters and dogs were near and were attacking him. Menelaus was ready to accept Paris' challenge and fight him.

But when Paris saw Menelaus, Paris felt like a man who had stepped on a snake. His knees trembled, and his cheeks grew pale. Instead of staying at the front of his troops, he withdrew, afraid to fight Menelaus. He no longer felt like boasting.

Hector, Paris' older brother, saw all. He said to Paris, "Prince of beauty. You prefer to seduce women than fight warriors. I wish to the gods that you had never been born and that you had never had a wife. That would be better than to see you now — you are a disgrace. The enemy warriors don't respect you.

"You are a handsome man, but you are often not a warrior. I look at you now, and I don't see the man who had the courage to sail across the Aegean Sea and steal the wife of his host. That was wrong, but it took some courage and now you slink away from Menelaus.

"You are bringing destruction to your father, to the city of Troy, and to all the Trojans, yet you are afraid to face Menelaus. If you fought him, you would find how powerful he is as a warrior — he is the man you robbed of his beautiful, warm wife.

"If you fought a duel with Menelaus, you would find that your skill with a lyre and your long hair and your beauty — gifts of Aphrodite — would be of no use to you, not as you roll and die in the dust.

"The citizens of Troy are cowards, else they would have stoned you to death long ago."

Paris, who could fight when he wanted to, although he often did not want to, replied to Hector, "Your criticisms of me are fair. I deserve them. You say what is in your tireless heart. Your words are like an ax chopping through wood. You tell the truth.

"Aphrodite has given me many gifts, including Helen. The gifts of a god are not to be lightly tossed aside. We cannot give such gifts to ourselves.

"If you really want me to duel with Menelaus to the death — and you do — I am willing. Let me and him fight to the death now in front of Greeks and Trojans. Whoever wins the duel will have Helen and the treasure. The living warriors will swear pacts of friendship. The Trojans will live in peace at Troy, and the Greeks will sail across the Aegean Sea to their homes, wives, and children."

Hector rejoiced. The Trojan War would end on this day, and the Trojan women and children would be safe and at peace.

Hector stopped his warriors from fighting, and then he strode into the ground separating the two armies. Greek soldiers threw rocks at him, and Greek archers tried to kill him with arrows, but Agamemnon stopped them, saying, “Stop attacking Hector! Let us hear what he has to say!”

All became silent, and Hector said to both armies, “Paris, who caused the war between us, challenges Menelaus. He wants all the Greeks and all the Trojans to stop fighting and allow Menelaus and him to fight in single combat. Whoever wins the single combat will take Menelaus’ treasure and Helen, and all the living warriors will swear pacts of friendship.”

Greeks and Trojans were silent.

Menelaus spoke, “Hear me now! This is limited vengeance, and I deserve more than that, but I want peace between Trojans and Greeks. Many Greek warriors have died because of the conflict between Paris and me — a conflict that Paris started.

“Now Paris and I will fight. Let the one who is fated to die, die now! But everyone else can depart in peace after this conflict is ended, which will be soon.

“Trojans, bring two lambs — a black male and a white female — for a sacrifice to the sun and earth. The Greeks will provide another lamb to sacrifice to Zeus.

“And Trojans, bring King Priam out to swear an oath with a sacrifice. I don’t trust his sons, the princes of Troy. We will swear an oath to Zeus, an oath that must not be violated. Too often, young men are reckless. Let an old man swear the oath to Zeus. An old man can remember the past and can see ahead. An old man has prudence and will respect the oath made to Zeus. This is our best hope for peace between Greeks and Trojans.”

The Greek warriors and the Trojan warriors rejoiced, hoping that soon the war would end. They drew their chariots in ranks. The soldiers stripped off their armor and placed it on the ground. Greek armor lay next to Trojan armor.

Hector sent two heralds to Troy to bring the sacrificial lambs and Priam. Agamemnon sent the herald Talthibius to bring a lamb to sacrifice to Zeus.

A messenger also went to Helen: the goddess Iris, looking now like Laodice, one of Hector’s sisters. Laodice was a beautiful woman who had married Helicaon, the son of Antenor. Helen was in her rooms, weaving a robe decorated with scenes from the Trojan War. Helen was an artist.

Iris said, “Come, Helen, to the walls of Troy so that you can see what is going on. Greeks and Trojans were ready to slaughter each other in battle, but now no one is fighting. Menelaus and Paris are going to fight a duel to the death over you. You will be the wife of whoever wins the duel.”

Helen wanted her husband of years ago, Menelaus, to win the duel. She put on a cloak and left her rooms. Two female attendants went with her: Aethra and Clymene. They went to the Scaean Gates.

Many old men were gathered there with King Priam, who was also an old man: Panthous, Thymoetes, Lampus, Clytius, Hicetaon, Ucalegon, and Antenor. They were too old to still be warriors, but they spoke well in council. The old men sitting near Priam saw Helen and her beauty, and they murmured, “Can anyone blame the warriors for fighting over Helen? We old men can understand why the warriors have been fighting for nine years over such beauty. She has the beauty of an immortal goddess! Still, it is much better for Troy if she goes back to Greece. If she stays here, she will continue to bring sorrow to us and our children.”

Priam saw Helen and called to her, “Dear child, come here. Sit with me and look at your husband of years ago. Look at all the Greek warriors. I don’t blame you for this war. The gods are the ones who brought this war to the Trojans — this war that devastates us and devastates the Greeks.

“Come closer and identify some of the Greek warriors. Who is the Greek warrior who is so regal? Other Greek warriors are taller, but this Greek warrior must be a king!”

Helen replied, “I respect you, and I honor you, Priam. I wish that I had died before I came to Troy, before I forsook my husband and left my relatives and my child and the friendship of women. But I did not die, and so now I mourn.

“But to answer your question, that Greek warrior is Agamemnon. He is a king, and he is a strong spearman, and he used to be my brother-in-law. But now I am a whore. I think I can remember life in Greece, but it all seems to be a dream.”

Priam, looking at Agamemnon, said, “You are fortunate to be able to command so mighty an army! When I was young, I visited Phrygia, and I helped fight the Amazons. Not even the hordes of the Amazons could match your army!”

Priam saw Odysseus but did not recognize him. He asked Helen, “Who is this Greek warrior? He is shorter than Agamemnon, but his shoulders and chest are broader. His armor lies on the ground, and he ranges through the soldiers like a ram among sheep.”

Helen replied, “That warrior is Odysseus. His father is Laertes, and he comes from Ithaca, a rocky island. Odysseus is good at coming up with plots and plans — he is a man of twists and turns.”

Antenor spoke up: “All you say is correct, Helen. He came with Menelaus on an embassy about you. I was their host, I observed *xenia* well, and I learned about them. When Menelaus and Odysseus stood up, Menelaus was taller, but when they were seated, Odysseus looked nobler. Both spoke to us about you. Menelaus spoke well and to the point. He wasted no words. When Odysseus stood up to speak, he did not speak right away. He stood, he stared down at the ground, and he clutched the scepter. He seemed unimpressive until he spoke, but when he did speak, he impressed us all. No one can match Odysseus with words.”

Priam saw another fighter: Great Ajax. Priam asked Helen, “Who is the Greek warrior who towers over the others? He is huge! He is strong!”

Helen replied, “That is Great Ajax, one of the two strongest Greek warriors.

“And near him is Idomeneus, king of Crete. Menelaus, my husband of long ago, used to host him in our home when Idomeneus traveled.

“I can see all the Greek warriors, but two warriors I expected to see are missing. Castor and Polydeuces are my blood brothers. Perhaps they stayed in Greece, or if they did sail to Troy, perhaps they are staying in their camp because they are ashamed to fight with the Greek warriors, ashamed because of me and because of how the other Greek warriors think of me.”

So Helen speculated, but her brothers were dead and buried beneath the life-giving earth in Lacedaemon, where she and Menelaus had lived.

The heralds Hector had sent to Troy had gathered the two lambs — a black male and a white female. The herald Idaeus had also gathered wine, a bowl, and wine cups. All of these items were needed for the oath. Idaeus went to Priam and said, “The commanders of both armies — Hector and Agamemnon — need you. They want you to come to them to swear an oath. Paris and Menelaus will fight a duel to the death. Whoever wins the duel will win Helen and the treasure of Menelaus. Everyone else will swear pacts of friendship. We will live in peace in Troy, and the Greeks will sail to their homes.”

Priam shuddered — this could be the day that Paris, his son, died. Priam ordered his men to prepare a chariot, and then he climbed aboard with Antenor. They went through the Scaean Gates and to the waiting warriors.

Reaching the warriors, they got off the chariot and walked in the area between the two armies. Agamemnon and Odysseus came to greet them. They prepared everything for the sacrifice and for the swearing of the oath, and Agamemnon raised his arms and prayed, “Zeus,

sun, and earth, witness what we swear here. Punish anyone who breaks this oath! If Paris kills Menelaus, then Paris keeps Helen and he keeps Menelaus' treasure, and the Greeks sail home. But if Menelaus kills Paris, then Menelaus gets Helen and his treasure back, and we Greeks get reparations for what we have suffered in our nine years of fighting here — reparations of an amount that men will remember. And if Menelaus kills Paris but Priam does not live up to his oath, then we Greeks will continue the war, fighting to destroy Troy.”

They slaughtered the lambs as a sacrifice, and then they drank wine and swore the oath.

The Greek warriors and the Trojan warriors supported the oath. Both Greeks and Trojans could be heard saying as they spilled a few drops of wine on the ground for the gods, “Whichever side breaks this oath, may their brains and their children’s brains spill on the ground just like this wine is spilled, and may their enemies make their wives sex-slaves!”

Zeus heard these prayers, but he would not grant — yet — the warriors’ wish for peace.

Priam then spoke, “Listen to me, Trojans and Greeks. I am returning to Troy. I do not wish to see my son, Paris, battle Menelaus. Zeus knows which warrior is fated to fall, which fighter is fated to be triumphant.”

Priam placed the slaughtered lambs in the chariots — food is often scarce in a besieged city — and he and Antenor rode back to Troy.

Priam and Odysseus measured the ground where the duel would be fought. The warriors on each side prayed, “Zeus, let the man who caused this war die and go to the Land of the Dead, but let the rest of us be friends and be at peace!”

Two lots — one for Menelaus and one for Paris — were placed in a helmet and Hector shook it to see which warrior would throw his spear first. Paris’ lot fell out of the helmet — he would throw first.

The troops sat down according to rank. Paris and Menelaus prepared for the single combat. They put on their armor, and each warrior had a helmet, breastplate, shield, spear, and sword. They armed at opposite sides of the dueling ground, and then they went into the no-man’s land in the middle.

Paris suddenly hurled his spear. It was a direct hit, but ineffective. It hit the center of Menelaus’ shield but did not punch through the shield — the shield was too tough.

Now, in accordance with the ancient custom, it was Menelaus’ turn to throw his spear. Menelaus first prayed to Zeus: “Give me revenge, Zeus. This is the man who wronged me. Let me crush him so that other people may learn not to violate *xenia*!”

Menelaus hurled his spear — a direct hit! It hit the center of Paris’ shield and punched on through the shield and through Paris’ breastplate. But Paris dodged death as he twisted out of the path of the spear.

Menelaus drew his sword and charged at Paris. He raised his sword and crashed it down on Paris’ helmet — the sword broke into pieces.

Menelaus cried out to Zeus, “I thought I would kill Paris today, but my sword is broken and I wasted the throw of my spear!”

But Menelaus was not finished. He grabbed Paris’ helmet and started dragging him to the Greek side of the dueling ground. The chinstrap of his helmet choked Paris. Menelaus would have won the duel and achieved undying glory, but Aphrodite rescued Paris. She broke the chinstrap, and the helmet came away empty in Menelaus’ hand. Menelaus threw the helmet to the Greek warriors — it was a notable piece of booty. Then he grabbed his spear and ran toward Paris — but Aphrodite was faster. She created a fog to hide Paris and spirited him behind the safe walls of Troy.

Aphrodite placed Paris safely down in his own perfumed bedroom, and then she went to bring Helen, who was in a tower with a group of Trojan women, to him. Aphrodite disguised

herself, changing her appearance to that of an old woman who had woven clothing for Helen in Lacedaemon. Aphrodite said to Helen, “Come quickly — Paris wants you. He is in your bedroom, waiting for you. He is handsome and finely dressed. He does not look like a man who has been fighting — he looks like a man who is going to a dance.”

Helen felt sexual passion for Paris. He was good for one thing.

Helen recognized Aphrodite and said to her, “Goddess, why are you luring me to go to Paris? This is ruinous. Do you have plans to eventually drive me to another man in another country — another favorite of yours?”

“Why do you want me to go to Paris now? Is it because Menelaus has beaten your favorite mortal and because Menelaus still wants to take me back to Sparta despite what I have done to him? Is that why you want me to go to Paris?”

“Why don’t you go to Paris yourself? He is your favorite! Stop being a goddess! Be a mortal instead! Stay with Paris and protect him. You can be his wife — or his slave. I don’t want to go to Paris and sleep with him. That would be shameful, and the Trojan women would hate me.”

It is not wise to make a god or goddess angry — they can do bad things to you.

Aphrodite was angry. She said to Helen, “Don’t make me your enemy. I can easily hate you as much as I love you now. I can easily make all the Trojans hate you and make all the Greeks hate you. I can easily make the rest of your life wretched.”

Helen was afraid. She knew that Aphrodite had spoken the truth. She followed Aphrodite, who led her to Paris, who was in his and Helen’s bedroom. Aphrodite brought Helen a chair, and Helen sat down, facing Paris.

Helen said to Paris, “So, you have had enough fighting for today. I wish that you had died today — killed by Menelaus, who used to be my husband. You have long boasted that you are a better warrior than Menelaus. If that is true, why don’t you go out and duel Menelaus again? Why don’t you two fight to the death?”

“Wait, I understand why you don’t do that. If you were to fight Menelaus again, he would most likely put a spear through your body.”

Paris replied, “No more words, Helen. True, Menelaus won the duel, but only because he had the help of a goddess: Athena.”

Helen thought, *That is a likely story.*

Paris continued, “I will kill Menelaus tomorrow.”

Helen thought, *That is also a likely story.*

Paris continued, “But right now, let us go to bed. I want you now more than I ever have — even more than when I ran away with you and we made love on an island. I want you much more now.”

Paris and Helen went to bed together.

As Paris and Helen had sex, Menelaus was looking for Paris on the battlefield. None of the Trojans or the Trojan allies could say where Paris was although none of them regarded Paris as a friend and all of them wanted Paris to die so that the war would end.

Agamemnon shouted to all, “Trojans and Greeks, Menelaus has clearly won the single combat. He is the victor. Trojans, you must return Helen and his treasure to Menelaus and pay the Greeks fitting reparations for nine years of war.”

The Greeks roared their approval.

Zeus, who was watching the war, thought, *The Trojans do not have a good reason for fighting the war. They are fighting only so that Paris can sleep with Helen.*

If the Trojans were to win the war, and they won’t, Paris would keep the treasure he stole from Menelaus, and he would keep the wife he stole from Menelaus. In order for him to do

that, many Trojans and many Greeks will have died in the war. Paris isn't worth the deaths of those men, and neither is Helen. Of course, while the war is being fought, many children are growing up in Greece without fathers. Some young men will run wild because they did not have fathers around to help raise them and teach them the correct way to behave. And at least one young man on Ithaca will still be an adolescent when he should be a man because his father was not around to raise him. In addition, many parents are growing old without their sons being around to take care of them.

If the Trojans lose the war, they lose everything. The men will lose their lives, and the women and children will become slaves. The young and pretty Trojan women will become sex-slaves. In addition, the world will lose a center of civilization.

The Trojans don't even respect Paris. All of them, including Helen, would be happy if he were to die. Paris has no concern for the Trojans. He is willing to have sex with Helen in Troy while the Trojans are on the battlefield.

Meanwhile, in his camp by his ships, Odysseus thought, *The world is what it is.*

The world is polytheistic. Many gods exist.

The gods are powerful beings. They are powerful forces in nature, and they can walk among human beings.

Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades decided to divide up the world. They cast lots to decide who would be the god of the sky, who would be the god of the sea, and who would be the god of the Land of the Dead.

Zeus is the god of the sky. Zeus' weapons include thunderbolts, which he throws.

Poseidon is the god of the sea. He has a chariot that he can drive over water.

Hades is the god of the Underworld. He rules a gloomy world: the Land of the Dead. The Land of the Dead is also known as Hades.

Zeus is the most powerful god. The land should be ruled in common by these three major gods, but Zeus seized power over the land. He is the strongest god, and the other gods cannot resist him. Zeus rules by might. He has many affairs with both immortal goddesses and mortal women.

These are the three major gods, but many other gods exist.

Aphrodite inflicts sexual passion on other people, and she is sexual passion.

Apollo is the god of the sun, of archery, of the lyre, of the plague, and of medicine.

Ares is hated because he is war.

Artemis is the goddess of the moon and of the hunt. She is also the goddess of the young of beasts and the children of human beings.

Athena is the goddess of wisdom.

Bacchus is the god of grapes and of wine.

Hera is the goddess of marriage. She is the wife of Zeus, and she is depicted in art wearing a veil and headdress. A veil and headdress are signs of a married woman. Hera is jealous of Zeus' many lovers.

Hephaestus is the god of fire: the blacksmith god. His legs are lame, but he has strong shoulders and so he became a blacksmith and a creator of beautiful objects.

Hermes is the god who guides the souls of the dead to the Underworld. He also delivers messages for the gods.

Iris is the goddess of the rainbow. She delivers messages for the gods.

Thetis, the mother of Achilles, is a minor sea-goddess. Her father is the Old Man of the Sea.

These gods have human form, with some differences. The gods and goddesses are larger and better looking and stronger than human beings. However, they look like human beings,

and they speak the language of human beings. They feel the human emotions of jealousy, anger, and grief. They eat, drink, and have sex like human beings. Gods and mortals can mate together and have children.

The gods are not omniscient, or omnipotent, or omnibenevolent.

The gods are not omniscient; they know a lot, but they do not know everything. The gods can trick other gods. The gods can do things behind other gods' backs. The gods can wait until the attention of Zeus is turned elsewhere and then act without his knowledge. If Zeus were omniscient, he would know when another god is tricking him. Hera sometimes tricks Zeus.

Here is an example of Zeus being unfaithful to Hera, who in turn tricks him. Zeus was able to sleep with Alcmena by assuming the form of her husband. This is a form of sexual misconduct. Alcmena did not want to have sex with Zeus; she thought that she was having sex with her husband. Alcmena became pregnant with the super-strong mortal named Heracles. Zeus wanted Heracles to become a king. Hera asked Zeus to swear an inviolable oath that a descendant of Perseus born on a certain day would become a king. Zeus swore the inviolable oath, knowing that Heracles was a descendant of Perseus and expecting him to be born on that day. But Hera held back Heracles' birth and instead another descendant of Perseus, Eurystheus, was born on that day and so he became a king. Heracles performed his famous twelve labors for Eurystheus.

Of course, the gods do know a lot. They know a human being's fate. The gods know when a human being will die. They also know the fate of cities; for example, they know that Troy will fall.

The gods are very powerful, but they are not omnipotent.

The gods can change their shape. They can take the shape of a bird or of a particular human being. The gods often take the shape of human beings when they appear before mortals because if they appeared in their full glory before mortals, the sight of them would incinerate the mortals. For example, Semele was the mortal mother of the god Bacchus. She wanted Zeus, the father of Bacchus, to reveal himself to her in all his glory. He did, and she burned to ashes.

The gods can make themselves invisible. They can make mortals invisible by hiding them in fog. When Agamemnon and Achilles quarreled, Athena appeared before Achilles and stopped him from killing Agamemnon. I was present. I did not see Athena, but Achilles did. He must have. And Aphrodite was able to make Paris invisible in a fog as she swept him off the dueling ground when he fought — and lost to — Menelaus. All I saw was the fog, but I know that Aphrodite loves Paris and she must have helped him.

The gods have well-developed senses of hearing and of sight. They can hear prayers addressed to them from far away. They can be on Mount Olympus and yet hear and see everything that is going on at Troy.

The gods can fly through the air. They can travel very quickly.

Some gods have special powers. Poseidon can cause earthquakes, and Zeus can cause lightning. Aphrodite can cause sexual desire in an immortal or a mortal being. Zeus at least sometimes knows the thoughts of mortals.

The gods cannot go back on their inviolable oaths. When Zeus swears by the River Styx, he must keep his oath. The same is true of the other gods.

Zeus and the other gods cannot simply annul death, and they cannot change fate — or, at least, they decide not to do these things. However, the gods can decide which course of events will lead to a certain fate. For example, if a mortal is fated to die on a certain day, a god such as Zeus can decide how that mortal will die.

The gods are a part of the universe. The universe existed and then the gods such as Zeus came into existence.

The gods are not omnibenevolent; they are not all-good; they are often not just. Some of the gods, including Zeus, are rapists. Hera is very capable of exacting vengeance on innocent people. The gods are very dangerous, and they can do bad things to human beings. One example is the story of Actaeon. He was out hunting with his dogs, and he saw the goddess Artemis bathing naked. He did not mean to see her naked, but she exacted vengeance anyway. She turned him into a stag, and his own dogs ran him down and killed him. He suffered horribly because his mind was still human although his body was that of a male deer.

The gods can at times be just. Zeus is the god of xenia, and he punishes those who violate xenia.

Because the gods are immortal, they do not regard time as humans do. They have all eternity to live. A mortal can die today. The Trojan War started because of a violation of xenia, but the war has gone on for nine years and Zeus has not yet punished Troy. What is nine years to Zeus? Nothing. What is nine years to me? If I were home in Ithaca, my wife, Penelope, and I could have had more children by now.

The gods take sides. Apollo, Artemis, and Aphrodite support the Trojans, while Athena, Hera, and Poseidon support the Greeks.

Usually, the gods do not love or respect human beings, although exceptions exist. Thetis really does love Achilles; she has long conversations with him. Athena has a certain regard for me. Both Athena and I can form well-planned plots. Athena respects me for that reason.

Often, we human beings seem to be playthings of the gods. Zeus rapes mortal women whom he desires but who are unwilling to sleep with him. The gods look at the Trojan War as a long-running source of entertainment.

The gods are not omnipotent, the gods are not transcendent, the gods are not necessarily good, the gods are not omniscient, and the gods are not necessarily loving. Occasionally, the gods can be good or loving, or both. Occasionally, the gods can be rapists or murderers, or both.

The gods are immortal, while human beings are mortal. I, Odysseus, accept mortality. Immortality does not work well for most human beings. For example, the goddess Dawn fell in love with the mortal Tithonus. As a gift, she made him immortal. However, she did not make him ageless, and so he grows older and older. A Sibyl was once granted anything she wished for. She wished to live as many years as the number of grains of sand on beaches. She will eventually die because the number of grains of sand on beaches is finite, but if you ask the very aged Sibyl now what she wishes for, she replies, "I wish to die."

I much prefer mortality. Mortality makes heroism possible. If a god goes to war against human beings, the god risks little because the god cannot die. A god can be wounded, but the god will quickly heal and be pain-free. When a mortal goes to war, the mortal can die and lose all. A mortal who risks his life to save the life of another human being is a true hero. The gods at times can inspire awe, but they cannot be heroes.

One characteristic of the gods is their anger. The word for the anger of a god is menis.

We Greeks saw how strong the anger of the gods can be when Agamemnon disrespected the priest of Apollo, and Apollo sent the plague against the Greeks. Agamemnon did not catch the plague and die, but many innocent Greeks did. The anger of the gods results in many innocent human beings dying. Take the Trojan War. I know about the Judgment of Paris. Athena and Hera are willing for many, many Trojans — and Greeks — to die simply because they lost a beauty contest.

The world is patriarchal. Males have the power. Of course, the goddesses are a special case and are more powerful than human men. However, even in the world of gods and goddesses, the gods have more power. The king of gods and men is Zeus, a male.

Slavery exists in this world. Women are spoils of war, and young, pretty women become sex-slaves to the warriors who have killed their husbands and brothers. Even in places of peace, slaves are servants in the palaces and on the farms.

The world is monarchical. Agamemnon is a king, Menelaus is a king, Achilles is a king, and I am a king. Many other Greek warriors at Troy are kings. Priam is the King of Troy.

This is just the way the world is.

CHAPTER 4: A Truce and a Battle

On Mount Olympus, Zeus and the other gods were enjoying an easy life. They sat in comfort, and Hebe, the goddess of youth and spring, poured nectar for them in golden goblets. They looked down at the Trojan War, a source of entertainment for them.

But Zeus decided to anger his wife, Hera. He said to the gods, “Look at those two there: Hera and Athena. They support Menelaus, and yet Aphrodite just rescued her favorite, Paris, from death at the hands of Menelaus. Hera and Athena watch, and Aphrodite takes action. Otherwise, Paris would now be dead. However, Menelaus obviously won the single combat.

“Now we need to decide future events. Troy is fated to fall, but will it fall now? Or do we ensure that the fighting starts again and Troy falls at a later date? If Troy falls now, men could still live in Troy and Menelaus could take Helen home to Sparta.”

Hera and Athena sat together discussing the war. Athena knew that her father was trying to make Hera angry. Athena ignored him and stayed silent, but Hera said, “Why do you want to end the war now? I have labored long and hard to bring the Greek ships to Troy. I have labored long and hard to make the war painful for Priam and Priam’s sons. I want them to suffer more.

“Do whatever you please. You have the strength. You have the power. But don’t expect the other gods to praise you!”

Zeus had wanted to make Hera angry, but now he was angry. He said to her, “You want to bring miseries to Priam and to Priam’s sons, but what miseries have they heaped on you? What have they done to you that makes you want to tear down the walls of Troy? How will you ever satisfy your thirst for vengeance? By eating Priam and Priam’s sons raw? Is that what it would take? Take your vengeance. Do whatever you want. But if I ever want to destroy a city you love, Hera, don’t try to stop me.

“After all, I am allowing you to destroy Troy — unwillingly. I love Troy and I love Priam. At Troy, my altars have never lacked for sacrifices. For me, the Trojans sacrifice animals and pour wine onto the ground. That is the way that mortals pay homage to me and to you other gods.”

Hera opened her eyes wide and said, “Wonderful. I love three cities ruled by men. I love the city of Argos, which is ruled by Diomedes. I love the city of Sparta, which is ruled by Menelaus, and I love the city of Mycenae, which is ruled by Agamemnon. Destroy these three cities whenever you wish. Do whatever you want to do to them whenever you want to do it. I will not come to their defense. And if I did, what good would it do? You are strong and powerful. Still, you ought to give me what I want. I am your wife, after all. So let us give in to each other’s wishes: You allow me to destroy Troy, and I will allow you to destroy Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae.

“But right now, let us keep this war going so that Priam and Priam’s sons can suffer even more. Send Athena to the battlefield. Let her make sure that the Trojans break the truce. Let her make sure that the war starts again — no peace!”

Zeus obeyed her wish. He knew that Troy was fated to fall, but not yet. He said to Athena, “Go to the battlefield and make sure that the Trojans break the truce. They started the war; they are the ones who will break the truce.”

Athena flew to the battlefield like a falling meteorite trailing fire behind it. The warriors saw the trail of fire, and they were terrified. They asked each other, “What does this sign mean? Will the two armies battle again? Or does this sign mean peace?”

Athena reached the battlefield, and looking like the Trojan Laodocus, she searched for Pandarus, a skilled archer. He was near, standing by warriors carrying shields.

Athena said to him, “You can win glory, Pandarus. You have skill as an archer. Are you man enough to kill Menelaus with an arrow? If you do, the war will be over, and Paris will reward you with shining treasure. So shoot an arrow into Menelaus and bring him down. Let his corpse be placed on a burial pyre and burned to ashes. But before you shoot an arrow, pray to Apollo, god of archery. Swear to him that you will sacrifice many newborn lambs to him when you return home.”

Athena tempted him, and the fool believed that he would be successful. He unstrapped his bow. It was made from the horns of a wild goat that he had hunted and hit in the heart. The horns were sixteen hands in length, and a skilled bowyer made them into a bow with gold caps on the tips. Apollo had given Pandarus the skill to hunt the wild goat and had given the bowyer the skill to make the bow, and so the bow was a gift from Apollo to Pandarus.

Pandarus strung the bow and fitted an arrow to the string. His fellow warriors hid him from sight with their shields. He prayed to Apollo, promising him sacrifices, and he aimed at Menelaus and shot the arrow.

But Athena protected Menelaus. She wanted the war to start again, and she wanted the Trojans to repeat their guilt, but she did not want Menelaus to die. Just like a mother flicks a fly from a sleeping baby, she flicked the arrow away from Menelaus’ vital organs. Blood flowed, but the wound was not mortal.

Warriors grabbed their armor and weapons and retreated to their respective sides.

The arrow had hit Menelaus’ war-belt and been deflected from his vital organs. The tip of the arrowhead had grazed his flesh, but most of the arrowhead remained outside his body.

Imagine a Carian woman dyeing ivory. From white it turns red. The prized ivory item — the cheek piece of a horse — is stored and valued in a king’s vault. Menelaus’ red blood flowed and dyed his legs red.

Agamemnon loved his brother. He saw the flowing blood and shuddered. Menelaus himself feared at first for his life, but he saw that the arrow had only lightly penetrated his body and had not made a mortal wound.

Agamemnon grabbed his brother’s hand and said, “Menelaus, the truce I made with the Trojans was a mistake — it sealed your death. It exposed you before the treacherous Trojans. They did not observe our truce. But the sacrifices we made and the oaths we swore to the gods shall not go for nothing. Zeus will take vengeance on the Trojans for breaking the oath. Maybe not today, but eventually. People who do such treachery will be punished. Eventually, Troy will fall and Priam and his people will die. Zeus, god of *xenia*, will make sure that this happens.

“But I will grieve for you if you die and I am forced to go back to Greece in disgrace. If you die, our warriors will want to immediately return home. The war will be over, and Priam and the other Trojans will be triumphant. Helen will stay at Troy, as will your corpse and funeral mound. Some Trojan will stand on your funeral mound and boast, ‘Let Agamemnon always be this “successful” in war! Let him always go home empty-handed, as he did when he attacked Troy and was forced to leave the corpse of his brother behind.’ Some Trojan will boast that way. Let me die before that happens!”

Menelaus said to him, “Don’t worry. This is not a mortal wound. My war-belt stopped the arrow before it reached a mortal spot.”

Agamemnon said, “I pray to the gods that you are right. Right now, let’s get a healer who will treat your wound and stop the pain.”

Agamemnon said to his herald Talthibius, “Get the healer Machaon. His father was the healer Asclepius. We need him to treat Menelaus. An archer has hit him with an arrow to gain glory for himself and to give defeat to us.”

Talthybius ran to find Machaon. He was with other warriors from Tricca. Talthybius said to Machaon, "Come quickly! Agamemnon needs you to treat Menelaus, who has been hit by an arrow in an act of treachery."

Talthybius and Machaon ran to Menelaus. Machaon removed the arrow from Menelaus' body and sucked blood out of the wound, and then he applied salves that the wise Centaur Chiron had given to Asclepius in years past.

Meanwhile, the Greeks and Trojans had put on their armor and grabbed their weapons and were preparing to do battle.

Agamemnon took charge. He left Machaon and Menelaus and went off to make sure that his warriors were ready. He left his team of horses and chariot in the care of his aide Eurymedon until he would need them when he grew exhausted in battle.

Agamemnon went first to the charioteers and said, "Fight strongly. Right is on our side. The Trojans started this war, and the Trojans broke the truce. Zeus will not support them in this war. Dogs and birds will eat the flesh of their dead warriors, and we will drag their wives and children home with us to be slaves after we have conquered Troy!"

Agamemnon also saw warriors retreating from doing battle. These men he scorned with words: "Bragging cowards! Why are you running from battle! Why are you acting like winded fawns? Is your fighting spirit dead? Are you waiting for the Trojans to pin you with your backs against your ships? Are you hoping that Zeus will perform a miracle to save your lives?"

Agamemnon moved down the front line and made sure that his warriors were ready to fight. He praised some commanders, and he criticized other commanders.

Idomeneus, commander of the warriors from Crete, stood with his warriors ready to fight the Trojans.

Agamemnon praised the Cretan leader, "I prize you, Idomeneus, more than other warriors, and I show it at our feasts. Other warriors drink only their allotted amount of wine, but your wine cup is filled and refilled without limit. Now fight bravely. Be the fighter whom you have always claimed to be."

Idomeneus replied, "I will. You can count on me. Now fire up the other warriors and make them ready for battle. The Trojans broke the truce. Let them die because of it."

Agamemnon next saw the two warriors named Ajax: Great Ajax and Little Ajax. They stood with their warriors, ready for battle. Think of a goatherd on a mountaintop seeing a black storm coming. The goatherd drives his goats to a cave, where they crowd together as they wait for a storm. Much like that, warriors crowded behind the two Ajaxes.

Agamemnon said to them, "Great Ajax and Little Ajax, I have no need to fire you up for battle. You are ready to fight, and so are your warriors. If all of my commanders and warriors were like you and yours, the city of Troy would fall — immediately!"

Next Agamemnon saw Nestor, who was too old to do battle but who still knew strategy. He was readying his warriors to be led into battle by Pelagon, Alastor, and Chromius. Nestor placed the charioteers in the front and the foot warriors behind them. He placed the weaker and more cowardly warriors in the center — they could not run away but had to fight.

Nestor gave advice to the charioteers: "Fight as a team, not as individuals. Don't go far out in front and try to be an individual hero, and don't lag behind. Drive at the Trojans in a solid line. When you use your spear, thrust it and hold on to it. Don't throw it at the Trojans. Use the effective, time-tested form of fighting."

Nestor had fought many battles in his long life, and he had learned from fighting them. He understood strategy.

Agamemnon praised him: "Honored sir, I wish you were young again and could fight. But old age comes to all who do not die. Still, I wish that another warrior had your old age and that

you were young again.”

Nestor replied, “I wish I were as young as I was when I killed Ereuthalion, but the gods give some gifts and hold other gifts back. No man receives all the gifts of the gods at one time. But with the burden of old age, I received the gifts of experience and knowledge. I will advise my warriors in battle tactics — that is something an old commander can do. The young warriors will engage in actual battle.”

Next Agamemnon saw Menestheus, commander of the warriors from the city of Athens, and Odysseus, commander of the warriors from the island of Ithaca. They were standing still, waiting for orders. Other commanders had received their orders, but not them.

Agamemnon thought they were slacking off and so he criticized them: “What are you doing? Avoiding battle? Letting other warriors do all the fighting? Are you avoiding your duty — your duty to fight in the front line? Both of you have been honored at my feasts. Both of you have been able to eat your fill of meat and drink your fill of wine. But are neither of you willing to dine at the feast of battle?”

Odysseus said sharply to Agamemnon, “Don’t talk nonsense! Watch me, and you will see that I fight well!”

Seeing that Odysseus was angry, Agamemnon controlled himself and said to him, “You are right, son of Laertes. I know that you have the heart of a warrior. If anything is wrong between us, we will fix it later. May the gods not allow us to quarrel!”

Agamemnon next saw Diomedes and his second-in-command, Sthenelus. Diomedes was standing in his chariot. Sthenelus was beside him. It seemed to Agamemnon that they were hanging back, unwilling to fight.

Agamemnon said to Diomedes, “You are the son of Tydeus. You ought not to be hanging back. Tydeus was a warrior who fought in the front lines. I never met him, but they say that he was a ferocious warrior. With Polynices, he visited the city of Mycenae a generation ago. They were preparing to attack the city of Thebes, and they wanted Mycenaean warriors to fight with them. My royal family was at first happy to fight with them, but Zeus sent them bad omens and they stayed at Mycenae. Tydeus and Polynices went to Thebes.

“Tydeus took a message to Thebes, a city which Eteocles ruled. Enemy warriors in the city surrounded Tydeus, but he was not afraid. He challenged warrior after warrior to contests of strength, and he won all contests. When he left the city, the Thebans sent warriors after him to kill him. Fifty warriors tried to kill Tydeus, but he killed forty-nine of them, leaving one alive to retreat to Thebes in accordance with signs sent by the gods.

“Such a man was Tydeus, but his son is not worthy of him.”

Diomedes, a young man, remained silent, but Sthenelus was angry. He said to Agamemnon, “You are wrong. We are better men than our fathers, and our successes show it. Our fathers fought at Thebes, but they were defeated. We fought at Thebes and won. Our army was weaker than the army of our fathers, but we followed the will of the gods and obeyed the signs sent by the gods. Our fathers were fools because they did not respect the will of the gods.”

Diomedes said to Sthenelus, “Calm down. Be quiet. Agamemnon is trying to inspire us to fight well. That is what a commander-in-chief should do. He will gain great glory if the Greeks conquer Troy, and he does not want the Trojans to kill great numbers of Greeks. So come now. Let us be ready to fight well.”

Diomedes jumped down from his chariot, and his armor rang. He headed toward the front lines. Any enemy warriors who saw him would have felt fear.

A heavy surf can pound a shore as wave after wave arrives and reaches the shore. Much like that, line after line of Greek warriors approached the Trojan warriors. The Greek warriors

marched silently into battle.

The Trojan warriors made much noise as they marched into battle. They sounded like a rich man's thousands of cattle waiting to be milked. The Trojan warriors and their allies shouted in various languages. No single language united them.

Ares led the Trojans and Trojan allies, and Athena led the Greeks. Other immortals were present: Terror, Rout, and Strife. Strife grows larger. At first, Strife, the sister of Ares, seems small, but she quickly grows so that her head touches the sky. Strife brought Hate with her.

The two armies clashed. Warriors fought. Some men screamed in defeat, and other men roared in triumph. The ground turned red with blood.

Flash floods sometimes thunder down from mountaintops through a gorge and into a valley. Miles away, shepherds can hear the thunder. Miles away, old men, wives, and children could hear the thunder of the two armies.

The Greek Antilochus killed Echeolus. Antilochus thrust his spear into Echeolus' forehead, breaking the skull. Echeolus fell like a tower. The Greek Elephenor grabbed the corpse's feet and tried to drag him away to strip off his valuable armor, but the Trojan Agenor saw Elephenor and stabbed his ribs with a spear and now the Greeks and Trojans fought like wolves over the corpse of Elephenor.

Zeus, who was watching the war, thought, *Often, the warriors fight over corpses. They want to strip away the armor and weapons, which are valuable. In addition, they can ransom the corpses. The family and friends of the dead warrior will pay to gain possession of the corpse so that they can give it a proper funeral.*

Great Ajax speared Simoisius, the young, unwed son of Anthemion. Anthemion was named after a flower, and his son died in the flower of his youth. Simoisius' mother had given birth to him along the banks of the Simois River when she and her parents had walked down the slopes of Mount Ida to tend to their sheep, and so he was named after the river. His parents loved him, but he died too soon to repay his parents by taking care of them in their old age. Great Ajax thrust his spear through Simoisius' right nipple and chest, and Simoisius fell like a black poplar tree that had grown tall and strong, but that had been cut down by a chariot-maker. The black poplar lies by the river, seasoning. The black poplar grows hard, and Simoisius' corpse will grow hard in *rigor mortis*.

Zeus thought, *Such are the results of war. Simoisius was a young man, very healthy, and still unwed. He will never know the pleasures of wedded life and never have a child. His life is cut short, unfinished and unfulfilled. His mother used to help her parents to tend sheep, but taking care of sheep on Mount Ida has been interrupted by the war. No longer do Trojans herd sheep on Mount Ida — the war has stopped that.*

The Trojan Antiphus, one of Priam's sons, hurled a spear at Great Ajax. He missed Great Ajax but hit Leucus, one of Odysseus' friends. Leucus was trying to haul away a corpse, but Antiphus speared him in the groin and Leucus fell on the corpse and died.

Odysseus was furious. He moved closer to the enemy and hurled his spear. The Trojans fell back, but Odysseus' spear found a target: Democoon, a bastard son of Priam. Odysseus' spear hit Democoon's head, entering one temple and exiting through the other temple. Democoon's eyes saw only the darkness of death.

The Trojans, including Hector, fell back, and the Greeks dragged away Democoon's corpse.

Apollo, watching from the fortress of Troy, yelled at the Trojans, "Kill the Greeks! Their bodies are not made of hard rock! They are made of soft flesh! Kill them! Achilles is not even present! He is in his shelter on the beach!"

In turn, Athena spurred on the Greeks.

The Trojan Pirous killed Diores. Pirous threw a jagged rock at him and hit his right shin, breaking bones. Diores fell, and Pirous rushed at him and speared him in the navel. Diores' intestines spilled on the ground.

The Greek Thoas then speared Pirous. The spear hit him near the nipple and pierced his lung. Thoas ran to Pirous, wrenched his spear out of Pirous' body and drew a knife and slashed him across his stomach. Thoas killed Pirous, but he could not take Pirous' armor. Pirous' fellow warriors were present, protecting his corpse and forcing Thoas back. Diores' and Pirous' corpses lay side by side upon the bloody ground.

No warrior who fought in that battle could doubt the ferocity of the battle. Even if a warrior were led into battle by Athena, and protected by her as she prevented deadly weapons from taking that warrior's life, that warrior would know that this was a battle to be celebrated in days to come.

CHAPTER 5: Diomedes Battles the Gods

Athena decided to help Diomedes achieve great glory. She would help him have an *aristeia*: a day of glory in battle — a day in which he would fight so well that a bard would sing his deeds of courage and his fame would never die. For millennia after the warrior died, people would remember his name and talk about him.

Athena set Diomedes on fire. His weapons gleamed. His armor gleamed. Fire seemed to surround him as he battled the Trojans.

The Trojan Dares, a wealthy, respected priest of Hephaestus, had two sons: Phegeus and Idaeus. They were trained for war, and in their chariot they rushed at Diomedes, who was on foot. Phegeus threw his spear, but he missed — the spear went over Diomedes' left shoulder. Diomedes then threw his spear and hit Phegeus in the chest, knocking him out of the chariot. Idaeus jumped out of the chariot and ran, afraid to stay and defend his brother's corpse. Diomedes would have killed Idaeus, but Hephaestus saved his life, taking him from the battlefield so that his father the priest would not have to endure the loss of both sons. Diomedes captured their team of horses and chariot and gave them to his aides to take back to his ships. The death of Phegeus stunned the Trojans.

Athena, supporter of the Greeks, saw Ares, supporter of the Trojans, and said to him, "Let's not take part in the battle. Let these mortals do the fighting. Zeus can allow whichever side he chooses to win. We need not get on his bad side." Athena and Ares sat on the bank of the river Scamander and watched mortals die.

Agamemnon killed Odius, a giant of a man. The spear hit him in the back between the shoulders and came jutting out of his ribs. He fell, and his armor clanged.

Idomeneus killed Phaestus, who tried to climb into a chariot. Idomeneus thrust his spear deep into Phaestus' right shoulder and Phaestus fell, dead. Idomeneus' aide stripped the armor from Phaestus' corpse.

Menelaus killed Scamandrius, a skilled hunter who had been taught how to hunt by the huntress goddess Artemis. She taught him how to track and kill the game found in the mountains. As Scamandrius fled, Menelaus speared him between the shoulder blades. The spear came out through his chest.

The Greek Meriones, second in command of the warriors from Crete, killed Phereclus, the son of a blacksmith. He was clever with his hands, and Athena cared for him. Phereclus had built Paris' ships when Paris sailed across the Aegean and visited Menelaus at Sparta. Phereclus had not known what would be the result of that trip. Meriones speared him in the right buttock. The spear pierced his bladder, and he dropped to his knees, screaming until his eyes saw only the darkness of death.

The Greek Meges killed Pedaeus. He was a bastard son of Antenor, but Theano, Antenor's wife, raised the boy to please her husband. Meges struck behind Pedaeus' neck with a spear. The spear came out through Pedaeus' mouth, cutting through his tongue. His teeth gripped the spearhead as he fell to the ground.

The Greek Eurypylus killed Hypsenor, the son of Dolopion, the priest of Scamander. Hypsenor fled from him, and Eurypylus followed and swung a sword and sliced off his arm. Hypsenor's arm and body hit the ground.

Warriors fought, and Diomedes fought in their midst. He was like a flash flood when spring arrives. Nothing can contain it; nothing can hold it back. It overflows the banks and washes away the dikes. The Trojans fled from Diomedes.

The archer Pandarus saw Diomedes routing the Trojans, and quickly he aimed an arrow at him. He shot — and hit his target! He hit a part of Diomedes' right shoulder that was not

protected by his breastplate. Blood splattered Diomedes' armor.

Pandarus shouted, "Attack, Trojans! I've wounded Diomedes! I don't think he will live much longer!"

But Diomedes was not seriously wounded. He retreated to his chariot and team of horses and told his second-in-command, Sthenelus, "Pull this arrow out of my shoulder."

Sthenelus pulled out the arrow, and blood gushed.

Diomedes prayed to Athena, "Hear me. You have stood by your father, Zeus, in battle before. Now stand by me. Pandarus fights at a distance. Bring him within range of my spear so that I can kill him. He wounded me with an arrow and boasts that I will not live much longer."

Athena heard him and gave him strength and speed. She said to him, "Fight the Trojans! I have given you the strength of your father. Tydeus was never afraid in battle; he was a fierce killer of foes. I have also given you special sight. Now you can tell when a god is fighting. If a god comes to fight you, do not engage in battle with the god, with one exception. If the god is Aphrodite, you may fight her and wound her with your spear."

Athena flew away, and Diomedes charged into battle. Now that he had been wounded, he was three times as angry as previously. He was as angry and as dangerous as a lion that a shepherd has wounded. The lion is ferocious, and the shepherd must flee as his flocks scatter in panic as the lion kills them. Like that lion killed sheep, so Diomedes killed Trojans.

Diomedes killed first Astynous and then Hypiron. He stabbed one with the lance, and the other he hacked with a sword that sliced his victim's entire shoulder and arm from his body.

Diomedes left them dead, not taking time to strip their armor. He charged the brothers Abas and Polyidus and killed them. Their father was Eurydamas, who read the meaning of dreams. But he had not read his sons' dreams when they sailed to become allies of Troy.

Diomedes killed two more brothers, Xanthus and Thoon. They had grown tall as their father had aged, and now he would father no more sons to be his heirs. Diomedes killed both of his sons and left the old father grieving. The father would never welcome his sons home from the war — distant relatives would inherit his property.

Diomedes killed Echemmon and Chromius, two more sons of Priam. They rode together in a chariot. Like a lion charging cattle and snapping their necks, so Diomedes charged them and took their lives. He stripped their armor and gave it and their team of horses to his aides to take back to his camp.

Diomedes kept killing Trojans, and Aeneas hunted for Pandarus, hoping that the archer could stop the Greek warrior. He found him and said to him, "Pandarus, you are the best of our archers. No one is better than you. Pray to Zeus, and kill with an arrow that Greek warrior who is routing us and killing many good warriors. You can kill him unless he is a god who wars against mortals."

Pandarus replied, "Aeneas, the Greek warrior looks like Diomedes to me. I can identify him by his distinctive shield and helmet and by his team of horses. I have been watching him closely. However, I cannot swear that he is not a god. But if he is Diomedes, then he fights with a god beside him. He can't be alone. An invisible god must be with him — a god who protects him. I shot an arrow at him and hit him and drew blood. I thought that I had killed him. But he still fights! Maybe he is a god!

"Here I am, on foot. I have no chariot and no team of horses. In the halls of my father, Lycaon, are eleven chariots and eleven teams of horses. My father urged me, 'Take the chariots and horses. Use them to lead the Trojans against the Greeks.' But I did not listen. I wish I had. I worried that I could not provide enough fodder for them during this war, so I left them at home, thinking that my bow and arrows would be offense enough.

“I have already wounded two of the best of the Greeks — Diomedes and Menelaus — but I killed neither of them. I drew blood, but I only made them angrier.

“It was bad luck when I chose to bring only my bow and arrows to Troy. If I make it back home again and see my wife and my house again, then let a stranger kill me if I don’t break my bow and burn it. It has been worthless to me here.”

Aeneas said to Pandarus, “Don’t talk about returning home. Let’s stop this rout by turning and facing Diomedes with my chariot and team of horses. Climb on board and see the horses that come from the stock of Tros, long-ago King of Troy. They are fast, and they will carry us back to Troy safely if we need to retreat. You can drive the team if you want, or if you prefer, I will do it.”

Pandarus replied, “It’s better for you to drive the team. They are your horses, and they will more readily obey you than they will me if we need to retreat. We don’t want them to panic if they don’t recognize my voice. They will be expecting to hear you. We don’t want Diomedes to kill the two of us and take your horses. You do the driving, and I will try to spear Diomedes and kill him.”

They boarded the chariot, and Aeneas drove the horses at Diomedes. Sthenelus, who was serving as a charioteer, saw Aeneas and Pandarus and said to Diomedes, “Here comes a challenge. Two enemy warriors are ready to fight you. One is the skilled archer Pandarus, and the other is Aeneas, whose mother is the immortal goddess Aphrodite. Climb aboard the chariot now. Don’t fight. You might die.”

Diomedes replied, “I won’t retreat. I prefer to fight. I will meet them on foot with Athena helping me. Two men are charging at me, but at best only one man will remain alive. If I should kill them both, I want you to capture Aeneas’ horses and take them to my camp. Aeneas’ horses come from the stock of Zeus’ horses that the god gave to Tros. Zeus had stolen Ganymede, one of Tros’ three sons, to be his cupbearer, and the god compensated Tros with strong stallions.

“Aeneas’ father, Anchises, was tricky. When his mares were in heat, he secretly drove them to be bred by the stallions, which then belonged to Laomedon, Tros’ grandson and the father of Priam. The mare produced six foals. Anchises kept four for himself, and he gave two to Aeneas, who is now using them in the war. With luck, we can take Aeneas’ horses and win great fame.”

Pandarus, bearing down upon Diomedes and Sthenelus, shouted, “What foolhardiness! Diomedes is standing his ground and will fight us!”

He shouted to Diomedes, “I failed to kill you with an arrow! Now we will see if I can kill you with a spear!”

He hurled his spear, and it drove through Diomedes’ shield and reached his armor.

Pandarus shouted, “A direct hit! You’re dead, Diomedes!”

But Diomedes replied, “No. Your spear did not go through my breastplate. My armor saved my life. But now one of you will die.”

Diomedes hurled his spear and it hit Pandarus’ face, splitting his nose and cracking his teeth and cutting his tongue. Pandarus fell off the chariot, and Aeneas’ horses reared into the air.

Aeneas jumped down from the chariot to protect the body of Pandarus. He straddled the corpse and shouted a battle cry.

Diomedes lifted a huge rock that no two men today could lift, and he threw it at Aeneas. It hit Aeneas’ hip, destroying the socket and cutting Aeneas’ skin. Aeneas did not die, but he fell unconscious.

Diomedes would have killed Aeneas, but Aeneas received divine help from his goddess mother, Aphrodite. She held him in her arms and threw part of her robe over his body. Weapons hit her robe and harmlessly bounced off. Aphrodite did not want a Greek warrior to kill her son. She started to carry Aeneas away from the fighting

Sthenelus remembered Diomedes' orders. He caught Aeneas' team and drove them over to the Greek side and gave them to Deipylus to drive to Diomedes' ships. Sthenelus then climbed into his own chariot and drove to Diomedes.

Diomedes saw Aphrodite, recognized her, and remembered Athena's words not to fight any of the gods except Aphrodite. Athena was allowing him to attack and wound the goddess of sexual passion. He stalked Aphrodite, knowing that she was a coward goddess, not a goddess like Athena, who is at home in war, and not a goddess like Enyo, who is the goddess of war.

Diomedes caught up to Aphrodite and rushed her and stabbed her wrist with a spear. Ichor, the blood of the gods, flowed from the wound. Gods drink nectar, they eat ambrosia, and ichor flows in their veins.

Unlike most mortal mothers would do when her son's life is in danger, Aphrodite screamed and dropped her son and fled. But Apollo, a god at home in war, picked up Aeneas and shielded him.

Diomedes shouted after Aphrodite, "Stay out of the fighting! You lured Helen to her ruin! I think that you have learned not to get involved in the fighting!" He mocked the goddess, and she ran away in pain.

Iris went to Aphrodite, took her hand, and led her out of the fighting. They found Ares, who was relaxing at the side of the battle. His spear was resting on a cloud beside his stallions.

Aphrodite dropped to her knees and begged him to lend his stallions to her, "Help me, brother, to quickly reach Mount Olympus. I've been wounded, and I'm in pain. Diomedes stabbed my wrist. He is willing even to fight Zeus!"

Ares lent his chariot and horses to her, and Aphrodite and Iris climbed on board. Iris drove her to Mount Olympus. Aphrodite found her mother, Dione, and like a little girl, climbed into her lap. Dione held her in her arms, stroked her hair, and asked, "Aphrodite, child, who has hurt you? Which god? It is as if you have been punished for doing something wrong in public."

Aphrodite replied, "The mortal Diomedes wounded me because I was carrying Aeneas, my son, away from the battle. Diomedes is insolent. The Greek warriors are fighting the gods!"

Dione tried to calm her daughter, "Be brave, although I know that you are in pain. Mortals have wounded other gods and caused them pain.

"Ares was chained and imprisoned for thirteen months in a bronze cauldron by two giants: Ephialtes and Otus. Although Ares is immortal, he was near death before Hermes, summoned by the giants' stepmother, freed him.

"Hera endured pain, too, when Heracles fired a three-barbed arrow at her and struck her in the right breast.

"Even Hades endured pain. Heracles shot an arrow into him at Pylos. Hades climbed Mount Olympus and saw Zeus. A healer applied a salve to Hades' wound and cured him.

"Heracles had no problem attacking the gods with his arrows. Their pain did not bother him. But Diomedes — Athena must have given him permission to attack you. Still, he ought to know that anyone who attacks the gods will not live a long life. The children of that kind of man will not get to know him and play games with him because he will not return home after the war.

"Let Diomedes beware. A better warrior than you may fight him and make his wife, Aegialia, a widow who will cry at night out of grief for him and wake up the servants."

Dione comforted Aphrodite with soothing words and wiped away the ichor. Aphrodite's wound healed, and her pain vanished.

Hera and Athena had watched, and now they mocked Aphrodite. Athena said to Zeus, "Will you get angry at me if I guess what caused Aphrodite's pain? She's been getting another Greek woman to fall in love with a Trojan man — one of the men whom Aphrodite loves. Aphrodite stroked a Greek woman's gown and scratched her wrist on a brooch."

Zeus said to Aphrodite, "You are not a warrior, child. Attend to marriage and sexual passion. Let Athena and Ares attend to war."

Diomedes now charged at Aeneas, trying to kill him and strip his armor, although Aeneas was still protected by Apollo, who repelled Diomedes' attack. Three times Diomedes attacked, and three times Apollo repelled his attack. When Diomedes attacked a fourth time like a superhuman warrior, Apollo shouted at him, "Think, Diomedes! You do not want to do this! The gods are not mortals and never will be! The gods will never die!"

Diomedes pulled back and stopped attacking. Apollo took Aeneas away from the battle and into Troy. He set Aeneas down on the citadel of Troy, and the goddesses Leto and Artemis healed him.

Apollo made a phantasm of Aeneas and put him on the battlefield, lying unconscious and wounded. The phantasm seemed to be wearing Aeneas' armor. Greeks and Trojans battled over the unconscious phantasm.

Apollo shouted to Ares, "Can you stop Diomedes? He wounded Aphrodite, and like a superhuman warrior, he even attacked me!"

Apollo went to the citadel of Troy, while Ares went to war. Taking the form of the Trojan Acamas, Ares shouted encouragement to the Trojans: "When are you going to fight these Greeks? When your backs are against the walls of Troy? Aeneas lies wounded and unconscious. We prize him like we prize Hector. Fight to protect him!"

Sarpedon, one of the Trojan allies from Lycia, taunted Hector, leader of the Trojans: "Where is your courage? Didn't you used to brag that you and your brothers-in-law and your brothers could defend Troy without help from allies? Where are these warriors now? I don't see them. We — your allies — are doing the fighting. I come from Lycia, a long distance away, a country where I left my wife and my son and my wealth. Here, I fight, although if I die here, the enemy warriors will find nothing of mine worth looting — no cattle or gold. So poorly do you reward your allies.

"Why are you just standing around? Why don't you at least encourage your warriors to defend their wives? Be careful. You and your city can fall. You need to encourage your allies to keep fighting. Lead by example, thereby stopping any criticism of you."

Sarpedon's criticism made Hector want to kill Greek warriors. He jumped from his chariot, fully armed and carrying two spears, and he encouraged his troops to fight well. The Trojans stopped retreating and turned around to face the Greek warriors, who stood their ground.

When men winnow the crop and the goddess Demeter separates chaff from grain, the dry chaff falls to the ground and turns it white. Similarly, the Greek warriors turned white as dust kicked up into the air and settled down on them — dust kicked up by the feet of fighting men.

Ares now helped the Trojans. Apollo had advised him to join the battle once Athena left the battlefield. Ares sent Aeneas, fully recovered, into the battle. The Trojan warriors were thrilled to see him again, but they had no time to ask him questions — they were too busy fighting.

Great Ajax, Little Ajax, Diomedes, and Odysseus encouraged the Greeks in their attack. The Greeks held firm against the Trojan onslaught. The Greeks were like unmoving clouds above a mountain peak on a windless day.

Agamemnon shouted to his troops, “Be courageous, and remember that men will talk about what you do today. Think of your future reputation! When warriors do that, more warriors stay alive. When they forget their reputation and run, more warriors die and their reputations also die.”

Agamemnon threw his spear and killed Deicoon, one of Aeneas’ friends. Agamemnon’s spear went through Deicoon’s shield and war-belt and plunged deep into his intestines. He fell dead.

In retaliation, Aeneas immediately killed the twin brothers Orsilochus and Crethon. The twins were like two young lions that mauled sheep and cattle until they themselves died. They had killed Trojan warriors, but now Aeneas killed them.

Menelaus wanted to avenge their deaths. Ares encouraged his fury, hoping that Aeneas would kill him. Antilochus, the son of Nestor, saw Menelaus exposed on the front line and ran to join him, afraid that Menelaus would die and the Trojans would win the war. Aeneas had been ready to fight Menelaus, but when he saw Antilochus join Menelaus, Aeneas backed away. Menelaus and Antilochus dragged away the corpses of the twin brothers and rejoined the battle.

Menelaus killed Pylaemenes, commander of the Paphlagonians, stabbing him and splintering his collarbone. Antilochus killed Mydon, the charioteer of Pylaemenes. Antilochus threw a rock at him and smashed his elbow. Mydon dropped the reins, which dragged in the dust, and Antilochus ran at him and thrust a sword into his temple. Mydon gasped and fell from the chariot. His head and shoulders struck some soft sand. Antilochus grabbed the reins and mounted the chariot and drove over Mydon while driving the team to the Greek side.

Hector saw all, and he and Ares charged the Greeks. Enyo, goddess of war, brought Uproar into the battle.

Diomedes saw Ares and was unwilling to fight him. Diomedes was like a man who comes to a river with raging rapids. He looks at the water and decides not to try to cross. Diomedes said to his warriors, “Hector fights with Ares, who is beside him. Retreat, but continue to face the Trojans. We ought not to attempt to fight the gods.”

The Trojans charged, and Hector killed Menesthes and Anchialus, two men in one chariot.

Great Ajax ran to their corpses and threw a spear, killing Amphius, who was rich and owned much farmland. The spear pierced Amphius’ war-belt and penetrated deep into his intestines, and Great Ajax rushed to the corpse, eager to strip the armor.

The Trojans attacked Great Ajax, and their weapons repeatedly hit his shield. Great Ajax planted a foot on the corpse and wrenched his spear out of the body. But he could not strip the corpse’s armor. Too many Trojans were attacking him, and he was forced to retreat.

Heracles, of a previous generation, was now a god and did not take part in the Trojan War, but one of his sons, Tlepolemus, a Greek, attacked the Trojan ally Sarpedon. Heracles’ father was Zeus, and Sarpedon’s father was Zeus, so now a son and a grandson of Zeus attacked each other.

Tlepolemus taunted Sarpedon, “Are you really a son of Zeus? I think not. You are not worthy to have Zeus as a father. My father, Heracles, was a real son of Zeus. Think of Heracles’ exploits. Poseidon sent a sea monster to attack Hesione, the daughter of the Trojan king Laomedon. Heracles rescued her, but Laomedon did not give him the reward that had been agreed upon: Laomedon’s famous horses. Therefore, Heracles gathered an army and sailed to Troy with only six ships. Despite the smallness of his army, he conquered Troy. But you — you’re no hero. You will die here, now, at my hands!”

Sarpedon replied, “You are correct that Heracles conquered Troy, but Laomedon was stupid to withhold from Heracles the price they had agreed upon: Laomedon’s mares. But you

will not kill me; instead, I will kill you and gain fame.”

Both threw their spears at the same time. Sarpedon’s spear hit Tlepolemus in the neck, going clear through and coming out the other side. Tlepolemus’ eyes saw the darkness of death.

But Tlepolemus’ spear hit Sarpedon’s left thigh, reaching the bone. But Zeus would not allow Sarpedon to die yet.

Sarpedon’s warriors carried him out of the battle, the spear still in his thigh. No one thought to pull the spear out so that Sarpedon could hobble away despite his wound. They were in too much of a hurry to carry him away to safety.

The Greeks carried the corpse of Tlepolemus away. Odysseus thought about the best course of action: Should he go after Sarpedon and try to kill him, or kill as many Lycians as he could? Athena turned his thoughts to the Lycians.

Odysseus killed and killed again. His fury took the lives of Coeranus, Chromius, Alastor, Alcander, Halius, Prytanis, and Noëmon. He would have killed more, but Hector charged toward him.

Sarpedon saw Hector and begged him, “Don’t leave me here! Protect me! Let me die within the walls of Troy! I’m obviously not fated to see my home again!”

Hector ignored him; he was too eager to kill Greeks.

Sarpedon’s fellow Lycians laid him under an oak and attended to his wound. Pelagon pushed the spear through and out Sarpedon’s body. Sarpedon fainted. His life-breath left him, but a strong North wind pushed it back into his mouth and he continued to live.

Seeing Hector and Ares, Odysseus and the other Greek warriors retreated, always facing the enemy. They did not break their ranks and run for their ships.

Hector and Ares killed many Greeks. They killed Teuthras, Orestes, Trechus, Oenomaus, the son of Oenops named Helenus, and Oresbius, a very wealthy man who had hoarded his wealth.

Hera saw Hector slaughtering Greek warriors, and she said to Athena, “It’s a disaster! We promised Menelaus that he would sack Troy before he sailed home again, so we can’t let Ares rampage on this way! Let’s stop him!”

The two goddesses mounted Hera’s chariot, a marvelous work of art with silver and gold. Athena carried her own shield, which displayed the head of a Gorgon, a monster the sight of which would turn a person to stone. She wore her golden helmet, which was decorated with the figures of warriors from one hundred cities. She also carried her heavy spear.

They drove the chariot to Zeus, and Hera said to him, “Aren’t you angry at Ares? He is killing many good Greek warriors. Apollo and Aphrodite are sitting at ease, but they are the ones who sent Ares to fight. Do I have your permission to drive Ares off the battlefield?”

Zeus said, “Go to the battle, but let Athena drive Ares back to Olympus. She is the one who can drive the god of war away in pain.”

Hera drove the chariot to the plain of Troy, and she let the immortal horses graze on the ambrosial grass she caused to grow beside the river Simois.

Hera and Athena went to Diomedes and his men, and Hera shouted with the voice of Stentor, who was famous for his loud shout, “Greeks! You are cowardly! When Achilles was fighting for us, the Trojans were afraid to leave the walls of Troy! Now they fight far from their walls! Now they fight close to your ships!”

Athena made her way to Diomedes. He was bathing the wound that the archer Pandarus had given him. Diomedes was wiping away the blood.

Athena said to him, “You are not worthy to have Tydeus as your father. He was a much better man than you are. When he went alone to Thebes, I forbade him to kill. But he

challenged the young Theban men to feats of strength and defeated them easily. I stood beside him.

“I also stand beside you, Diomedes. So why aren’t you fighting Trojans? Either you are tired or you are afraid. Either way, you are not the son your father deserved.”

Diomedes replied, “I recognize you, Athena. I am not afraid. Why am I not fighting? Because I am following your orders. You yourself forbade me to fight the gods except Aphrodite. I am not on the battlefield because Ares is leading the Trojan warriors.”

Athena said, “I have new orders for you. Fight Ares. You need not fear him or any god. I will go with you. Fight Ares. He lied to Hera and me. He promised us to fight with the Greeks, not against them, but now he leads the charge against the Greeks.”

Hera thought, *Ares did not promise us to fight with the Greeks, not against them, but if Athena’s lie will motivate Diomedes to attack Ares, then it’s a worthwhile lie.*

Athena grabbed Sthenelus and threw him out of the chariot. She herself would be Diomedes’ charioteer. Diomedes climbed aboard the chariot, and Athena drove it straight at Ares.

Ares, smeared with blood, was stripping the corpse of Periphas. Athena put on the helmet of Death so that Ares would not recognize her, but Ares did recognize Diomedes. Ares left the corpse of Periphas, and thrust his spear at Diomedes, eager to take his life. But Athena moved the trajectory of the spear so that it missed Diomedes.

Diomedes then thrust his spear at Ares, and Athena guided the spear into Ares’ intestines, past his war-belt. Ares screamed with pain. The scream sounded like nine thousand or ten thousand warriors clashing in battle.

Ares soared up into the air and headed for help on Mount Olympus. He settled down by Zeus and showed him his wound. Overcome with self-pity, he complained, “Zeus, doesn’t the sight of this wound make you angry? We are gods, and yet, when we show mortals kindness, we suffer for it at the hands of other gods. I was fighting for the Trojans, and your headstrong daughter — it must have been Athena — spurred on Diomedes to attack first Aphrodite and then me. But I escaped.”

Zeus said to Ares, “You are a whiner. Stop it. You are the god of war, and I hate you more than I hate any other of the Olympian gods. You love war, and you love battles, and you love suffering. You have the same kind of anger that your mother, Hera, has. But I do not want you to suffer. After all, you are my son. If you were not, I would have sentenced you long ago to dwell in the Land of the Dead.”

Zeus thought, *I really do hate my son: Ares, the god of war. He is a ridiculous god. He fights in battles against mortals, and he risks very little. Mortals die; gods can be wounded and feel pain, but they quickly heal. A god fighting in war is never tragic; mortals fighting in war are frequently tragic. In order to have a tragedy, someone must lose something important, such as his or her life. The gods and goddesses are immortal, so they are incapable of tragedy. A human being who loses his or her life stays dead forever in the Land of the Dead. Human beings can be heroes, but the gods and goddesses cannot. Only heroes can risk their lives in war or to help another person. When Ares fights in a battle and kills many mortal warriors, so what? He is immortal — he can’t be killed. Ares isn’t risking anything when he fights in battle. He knows that later he will sit at his ease — it is human beings who die and stay dead. And why does Ares consider his killing mortals in battle to be a kindness?*

The healing god covered Ares’ wound with a salve, and the wound healed. Hebe then gave Ares a bath and dressed him in luxuriant robes. He sat down among the gods and enjoyed himself.

Mission accomplished, Hera and Athena returned to Mount Olympus. They had stopped Ares.

Zeus thought, *Diomedes is a better warrior than Aphrodite and Ares. Pandarus wounded Diomedes, but despite the wound, Diomedes kept fighting, stopping only when, under orders from Athena, he would not fight Ares. The wounded gods quickly left the battle.*

Diomedes is noted for his obedience. He is able to get along with his superiors. When Agamemnon reviewed the troops, he criticized Diomedes and Sthenelus for not being prepared to fight. Sthenelus defended himself and Diomedes against Agamemnon's attack, but Diomedes said that he did not mind Agamemnon's criticizing him because a leader is supposed to rally his troops. If criticizing the troops will make them fight harder, then that is what their troops' leader ought to do.

One reason Diomedes is so deferential to Agamemnon is because he is the youngest commander among the Greek kings. Agamemnon is older, and therefore Diomedes defers to him.

Diomedes respects the authority of Agamemnon, and he respects the authority of the gods. He knows his human limits. Even during his aristeia, Diomedes recognized that he is human and not a god. Athena told Diomedes to keep away from all the gods except Aphrodite, and Diomedes obeyed — he wounded only Aphrodite until he had Athena's permission to wound Ares. After receiving Athena's permission, Diomedes wounded Ares.

Diomedes appeared superhuman as he tried to kill Aeneas (who was acting as Pandarus' charioteer) while Apollo protected him, and he did risk going too far when he charged Apollo three times in his battle frenzy as he attempted to kill Aeneas. However, Diomedes withdrew after Apollo warned him. Of course, Diomedes was trying to kill Aeneas, not wound Apollo.

Diomedes is different from Achilles. Diomedes is obedient and listens to orders from his superiors, whether mortal or immortal, whereas Achilles does not always obey the commands of Agamemnon.

Diomedes is noted for his sophrosyne — his lack of presumption, his restraint, his recognition of human limits. At this time, Achilles is not noted for his sophrosyne. Achilles will have a hard time recognizing his human limits.

CHAPTER 6: Hector Returns to Troy and Andromache

Now that the gods were relaxing on Mount Olympus, the battle was between mortals and mortals. Greeks and Trojans battled on the land in between the river Simois and the river Xanthus.

Now that Ares had withdrawn from battle, the Greek warriors were victorious.

Great Ajax attacked and killed Acamas, the bravest of the Trojan allies from Thrace. Great Ajax threw his spear through Acamas' helmet and into his forehead.

Diomedes killed Axylus, the son of Teuthras. Axylus was a good person. He had wealth, and he entertained travelers, showing them good *xenia*. But none of the people he had hosted could prevent his fate. Diomedes killed both him and his aide-in-arms: Calesius, who drove Axylus' chariot.

Euryalus, the third-in-command, after Diomedes and Sthenelus, of the warriors from Argos, killed Dresus and Opheltius. He then charged the twins Pegasus and Aesepus, who had been born to Bucolion and Abarbarea. Bucolion had been tending his flocks of sheep when he made love to Abarbarea, nymph of the spring. But Euryalus killed the twins and stripped their armor from their corpses.

The Greek Polypoetes killed Astyalus.

Odysseus threw his spear and killed Pidytes.

Teucer speared Aretaon.

Antilochus, the son of Nestor, killed Alerus.

Agamemnon killed Elatus, who lived by the river Satniois in a city set on a cliff.

The Greek Leitus ran down and killed the fleeing Phylacus.

The Greek Eurypylus killed Melanthius.

Menelaus captured Adrestus alive. Adrestus had been fleeing in a chariot drawn by terrified horses, and the horses had been tangled in tamarisk branches. Adrestus' chariot had been damaged. The horses broke free of the branches and galloped back to Troy, but Adrestus fell out of the chariot. Menelaus stood over him, spear raised, and Adrestus, a suppliant, hugged Menelaus' knees and begged for his life: "Menelaus, take me alive and ransom me instead of killing me. My father is rich, and he has bronze and gold and iron. My father will gladly give you treasure in return for keeping me alive if you send word to Troy that I have been captured alive!"

Menelaus was about to hand Adrestus over to an aide to take him alive to Menelaus' ships. But his brother, Agamemnon, saw him and said, "Why are you so soft and forgiving? Why are you showing mercy to an enemy? Did Paris and the other Trojans show you mercy when Paris visited you in Sparta? I want every Trojan to die, including every baby boy still in his mother's womb. I want Troy to be destroyed, and I want Trojans to lie in unmourned and unmarked graves."

Zeus thought, *When Troy falls, women and children will die, as, of course, will many Trojan warriors.*

Menelaus listened to his brother and shoved Adrestus away from him, and Agamemnon speared Adrestus in the side. Adrestus fell on his side, and his chest heaved. Agamemnon put his foot on Adrestus' chest and pulled his spear out of Adrestus' body.

Nestor, a strategist, advised the Greek warriors: "You have the advantage. You are routing the Trojans. Don't stop to gather booty and strip the armor off corpses. Keep fighting and killing — you can strip off the armor later!"

The Trojans seemed to be on the verge of fleeing back to Troy. However, Helenus, a son of Priam, gave them good advice. Helenus was a seer who understood the interpretation of bird-

signs sent by the gods.

Coming up to Aeneas and Hector, Helenus said, “You two are our bravest and strongest warriors. We need you two to rally our warriors. Keep the Trojans from fleeing to the walls of Troy. Rally the warriors, and we can hold the line here.

“Hector, after you and Aeneas rally the Trojans, go to Troy. Get our mother and tell her and the old women of Troy to go to Athena’s shrine. Have her give to Athena a large, lovely robe — the best we have. Have her promise to make a sacrifice of twelve heifers to Athena, if Athena will have mercy on Troy and pity the Trojan women and children. We need Athena to hold back Diomedes and stop him from slaughtering us. Right now, Diomedes is the strongest Greek warrior. We did not fear even Achilles the way we fear Diomedes — and Achilles is said to have a goddess for a mother. Diomedes is slaughtering us now.”

Hector knew that his brother Helenus’ advice was good. He leapt down from his chariot and went from Trojan to Trojan, rallying the troops and making them face the Greek warriors. The Greeks were unable to keep on routing the Trojans. Hector shouted to the Trojan warriors, “Be men! Be warriors! I will return to Troy and ask the old men and the women to pray to the gods for us!”

Hector then headed toward Troy, and his helmet shone in the sun.

Zeus thought, Troy is doomed. The Greeks will conquer it. Many Trojan warriors will die. Their wives and children will become slaves. The wives who are young and pretty, including Hector’s wife, will become sex-slaves. Many children, including Hector’s young son, will die.

Diomedes was still on the battlefield. He met the Trojan ally Glaucus and said, “Who are you? Another Trojan or ally about to die? I have not seen you on the battlefield before. But you must be brave — you have chosen to come out and fight me. Mortals who do so die! But are you a god? If you are, I will not fight you. Usually, it is a bad thing to fight the gods. Lycurgus once attacked the followers of Bacchus — the maenads. He frightened them so much that they ran away from him, leaving their sacred staffs behind. Even the god Bacchus was terrified and ran to the sea and dived beneath the surf so that the sea-goddess Thetis could comfort him. But Zeus struck Lycurgus blind and Lycurgus died young.

“That is why, warrior, I do not wish to fight the gods. But if you are a mortal, come closer and attack me so that I may kill you.”

Glaucus, who had come to Troy with Sarpedon, replied, “Diomedes, why are you asking me about my identity? The lives of mortals are like the lives of leaves. The old leaves are scattered by the wind, and new leaves grow on the trees. The same is true of mortal men. One generation comes into existence. It dies, and another generation takes over.

“But about my birth and family — this is my story. Sisyphus lived in Corinth, and he had a son named Glaucus. Both were my ancestors. Glaucus had a son named Bellerophon. But Proetus, the king of Corinth, became angry at Bellerophon because of lies. Antea, the wife of Proetus, wanted to have sex with Bellerophon, but he acted morally and would not sleep with her. She lied to her husband and told him, ‘Bellerophon keeps trying to rape me. I have to fight him off! Kill him!’

“These were lies, but Proetus believed them to be true. He sent Bellerophon to Lycia with a written message to show to Antea’s father. The message said to kill Bellerophon.

“Bellerophon went to Lycia, and Antea’s father hosted him well for nine days, slaughtering nine oxen to feast him. After nine days, he asked for any messages from his daughter’s husband. Bellerophon then gave him the written message.

“Antea’s father tried at first to get Bellerophon killed without resorting to outright murder. He ordered Bellerophon to kill the Chimaera: a monster formed of a lion in front, a goat in the

middle, and a snake at the end. It breathed fire! Bellerophon obeyed signs sent by the gods and killed the Chimaera.

“Next the father of Antea ordered Bellerophon to fight the tribe known as the Solymi. Bellerophon did — and he won.

“Next the father of Antea ordered Bellerophon to fight the Amazons, a tribe of women who fought in war like men. Bellerophon did — and he won.

“Then Antea’s father picked out warriors to ambush Bellerophon — but Bellerophon killed them all.

“Knowing Bellerophon’s worth at last, Antea’s father offered him one of his daughters to wed. The Lycians gave him an estate with good cropland, and his wife bore him three children: Isander, Hippolochus, and Laodamia.

“Laodamia slept with the god Zeus and bore him a son: our commander, Sarpedon.

“But the wheel of fortune turned, and the gods hated Bellerophon. He became a fugitive and wandered the earth. The Solymi killed Isander, his son. The goddess Artemis killed Laodamia, his daughter.

“But Bellerophon’s other son, Hippolochus, became my father. He sent me to fight at Troy, and I still can hear his advice to me: ‘Have pride in yourself. Be the best. Do not do anything to disgrace your ancestors, who were champions.’

“Now you know who I am, and who my family members are.”

Diomedes was happy with what he had heard. He plunged his spear into the earth instead of attacking Glaucus with it, and he said to Glaucus, “You and I are friends because our grandfathers were friends. The laws of *xenia* bind us. My grandfather Oeneus hosted your grandfather Bellerophon in his palace for twenty days. They exchanged binding gifts of friendship. My grandfather gave Bellerophon a gleaming sword-belt, and Bellerophon gave my grandfather a two-handled, solid-gold cup. I still have it; I left it at home in Argos.

“I don’t remember my father, Tydeus, who died at Thebes when I was still a baby. But because of the friendship of our grandfathers, you and I share a hereditary friendship. That is the way that *xenia* works. If you ever visit me in Argos, I will be your friend and host. If I ever visit you in Lycia, you will be my friend and host.

“You and I should not fight each other in this way. Here are many Trojans for me to kill. Here are many Greeks for you to kill. We need not and ought not to try to kill each other.

“To show the others that we are friends, let us trade armor. We share a hereditary friendship that others should know about.”

The two warriors shed and exchanged their armor and vowed their friendship to each other. However, the gold armor that Glaucus gave Diomedes was worth one hundred oxen, and the bronze armor that he received from Diomedes was worth only nine oxen.

Zeus thought, *Similarly, Troy is making a bad trade. The Trojans have traded away the blessings of peace so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous affair. Helen isn’t worth it even though she is my daughter, and neither is Paris. Why should so many Trojans die or become slaves just so those two can have sex? Why should the world lose a center of civilization for the likes of Paris and Helen?*

Hector had reached the Scaean Gates of Troy. He entered the city and was immediately surrounded by women and girls asking him whether a husband, a father, a son, or a brother was still alive. From the walls of Troy, they had witnessed the fighting in the battle and had seen much slaughter. Hector told them, “Pray to the gods.”

He went to the palace of his father, Priam, in which were fifty bedrooms in which fifty of Priam’s sons slept beside their wives. Also in the palace were twelve bedrooms in which twelve of Priam’s daughters slept beside their husbands.

Hector's mother, Hecuba, met him and said, "Why have you returned from the fighting? You must be exhausted. Let me bring you some wine so you can pour some to Zeus and drink the rest to refresh yourself. Stay a while. Relax."

But Hector shook his head and declined the wine: "No, mother. I need to keep on fighting, and I can't pour wine to Zeus with blood on my hands. It would not be fitting. Mother, pray to Athena. You and the older women of Troy go to the shrine of Athena. Give her the best robe we have. Promise that we will sacrifice twelve heifers to her if she will pity Troy and the women and children of Troy by stopping Diomedes. Go now, and I will see Paris and convince him to return to the fighting. I wish that he were dead and the war were over. That would make me happy."

Hecuba did as Hector wished. She got the best robe — one made by Sidonian women. When Paris had stolen Helen away from Menelaus, he had stopped by Sidon and brought back with him women skilled in weaving.

Hecuba went to the shrine of Athena. Theano, the priestess of Athena, let her in. Theano offered Athena the robe and prayed, "Stop Diomedes! Pity Troy and the Trojan women and children! If you do, we will sacrifice twelve heifers to you." But Athena would not hear the prayers of Theano.

Hector went to the apartment of Paris and Helen. Paris had built the luxurious quarters himself with the help of master craftsmen. He and Helen lived near Priam's quarters and near Hector's quarters.

Hector carried his long spear into the apartment where Paris lived with Helen. Hector's spear and armor were bloody. Paris was polishing his weapons and armor. They were clean and gleaming. Helen was present. She was sitting with her female servants, overseeing their embroidery.

Hector saw Paris and taunted him, "What are you doing here? Are you nursing the anger you have inside you?"

Hector thought, *Paris ought to be angry at the Greeks who are killing Trojans, but he is not. He is relaxing and not thinking about the battle.*

Hector continued, "Outside the walls of Troy, people are fighting and dying for you. If you were outside the walls of Troy and saw a warrior slacking off, you would criticize that warrior. Don't you yourself do what you would criticize someone else for doing! Get up, come with me, and fight!"

Paris replied, "You criticize me fairly, but it is not anger that keeps me in my quarters. I came here to plunge myself in grief because of this war."

Hector thought, *Not likely. If anything, you came here to plunge yourself in Helen.*

Paris continued, "Helen has been convincing me to return to the battle. She is very persuasive. So let me put on my armor and we shall go. You can wait for me, or if you wish, you can go ahead. I am sure that I can catch up with you."

Helen said to Hector, "My dear brother-in-law, I am a bitch and I wish that I were dead. It would have been much better for everyone if I had died the day that I was born. When I was born, I should have been carried away by a whirlwind or by the waves of the sea. But since the gods have kept me alive, I wish I were the wife of a better man than Paris. I wish I were the wife of a man who is sensitive to what other people think of him. The husband I have is selfish.

"Hector, sit down. Relax. You fight hard — harder than any other Trojan. You are fighting for me — a whore. And you are fighting for Paris. Because of what Zeus made us do, Paris and I will be remembered by many generations to come."

Hector said, “Don’t ask me to sit and relax, Helen. I need to get back to the battle. My warriors need me. But make Paris put on his armor and get ready to fight. He can catch up with me — I will briefly see my wife and son. It is possible that I will never see them again. This may be the day that I die.”

Hector quickly reached his quarters, but his wife, Andromache, was not at home. She had taken a servant and her son to the high walls of Troy so that she could watch the battle and try to determine whether she was still a wife or newly a widow.

Hector asked the servants, “Where is Andromache? Is she visiting my sisters? Or my brothers’ wives? Or is she praying at the shrine of Athena?”

A servant said, “Andromache is watching the battle. She knows that the battle is hard fought, and she is worried that you are already dead or are going to die today. She is like a madwoman.”

Hector rushed to the Scaean Gates, and Andromache saw him and came running to meet him. Following Andromache was a nurse who was carrying the son of Hector and Andromache. Hector called his son Scamandrius, but other Trojans called him Astyanax — the Lord of the City.

Hector looked at his son and smiled.

Andromache cried and said to Hector, “Pity your son, and pity me. You have too much courage. You will fight, and you will be killed. With you dead, it would be best for me if I were to also die.

“My father was Eetion, king of Thebe. My father is dead. My mother is dead. Achilles killed my father when he and the Greeks conquered Thebe. But he treated my father’s corpse with respect. Achilles did not strip the armor off Eetion. Instead, he burned the armor with my father’s body when he gave my father a proper burial. Achilles heaped up a grave-mound over my father’s ashes. Mountain nymphs planted elms around the grave-mound. Achilles also killed all seven of my brothers on the day he conquered Thebe.

“But Achilles respected my mother’s life. He allowed her to be ransomed and set free. But she died because of Artemis, who took her life the way she takes the lives of so many women. Artemis kills women with her arrows, and her brother, Apollo, kills men with his arrows.

“Hector, you are all I have left! You are my father, my mother, my brother, and my young and warm and strong husband!

“Don’t fight on the battlefield. You and your warriors can defend the city from behind its walls. One wall of Troy is lower than the other walls. Take up your position there. Three times have Great Ajax, Little Ajax, Idomeneus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Diomedes tried to storm the city at that point. Don’t allow your courage to make your son an orphan and your wife a widow.”

Hector said to Andromache, “I worry about the same things that worry you, but I must fight. I cannot be a coward. I want to fight bravely in the front ranks. I want to win glory for my father and for myself. But I know that Troy is doomed and that my father and all Trojan warriors must die.

“But what hurts me most — more than the pain that my father, my mother, and my brothers will feel — is the agony that you will feel after I die and a Greek warrior takes you, crying, away and makes you a slave in Greece. You will work in a Greek household, weaving, and you will be forced to obey the orders of a Greek wife and fetch water. A Greek man may see you and say, ‘She was the wife of Hector, the bravest of the Trojan warriors when Troy still existed.’ You will hear him, and the grief will come to you again. You will be a widow, and the man who could keep you from being a slave will be dead.

“I prefer to be dead rather than to hear you crying as you are led away to be a slave!”

Hector reached to take his son, but his son saw Hector's shining helmet, which scared him. Terrified, he screamed.

Zeus thought, *Someday, not long from now, a Greek warrior with a shining helmet will take Hector's son to a high wall of Troy and murder him by throwing him to the ground.*

But now Hector laughed at his son, and Andromache laughed, too. Hector took off his shining helmet, and his son knew him and was not afraid. Hector kissed his son and tossed him in his arms.

Hector lifted up his son and prayed to Zeus, "Let Troy not fall! Allow my son to grow up and to be like me: a brave, strong defender of Troy. Let the Trojans say about my son, 'He is a better, braver, stronger man than his father.' Let him come safely home from battle wearing armor that is dirty with the blood of the enemy warriors whom he has killed! Let him be a man his mother can be proud of."

Zeus thought, *Hector is praying for his son to be a better man than he is. That is a very human thing to pray for. I myself would never do a thing like that. If I had slept with Thetis, my son would be a better, stronger god than I am. He would have overthrown me, just like I overthrew my father, and just like my father had overthrown his father. If I had slept with Thetis and had fathered Achilles, he would now be the king of gods and men.*

Hector truly is a mortal human. He said that he knows that Troy must fall, but he does not really know that. He knows that it is possible for Troy to fall, but just a few minutes after he said that he knows that Troy must fall, he is praying for his son to grow up to be a better, braver, stronger man than he — Hector — is.

Finishing his prayer, Hector gave his son to Andromache. She held him, and with tears in her eyes, she smiled.

Hector gently stroked her arm and said, "Why feel so much grief for me? I have my fate. No man can kill me unless I am fated to die on that day. No man has ever escaped his fate: All mortal men must die. Brave men must die, and cowards must die. On the day that we are born, our parents know that we must die. So go home and keep busy and keep the female servants busy, too. Let me attend to the battle; that is the job of men and especially of me."

Hector put on his shining helmet again, and Andromache went home, turning again and again to look at her husband and cry. In their apartment, Andromache and her female servants mourned for Hector. They were afraid that he would not return from the battle alive.

Paris left his apartment and hurried to catch up to Hector. Paris was like a well-rested and well-fed stallion that has broken free and is running to plunge into a stream. He was happy and laughed.

Hector walked slowly, knowing that he had to return to battle but wishing to stay with his wife and son.

Paris said to Hector, "Brother, I am sorry to hold you back from returning to the battle. I have been too late in coming."

Hector replied, "Paris, you can fight well when you want to fight, but all too often you do not want to fight. The Trojans feel contempt for you, but if you fought the way that I know you can fight, their opinion of you would change.

"Let's join the battle and fight. Someday, everything will work itself out well if Zeus will let us fight off the Greeks and win this war."

CHAPTER 7: A Duel with Hector

Hector and Paris rushed through the Scaean Gates, eager for war. Their warriors welcomed them the way that sailors, exhausted from rowing, welcome a breeze sent by the gods.

Rested, Hector and Paris each quickly killed a warrior.

Paris killed Menesthius, the son of King Areithous and his beautiful-eyed wife, Phylomedusa.

Hector used his spear to slash the throat of Eioneus, who collapsed and died.

Inspired, Glaucus killed Iphinous just as he was leaping onto a chariot. Glaucus stabbed him in the shoulder. Iphinous fell off the chariot, and his arms and legs stopped moving.

The Trojans were rallying, but Athena witnessed the Greek deaths and flew to Troy from Mount Olympus. Apollo was watching from Pergamus, the citadel of Troy. He flew to meet her, and he said to her, "What do you want now? No doubt you want to turn the tide of battle and let Trojan blood flow. You want the Trojans to die. Listen to me. Let's stop the war for a day. The Greeks and Trojans can spill each other's blood tomorrow and the next day and the next day until Troy's day of doom arrives — that is what you and Hera want and what you are waiting for."

Athena agreed, "Good idea! But how do you plan to stop the war for a day?"

Apollo replied, "With Hector. He is a brave warrior. We can convince him to challenge the Greek warriors to choose a champion to duel with him to the death. The Greek warriors will find a champion to duel with him."

Athena communicated with the Trojan prophet Pandarus, one of Priam's sons. He heard her voice inside his head. Pandarus went to Hector and told him, "Listen to me. Challenge the Greeks to fight a single combat with you: a duel to the death. This is not your day to die. One of the gods told me."

Hector was willing. He went into the no-man's land between the two armies. The Trojan warriors and the Greek warriors stopped fighting. Apollo and Athena, having taken the shape of vultures, looked on from the branches of an oak tree.

Hector shouted, "Listen to me, Greeks and Trojans. Our oaths and sworn truth have been broken for reasons that Zeus knows. We will continue fighting and dealing death until the Greeks conquer Troy or the Trojans kill the Greeks with their backs up against their ships.

"But now, let one of your champion warriors fight me: a duel to the death. These are the conditions. If your champion kills me, he will strip my armor and take it to his ships, but he will allow the Trojans to take my corpse and give it a proper cremation and burial. But if I kill your champion, I will strip his armor from his body and take it to our temple of Apollo, and you will take his corpse and give it a proper burial, burning it and raising high a burial-mound, to which men yet to be born may point and say, 'There is the burial-mound of a warrior of long ago, a brave warrior whom Hector killed.'"

The Greek warriors were silent. They were afraid to fight Hector. After a long, uncomfortable wait, Menelaus accepted the challenge and said, "It would be a disgrace if no one were to accept Hector's challenge. We would be like women. You are just sitting there, silent. Well, I'll fight Hector since no one else will. Who knows? The gods might let me win."

Had Menelaus been allowed to fight Hector, Menelaus would have died. He was no match for Hector. Hector was a much stronger warrior — and Menelaus knew it.

Agamemnon was afraid for his brother. He grabbed Menelaus' right hand and said to him, "Don't fight Hector, brother. Don't do something insane. Don't try to fight a stronger, better warrior. Even Achilles is afraid to fight Hector, and Achilles is a stronger, better warrior than you."

Nestor thought, *It is true that Achilles is a stronger, better warrior than Menelaus, but it is false that Achilles is afraid to fight Hector. Still, if Agamemnon's lie will motivate Menelaus not to fight Hector and get himself killed, then it's a worthwhile lie.*

Agamemnon continued, "Sit down. Another warrior can fight Hector. Hector is supposed to be fearless and eager for battle, but if he comes out of this duel alive, I think that he will be happy to rest and stay away from battle for a while."

Menelaus sat down, and Nestor said to the Greek warriors, "Let us meet this challenge. Achilles' father, Peleus, would be embarrassed if he were to see us now. Peleus was impressed with the reputations of the Greek warriors whom we brought to Troy. He would be ready to die if he believed that all of us were afraid to duel Hector.

"I wish I were young again. My Pylian warriors fought the spearmen of Arcadia. Their champion, Ereuthalion, wore the armor of King Areithous, who was a giant of a man and was called the Great War-Club. He did not use a bow and arrows or a spear; he smashed the enemy with his iron war-club. Lycurgus killed King Areithous by spearing him when he was in a narrow footpath so cramped that he could not swing his war-club. Even before he could lift his war-club, Lycurgus had speared him in the intestines. King Areithous fell backwards, and Lycurgus stripped his armor. Lycurgus wore the armor for years, but when he grew old, he gave the armor to Ereuthalion, who then challenged the best Pylian warriors. They were afraid, all except for me. I was the youngest of the warriors, and I killed Ereuthalion — the biggest and strongest warrior I have ever killed.

"Make me young again, and I will fight Hector. I cannot believe that you are the best warriors we have — none of you is brave enough to fight Hector in a duel to the death."

Shamed by Nestor, nine Greek warriors stood up, ready to fight Hector: Agamemnon was the first to stand, but he was followed by Diomedes, Great Ajax and Little Ajax, Idomeneus and his aide Meriones, Eurypylus, Thoas, and Odysseus.

Nestor ordered, "Each of you make your mark on a stone, and the lottery will choose who will fight Hector. That warrior will make his fellow Greeks proud if he does not die."

Each warrior made his mark on a stone, and they put the stones in Agamemnon's helmet.

Nestor shook the helmet until a stone fell out, as warriors prayed that the warrior they thought would best be able to fight Hector would be chosen: Great Ajax, Diomedes, or Agamemnon.

The stone that fell out bore the mark of Great Ajax, the warrior the majority of the Greeks wanted to fight Hector. A herald showed the stone to the warriors willing to fight Hector, and Great Ajax recognized his mark and took the stone. He threw it to the ground and shouted, "This is my lot, and I am thrilled to fight Hector! Everyone pray to Zeus, silently — no, pray out loud. No one can make me run — not by force and not by treachery. I am an experienced warrior."

The Greek warriors prayed, "Zeus, allow Great Ajax to win the duel, but if you love Hector, allow both warriors to share glory."

Great Ajax was ready to fight. He resembled Ares, the god of war, and Hector's heart started pounding, but he could not back out of the fight — he was the challenger. Great Ajax carried his huge shield. It was eight layers thick. Seven layers were oxhide, and the top layer was made of heavy bronze. This shield could stop death.

Great Ajax with his deep voice said to Hector, "Now you will learn, face-to-face in single combat, what kind of warriors the Greeks have. Achilles is still angry at Agamemnon and will not fight, but we remaining warriors can defeat you. Come now. Begin the duel."

Hector replied, "Great Ajax, don't talk to me as if I were a weak boy or a woman who knows nothing of battle. I know war well, and I know how to butcher a warrior. I know how to

fight while on the defense and while on the offense, and I know how to fight until the end. So let the duel begin. Be on guard. I do not want to hit you with my spear by treachery. I want to hit you with my spear openly.”

Hector hurled his spear at Great Ajax. It hit his shield and tore through the topmost bronze layer and six of the seven oxhide layers, but the final oxhide layer stopped his spear.

Great Ajax then hurled his spear. It went through Hector’s shield and through his breastplate and tore his war-shirt and narrowly missed bloodying Hector’s side, but Hector swerved and escaped death. Both warriors wrenched their spears away from the other’s shield and attacked each other. They were like lions or wild boars.

Hector stabbed at Great Ajax’ shield, and Great Ajax stabbed his spear through Hector’s shield, slightly cutting his neck and making the blood flow.

Hector kept fighting. He picked up a heavy rock and threw it. It hit Great Ajax’ shield, which clanged, but Great Ajax picked up a heavier rock and threw it and Hector’s shield broke and he fell on his back. Apollo lifted him up, and Great Ajax and Hector would have attacked each other with swords, but Greek and Trojan heralds — the Greek Talthibius and the Trojan Idaeus — rushed in and stopped the duel, parting the warriors by holding staffs in front of them.

Idaeus said to the two warriors, “No more. It’s easy to tell that Zeus loves both of you and that both of you are great fighters. But darkness is coming and you need to stop fighting now.”

Great Ajax said, “Idaeus, tell Hector to ask for the duel to stop. He is the challenger. I will agree to Hector’s request.”

Hector replied, “Yes, Great Ajax. You are a mighty warrior. Let the duel end now. We can fight again tomorrow. We will keep on fighting until one army is the victor. Night is coming, and it is a good idea to stop fighting now. You will go back to the Greek ships, and I will return to Troy. Both sides will be happy.

“But let us each give the other a gift. Let others say that you and I fought each other with hatred, but we parted with respect.”

Hector gave Great Ajax his silver-studded sword and a sword-strap, and Great Ajax gave Hector his purple war-belt.

Hector went back to his Trojan warriors — they were thrilled to see him still alive. Great Ajax — thrilled with victory — went back to his Greek warriors.

Zeus thought, *Usually, Great Ajax is second best. For example, he is the second-best Greek warrior — Achilles is the best Greek warrior. After Achilles dies, Thetis will give his divine armor to the Greeks to give to the most deserving warrior. The two warriors in the running to get the armor will be Great Ajax and Odysseus; Odysseus will get the armor. But here Great Ajax is the victor. He deserves to be the victor because the Greeks will eventually conquer the Trojans.*

The Greek warriors escorted Great Ajax to the camp of Agamemnon, who sacrificed an ox. Agamemnon served Great Ajax the cut of honor: the rich, tender cut along the backbone.

After they had eaten, Nestor spoke. He was a good man with ideas: “Agamemnon and commanders, many Greek warriors lie dead on the battlefield. Their souls have gone to the Land of the Dead, but they will not be allowed to enter it until their bodies have been cremated and a burial-mound has been raised. Souls mourn until they can enter the Land of the Dead — where they belong. Cremation and burial is the respect we show to the dead.

“Therefore, we need to devote time to our duty to the dead. We will not fight. Instead, we will get wagons and load them with dead warriors, and we will burn their bodies at a distance from our camps. We will gather the bones so each dead warrior’s family can have them after the war, and we will raise a burial-mound over the cremation site.

“In addition, let us build defensive fortifications for our ships and camps. Let us build a wall and a trench. The wall will be nearest to the ships, and the trench will be nearest to the Trojans: a double fortification. We will build gateways for our chariots to drive through. The trench will be a barrier for the Trojans’ chariots. These are fortifications that will stop the Trojans from reaching our camps and ships.”

The Greek warriors recognized that this was good advice, and they shouted their assent.

Meanwhile, the leading Trojans met in Troy: Hector, Paris, Priam, and the old advisors and the leading commanders. Antenor said, “Listen to me, Trojans. Let us stop this war. Let us give Helen and all the treasure that Paris stole from Menelaus back to him. We are in the wrong. The Greeks and we had a truce, and we are the ones who broke it. We will gain no profit by continuing the war.”

Paris was angry and replied to the old advisor, “Don’t be stupid, Antenor. I tell you and all the other Greeks that I will NOT give up Helen. I am going to keep her. But I am willing to give Menelaus’ treasure back to him and even add treasure of my own to give to him.”

Priam, King of Troy and father of Hector and Paris, said, “Hear me, Trojans. Let us eat our evening meal, and stand our night watch. In the morning, the herald Idaeus will go to the Greeks and inform Agamemnon and Menelaus of Paris’ offer to give treasure to Menelaus. In addition, Idaeus will ask whether the Greeks are willing to call a truce so that we can burn the bodies of our dead warriors. We can fight again later. We will fight until one army wins.”

All obeyed Priam.

In the morning, the herald Idaeus went to the Greeks and said, “Agamemnon and leading Greek commanders, Priam wishes me to tell you about the offer that Paris has made — Paris, whom we all wish had drowned before causing this long war. Paris will return to Menelaus all the treasure he stole, and he will add treasure of his own to give to Menelaus, but he insists on keeping Helen, although all other Trojans wish that he would give her back to Menelaus. In addition, Priam wishes me to ask if you are willing to call a truce so that we can burn the bodies of our dead. We will fight again after this deed is done.”

Diomedes thought, *This is a very bad speech for a herald to make. Obviously, the Trojans know that they are in the wrong. Obviously, the Trojans are demoralized. Odysseus, a master of rhetoric, would never make a speech like that.*

Diomedes shouted, “Let’s not stop the war! Let’s not accept the treasure — or even Helen! It’s easy to see that Troy is in the wrong. It’s easy to see that one day Troy must fall.”

The Greek warriors shouted their agreement with Diomedes, and Agamemnon said to Idaeus, “I agree with my warriors: The war will continue. But also I agree that we need a truce so that both sides can burn their dead. The way to respect the dead is to burn their corpses quickly and allow their souls to enter the Land of the Dead.”

Idaeus returned to Troy and told Priam what Agamemnon had said. The Trojans organized themselves quickly. One group would gather the corpses, and the other group would gather the wood to burn them.

Greeks and Trojans met on the battleground and began to gather their corpses. The bodies were hard to recognize. Greeks and Trojans washed blood away from the corpses to make identification possible, and then they loaded their dead on wagons as they wept. The Trojans worked silently because Priam had forbade them to cry loudly. Both armies piled their dead on funeral pyres. The fires burned all night.

The next day, the Greeks built their fortifications. They piled up earth to form a burial-mound, they built a wall with gateways, and they dug a trench. In the trench they put sharp stakes to serve as additional protection against attack.

Meanwhile, on Mount Olympus, Poseidon complained to Zeus, “The mortals are disrespecting the immortals. The Greeks have built a magnificent wall and trench, and they did it without first sacrificing and praying to the gods. They should have sacrificed one hundred magnificent bulls to us. The fame of their fortifications will spread, while the fame of the walls I built will fade.”

Zeus thought, *I remember you building the walls of Troy. You and Apollo rebelled against me, and as punishment I made you two serve for a year the then-King of Troy, Laomedon. You two built the walls of Troy.*

Zeus replied, “You are a powerful god. You ought not to be jealous of a wall built by mortals. You are better than that. Listen: Wait until the Greeks sail back home and then tear the wall down. Beat the wall into the sea, and let nothing but sand lie on the beach. You can easily do that.”

Night arrived, and the Greeks’ fortifications were complete. They ate the evening meal, and ships arrived from Lemnos with cargoes of wine. Euneus, king of Lemnos, gave the gift of a thousand measures of wine to Agamemnon and Menelaus. The other Greek warriors bought their wine, paying for it with bronze or iron or hides or cattle or slaves.

The Greek warriors feasted, but all night Zeus sent thunder and lightning, and the Greek warriors worried about the bad omens. They poured wine for Zeus, but still worried. They then slept.

CHAPTER 8: The Tide of Battle Turns in the Trojans' Favor

As morning came, Zeus assembled the gods on Mount Olympus. He told them, "Listen to me. Let no one — god or goddess — disobey my orders. I order you to stay out of the Trojan War. Do not help the Greeks or the Trojans. Stay away. I have something that I wish to accomplish. Anyone who interferes with my plans will be whipped back to Mount Olympus in disgrace. Or I will throw that god or goddess to Tartarus, the lowest part of the Land of the Dead. Whoever interferes with my plans will learn how strong I am. If you wish, try to fight me now. Let me hold on to one end of a golden cable in the sky, and let all of you hold on to the end of the golden cable on the earth. All of you together are not strong enough to pull me down from the sky. But I could pull all of you up into the sky, and I could pull up the earth, and I could leave you and the earth dangling at the end of the golden cable. That is how strong I am."

The gods and goddesses were uneasy, and they were afraid of Zeus.

Athena said, "Father, Zeus, we all know how strong you are. But other gods and I pity the Greek warriors. They have fates, and they die bloody deaths. We will obey your orders and not fight in the war, but we will offer the Greek warriors advice so that they don't all die."

Zeus replied, "Don't be afraid. Don't take me too seriously. You are my favorite daughter."

Zeus then harnessed his horses to his battle-chariot and drove to Mount Ida, where an altar to him stood. This was one of his favorite spots for viewing the Trojan War. He released his horses so that they could graze, and he sat on his throne and watched the Greek and Trojan warriors.

Both armies ate and put on armor, and the gates of Troy opened and the Trojan warriors marched out. The Trojans knew that they had wives and sons to defend.

The armies met and fought, and warriors screamed and died. Blood flowed and the ground turned red.

All morning the two armies were evenly matched, and warriors died on each side with no army winning an advantage. But at noon, Zeus lifted his golden scales. In one scale was the fate of the Trojans and in the other scale was the fate of the Greeks. The fate of the Trojans rose, and the fate of the Greeks fell. On this day, the Trojans would be triumphant.

From Mount Ida, Zeus created thunder and sent lightning bolts against the Greek army. The Greek warriors were terrified. They knew that Zeus opposed them.

Many Greek warriors were terrified and retreated: Idomeneus, Agamemnon, Great Ajax, and Little Ajax. Nestor remained on the battlefield, but not by his own free will. Paris had shot an arrow and killed one of Nestor's horses. The horse had been hit in the head and had reared in agony before dying. Now Nestor was cutting the horse out of its harness with his sword.

Hector saw Nestor and charged toward him in a chariot. Nestor would have died, but Diomedes saw Hector and came to Nestor's rescue. Diomedes also saw Odysseus, who was running to the ships. Diomedes called to him, "Odysseus, why are you running away? Be careful that you don't get a spear in your back. Stay here with me and fight off Hector and save Nestor!"

Odysseus did not hear Diomedes. He kept running.

So Diomedes alone faced Hector. He came to a stop before Nestor's chariot and said to Nestor, "Old soldier, climb aboard my chariot and drive my horses that I took away from Aeneas. Our aides can take your chariot and living horses back to our ships. Come, let's fight Hector!"

Nestor was willing. Sthenelus and Eurymedon boarded Nestor's chariot and drove it to the ships, while Nestor boarded Diomedes' chariot. He grabbed the reins and charged straight at

Hector. Diomedes threw his spear. He missed Hector, but killed Hector's driver: Eniopeus. He stabbed him in the chest beside the nipple, and Eniopeus fell off the chariot as his horses reared.

Hector grieved for his driver, but left him lying dead on the ground. Hector sought and quickly found another driver: Archeptolemus.

Now the Greeks would have rallied and thrust back the Trojans, but Zeus took direct action against the Greek warriors. He threw a thunderbolt that hit the earth just in front of Diomedes' team. Lightning flashed and thunder sounded. The horses reared and Nestor dropped the reins.

Nestor was afraid. He shouted to Diomedes, "Let's retreat! We can't be victorious without the help of Zeus, who today is helping Hector. Today, Hector wins glory. Tomorrow, Zeus willing, we will win glory. No one of us mortals can fight the will of powerful Zeus!"

Diomedes, unhappy, said, "All you say is correct, but I hate it that one day Hector will boast that he drove me back to the ships! I would rather die than hear that boast."

Nestor replied, "Your reputation is secure. Even if Hector makes that boast, no one — not even the Trojans — will believe it. Especially not the Trojan women whom you have made widows!"

Nestor turned the chariot around and drove back to the ships. Hector and other Trojan warriors followed him, shouting as they attacked them with spears and arrows.

Hector yelled at Diomedes, "Once you had a reputation. Once you were respected. Once you were worthy of the best meat and the best drink. But now everyone will know that you are a girl. You will never conquer Troy! You will never drag our women to your ships! I will kill you first!"

Diomedes wanted to turn and fight Hector, but three times Zeus created thunder that rolled across the battlefield — a sign that today was a Trojan day of triumph.

Hector shouted to his warriors as they chased Nestor and Diomedes, "Trojans! Trojan allies! Be warriors! Zeus is giving us glory, and he is giving the Greeks death! The Greeks erected fortifications — the fools! Nothing can hold me back! Nothing can keep me from reaching their ships! And when I do, bring fire! We will burn their ships, and we will slaughter their warriors!"

Hector then shouted to his horses, "My wife, Andromache, has always treated you well. Now you can repay us! She has given you wheat soaked in wine to eat. She has fed you before she fed me! So now run after Nestor and Diomedes! If we can take Nestor's solid-gold shield and Diomedes' armor that was created by Hephaestus himself, I think that we will reach the Greek ships!"

Hera witnessed all from Mount Olympus — Zeus was routing her Greek warriors. She tried to convince Poseidon to help the Greeks: "God of the sea and of earthquakes, don't you feel pity for these Greeks? They are dying, all these warriors who sacrificed to you at Aegae and Helice. If only we gods who support the Greeks could help them and resist Zeus!"

Poseidon replied, "That can't happen. Zeus is too strong for us."

The trench in front of the Greek wall was filled with warriors fighting. Hector might have reached the ships, but Hera put a thought in Agamemnon's mind that he ought to encourage his men. He made his way to Odysseus' ship, which was moored in the middle of all the other ships. A man shouting here could be heard on both ends of the line of ships: the vulnerable sides that were protected by Great Ajax and by Achilles, the Greeks' mightiest warriors.

Agamemnon shouted to his warriors, "You have made many boasts, but what are they worth? You used to boast that you were the greatest warriors. While eating meat and drinking wine on the island of Lemnos, you boasted that one Greek warrior could fight up to one

hundred — no, two hundred — Trojan warriors. Now, one Trojan warrior — Hector — conquers us all! Soon, he will set our ships on fire!

“Zeus, why aren’t you helping us? On our way here to Troy, we stopped at each of your shrines and made sacrifices. If nothing else, let us escape with our lives! Don’t let these Trojans kill us all!”

Zeus heard the prayer and answered it. An eagle clutching a fawn flew to Zeus’ altar and released it. The fawn had been in great danger but had escaped. And so the sign from Zeus communicated that the Greek army was now in great danger but it would not be annihilated. It would live to fight another day. The Greeks recognized that Zeus had sent them a favorable sign, and they attacked the Trojans.

Diomedes was the first to kill a Trojan in the Greek rally. Agelaus had turned his chariot around and was fleeing. Diomedes’ spear hit him in the back and came out through his chest. Agelaus fell from his chariot, and his armor clanged.

Following Diomedes were Agamemnon and Menelaus, Great Ajax and Little Ajax, Idomeneus and his aide Meriones, and Eurypylus.

The archer Teucer, who shared a father but not a mother with Great Ajax, worked with him to kill Trojans. With his shield, Great Ajax protected Teucer while he fitted an arrow to his bow, then he raised his shield until Teucer shot, and then he lowered his shield to protect Teucer again.

The teamwork paid off. Teucer killed Orsilochus, Ormenus, Ophelstes, Daetor, Chromius, Lycophontes, Amopaon, and Melanippus. Arrow after arrow hit warrior after warrior, and corpse after corpse fell to the ground.

Agamemnon saw all. He told Teucer, “Son of Telamon, you show your effectiveness in battle. You bring hope to your fellow warriors. You bring glory to your father, who raised you although he was not married to your mother. If Zeus allows us to conquer Troy, you will be the first to be rewarded after myself. I will give you a gift of honor: a tripod, a chariot and a team of horses, or a sex-slave to sleep with.”

Teucer responded the way a good warrior should respond: “You don’t need to encourage me. I will fight well without the encouragement. I have no intention of quitting. I have shot eight arrows, and I have hit eight Trojans. But still, try as I do, I can’t hit Hector and kill him.”

Teucer aimed an arrow at Hector, but he missed and killed Gorgythion, a handsome son of Priam. The arrow hit Gorgythion in the chest. One of Priam’s wives, Castianira, had given birth to him. As he died, his head, weighed down by his helmet, drooped the way that a red poppy, weighed down by its seeds, droops in a garden.

Again, Teucer aimed an arrow at Hector. Again, he shot and missed — Apollo protected Troy’s mightiest warrior. Teucer hit Hector’s driver, Archeptolemus, in the chest beside the nipple. He fell off the chariot, and the horses reared.

Hector grieved but left the corpse on the ground and cried to his brother Cebriones, “Take the reins!” But before Cebriones could do so, Hector jumped from the chariot and seized a rock and threw it at Teucer, who was fitting another arrow to his bow.

The rock, thrown by Hector as hard as he could, struck Teucer’s collarbone. The string of the bow snapped, and Teucer’s hand went numb. Hector would have killed him, but Great Ajax protected his half-brother with his shield as Greek warriors lifted Teucer up and took him to their ships.

Again Zeus helped the Trojans as they charged, forcing the Greeks back. Hector was like a dog harassing a wild boar or a lion, chasing it and snapping at its heels but alert lest the wild boar or lion turn around and attack.

Hector killed the Greek warriors who lagged behind as the others fled back to their ships. The Greek warriors who reached their fortifications prayed to the gods and lined up to face the Trojans.

Hector's eyes were like those of Ares or of a Gorgon — a female monster the sight of whom would turn a mortal to stone.

Hector and his Trojans had routed the Greek warriors.

Hera saw all, and she was unhappy. She said to Athena, "Don't we care anymore for the Greek warriors? They are dying! One warrior — Hector — has routed them! If we are going to help the Greeks, we need to do it now!"

Athena replied, "Let Hector die on the battlefield before Troy! But Zeus protects him. Zeus has forgotten the many times that I helped his son Heracles when he was performing the labors that Eurystheus set for him. Heracles often needed help, and Zeus often sent me down from Olympus to help him. If I knew then what I know now, when Heracles went down to the Land of the Dead to kidnap Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog, Heracles would never have left the Land of the Dead.

"Now, Zeus ignores what I want. He obeys the wishes of Thetis, the mother of Achilles. She supplicated him and asked him to teach the Greeks how much they need Achilles, her son. But someday, Zeus, my father, will give me what I want.

"Harness the horses to your chariot, and I will dress myself in armor. Then I will see if Hector is happy to see us on the battlefield or if he will grieve at the destruction we will wreak."

Hera got the chariot ready, and Athena put on her armor and grabbed her spear. Then they set off to Troy.

But Zeus was watching. He had given them orders not to interfere in the war. He called Iris, the messenger of the gods, to him, and told her, "Go after Hera and Athena and tell them that I am ordering them to stay at Olympus. If they do not return, I will maim their horses, smash their chariot, and use my lightning bolts to wound them so badly that it will take more than ten years to heal their wounds. I am especially angry at Athena, who ought to know better. But I am used to Hera's disobedience — she always goes against my will, whenever she can."

Iris raced away with his message. She quickly reached Hera and Athena and told them, "Zeus orders you to stay at Olympus. He orders you not to fight in the war. If you disobey him, he will maim your horses, smash your chariot, and use his lightning bolts to wound you so badly that it will take more than ten years to heal your wounds. He says that he is especially angry at Athena, who ought to know better. But he says that you, Hera, always go against his will, whenever you can. Bitch, do you really want to challenge Zeus?"

Having delivered the message, Iris raced away, and Hera decided not to challenge Zeus. She said to Athena, "Let's return to Olympus. Let mortals fight, and let mortals die. Let Zeus decide which side will be triumphant. I cannot challenge Zeus."

The Seasons took care of Hera's horses, and Hera and Athena sat down among the other gods.

Zeus then returned to Olympus from Mount Ida. Poseidon took care of his horses, and Zeus sat on his throne. Athena and Hera ignored him, but Zeus openly mocked them: "What is wrong with you two? Are you exhausted from helping the Greeks on the battlefield? Are you exhausted from slaughtering Trojan warriors? No one can stop me from going to the battlefield, but I was able to keep you two from going there. If you had not obeyed my orders, I would have blasted you with lightning bolts and never have allowed you to return to Mount Olympus."

Athena remained angry but silent, but Hera was both angry and loud: “We know how powerful you are, but we pity the Greek warriors. They are bloody. They are dying. We will not fight on the battlefield, but we will give advice to the Greek commanders.”

Zeus replied, “Tomorrow you can watch the battle. You will see me getting many, many more Greek warriors killed. Hector will kill and kill again until Achilles rejoins the fighting, as he will when the battle reaches the ships and warriors fight to gain possession of the corpse of his best friend, Patroclus. This is the doom of Zeus.

“You, Hera, will be angry, but that means nothing to me. I would not care if you ended up in Tartarus, a place of pain and the lowest part of the Land of the Dead. You are a bitch.”

Hera was silent, and the day came to an end. The Trojans were unhappy to see dusk — more time, and they could have reached the Greek ships and set fire to them. The Greeks were happy to see the dusk — finally a respite from blood and death.

Hector met with his commanders in a place where corpses did not lie unburied on the ground. He said to them, “Listen to me. I had hoped to reach the Greek ships and set fire to them, but night arrived too soon. We could have saved our city, our wives and female relatives, and our children. Let us camp out on the battlefield and not return to Troy tonight. We will get cattle from the city and eat out here. We will set watch fires so that the Greeks cannot sail tonight and escape death at our hands. We won’t let the Greeks board their ships without a fight, without wounds to take back to Greece. We will destroy the Greeks so that other warriors will decide not to attack Troy.

“Heralds will return to Troy and order that boys and old men stand on the walls and take watches. Our wives can set big fires in their homes. All will be on guard in case of a surprise night attack by night raiders while our army is camped on the battlefield.

“Those are my orders for tonight. Tomorrow we will attack.

“Zeus is on our side. I pray to him that we destroy the Greeks and their ships. Tonight we will guard our camps, and tomorrow we will fight a great battle.

“Tomorrow we will see who is triumphant: me or Diomedes. Will he drive me away from the ships? Or will I kill him? I think that Diomedes will die, and his Greeks will be routed. I wish that I were as sure of immortality as I am of this.”

The Trojans were triumphant, and their morale was high. They shouted their agreement with Hector’s orders and carried them out.

The watch fires spread across the battlefield, hundreds of them blazing in the night, in between the Greek ships and the Xanthus River. One thousand watch fires blazed, and by each watch fire fifty warriors camped — fifty thousand Trojans waited for dawn to come so that they could kill Greeks.

Meanwhile, in his camp, Achilles was thinking, *Why am I here? Why was I fighting? I am not married to Helen. Paris has never done anything to harm me. Why have I been risking my life in this war? What benefit can I gain from fighting?*

The major benefit I can gain is kleos: reputation, fame, and a kind of immortality. Human beings are mortal; all of us will die. The Land of the Dead is a gloomy place. Souls go down to Hades, but they have no meaningful kind of afterlife. Nothing good can be found there, and the only thing worse is to be a soul who is not allowed to be in the Land of the Dead because his corpse has not been properly burned and buried. The soul suffers a horrible fate when dogs and birds are allowed to eat his corpse. The soul is not allowed to enter the Land of the Dead. For a soul, this is horrible. The dead belong with the dead.

The immortality of the soul is worthless. The only meaningful kind of immortality is kleos. I have been fighting in this war and risking my life in order to attain kleos. I have wanted to fight so well that I will be immortalized in poetry and song. I have wanted to fight so well that

an epic poet will come along and create a poem about me that will be sung forever. That way, I will have undying kleos. People will remember my name after I am dead. I will have reputation and fame.

I want to be remembered after my death. I want my name to live on after I die. I want to be remembered as a great warrior who slaughtered many other warriors.

My body will become a corpse. All of us will die, but my kleos can live on in epic poetry after I die.

To get kleos, I need to fight well and earn timê. If I fight well, I am supposed to be rewarded with timê. Timê is booty — the spoils of war. Timê is cattle, slaves, and pretty young women who become sex-slaves. The more timê I earn, the more kleos I will have.

Timê is gifts of honor. After a city has been captured, what is inside the city is given out as gifts of honor. If a warrior has fought bravely, that warrior will get timê. An important kind of timê is a sex-slave.

Briseis was my timê. I earned her because I fought well in battle. She was my sex-slave, but Agamemnon took my timê away from me. By taking away my timê, Agamemnon is taking away my kleos.

All warriors are fighting for timê and kleos. All warriors are willing to risk dying in order to achieve undying kleos. But if Agamemnon can take away my timê and kleos so easily, are those things worth dying for? All warriors believe that timê and kleos are worth dying for. Maybe they are wrong. Maybe life is more valuable than timê and kleos.

All mortals need to decide how to live their lives. Warriors believe that since we are mortals and we will die, the best way to live our lives is to fight bravely and gain undying kleos. Maybe we are wrong.

CHAPTER 9: Peace Offerings to Achilles

The Trojans stood watch to make sure that the Greeks did not sail away during the night. Their mood was one of triumph.

The mood of the Greeks, however, was discouragement for many and near-panic for others. They had lost a significant battle. For the first time, the Trojans were camped on the plain near the Greek ships. The Greeks grieved.

Just like the winds will stir the sea and cast up seaweed on the shore, so the Trojans had cast the Greeks back to their ships on the shore. The spirits of the Greeks were like damp seaweed.

Agamemnon ordered heralds to call the Greek commanders to a council — not loudly, but quietly. He did not want the Trojans or common soldiers to hear and wonder what they would discuss.

They gathered. Morale was low.

Agamemnon stood up with tears streaming down his face and said, “Friends, Zeus has tricked me. Long ago, he promised — he nodded to me — that I would return to Greece triumphant, with the walls of Troy torn down. But, no, it was all a trick to bring disaster to us and to get many of us killed. Zeus wants me to return — defeated — to Greece. He wants me to leave entire regiments of warriors behind as corpses. Who can go against the will of Zeus? He has destroyed a thousand cities, and he will destroy a thousand more.

“So let us return to Greece. We have lost the war! We will never conquer Troy!”

Although the Greek commanders were discouraged, they were stunned by Agamemnon’s orders. True, they had lost a significant battle, but the lost battle was not so significant that they should quit the war.

Diomedes said, “Warriors are allowed to speak up honestly in council, and I will do so. Agamemnon, your plan is exactly what we should not do. We should not sail home to Greece. I am a young warrior, and when I came to Troy you thought that I was a poor warrior. Ask the Trojans now what they think of my skill in battle. Zeus gives us some gifts, but not all. He gave you power, but not courage. We Greek warriors are not cowards; we shall stay here. If you wish to return to Greece, go! But we other Greek warriors shall continue the war until we have conquered Troy. And if all the other Greek commanders sail home to Greece with you, Sthenelus and I will stay here and conquer Troy by ourselves. I say this: Stay here and conquer Troy! The gods are on our side!”

The Greek warriors roared their approval of what Diomedes had said.

Nestor approved of the substance of Diomedes’ speech, but he did not approve of how Diomedes had made the speech. An old man, Nestor knew the importance of saving the face of an important leader. A young commander such as Diomedes should show respect to an older commander such as Agamemnon. Young men do not always know how to speak properly. Nestor also knew that a hungry man feels discouragement much more than a fed man.

Nestor stood up and said, “You are a mighty warrior, Diomedes, and in council you speak well — for a young man. What you said is good, but we need to add to it. We need a plan of action. You are very young — you could be the youngest of my sons. I can add more to what you have said, and everybody — including mighty Agamemnon — will listen to what I have to say. We will not have civil war during our council.

“But first, let’s eat. Let’s set up sentries to stand watch. The younger warriors can do the guarding. You, Agamemnon, are the greatest commander here. Make a feast for all the lesser commanders. You are hospitable. You have lots of wine. You command so many men.

“After we eat, we will meet again and seek a good plan. Good advice is what is needed now, now that the Trojans are camped so close to our ships. This night will lead to destruction or to victory.”

Seven captains with one hundred men set up as guards, keeping the Greek warriors safe. The seven captains were Thrasymedes, Ascalaphus, Ialmenus, Meriones, Aphareus, Deipylus, and Lycomedes. They lit fires, cooked, and ate their meal as they stood guard.

Agamemnon feasted the commanders, and after they had eaten, Nestor said, “Great commander Agamemnon, lord of men, you are the most important commander here. You rule many men, and Zeus has given you power. You must speak up in council, and you must listen to the advice of other people. If another person has a good plan, you must implement it, if it truly is good. You will get much credit for doing so.

“This is what I think is best. I think it is the best plan possible. I have been thinking about it ever since you angered Achilles by taking away his *timê*: his sex-slave Briseis. None of the Greek warriors wanted you to do that, including me. I advised you — strongly — not to take Briseis away from Achilles. But you were angry, and you dishonored Achilles by taking away his *timê*, his prize of honor. And you have Briseis even now.

“But you can make things right again. You can stop Achilles’ anger by giving him gifts of friendship and by giving him words of friendship.”

Agamemnon agreed at once with much of what Nestor had proposed. He said, “You are right, old man. I am in the wrong. Achilles is a mighty warrior, and we need him. Zeus obviously loves him because Zeus is now supporting the warriors of Troy and making them triumphant. Because I am in the wrong, I will give Achilles gifts of friendship.

“Listen to what I will give Achilles if he will stop being angry and will start fighting again.

“I will give him ten tripods that have never been set over a fire. I will give him ten gold bars. I will give him twenty polished cauldrons. I will give him one dozen racing stallions that have won prizes that make a man rich. I will give him seven women from Lesbos who are skilled weavers and artists — these are the women I chose for myself when Achilles conquered the citadel of Lesbos. They are beautiful women. I will give him back Briseis, and I will swear that I have not slept with her. These are the gifts that I will give Achilles now.

“If we conquer Troy, I will give Achilles more. I will allow Achilles to take from Troy as much gold and bronze as his ships can carry back to his home. I will allow Achilles to take from Troy twenty women who are nearly as beautiful as Helen.

“If we return safely to Greece, I will make Achilles my son-in-law and honor him the way I honor my own son: Orestes. I have three daughters — Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa. Achilles can choose any one of the three to marry; he will not have to pay a bride-price. I will also give Achilles a dowry: a treasure. I will also make Achilles the king of seven citadels: Cardamyle, Enope, Hire, Pherae, Anthea, Aepea, and Pedasus. The people there will give Achilles gifts and obey his laws.

“All of these things I will give to Achilles if he will stop being angry and will start fighting again. But he will have to obey my orders! Only Death submits to no man, and so Death is hated. Achilles must obey my orders! He must submit to me! I am a greater king than he is! I am an older man than he is!”

Nestor thought, *You are offering to Achilles half of what I wanted you to offer him. You are offering many generous gifts of friendship — but no words of friendship. Let us hope that this is enough. For all or almost all warriors, it would be.*

Nestor said, “Agamemnon, you are certainly generous. These gifts are remarkable. Let us pick men to send to Achilles to talk to him and bring to him your offer. Who will be the three

heralds? Old Phoenix, Great Ajax, and Odysseus. These are the men for this mission. Bring them water so that they can wash their hands and pray to Zeus.”

Nestor thought, *These are all good people to be in the embassy to Achilles.*

Odysseus is a skilled rhetorician as well as a skilled warrior. People who know rhetoric can speak persuasively. Because Odysseus is a skilled rhetorician, he will be able to speak persuasively to Achilles. Odysseus knows how to use language to please and to persuade.

Phoenix is an old man who serves as a father figure to Achilles. We Greeks respect fathers, and we Greeks respect old men. Phoenix will be able to speak to Achilles on an emotional level.

The prowess of Great Ajax as a warrior is second only to Achilles. Great Ajax can speak to Achilles warrior to warrior.

If all goes well, these three people can persuade Achilles to stop being angry and to start acting as a warrior again.

Everyone was pleased with the three people he had chosen to be emissaries to Achilles. Heralds brought water. After everyone had washed their hands and poured out offerings of wine to Zeus, the three emissaries and two heralds — Odysseus and Eurybates — set out for Achilles’ camp. As the three emissaries left, Nestor looked each of them in the eyes — especially Odysseus.

As the group walked to Achilles’ camp, Great Ajax and Odysseus prayed to Poseidon that they could persuade Achilles to end his anger.

When the emissaries reached Achilles’ camp, Achilles was performing an epic song. He was singing about the *kleos aphthiton* — the undying reputation — of heroes of long ago. The lyre he was playing was part of the *timê* he had gotten after conquering the city of King Eetion, the father of Hector’s wife, Andromache. His best friend, Patroclus, sat quietly and listened to the songs.

Startled by the arrival of the embassy to his camp, Achilles stopped singing and stood up. Patroclus also stood up, and Achilles said to the emissaries, “Welcome! I must be needed now — my friends have come to visit me.”

Achilles welcomed his guests into his camp and invited them to sit down. He said to Patroclus, “Bring more wine, and make it strong. Give each of our guests a cup full.”

Patroclus brought the wine, which the Greeks mixed with water, and Achilles cooked mutton, goat, and pork — the best and tastiest cuts, which are along the backbone. Patroclus brought bread, Achilles served the meat, and Patroclus sacrificed to the gods. Everyone ate, including the emissaries, who had just eaten a meal that Agamemnon had given to them. Breaking bread with another person is important, and the emissaries did not want to do anything to upset Achilles.

After they had eaten, Great Ajax nodded to Phoenix — a signal for him to begin speaking. But although Odysseus saw the nod, he — confident in his ability as a speaker of rhetoric — began speaking.

First he toasted Achilles and complimented him.

Odysseus said, “To your health, Achilles! Thank you for the feast! We know that we can receive excellent *xenia* here and at the camp of Agamemnon.

“But we did not come here to feast. We are facing disaster, and we are afraid. Soon, either we will save our ships or the Trojans will burn them. It could go either way — unless you decide to fight for us. The Trojans are camped close to our ships. Thousands of watch fires are burning on the plain before Troy. Nothing can stop the Trojans from burning our ships — so the Trojans say.

“Moreover, Zeus is on their side. He sends them lightning bolts on their right side — the lucky side. Hector trusts the signs of Zeus, and he prays for daylight to come so that at last he can set fire to our ships and slaughter us. I fear that this will happen. With the gods’ help, Hector and his Trojans can kill us all and make us corpses in his country, far from the Greece we love.

“Help us now! Arm yourself and fight! You can save us if you want. But what if you don’t save us? Then the memory of our deaths will be a misery for you to think of in future years. Once we are dead, you cannot bring us back to life. Now is the time to stop our coming deaths.

“Your father, Peleus, must have given you good advice when you set out to fight at Troy: ‘Victory is yours if Athena and Hera give it to you. But do not be proud. Avoid quarrels. Instead, get along with others. If you avoid quarrels, your Greek friends will respect you.’ Your father must have said that to you. You must have forgotten his words.

“Stop this quarrel now. Let go of the anger you have. Agamemnon insulted you, but he is willing to give you many valuable gifts to make up for the insults. Listen to what Agamemnon has promised that he will give you.

“He will give you ten tripods that have never been set over a fire. He will give you ten gold bars. He will give you twenty polished cauldrons. He will give you one dozen racing stallions that have won prizes that make a man rich. He will give you seven women from Lesbos who are skilled weavers and artists — these are the women he chose for himself when you conquered the citadel of Lesbos. They are beautiful women. He will give you back Briseis, and he will swear that he has not slept with her. These are the gifts that he will give you now.

“If we conquer Troy, he will give you more. He will allow you to take from Troy as much gold and bronze as your ships can carry back to your home. He will allow you to take from Troy twenty women who are nearly as beautiful as Helen.

“If we return safely to Greece, he will make you his son-in-law and honor you the way he honors his own son: Orestes. He has three daughters: Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa. You can choose any one of the three to marry; you will not have to pay a bride-price. He will also give you a dowry: a treasure. He will also make you the king of seven citadels: Cardamyle, Enope, Hire, Pherae, Anthea, Aepea, and Pedasus. The people there will give you gifts and obey your laws.

“All of that is what Agamemnon will give you if you return and fight.

“But if you are still angry at Agamemnon, think of your fellow warriors. If you continue to be angry at Agamemnon, many of us will die although you are not angry at us. If you save our lives, we will honor you. You will gain *kleos*.

“If you return to the fighting, you will be able to meet Hector in battle and kill him, thereby winning great *kleos*. Before, the Trojan warriors stayed in Troy. Now, they fight on the plain. Now, you can meet Hector face-to-face!”

Odysseus thought, *This is the best speech I can make. I wish that I could offer words of friendship from Agamemnon, but Agamemnon did not say them. Instead, he wants Achilles to submit to him. Agamemnon’s words about submission are not persuasive words and so I left them out of my speech. I did mention the kleos that Achilles can win on the battlefield. If Achilles were to meet and kill Hector, Achilles will have undying kleos. Kleos motivates all of us warriors: Greek and Trojan.*

Achilles replied, “Odysseus, son of Laertes, I will tell you what I have to say plainly. I hate a liar: one who says one thing although what is in his heart is different. Agamemnon is a liar. He said that he would give me Briseis, but he took her back. I am not a liar. I speak the plain truth.

“Will I fight for Agamemnon again? Never. What is the reward that a warrior gets for fighting? *Kleos*? With Agamemnon, a brave warrior and a cowardly warrior get the same *kleos*. And they reap the same reward. In the long run, we are all dead: brave and cowardly alike. The brave warrior who fights in every battle will die. The coward who runs away from every battle will die. I have fought hard — and what have I gotten?

“I have been like a mother bird feeding her nestlings unendingly without time for her to feed herself. I have fought hard. I have sailed to and conquered twelve cities, and I have traveled by land to eleven cities and conquered them. I have seized booty from these cities and fed it all — given it all — to Agamemnon, who stands not in the front lines but in the safe lines and often in his camp. Agamemnon would return a small portion to me as my *timê*, but the majority he would keep. Some other portions he would hand out to other commanders.

“The other commanders still have their *timê* — but not me! From me — and only from me — he takes back the *timê*. He took back Briseis, whom I loved. Let him sleep with her now! He can have sex with her to the hilt!

“Why are we here before Troy? Why did Agamemnon gather an army and lead us here? For Helen. But are Agamemnon and Menelaus the only men who love their wives? All decent men love their wives. I loved my spear-bride. I loved Briseis.

“Agamemnon awarded Briseis to me, and then he took her back. Why should I trust him now? I know him all too well to trust him now. I have learned from experience.

“So let him fight his own battles. You, Odysseus, and the other commanders can help him if you wish.

“He has erected a mighty wall and trench. He has erected mighty defensive fortifications. Even with the wall and the trench, he can’t stop Hector, who is intent on setting fire to the ships. No, Agamemnon can’t stop Hector.

“When I was fighting, Hector had little desire to leave Troy. He stayed close to the Scaean Gates. Once, I met him face-to-face and I nearly killed him. Now, he camps by your ships.

“At one time, I wanted to fight and kill Hector — but not now. Tomorrow morning, I will sacrifice to Zeus and the other gods, and then I will load my ships so that my warriors and I can sail home. If you want to watch, you will see us setting sail. If Poseidon, the god of the sea, permits, we will reach home on the third day.

“At home, I have treasure. Here, I have gained more treasure. I will haul it all home: gold, bronze, women, and iron. All that I have won by fighting I will haul home — all except Briseis, my *timê*. Agamemnon gave her to me and took her back — an insult to his greatest warrior!

“Tell Agamemnon all that I have said. Tell him in front of other warriors. Perhaps they will be prepared to resist him if he tries to steal someone else’s *timê*.

“I will not be reconciled with Agamemnon. I will never forgive him for what he did. He has no shame. He cheated me. Once. He never will again. If he dies, the world will be a better place.

“Agamemnon wants to give me gifts? I despise his gifts. He could offer me ten or twenty times what he has offered plus all the treasure in the world — all the wealth that flows into Orchomenos or into Egyptian Thebes, which already overflows with treasure and with warriors. Even if Agamemnon were to offer me as many gifts as there are grains of sand, it would not be enough to repay me for the insult he has given me and it would not be enough for me to fight for him.

“I will never be Agamemnon’s son-in-law. Even if his daughters were as beautiful as Aphrodite or as wise and skilled as Athena, I still would not marry one of his daughters. Let him find other people to marry his daughters. My father will find me a wife. Many women live

in the lands of my father. They are women who have powerful and rich fathers. I can find a good woman to marry and to share my wealth and the wealth of my father.

“Agamemnon has offered to give me much wealth, but no amount of wealth — no amount of *timê* — is worth dying for. Troy was a rich city before the war started. The wealth that Troy had and the gold that Apollo has are not worth my life!

“I can gain wealth. I can make raids to get cattle and sheep. I can trade for tripods and stallions. But once I am dead, I cannot make a trade to get my life back! I cannot make a raid to get my life back!

“My mother, Thetis, the goddess, has special knowledge. Almost all men have one fate. They will die at a certain place at a certain time. They have no choice in the matter.

“Not me! Thetis has told me that I have two fates. If I stay here and fight at Troy, I will definitely die here — soon. But if I stay here and die here, I will earn undying *kleos*. People millennia from now will know my name and will talk about me.

“If I sail home, I will have a long life but no *kleos*. Soon after I die, no one will remember my name.

“You warriors have one fate, but you do not know what it is. You know that if you stay and fight at Troy, you may die in battle — or you may not. You know that if you leave Troy now and return home, you may have a long life — or you may not. Because my mother is a goddess, I know for certain what my fates are. You have probabilities; I have certainties.

“I advise you to set sail for Greece. You will not conquer Troy. You know that Zeus now favors the Trojans.

“Go back to Agamemnon and tell him what I have said. Let the leading commanders decide what to do. The Trojans are close to burning your ships, and your embassy to me has failed — completely!

“However, Phoenix is welcome to stay the night here. He can sail to Greece with me tomorrow if he wishes. I won’t force him to go with me.”

The emissaries were shocked by the vehemence with which Achilles had turned down Agamemnon’s offer of reconciliation. They were silent.

Then old Phoenix spoke. He said to Achilles, “You wish to sail home? Trojan fire is coming close to our ships! You are too angry to help us?”

“I will not be separated from you, Achilles. Your father, Peleus, wanted me to stay with you. You were just a boy with no experience in war when you joined forces with Agamemnon. You had no experience speaking in council. Peleus wanted me to be your teacher, your mentor. You had so much to learn. He wanted me to make you a man of words and of action. Can I be separated from you now when Peleus gave me such responsibility?”

“I do not want you to leave me behind here at Troy. I would not want to be separated from you even if Zeus promised to make me young again — as young as I was when I fled from a quarrel with an older man — my father, Amyntor — over a woman.

“We had quarreled over his mistress: a woman with beautiful dark hair. My mother — his wife — was jealous. She begged me to seduce my father’s mistress. My mother supplicated me and hugged my knees. She thought that if the mistress felt the love of a young man, then the mistress would leave the old man.

“I did as my mother wished and seduced my father’s mistress, but he was jealous and cursed me: his own son. He even prayed to the Furies, ‘Never let me bounce on my knees the son of my son!’ This was an awful curse, but the gods granted my father his wish. Zeus and Persephone gave my father what he wanted.

“I even wanted to murder my own father. But a god stopped me and reminded me of the bad consequences and the bad reputation that would follow a father-killer.

“I was kept prisoner in my father’s house. My kinfolk were always around, and they begged me to stay and not run away, and they watched me to make sure that I did not run away. For nine nights they feasted and drank wine, letting me join the festivities in hopes that I would stay.

“On the tenth night, I escaped. I burst through the bolted door of my quarters and ran. I jumped over the wall and fled from guards and female servants.

“I traveled through many lands and reached Phthia, where your father, Peleus, is king. He welcomed me, and he treated me like a son. He made me rich and a ruler.

“I helped him raise you, Achilles. I loved you and treated you well. At feasts, you would sit on my knee and I would cut up meat and feed it to you. I would mix wine and water and gave you sips from a cup I held up to your lips. Often, you spit up the wine and soaked my shirt with it.

“I loved you, and I often thought about how the gods had not given me a son of my own.

“Achilles, I made you my son. I wanted you to treat me like a father when I grew old. I wanted you to protect me when I grew old like a son would protect an elderly father.

“Now is the time to do that, Achilles. The fire has nearly reached the ships. Resist your anger; put out your burning rage! Your heart does not yield to better feelings — even the gods can put aside their anger when they are given sacrifices and prayers.

“Prayers are daughters of Zeus; they are goddesses who follow the goddess Ate, who is also known as Ruin. Prayers are lame and wrinkled and cross-eyed, and they follow Ate, who is strong and quick. Ate causes damage, and Prayers attempt to repair the damage. If a man will respect Prayers, they will be on his side. If a man disrespects Prayers and refuses them, they will go to Zeus and tell him to strike down that man.

“Achilles, respect Prayers! Give honor to Prayers!

“If Agamemnon were not giving you great *timê*, and were not promising you much more *timê* in the future, I would tell you to continue being angry. I would not tell you, ‘Stop being angry! Defend the ships and the lives of your friends!’

“But Agamemnon is offering you much *timê*. He will give you much *timê* now and much *timê* in the future.

“He has sent to you three friends — commanders of warriors — to ask you to put aside your anger. You know us. Don’t ignore the appeals of your friends, not now. Before, no one could blame you for being angry. That is not the case now.

“Remember the ancient heroes and what you and we can learn from them. Famous fighting men have gotten angry before. Famous fighting men have been offered great amounts of *timê* before. I remember an old story. Let me tell it to you. We are friends.

“The Curetes and the Aetolians warred. They slaughtered each other. The Aetolians defended their city, and the Curetes vowed to conquer it.

“The war began because of Artemis. The Aetolian Oeneus, the father of Tydeus and Meleager, did not offer her a sacrifice, although he had sacrificed to the other gods. He had forgotten about Artemis or he did not want to sacrifice to her. Either way, it was a fatal mistake!

“Artemis was angry, and she set loose in his kingdom a wild boar. The boar ripped up Oeneus’ orchard, but his son, Meleager, killed it. Many men had banded together to hunt the boar, and the boar had killed many men, and Meleager was the one who killed it.

“A fight broke out over who would get the boar’s head and hide. Curetes fought Aetolians. As long as the Aetolian Meleager, a ferocious warrior, fought, the Curetes were continually beaten. They were even beaten back to the walls of their own city.

“But Meleager became angry and stopped fighting. He became angry at Althaea, his mother, and he stayed in bed with his wife, Cleopatra, instead of going to war and fighting.

“Cleopatra’s mother was Marpessa, a woman who was such a prize that Idas, who became her husband, even dared to draw a bow against the god Apollo. Apollo had carried away Marpessa. Idas followed them and then challenged Apollo. Zeus intervened and asked Marpessa to choose whom she preferred: Idas or Apollo. She chose Idas.

“When Cleopatra was born, her parents called her by another name: Halcyon, after a seabird. While grieving after Apollo had kidnapped her and taken her away, Marpessa had made a noise that sounded like the wail of the seabird.

“Angry, Meleager lay beside Cleopatra. His mother had enraged him. When the fight broke out over who would get the boar’s head and hide, Meleager killed his uncle — his mother’s brother. She cursed Meleager. She prayed to the god Hades and his wife, Persephone, “Kill him! Kill Meleager! Kill my son!” A Fury — one of the goddesses who punish the murderers of family members — heard her, and suddenly the Curetes attacked the city of the Aetolians.

“The elders of the city begged Meleager, ‘Come and fight! Save us! Defend your city and your people!’ They promised him a wonderful gift if he would fight: They would give him fifty acres of the best land — his own choice. Twenty-five acres would be devoted to vineyards, and twenty-five acres would be devoted to crops.

“Oeneus, his own father, supplicated him. But Meleager refused to fight. Meleager’s brothers and — now — his mother begged him to put aside his anger and fight, but he would not. His friends came to him and begged him to put aside his anger and fight, but he would not. The Curetes continued to attack and were on the verge of conquering the city and setting it on fire.

“Finally, Cleopatra herself, Meleager’s wife, begged him to save the city. She reminded him of what happens when a city falls: The enemy warriors kill warriors, set the city on fire, rape the women, and make the children slaves. Conquered people have no power and no freedom.

“Meleager armed himself and went to war. He saved the city. But so many Aetolians had died that Meleager did not receive the gift of land that he would have received if he had fought earlier. He saved the city, but he did not receive a reward.

“Don’t make the mistake that Meleager made. And don’t let the ships be set on fire. After they are set on fire, it is hard or impossible to repair the damage. Go into battle now and earn the gratitude of the Greeks while they are offering you gifts.

“If you go into battle without the gifts, without the *timê*, your *kleos* will be less although you beat back the Trojans!”

Odysseus thought, *Old Phoenix made a very good speech. His stories are relevant to the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. One of Old Phoenix’ stories stressed the problems that result when an older man and a younger man quarrel over a woman. In another story, he also stressed, like me, the importance of saving the lives of friends and the importance of timê and kleos.*

Achilles replied, “Phoenix, old sir, why should I try to get *kleos* by accepting the *timê* of Agamemnon? My *kleos* — if I should get it — will come from the decree of Zeus, who has vowed to make the Trojans triumphant. If I want the *kleos* that comes from the decree of Zeus, I will stay here by the ships and I will die here. I have already explained this to you.

“One more thing. Don’t try to persuade me to stay by weeping and wailing and pleading the cause of Agamemnon. He is not worth pleading for. If you continue to support him, I will hate you. Now, I love you. You should take my side, and you should attack, not support, Agamemnon. Stand by me, and take half of my honor.

“Let the other emissaries carry my message back to Agamemnon. You may stay here and sleep in a soft bed. Tomorrow, we will decide what to do: sail back home to Greece or stay in our camps, not fighting.”

Achilles nodded to Patroclus, a signal to him to make a soft bed for old Phoenix and a signal to the other emissaries to leave.

Great Ajax stood up and spoke to Odysseus, “Let’s go. We have failed in our mission to Achilles. Let’s report to Agamemnon and the other commanders, all of whom are waiting for us.

“Achilles is too proud to help us, although we have honored him. Other men have suffered injustice — a brother or a son killed. But they allow the murderer to live on in the same land as long as the murderer pays money as the price for his crime. Once the father or brother accepts the blood-price, he will hold down the anger in his heart.

“But Achilles does not do that, although the injustice done to him is much less than the loss of a brother or of a son. Achilles is angry because of the loss of a girl — just one girl. We have offered him his girl back, and seven other girls, and much treasure as well.

“Achilles, soften your heart! We three have appeared here because we were sent by *all* the Greek warriors. We three want to be your friends.”

Achilles replied, “Royal son of Telamon, warrior and commander, Great Ajax, you have spoken well. I agree with most of what you have said. But still I am angry at Agamemnon. I remember how he humiliated me in front of everyone when he treated me as an outcast instead of as a warrior — I cannot forgive him.

“Go to him and tell him my message. Hector will continue to fight and to kill, and he will set on fire your ships. I will not fight again until the fire reaches my own ships. When Hector tries to attack my own troops and my own ships, then I will fight him and I will stop him. I will fight for myself, but I will not fight for Agamemnon!”

The warriors poured out an offering of wine to the gods, and Odysseus and Great Ajax and the two heralds went back to Agamemnon and the other commanders. Odysseus led the way.

Patroclus ordered that a bed be made for Phoenix, who then slept on soft fleeces. Achilles slept beside Diomedes, a woman he had brought from Lesbos. Patroclus slept beside Iphigenia, a woman whom Achilles had given to him. Achilles had won her by conquering the city of Scyros.

When Odysseus and Great Ajax and the two heralds reached Agamemnon’s camp, Agamemnon urgently asked, “Odysseus, will Achilles fight again? Will he keep the Trojan fire from burning our ships? Or is he still too angry to fight?”

Odysseus replied, “Agamemnon, Achilles is still too angry to fight. He has no intention of stopping his anger. He says that he does not care about you, and he does not care about your gifts. He tells you to fight your own battles and to keep the Trojan fire from the ships without his aid. He even threatens to sail away to Greece tomorrow. He also advises your warriors, ‘Sail away to Greece. You will never conquer Troy. Zeus favors the Trojans, and the Trojans know it.’”

Odysseus thought, *Achilles actually told Great Ajax that he would not sail away tomorrow but would stay here and not fight until the fire reached his own ships. Still, it’s best to give Agamemnon and the others the worst news. That way, they will be prepared if Achilles changes his mind and sails home. In addition, they may feel a bit better if Achilles does not sail home tomorrow. Interestingly, Great Ajax made the shortest speech — and the most effective. After hearing what Great Ajax had to say, Achilles decided not to sail home to Greece.*

Odysseus added, “That is his answer to us. Here are men who can confirm it: Great Ajax and the two heralds. Phoenix stayed with Achilles. Achilles has invited him to sail home to

Greece with him tomorrow, but only if he wishes to go with him. Achilles says that he will not force Phoenix to go.”

Agamemnon and the other commanders were stunned into silence for a long time.

Then Diomedes spoke up: “Agamemnon, it was a mistake to send an embassy to Achilles. He has always been proud, and now he will be prouder. Let him do whatever he wants. He can sail home if he wants, or he can stay at Troy if he wants. If he stays here, I think he will fight again — a time will come when he wishes to fight.

“Let all of us work together. We have eaten, so now let us sleep. When dawn comes, we fight. Agamemnon, you take your chariot and team of horses and lead us into battle. You fight in the front ranks!”

The Greeks roared their approval of Diomedes’ words. They poured wine to the gods, returned to their own camps, and slept.

CHAPTER 10: A Night Raid

Most of the Greek commanders slept, but Agamemnon could not — his mind was too active. He was worried and he groaned. His groans were like the thunderbolts thrown by Zeus to signal rain or hail or snow — or war. He looked at the watch fires of the Trojans — there were so many! He saw a thousand fires! He groaned again, and he tore hair from his scalp, but he formed a plan of action. He would go to Nestor and see if the old, wise warrior could think of something that would keep the Trojan fires away from the Greek ships. He seized a spear and prepared to go to Nestor.

Menelaus also could not sleep. He was afraid for the Greek warriors who had crossed the sea to war against Troy for his sake, to fight in his war. He dressed and seized a spear and went to his brother Agamemnon's camp, thinking to wake him up.

Agamemnon was pleased to see Menelaus coming — Menelaus was taking action instead of hanging back.

Menelaus said to Agamemnon, "Why are you arming? Are you thinking of sending a spy to gather information about the Trojans? Whoever will do that will have to be a brave man."

Agamemnon replied, "We need a plan. We need to do something that will rally the troops. We need to raise morale. We need to make sure that we save our ships.

"Right now, Zeus supports the Trojans and especially Hector, who wreaked such damage on us yesterday — and Hector isn't even the son of a god or goddess! Hector slaughtered so many of us!

"Go and wake up Great Ajax and Idomeneus. I will go to Nestor and wake him up. I want him to go to the guards and make sure that they are doing what they ought to be doing. The guards will obey him. One of his sons, Thrasymedes, and the aide of Idomeneus, Meriones, are the main captains of the guards. We gave them that power."

Menelaus replied, "What do you want me to do after I wake up Great Ajax and Idomeneus? Do you want me to stay with them, or do you want me to go and find you?"

Agamemnon said, "Stay with them at the place where we will meet. Otherwise, we may miss each other in the maze of camps. But as you walk, shout to the guards to stay awake. Show the warriors respect. Show them that you know the names of their fathers. We ought not to be overly proud. Zeus has given us many misfortunes to face and rise above."

Menelaus left to follow Agamemnon's orders, and Agamemnon left to wake up Nestor, who was lying in bed, beside his armor, his shield, his helmet, his war-belt, and two long spears. Nestor was old, but he did not act old.

Ever alert, Nestor heard Agamemnon coming, and called out, "Who are you? Why are you walking during the night while others sleep? Are you trying to find a lost mule or a missing friend? Who are you, and what do you want?"

Agamemnon said, "Nestor, son of Neleus, it is I, Agamemnon — the man to whom Zeus has given many troubles. I can't sleep. I am too worried about our warriors and the death that may come to them. Apparently, you can't sleep, either. Let's go to the guards and make sure that they are awake and alert — the Trojans may decide to attack this night."

Nestor replied, "Hector hopes to defeat us, but it won't happen — Zeus will not allow it to happen. You have troubles now, but Hector will have troubles if Achilles ever decides to fight again.

"Will I go with you to the guards? Of course. Let's also wake the other commanders: Diomedes, Odysseus, Little Ajax, and Meges. Maybe someone else can wake up Great Ajax and Idomeneus — their camps lie far away. We ought to hold a council and make plans.

“But I do blame your brother: Menelaus. You should not do all the work. Menelaus sleeps too much. He should also be waking up commanders. This is a desperate time.”

Agamemnon replied, “You are right when you say that Menelaus often hangs back. He lets me do the leading. But this time he came to me first, and I sent him after Great Ajax and Idomeneus. He wants to rally the troops. He even has a plan. He deserves credit for what he has done tonight. Let’s go.”

Nestor said, “Menelaus is right. We need people to rally the troops.”

Nestor dressed quickly and grabbed a spear. He went to Odysseus’ tent and cried, “Wake up!”

Odysseus — always ready to respond to crises — came out of his tent and said, “What is wrong? What crisis are we facing now?”

Nestor replied, “We need to wake up the other commanders and hold a council. We need a plan of some kind. Should we stay here, or sail home?”

Odysseus got a shield from his tent and went with the others to the camp of Diomedes, who was sleeping outside his tent with other men. They had their shields under their heads, and their spears, points up, were sticking out of the ground.

Nestor pushed Diomedes with his foot and said, “Wake up! Do you want to sleep all night? Don’t you know that Trojans are near? Only a small space separates us from a quick death.”

Diomedes woke up and said to Nestor, “You are an old warrior who is harder than younger warriors. Shouldn’t they be the ones waking up the commanders? You out-work the younger warriors!”

Nestor replied, “There is truth in what you say, friend. I have sons and friends who could do this work — but we are facing a crisis. Get up and awaken Little Ajax and Meges for me — you are a younger man.”

Diomedes got up, wrapped the hide of a lion around his shoulders, grabbed a spear, and went off to wake up Little Ajax and Meges.

Nestor went to the guards, who were all awake and alert. They were like sheepdogs on edge because a wild beast is near and eager to reach the flock. The beast charges, and men and dogs are awake and ready to defend the flock. The guards had no intention of sleeping; they were ready to repel a night attack.

Nestor said to the guards, “Keep it up. You are doing the right thing. Stay awake, or you will bring much joy to the Trojans who want to kill us.”

Nestor and the other commanders met in council. Meriones and Thrasymedes, as requested, were present. They all met in a place in which there were no corpses — it was the place where Hector had stopped his attack when darkness arrived.

Nestor asked, “Is there a man here who is willing to volunteer to gather information about the Trojans? We need someone to try to find out what the Trojans are planning. Possibly, the volunteer can find a warrior who is away from his fellow warriors. A lone warrior may be a good source of information. We need to know whether the Trojans are going to stay out on the plain before Troy or are going to return to Troy now that they have inflicted a defeat upon us. If someone can find out that information, he will be a hero and will win *kleos*. Plus, he will win *timê*. Each commander here will give him a black ewe and a suckling lamb. Each commander here will invite that man to feasts.”

Diomedes quickly volunteered, saying, “I’ll eagerly do it. I will go among the Trojans who are camped to the side of the battlefield. But I want another warrior to go with me. When two warriors work together, good things happen. They cooperate, and they seize opportunities. Two warriors working together accomplish more. A warrior who is alone will accomplish less. Cooperation among warriors is important to achieve victory.”

Several warriors volunteered to go with Diomedes: Great Ajax, Little Ajax, Meriones, Thrasymedes, Menelaus, and Odysseus.

Agamemnon said to Diomedes, “Choose your own companion for this exploit. But don’t think that you have to choose according to rank. Choose the best man for the exploit.”

Agamemnon was afraid that Diomedes would pick Menelaus as his companion. Spying on the Trojans was dangerous, and Agamemnon was afraid that his brother might die that night.

Diomedes said, “Pick my own companion? Great! I pick Odysseus. He is the best man for the job, and Athena is his protector. With Odysseus and I working together, both of us will come back alive.”

Odysseus said to Diomedes, “Don’t over-praise me, but don’t under-praise me, either. People have witnessed what I have done during the war. They know my exploits. Let’s go. Not much night remains. Only a few hours are left.”

Diomedes and Odysseus prepared themselves. Not enough time remained for them to go to their camps and get the rest of their armor and weapons, so they borrowed what they needed from other warriors. Thrasymedes and Meriones, who had had guard duty, were well armed.

Thrasymedes lent Diomedes a two-edged sword, a shield, and a bull’s-hide helmet. Meriones lent Odysseus a bow, a quiver of arrows, and a leather helmet that was decorated with the teeth of a boar. Odysseus’ maternal grandfather, Autolycus, a cunning man and a thief, had stolen the helmet from Amyntor, who lived in Eleon. Autolycus then gave the helmet to Amphidamas, who gave it as a guest-gift to Molus, who gave it to his son, Meriones, to wear during the war. Now Odysseus wore it.

Diomedes and Odysseus headed out into the night, leaving the Greek commanders behind. Athena watched them and sent them a lucky bird-sign: They heard a heron heading to their right.

Odysseus prayed to Athena, his patron goddess who respected him, “Athena, you are aware of all my exploits. Once more, please give us your support. Allow Diomedes and me to return to our ships safely after we have accomplished something that will harm our enemies!”

Diomedes also prayed, “Athena, hear my prayer, too. Be with me now just as you were with my father, Tydeus, when he left his warriors behind and went into enemy territory alone — a dangerous exploit. Tydeus took a message to Thebes. Enemy warriors in the city surrounded Tydeus, but he was not afraid. He challenged warrior after warrior to contests of strength, and he won all contests. When he left the city, the Thebans sent warriors after him to kill him. Fifty warriors tried to kill Tydeus, but he killed forty-nine of them, leaving one alive to retreat to Thebes in accordance with signs sent by the gods. You, Athena, stood by Tydeus and helped him then. So protect me now. I will sacrifice to you a yearling heifer. It will be yours — I will decorate its horns with gold.”

Athena heard the prayers of Diomedes and of Odysseus. She was pleased. The two warriors went into the darkness. They walked by corpses and pools of blood.

The Trojans, however, were also awake. Hector was holding a council of war. To his leading commanders, he asked, “Is anyone willing to volunteer for a dangerous mission? If you can accomplish it, you will receive a worthy prize. I will give that warrior a chariot and two horses — the best that the Greeks have brought to Troy. That warrior will win *kleos* if he will spy on the Greeks and find out what they are doing. Are they well guarded in the night or too discouraged to mount a proper guard? Are they planning on racing away from Troy in their ships?”

Dolon, who was rich in bronze and gold and iron but was not handsome, was a swift runner and the only son in a family with five daughters. He spoke up, “Hector, I will get information for you. But first swear that you will give me the horses and chariot of Achilles — his are the

best. I will be a good spy. I will even spy on the camp of Agamemnon, which is where they must be holding a council.”

Hector swore the oath: “I swear to Zeus that you will get the horses and chariot of Achilles — they will be your prize possession.”

The oath was sworn in vain — Dolon would not return alive — but it motivated Dolon. He armed himself with a bow and arrows, and he threw a wolf skin over himself and wore a cap made from the skin of a weasel.

He ran from the council of the Trojans and headed toward the Greek ships. Odysseus saw him first and alerted Diomedes, “Someone is coming from the Trojan camps! It could be a spy or someone who loots corpses at night. Here’s a plan. Let’s allow him to go past us so that he is in between our ships and us, and then we can capture him. He will have nowhere to run but toward our ships. He won’t make it back to his fellow Trojans — he will be too afraid of your spear.”

Diomedes and Odysseus hid themselves and allowed Dolon to run past them, and then they raced after him. Dolon heard them and hoped that they were Trojans calling him back to the council because they had decided that the mission was not needed, but then he saw enemies. He raced away.

Diomedes and Odysseus pursued him. They were like hounds pursuing a fawn or hare that they want to rip to pieces. Diomedes and Odysseus kept Dolon from returning to his own troops. Dolon was getting close to the Greek ships when Athena gave Diomedes strength. He wanted the glory of capturing Dolon to go to him and Odysseus, not to the Greek guards. He shouted at Dolon, “Stop, or I’ll kill you!” He then threw his spear but deliberately missed Dolon.

Dolon stopped. His fear made him shake. He started crying and pleaded, “Don’t kill me! Capture me and allow me to ransom myself with bronze and gold and iron. My father will give you whatever you want if you don’t kill me!”

Odysseus said, “Don’t think about dying. Tell us what we want to know. Why are you out here in the night? Are you trying to loot the corpses, or did Hector send you to spy on us? Are you out here to earn *kleos*?”

Dolon, still quivering with fear, replied, “Hector tempted me. He swore that he would give me the horses and chariot of Achilles if I would spy on the Greeks and learn whether you are guarding yourselves well or you are so discouraged that you are planning to return to Greece and have failed to set up a guard for your troops.”

Odysseus smiled and laughed, and then he said, “That is quite a prize you are attempting to win. Achilles’ team of horses is difficult for any mortal man to control. Achilles can do it, but his mother is an immortal goddess.

“Now tell us where Hector is. Where are your guards? Where are the Trojans and your allies sleeping? What are you Trojan warriors planning to do: stay by the ships or return to Troy?”

Dolon replied, “I will tell you everything. Hector is holding a council with his commanders. The Trojan warriors have guards, but our allies do not. The Trojans keep watch because their wives and children are near and need to be defended. The wives and children of our allies are far away and so they leave the guarding to us. Our allies are asleep.”

Odysseus asked, “Where are your allies sleeping? Are their camps among the Trojan camps or do they sleep in a separate area?”

Dolon said, “I will tell you everything you want to know. Toward the sea sleep the Carians, Paeonians, Leleges, Cauconians, and Pelasgians. Toward the city of Thymbra sleep the Lycians, Mysians, Phrygians, and Maeonians. If you are looking to kill some of our allies, I

can tell you what you need to know. Some newly arrived Thracians are exposed on the side, including King Rhesus, who has fine horses — they are big and swift. His chariot is decorated with gold and silver, and he wears gold armor. Now that I have helped you and told you what you need to know to kill some of our allies, will you take me to your ships, or will you leave me bound and gagged here until you have killed some of our allies and learned that I have told you the truth?”

Diomedes said to him, “Don’t think about escaping death even though you have given us the information we need to kill some of your allies. What would happen if we were to ransom you and set you free or if you were to escape? You would try to spy on us again. But if I kill you now, we do not need to worry about you ever hurting the Greeks.”

Dolon started to beg for his life, but Diomedes’ sword sliced through Dolon’s neck and his head fell to the ground. Diomedes and Odysseus stripped the corpse of the wolf skin, bow and arrows, weasel cap, and spear, and Odysseus, the older man, raised them to Athena and prayed, “These are yours, Athena. You have helped us! Continue to help us as we attack the Thracian camp.”

Odysseus put the bloody spoils on a tamarisk bush and marked the spot so that he and Diomedes would not miss it when they returned from their raid on the Thracian camp.

They walked on past more pools of blood and reached the camp of King Rhesus and his men, all of whom were asleep without warriors guarding them. King Rhesus’ horses and chariot were beside him.

Odysseus said to Diomedes, “This is the king whom the man we just killed pointed out to us. And here are his horses. Let us go among them. Do you want to get the horses ready for stealing, or do you want to kill the warriors?”

Athena inspired Diomedes with bloodlust, and he began to kill men as they lay sleeping, killing them quickly so that they could not raise a cry as they gasped out their lives. Like a lion kills goats or sheep when the goatherd or shepherd is absent, so Diomedes killed men. He killed twelve warriors.

Diomedes and Odysseus worked together. Diomedes killed men with his sword, and Odysseus grabbed each corpse by the feet and dragged it out of the way. They knew that the horses — newly arrived to the war and not yet used to corpses — would balk if they tried to drive the horses over corpses.

The thirteenth and final man whom Diomedes killed was King Rhesus himself. Had he been awake, he would have seen a nightmare above his head: Diomedes!

Odysseus got the horses ready and hitched together, using the horses’ own reins, and Diomedes wondered what more damage he could inflict. Should he try to take King Rhesus’ chariot as well as his life? But Athena appeared beside him and said, “Time to get back to your ships. Another god may awaken the Trojans and then you would have to flee for your life.”

Diomedes mounted one of King Rhesus’ horses, and he and Odysseus rode away with the horses. Unused to working with horses, Odysseus had forgotten to get King Rhesus’ whip out of the chariot and so he used a bow on the horses instead of a whip.

Apollo saw Athena with Diomedes and Odysseus, and the god woke up a Thracian commander named Hippocoon, who was related to King Rhesus. Hippocoon saw that King Rhesus’ horses were missing. Then he saw dead and dying men. Hippocoon cried out, and other warriors awoke and stared at the damage that Diomedes and Odysseus had inflicted.

The two Greeks reached the spot where they had killed Dolon. Odysseus put the bloody spoils into Diomedes’ arms and then he used the bow on the horses and drove them to the Greek ships where Agamemnon and the other Greek commanders waited.

Nestor was the first to hear them coming. He said, “I hear horses. I hope that Diomedes and Odysseus have managed to steal them from the Trojans, but it’s possible that the Trojans have killed Diomedes and Odysseus tonight.”

Diomedes and Odysseus raced into the council meeting place, and their friends greeted them and hugged them.

Nestor asked, “Odysseus, how did you get those horses? Did you steal them from behind the Trojan lines, or did a god give them to you? These are fine horses — their coats shine! I have been going out onto the battlefield facing the Trojans and not staying by the ships, old as I am, and I have not seen such fine horses before. Because I have not seen them before, I’d have to say that a god or goddess gave them to you — Athena respects both you and Diomedes!”

Odysseus replied, “No god or goddess gave us these horses — a god or goddess could give us finer horses than these. Let me give credit where credit is due — Diomedes killed the owner of these horses, which are newly arrived at Troy. Diomedes also killed twelve other warriors and a thirteenth man, too — a man whom Hector sent out to spy on us Greeks.”

They then drove the team to Diomedes’ camp as their friends cheered them. Diomedes got the horses. He fought with horses and a chariot, and Odysseus did not. Odysseus was the king of Ithaca, a hilly island that was good for goats but not for horses. Odysseus got the bloody gear of Dolon as his share of the spoils — Odysseus had promised the gear to Athena.

Diomedes and Odysseus went into the sea and washed off their sweat, and then they bathed and rubbed their skin with olive oil. Finally, they sat down for a meal and poured out wine for Athena.

CHAPTER 11: Agamemnon has a Day of Glory, but the Greeks Face Disaster

Dawn rose, and Zeus brought the goddess Strife to the Greek ships. She was the only goddess he wanted to take part in the coming battle. She stood on Odysseus' ship, which was moored in the middle of all the Greek ships. A shout from Odysseus' ship would reach the ships of Great Ajax and of Achilles, which were at the far ends of the line of ships. Strife yelled now and raised the battle-fury inside each Greek. They had heard what damage Diomedes and Odysseus had inflicted on the Trojans during the night, and their morale was restored.

Agamemnon also called to his warriors to arm themselves as he was doing. He put greaves on his legs, and he wore his breastplate — it was a guest-gift from Cinyras, lord of Cyprus. The breastplate had ten bands of blue enamel and twelve bands of gold and twenty bands of tin, and it was decorated with the figures of dark blue snakes. Agamemnon's sword had golden studs at the hilt, and his scabbard was sheathed in silver. His shield had ten rings of bronze and twenty disks of tin and was decorated with the figure of a Gorgon with burning eyes. His shield-belt, glinting with silver, was decorated with the figure of a dark blue snake with three heads. His helmet had four knobs in front and two horns and a horsehair crest on top. Finally, he picked up two spears with bronze points that flashed like lightning. Today would be a day of glory for him — a day on which he would win *kleos* — and Athena and Hera exalted him with the sound of thunder.

Those who fought in chariots got ready, each warrior telling each driver, "Line up with the other chariots in good battle-order."

But Zeus meant for this day to be a day of glory for the Trojans, although the Greeks would have some success, too. He sent a wave of terror over the Greeks, and he made the sky rain blood. Today, Zeus intended that many warriors would die.

The Trojans also prepared for battle. They grouped around Hector, Polydamas, Aeneas, and three of Antenor's sons, all in their prime: Polybus, Agenor, and the still unwed Acamas.

Hector's round shield blazed: This would be a day of glory for him, a day on which he would win *kleos*. Hector made his way along the front lines, making sure that his warriors were prepared to fight.

The two armies attacked each other. No one thought of fleeing. All fought. The goddess Strife was pleased; this was what she liked to see.

The other gods and goddesses stayed away from the battle. Zeus had forbidden them to go to the battlefield. They were unhappy, but Zeus did not care. Zeus stayed apart from the other gods and goddesses, and he watched the war. Warriors were killing, and they were being killed.

All morning, the two armies were evenly matched and neither had an advantage. But at noon, the time when a woodsman wearies from chopping down trees and thinks of food, the Greeks gained the advantage.

Agamemnon killed and killed again. He killed Bienor, who fought from a chariot, and he killed Oileus, the driver of Bienor's chariot. After the death of Bienor, Oileus leapt from the chariot and charged at Agamemnon, but Agamemnon speared him through his helmet. Agamemnon's spear burst through metal and bone, and Oileus' brain splattered inside his helmet. Agamemnon left both Bienor and Oileus lying dead on the ground after he stripped off their armor.

Next Agamemnon killed two sons of Priam: the bastard Isus and the legitimate Antiphus. Isus drove the chariot from which Antiphus fought. Previously, Achilles had captured both of

them on a spur of Mount Ida. They had been watching their sheep, but Achilles tied Isus and Antiphus with ropes made from willow shoots. Achilles had allowed them to be ransomed. Now Agamemnon stabbed Isus in the chest beside a nipple, and he slashed Antiphus with a sword. He knew both Trojans, having seen them when Achilles captured them. Agamemnon was like a lion whose jaws break the backbones of fawns and tear out their hearts. The mother doe may be near but can do nothing, and the Trojans nearby could do nothing to save the lives of Isus and Antiphus.

Next Agamemnon killed Pisander and Hippolochus, the two sons of Antimachus, whom Paris had bribed with gold and gifts to oppose the return of Helen to her legitimate husband. Now Agamemnon saw Pisander and Hippolochus in a chariot. They were having trouble controlling the horses — they had dropped the reins. Like a lion, Agamemnon appeared before them, and they pleaded for their lives: “Take us alive and ransom us. Our father, Antimachus, has much treasure in his house: bronze and gold and iron. Don’t kill us!”

So they begged, but Agamemnon replied, “So you are the sons of Antimachus? He once tried to kill my brother, Menelaus, who was in his house as part of an embassy with Odysseus. They had a safe-conduct guarantee, but your father ignored it. You are Antimachus’ sons? Then you deserve to die!”

He threw Pisander off the chariot and thrust a spear into his chest. Hippolochus tried to run away, but Agamemnon used his sword to cut off his arms and head. What was left of Hippolochus’ body rolled on the ground like a log.

Agamemnon left the two corpses behind and charged the Trojans with his warriors following him. The Greeks killed and killed again. Agamemnon was like a fire burning dry timber with a wind blowing — everything toppled before his army’s onslaught. Trojan chariots emptied as the warriors they were supposed to carry fell dead to the ground, now of more use to vultures than to wives.

Zeus kept Hector away from the onslaught of Agamemnon as the Greek commander pushed back the Trojan warriors. Agamemnon, splattered with blood, pursued the Trojan warriors as they fled to Troy. The Trojans reached the Scaean Gates, and then they faced the Greeks again.

But some Trojans lagged behind, and Agamemnon chased them down. He was like a lion pursuing cattle that had scattered. The lion snaps the neck of its victim and then eats its victim’s blood and meat. Like the lion pursuing its victims, so Agamemnon pursued the Trojans.

But just as Agamemnon came near Troy, Zeus called the messenger goddess Iris to him and gave her a message: “Go to Hector and tell him that as long as Agamemnon is fighting, Hector must hold back and not fight him but command his warriors to fight. But once Agamemnon is wounded, whether by spear or by arrow, and leaves the battlefield, then Hector must fight because on this day I will give Hector great power. On this day, Hector will kill and kill again. He will drive the Greeks back to their ships. I will give Hector great power until the sun sets.”

Iris obeyed and told Hector, “Zeus has a message for you. As long as you see Agamemnon fighting, don’t engage him in combat. But as soon as Agamemnon is wounded and withdraws from battle, then you may attack. On this day, Zeus will give you great power to kill and kill again until the sun sets.”

Hector leapt from his chariot. Carrying two spears, he went along the front lines and encouraged his warriors to fight. The two armies faced each other, and Agamemnon charged.

Muses, tell us who first tried to stop Agamemnon.

Iphidamas tried to stop Agamemnon, but he failed. His mother’s father, Cisseus, raised Iphidamas in Thrace. Cisseus was the father of Theano. When Iphidamas grew up and wished

to gain *kleos* in war, Cisseus tried to stop him by getting him a wife. But Iphidamas sailed off to war with twelve ships at his command. He left them at Percote and marched with his warriors by foot to Troy, and now he came closer and closer to Agamemnon.

Agamemnon threw his spear at Iphidamas but missed. Iphidamas tried to stab Agamemnon in the waist, but his spear point could not pierce Agamemnon's war-belt. Agamemnon grabbed Iphidamas' spear and pulled and wrenched it from Iphidamas' grasp, then he sprang toward Iphidamas and slashed his neck with a sword. Iphidamas dropped to the ground, far from his wife, whom he had known so short a time. He had paid a hundred oxen as a bride-price and had promised in addition a thousand goats and sheep, but Agamemnon killed him and stripped off his armor.

But Coon, Iphidamas' brother, saw him die. He charged Agamemnon from the side and slashed his arm with a spear. Agamemnon did not quit the fighting despite his bloody wound. Coon grabbed his brother's foot and tried to drag away his brother's corpse. He called for help from other Trojans, but Agamemnon thrust his spear under Coon's shield and wounded him and then swung his sword and cut off Coon's head, which fell onto his brother's corpse. These two sons of Antenor went together to the Land of the Dead.

Agamemnon kept fighting, thrusting with his spear, slashing with his sword, and throwing rocks. As long as the blood flowed from his wound, he fought, but when the blood stopped flowing, the pain came — pain as great as that felt by a woman giving birth, pains brought by the daughters of Hera.

Agamemnon jumped back in his chariot and told his driver to return to the ships, but first he told his warriors, "Keep fighting! Keep the Trojans away from our ships! Zeus has sent me a wound that keeps me from fighting."

Agamemnon's charioteer drove him to the Greek ships, away from the battle.

Hector had been watching. He knew that now was the time that Zeus would grant him great power to kill and kill again. He shouted to his troops, "Be warriors! Now is the time for battle fury! Agamemnon is wounded and cannot fight. The Greeks' best warrior flees the battlefield! Now is the time to attack!"

Hector led his warriors in a charge against the Greeks. Who was the first he killed, and who was the last he killed? He killed Asaeus first, and then he killed Autonomous, Opites, Dolops, Opheltius, Agelaus, Aesymnus, Orus, and Hipponous. He kept on fighting. He battered Greek warriors the way the West wind batters clouds.

The Greeks could have been routed, but Odysseus shouted to Diomedes, "Can't we fight harder than we are fighting now? Fight with me. We will die if Hector destroys our ships!"

Diomedes replied, "I will stand by you and fight, but clearly Zeus is helping the Trojans and not the Greeks."

Despite his pessimistic words, Diomedes speared the left breast of Thymbraeus. Odysseus killed Molion, the aide of Thymbraeus. Diomedes and Odysseus left the corpses and then charged the Trojans. They were like two wild boars that want to kill and kill again. Diomedes and Odysseus attacked the Trojans the way that two wild boars attack the pack of dogs that hunts them. Their attack gave the Greek warriors who had fled from Hector a chance to regroup.

Diomedes killed two more warriors who were riding in a chariot: the two sons of Merops, who understood prophecy and foresaw the future. He refused to give his two sons permission to fight in the war, but they disobeyed him. Fate knew when and where they would die. Diomedes killed both sons: Adrestus and Amphius. Meanwhile, Odysseus killed both Hippodamus and Hypirochus.

Zeus watched the battle from Mount Ida.

Diomedes killed Agastrophus. Diomedes hit his hip joint with a spear. If Agastrophus' horses had been near, he could have escaped. No such luck. His driver kept the horses by the side of the battle while Agastrophus fought. Agastrophus died.

Hector saw Diomedes and charged. Diomedes called to Odysseus, "A mighty warrior is headed our way like a massive wave ready to wreck a ship. Let's stand up to him!"

Diomedes concentrated and hurled his spear. No miss! A hit! But Diomedes' spear hit Hector's helmet, and metal bounced off metal. Hector was hurt and retreated. He retreated a long way and then sank down onto one knee before he lost consciousness.

Diomedes ran to his spear and recovered it, and Hector regained consciousness. He boarded his chariot and drove toward his warriors and away from death.

Diomedes shouted after Hector, "Once again you have escaped death, but I nearly killed you! Apollo must have helped you. The next time we meet I will kill you if a god helps me as much as Apollo helps you. But since you are no longer here, I will kill as many other Trojans as I can!"

Diomedes started to strip the armor off the corpse of Agastrophus. Paris saw him, and aimed an arrow at him. He loosed the arrow, and it pinned Diomedes' foot to the ground.

Paris laughed and shouted, "You're wounded, but I wish it were a mortal wound. I wish that I had sent an arrow deep in your intestines! Then my Trojans could rally; you have scared them the way a lion scares goats."

Diomedes, unafraid, replied, "You are brave with a bow and arrow, pretty boy who chases girls. But a real man fights up close with a spear. Let's you and I face each other with spears — no fighting from a distance! No wounds from an arrow. All you have done is to wound my foot. A woman or child could do that. An arrow is a toy. But look at my spear — it has weight and sharpness. When a spear hits a warrior, the warrior's wife weeps and his children become orphans. The corpse of the warrior turns the ground red, and suddenly the warrior is sought after by dogs and birds, not by women."

Odysseus had come running and stood in front of Diomedes to protect him. Diomedes kneeled and pulled out the arrow. The pain came, and Diomedes boarded his chariot and told his driver to head for the Greek ships.

Now Odysseus stood alone. An experienced warrior, he knew he was in a dangerous situation. He thought, *What will happen to me now? If I flee, I will disgrace myself. But if I stay, the result can be worse. Zeus panicked the other Greeks, and they fled. Cowards will run, but the man who wants to win kleos must fight and either kill or be killed.*

Some Trojan warriors approached him, thinking to kill him and not knowing that they would be killed. Odysseus was like a wild boar caught in a thicket by hunters and their dogs. They think they have the wild boar trapped and ready to be killed, but the wild boar bursts out of the thicket and charges the hunters.

Like the wild boar, Odysseus attacked. He wounded Deiopites in the shoulder, and then he killed Thoon and Ennomus. The Trojan Chersidamas jumped down from his chariot, and Odysseus speared him under his shield and split him open from crotch to navel.

Then Odysseus speared Charops, whose brother, Socus, moved in to defend Charops' corpse and shouted at Odysseus, "Today you will kill *both* sons of my father, Hippasus, and strip their armor — or I will kill you!"

Socus stabbed with his spear. It went through Odysseus' shield and through Odysseus' breastplate and through the skin over Odysseus' ribs, but Athena kept the wound from being mortal — she would not let the spear kill him.

Odysseus knew that the wound was not mortal; he was an experienced man of war and had seen many wounds. He said to Socus, "Today is your day to die. You have wounded me

enough to make me withdraw to the ships, but I shall not leave until I have taken your life. You will die and increase my *kleos*!”

Panicked, Socus turned to run, and Odysseus’ spear hit him in the back between his shoulders. The spear punched through his chest. Odysseus boasted over Socus’ corpse, “You raced death and lost. Your grieving father and mother will never be able to close your eyes in death and will never be able to give you a proper funeral. Vultures will claw out your eyes, and their wings will beat your corpse. Your soul will not be able to enter the Land of the Dead. But if I die in this battle, the Greek warriors will give me a proper funeral. My soul will enter the Land of the Dead quickly. Your soul will weep.”

Odysseus pulled Socus’ spear out of his body, and the blood gushed. The Trojans saw that he was wounded and attacked. Odysseus retreated now, and he yelled three times as loudly as he could for Greek warriors to help him.

Menelaus heard Odysseus’ cries for help and said to Great Ajax, “Odysseus sounds as if he is in trouble — in danger of being overpowered by the Trojan warriors. Let’s save him. The great warrior may be wounded!”

Menelaus and Great Ajax ran and found Trojans besieging Odysseus the way jackals besiege a stag that has just been wounded by a hunter. The stag escapes the hunter and runs fast for a long time, but now the wound saps his strength. If a lion arrives, the lion will scatter the jackals and kill the stag.

Odysseus’ life was in danger as the Trojans attacked him, but he fought back and kept himself alive. Great Ajax arrived and stood in front of Odysseus. The Trojans saw Great Ajax and scattered in panic. Menelaus led Odysseus away from the Trojans, supporting him with his arm. A chariot arrived and took Odysseus to the ships and safety.

Great Ajax charged the Trojans and killed Doryclus, a bastard son of Priam. Then Great Ajax wounded Pandocus, Lysander, Pyrasus, and Pylartes. Great Ajax swept the Trojans from the field the way a flash flood rushes downward and sweeps away everything in its path, including entire forests.

Hector did not see the Trojan rout because he was fighting off to the side, a place of fierce killing. Nestor and Idomeneus were there, and war cries sounded. Hector killed and killed again.

The Greeks fought back, but Paris wounded the fighter and healer Machaon with an arrow that pierced his right shoulder. Now the Greeks feared for Machaon’s life. Idomeneus shouted to Nestor, “Mount your chariot and rescue Machaon. Drive him back to the ships. He is a healer and can cut out spearheads and arrowheads. One healer is worth many warriors!”

Nestor knew that Idomeneus was right. He mounted his chariot, and Machaon climbed aboard, and Nestor drove the horses quickly to the ships.

The Trojan Cebriones saw Great Ajax fighting and shouted to Hector, “We are fighting well here, but we are off to the side. Our troops in the middle need help — they are being routed. Great Ajax is routing them — I recognize him by his huge shield. Let’s fight in the middle! Let’s go where the fighting is most fierce! Let’s go where warriors hack each other to death and war cries fill the sky!”

Cebriones drove Hector toward the middle. Their chariot passed over fallen warriors and blood sprayed into the air and onto the chariot. Hector fought with his spear and his sword, and he threw rocks, but he did not fight Great Ajax man-to-man.

Zeus forced Great Ajax to retreat. Great Ajax stood, stunned by Zeus. Holding his seven-layer oxhide shield that had an additional metal layer, he retreated, slow step by slow step. He was like a lion trying to kill cattle so he could get his fill of meat, but the oxherds stay awake all night and beat the lion away. At dawn, the lion leaves, still hungry.

Great Ajax continued to fight. He was like an ass some boys were driving down a road. They try to lead him, but he breaks into a field and eats his fill of crops while the boys break sticks on his back. Finally, after the ass has eaten his fill, the boys succeed in driving him down the road. So now Great Ajax retreated slowly, but he kept stabbing with his spear and he more than anyone kept the Trojans from the ships. The Trojans kept throwing spears at him. Some spears lodged in his shield, but many spears fell into the earth short of their target. Many Trojans were too afraid to come close to Great Ajax.

The Greek warrior Eurypylus saw Great Ajax under attack by spear-throwing Trojans and ran to assist him. Standing by Great Ajax' side, Eurypylus threw a spear and hit Apisaon in the liver. Eurypylus started to strip off Apisaon's armor. Paris saw him and drew an arrow on his bow. He shot, and the arrow buried itself in Eurypylus' right thigh. The shaft of the arrow snapped off.

Eurypylus moved back to the Greek side and cried aloud, "Greeks, help Great Ajax! Too many Trojans are battling him! Come and keep Great Ajax away from death!"

Greek warriors came running and fought, and Great Ajax kept fighting, too.

As they fought, Nestor's chariot took Machaon the healer away from the battle. Achilles saw them — he was watching the battle from his ships. He called to his best friend, Patroclus, who quickly came. In doing so, he took his first steps toward death.

Patroclus asked, "What do you want, Achilles?"

Achilles replied, "The battle is going badly for the Greeks, I think they will beg me for my help. They need me. Badly. Go and ask Nestor who is the warrior he drove away from the battle just now. It looked like Machaon, but I saw him only from the back. The chariot was moving quickly."

Patroclus left the camp immediately.

Nestor and Machaon reached Nestor's camp. Eurymedon, Nestor's driver, took care of the horses, and Nestor and Machaon went inside the tent and sat. Inside the tent was Hecamede, a woman whom the Greeks had given to Nestor after Achilles conquered Tenedos — a prize given to Nestor on account of his wisdom. She mixed for them Pramnian wine with goat cheese and barley, and the two men drank and banished their thirst.

The solid gold wine cup she mixed the wine in was so heavy that an average man could barely lift it, but Nestor — despite his age — could lift it easily.

Patroclus appeared at the door of the tent. Nestor was not the person to miss an opportunity — he could not talk to Achilles, who would not listen to him, but he could talk to Patroclus, who might listen to him. Nestor stood up, took Patroclus by the hand, and drew Patroclus inside the tent, despite Patroclus' wish to go immediately.

Patroclus protested, "I'm in a hurry. I don't have time to stay here. Achilles sent me to find out who was wounded, and I can see the wounded man here: Machaon. I need to let Achilles know immediately — he can be impatient, as you well know."

But Nestor would not let Patroclus leave. He said, "Is Achilles grieving for just one wounded man? Many Greek warriors have been wounded. Our finest warriors are out of commission because they have been wounded by arrows or by spears. Diomedes and Odysseus and Agamemnon and Eurypylus and here, Machaon, are all wounded and unable to fight.

"Achilles does not care. He is brave, but he does not respect our pain or our lives. When will he return and fight? When our ships are destroyed by fire? When all that is left is a final stand with our backs against the sea? When most of us are dead?"

Nestor thought, *I hope that you are paying attention, Patroclus. I am trying to impress upon you how desperately we need another fighter.*

Nestor continued, "I am old, and I wish that I were young again so that I could go into battle. When I was young, I fought well.

"When we fought the Epeans in a feud, I killed Itymoneus. The Epeans had raided our cattle, and so we were raiding their cattle. I threw a spear and killed him, and the Epeans near him ran away in panic. We got fifty herds of cattle, fifty herds of sheep, fifty droves of pigs, fifty herds of goats, and one hundred and fifty horses, all of which were mares and many of which were nursing foals.

"We drove them all back home to Pylos, and my father, Neleus, was proud of me and proud of the plunder. I was young, and this was my first raiding party."

Nestor thought, *I hope that you are paying attention, Patroclus. I am trying to impress upon you that a young warrior can win plunder by fighting and can make his father proud.*

Nestor continued, "In the morning, a herald cried out, 'Pyliaus, come collect what is due to you from the wealth of Elis, the realm of the Epeans!' Much was due to us from the Epeans. Years before, Heracles had attacked us and killed many Pyliaus. My father had twelve sons, but eleven died during that attack. Heracles had weakened the Pyliaus, and the Epeans took advantage, harassing us and stealing our herding animals.

"Following our raid on the Epeans, my father took a herd of cattle and a flock of sheep: three hundred animals. The Epeans owed him much. He also took four fast horses and their chariot. They belonged to my father, but when he sent them to a race, the Epean warlord Augeas stole them and threatened their driver before sending him away.

"So now my father, Neleus, received a treasure in payment for the Epeans' bad conduct in years past. My father gave the rest of the haul to his people so all could share in the spoils."

Nestor thought, *I hope that you are paying attention, Patroclus. I am trying to impress upon you that a young warrior can right wrongs.*

Nestor continued, "But three days after the raid, the Epeans showed up ready to fight. Among them were the twin brothers known as the Moliones: Cteatus and Eurytus. They were thought to have had a mortal father, but their real father was Poseidon. They were still young and not fully experienced in war.

"The Epeans surrounded a frontier fortress named Thryoëssa, but Athena supported us. She came to us and shouted, 'To arms! Get ready to fight!' She gathered many warriors and formed an army.

"But I was still young, and my father did not want me to fight — he thought that I was too young and inexperienced. He even hid my horses, hoping that he could keep me away from the fighting.

"But I was determined to fight, and I walked to the battle, where I distinguished myself. That night, we waited at the Minyeos River for dawn. We had men on horseback and men on foot. We then marched, armed for battle, to the ford at the Alpheus River, which we reached at noon. We sacrificed to Zeus, the Alpheus River, Poseidon, and Athena. We ate the evening meal and then slept.

"The Epeans still surrounded Thryoëssa, but that dawn we arrived and started fighting. We prayed to Zeus and Athena for victory.

"I was the first to make a kill and to take a chariot and team of horses. I speared Mulius, son-in-law to the Epean king. Mulius had married blond Agamede, who understood the properties of drugs. As Mulius fell to the ground, I leaped into his chariot and charged their lines. They were shocked that Mulius had died.

"I took fifty chariots that day, and I killed two Epeans for each chariot I took. I could have killed both Moliones, but their real father, Poseidon, protected them. He hid them in fog and took them from the battlefield.

“Zeus gave us victory! We pushed the Epeans back, slaughtering them all the way and stripping off their armor. We pushed them far away, and finally Athena stopped us as I killed my final man.

“We went back to Pylos. The Pylions gave glory to the god Zeus and to the mortal me: Nestor.”

Nestor thought, *I hope that you are paying attention, Patroclus. I am trying to impress upon you that a young warrior can win kleos.*

Nestor continued, “That is how I was when I was young.

“But what about Achilles? What is he doing? He has great courage, but no one is benefiting from it, not even him. He will grieve when all of us are dead.

“Patroclus, remember your father, Menoetius, and what he told you. When he sent you to Agamemnon so that you could go to the Trojan War, Odysseus and I heard what he told you. We had come to your country to look for warriors. In the palace of Peleus, we found you, your father, and Achilles. Peleus was sacrificing to Zeus. He had sacrificed an ox and was pouring wine to Zeus.

“You and Achilles were carving the meat when we appeared. Achilles was startled by our sudden appearance, but he led us into the hall and gave us good *xenia*. He gave us a place to sit and meat to eat and wine to drink.

“After we had eaten, I spoke and invited you and Achilles to come to Troy. Both of you were willing. Peleus told his son, Achilles, ‘Be the best. Be the bravest. Be proud.’ And your father, Menoetius, told you, ‘Achilles has nobler blood than you do because a goddess is his mother, but you are older than he is. He is stronger by far than you, but you can advise him well. Guide him to do the right thing for others and for himself.’ This is what your father told you. Odysseus and I heard him. You must have forgotten what your father told you.

“But it is not too late to advise Achilles. You can tell him what I have told you about our battered army and wounded warriors. Perhaps you can convince him to fight. You are his best friend.

“But if he is worried about what his mother, Thetis, has told him about his fate, then convince Achilles to send you into battle. You can lead all of Achilles’ warriors into battle. You may bring victory to our side.

“And convince Achilles to allow you to wear his armor. That way, the Trojans will think that you are Achilles and they will be afraid to attack, and that will give our warriors time to rest and regroup. You are rested, and Achilles’ warriors are rested. All of you can force the Trojan warriors back to Troy and away from our ships!”

Nestor’s speech was effective. Patroclus burned to go into battle, and he took off running to Achilles’ camp.

But by Odysseus’ ship, he saw Eurypylos, limping, with an arrow in his thigh. Sweat dripped from his head and body, and blood flowed down his thigh, but he was able to walk.

Patroclus said to him, “The Greeks are doomed. Far from home, you will die at Troy — Greek corpses will feed dogs and birds. Eurypylos, is there a way to stop Hector? Or will he batter down the Greeks?”

Eurypylos replied, “We have no hope, Patroclus. We will be battered back to our ships. Arrows and spears have wounded the best of us, and we are unable to fight. Help me, please. Take me to my ship and cut this arrow out of my flesh. Clean the wound and give me the healing drugs that Achilles taught you and that Achilles learned from Chiron, the best of the Centaurs.

“We have two healers: Podalirius and Machaon. Podalirius is on the battlefield, fighting, and Machaon needs a healer — an arrow wounded him.”

Patroclus replied, "We are in a bad situation. I was going to Achilles to tell him what I have learned from Nestor, but I will help you."

Supporting Eurypylus, Patroclus walked with him to his ship. An aide put down some oxhides, and Eurypylus lay down. Patroclus cut out the arrow. Patroclus crushed a root in his hands and covered the wound with it. Eurypylus' pain stopped, and the blood quit flowing.

CHAPTER 12: The Trojans Storm the Barricade

As Patroclus helped Eurypylus, the Greeks and Trojans fought before the Greek trench and wall. At any time, it seemed that the Trojans would break down the wall and bring fire to the ships — the Greeks had neglected to sacrifice to the gods and so their defensive fortifications would not protect them.

After the war, the wall would not last long. After the war, it would vanish. After many warriors died, and after Troy fell in the tenth year of the war, and after the Greeks had sailed for home, Poseidon and Apollo would turn their anger to the wall. They would turn rivers — the Rhesus and Heptaporus and Caresus and Rhodius and Grenicus and Aesepus — against it. They would also turn the Scamander and Simois rivers against it — rivers into which fell shields and helmets and the corpses of warriors who seemed half god and half mortal. Apollo would join all these rivers together and direct their force against the wall for nine days as Zeus sent cloudburst after cloudburst and Poseidon ripped apart the foundations of the wall. The Greeks had built the wall with their own hard work, but the gods knocked it down and covered it with smooth sand, and then the rivers flowed in their natural channels again.

In the future, Poseidon and Apollo made it look as if a wall had never existed there.

But now the wall still stood, and the battle raged before it. Hector was driving the Greeks back to their ships. Hector fought like a whirlwind. Hector fought like a boar that hunters have cornered but that wheels around and attacks. The hunters hurl their spears at the boar, but the boar with its strength and bravery charges the hunters again and again. What will kill the boar will be its own courage. It charges, and the hunters give way, and the boar charges again.

Hector kept charging, kept rallying his warriors, kept trying to reach the ships so he could keep his wife and son safe at Troy.

But the Greek trench stopped his horses. They whinnied and balked. The trench was deep, and the far side was lined with sharpened stakes.

Polydamas warned Hector, “The trench is too deep for our chariots, and just beyond it is the Greek wall. The Greeks have the advantage. If Zeus is on our side and wants us to win and to kill the Greeks, I hope he helps us soon. I hope that the Greeks die here, far from their homes.

“What if the Greeks attack while we and our chariots are in the trench? What if the Greeks are triumphant? The warriors and chariots will be in a disorganized mass of confusion.

“It is best if we don’t fight here with chariots. Let everyone dismount from the chariots and fight on foot. All of us will follow you, Hector, in a mass attack. We can defeat the Greeks on foot.”

Hector agreed. He leapt from his chariot, and so did the other Trojans. They lined up their chariots and prepared to fight on foot. Five captains led five battalions of Trojans and Trojan allies against the Greeks.

The largest battalion was with Hector and Polydamas. Cebriones was third in command.

Paris led the second battalion. With him were Alcahous and Agenor.

Helenus led the third battalion. Second in command was Deiphobus. Both of them were sons of Priam. Third in command was Asius — huge stallions had carried him to Troy.

Aeneas led the fourth battalion. With him were Acamas and Archelochus, two sons of Antenor.

The fifth battalion consisted of many of the Trojans’ allies. Sarpedon, the son of Zeus, led them. Next in command were Glaucus and Asteropaeus. They were the best men next to Sarpedon.

The five battalions charged the Greeks, intending to break through the wall and reach the ships.

Almost all Trojans followed Polydamas' plan of fighting on foot, but Asius did not. He charged the Greeks in his chariot — fool! He was fated to die. Idomeneus' spear would take his life.

Asius charged the ships on the left, straight toward some gates through which the Greeks passed after a battle.

The gates were open — two warriors who kept them open so that any straggling Greeks could make their way to safety guarded them. Asius drove straight at the gates with his warriors following him.

The two Greek warriors guarding the gates were Polypoetes and Leonteus. They were like deeply rooted, huge oak trees on a mountain ridge, standing up to storms.

They stood up to Asius, who was followed by Trojan warriors yelling cries of war. Following Asius was Adamas, his son, as well as Iamenus, Orestes, Thoon, and Oenomaus.

Polypoetes and Leonteus yelled to the other Greeks, "Defend the ships!" Polypoetes and Leonteus then stood in front of the gates and fought like two wild boars on a hilltop taking on hunters and dogs, charging and shattering trees, fighting men and dogs with their tusks until a hunter spears them. Meanwhile, Greek warriors from the wall behind Polypoetes and Leonteus threw rocks at the Trojans and their allies.

Blow on blow sounded on the Greeks' armor and on the Trojan allies' armor.

Asius cried, "Zeus, I did not believe that the Greeks could withstand our charge. The Greeks are like wasps or bees defending their homes and their young. The bees keep the hunters of honey away. Although only two warriors are in front, they will not stop defending the gates until either they kill all of us or we kill both of them."

Zeus heard Asius, but Zeus would give *kleos* to Hector, not to Asius.

At the gates they fought. It is impossible to tell the story with the detail with which a god could tell it. But the Greeks were desperate — what would happen if the Trojan allies broke through the wall? The gods who supported the Greeks were dejected, but the Greek warriors Polypoetes and Leonteus kept fighting and kept killing.

Polypoetes' spearhead went through Damasus' metal helmet and through his skull. His brain splattered inside his helmet.

Polypoetes then killed Pylon and Ormenus and stripped their armor from their corpses.

Leonteus speared Hippomachus in the belly and then drew his sword and killed Antiphates, Menon, Orestes, and Iamenus. Corpses littered the ground.

While Polypoetes and Leonteus stripped the armor of the warriors they had killed, the warriors led by Hector and Polydamas witnessed a bird-sign sent by Zeus. An eagle was flying on their left — the unlucky, sinister side. It clutched in its talons a huge bloodied snake. Still alive, the snake bit the eagle's throat, and the eagle dropped it. It fell in the midst of the Trojan warriors and wriggled.

Polydamas the prophet was able to interpret the sign. He said to Hector, "Often you criticize me when I interpret a bird-sign or other sign from the gods, although my advice is good. You don't think that anyone should criticize you in council and especially during a war. But I have to tell you what I have learned from this bird-sign. Stop the attack and return to Troy. The eagle bloodied the snake, but the eagle was unable to feed it to its nestlings. We have bloodied the Greeks in battle today, but we will be unable to continue to do so. Eventually, the Greeks will batter us back to Troy, defeated. That is what this bird-sign shows us."

Hector said, "Polydamas, shut up. You are wrong. I have heard a message from Zeus himself that this is my day of triumph. I will not put that aside because of a bird-sign. Not all

movements of birds are signs from the gods. I pay no attention to birds on the right, lucky side or to birds on the left, unlucky side or to birds in the middle. I do pay attention to messages given to me from Zeus.

“The best thing that all of us can do is to fight for our country. We have wives and children and parents and other family members to protect. You yourself have nothing to fear in war. The rest of us risk our lives and may die trying to set the Greek ships on fire, but you are so cowardly that you will not fight long or hard.

“I warn you not to hold back from the fighting. I warn you not to convince even one of our warriors to hold back from the fighting. If you do, I myself will kill you with my spear!”

Hector led the Trojans in a charge against the Greeks, and Zeus sent a dust storm against the Greeks. This was the day on which Zeus would allow Hector to win great *kleos*.

Hector and his Trojans were mad to tear down the Greek wall. They tried to use levers to tear it down, and they tried to wreck the foundations so that the wall would fall. But the Greeks kept fighting. They used shields to plug holes in the wall, and from the wall they threw rocks at the Trojans.

Great Ajax and Little Ajax were on the wall, calling on their fellow Greeks to fight fiercely: “Warriors! Commanders! Look at the Trojans as they attack! This is not the time to rest! We can either achieve victory and live or we can be defeated and die! There is no other outcome! May Zeus help us to achieve victory!”

Zeus sometimes sends a snowstorm from which flakes of snow fall and cover the highlands and the lowlands, the plowed fields and the beaches, everything except the sea. Rocks thrown by Greeks and by Trojans were as plentiful as those flakes of snow.

Zeus inspired Sarpedon, his son, to achieve a great feat and so earn *kleos*. Sarpedon charged straight at the Greeks, holding his shield in front of him. He was like a hungry mountain lion wanting to feed on some sheep. Even if the lion chances on herdsmen protecting the flocks with spears and with dogs, the lion still charges. Either the lion kills a sheep and carries it away or the herdsmen kill the lion.

Sarpedon called to his second-in-command, “Glaucus, why do our fellow Lycians honor us with the best meat and the best wine? Why do our countrymen respect us as if we were gods? Why do we have the best vineyards and the best cropland?”

“They do it because of times like this. Our duty is to fight in the front lines. Our duty is to fight so well that a fellow warrior will say, ‘Our kings of Lycia have earned *kleos*. Our kings eat the best food and drink the best wine, and they deserve it. They have great fighting ability, and they lead us during war!’

“Glaucus, my friend, if it were possible for us to leave this battle and never die and never age, to be immortal and eternally young, I would never fight again. Nor would I command you to fight. But immortality for us is not possible because death is not optional.

“Death in any of a thousand forms awaits you and me and all men. All living men will die. No living man will escape his fate. So let us fight! Let us kill and earn *kleos* for ourselves, or let us be killed and earn *kleos* for another warrior! Let us achieve such great feats that we will be remembered after we die!”

Glaucus heard him and responded by charging at the Greeks. Sarpedon and Glaucus led the Lycian warriors in the attack.

Menestheus saw them charging and knew he needed reinforcements. Who could help defend the wall at that spot? He saw Great Ajax and Little Ajax with Teucer, the archer who had been wounded earlier but, rested now, had come from the camps to help fight the Trojans. They were too far away for them to hear Menestheus shout. The Trojans and Greeks yelled as they fought before the bolted gates.

Menestheus sent a herald to give Great Ajax a message: “Ask Great Ajax to come here and fight. Better, ask Great Ajax and Little Ajax to come here and fight. The Lycians are attacking with a mighty force and we will be hard pressed to resist it. But if their part of the wall is strongly under attack, let Little Ajax stay there. But let Great Ajax and Teucer fight here.”

The runner took off and delivered the message: More warriors were needed to fight off the Lycians.

Great Ajax told Little Ajax, “Stay here. You and Lycomedes command the Greeks in their fight with the Trojans. I will return soon — after I have fought off this fresh attack.”

Great Ajax and Teucer went to Menestheus. Pandion, Teucer’s comrade, carried Teucer’s bow. The Lycians were attacking in force, storming against the Greeks like a tornado.

Great Ajax was the first to kill a Lycian. He threw a rock that a strong man of today would find difficult to lift with both hands. The rock struck Epicles, one of Sarpedon’s friends, and splintered his skull.

Teucer shot an arrow that wounded Glaucus, hitting him in his shoulder blade.

Sarpedon felt sorrow for his friend, but he kept on fighting. Sarpedon stabbed Alcmaon and then drew his spear out of Alcmaon’s body. Alcmaon fell headfirst from the wall.

And now Sarpedon grabbed the wall and wrenched it, and a part of the wall fell. A gap in the wall was before him, a gap through which hundreds of Trojans could attack.

Teucer and Great Ajax both targeted Sarpedon. Teucer aimed an arrow at him and shot and hit Sarpedon’s war-belt. But Zeus made sure that Sarpedon — his son — was not wounded. Sarpedon was not yet fated to die.

Great Ajax stabbed at Sarpedon and hit his shield, which held off Great Ajax’ spear. But Great Ajax forced Sarpedon back — slowly, unwillingly.

Sarpedon shouted to his Lycians, “Fight harder! I’ve knocked down part of the wall! Now we need to charge through it! The harder we fight together, the more Greeks we will kill!”

The Lycians rallied around Sarpedon, but the Greeks also rallied. What would happen to the Greeks if the Trojans and Trojan allies got through the wall? The Lycians were unable to push the Greeks back and get through the wall, and the Greeks were unable to push the Lycians back.

Two farmers sometimes fight over boundary stones, and each tries to get more territory. They fight it out with measuring rods, but the Greeks and the Lycians were fighting it out with spears and swords as they jabbed and hacked at each other.

Many warriors were wounded, sometimes in the back and sometimes when a spear punched through a shield. Everywhere was the blood of Greeks and Lycians — on rocks, on the ground, on pieces of the wall, and on weapons. But the Trojans and their allies could not pour through the gap in the wall. Greeks and Trojans were evenly matched.

But Hector arrived, and Zeus gave him the glory of storming the wall. Hector shouted, “Charge, Trojans! Get through the wall! Burn the ships!”

Hector’s warriors gathered around him, and Hector picked up a huge boulder that no two men of today could easily lift into a wagon. But Hector lifted it as easily as a shepherd can lift the fleece of a ram.

Hector ran toward the gates. They were sturdily built, with two crossbars locking them. Hector threw the boulder against the gates, using his weight as he did so. The boulder smashed the gates and knocked them down.

Hector’s armor blazed. No Greek could stop him as he battled his way through the gate, shouting to his warriors, “Storm the wall!”

They obeyed him. Some climbed over the wall, and some followed Hector through the gate.

The Trojans forced the Greeks back. Nothing was behind the Greeks except their camps and ships. They had nowhere to escape the fighting.

Zeus, watching the battle, thought, *What are these warriors fighting for? Hector and the Trojans are fighting to save their wives, children, parents, other family members, and siblings. The Greeks are fighting to get Helen back. But what else are these warriors fighting for?*

Although it is difficult for an immortal god to understand, my own son, Sarpedon, explained it well in his speech to his friend and second-in-command, Glaucus. They are fighting for something that Achilles at this time completely rejects: kleos. Achilles told the embassy of Odysseus, Phoenix, and Great Ajax that he is no longer willing to fight for kleos and timê. In doing that, he is completely rejecting what Sarpedon, Glaucus, and every other warrior — Greek or Trojan or Trojan ally — wants. He is rejecting the Warrior Ethic on which mortal society is built.

The human condition is mortality. Every human being must die. Many, many warriors have died and are dying here. For human beings, death is not optional. Everyone must face death, and warriors face it almost daily. Every mortal, including the mortal's friends and family and the mortal himself, must die. They have to accept that, and although they accept that, they also have to eat, sleep, and try to find joy in life.

For these warriors, only one kind of meaningful afterlife exists, and it cannot be found in Hades, the Land of the Dead. Every mortal dies and goes to Hades, a gloomy and unhappy place. The breath of life leaves the mortal body and, once the body has had a proper funeral, the warrior's psyche, or soul, enters Hades. The only thing worse than being a soul in the Land of the Dead is being a soul that is not allowed to enter the Land of the Dead. The dead belong with the dead.

Kleos apthiton is the only kind of meaningful or significant afterlife available to a warrior. It is not a living body but a living reputation. Kleos is fame or glory or reputation; it is what people say about you after you are dead. Kleos apthiton is undying kleos. The body of the warrior will die, but if he fights well enough in battle, his kleos will be everlasting — people will remember his name and he will be talked about after he is dead. Epic poets such as Homer who is yet to be born will sing songs about him.

The only alternative is to be forgotten.

The way that a warrior can get kleos apthiton is to kill and/or to be killed — or both. Many of the warriors who achieve immortality by having their exploits sung have killed other warriors and were killed themselves.

Achilles told Odysseus, Phoenix, and Great Ajax about his two fates that he learned about from his goddess mother, Thetis. If he returns home to Greece, his life will be long but he will die with no kleos. If he stays at Troy, he will die young but his kleos will be apthiton — everlasting.

Previously, Achilles has been willing to die for kleos, but Agamemnon has shown him that kleos can be taken away arbitrarily. Timê is related to kleos in that if the warrior gets lots of timê, the warrior will also get lots of kleos; however, kleos is what the warrior is truly fighting for. Agamemnon took away Achilles' timê: Briseis. If Agamemnon can take away Achilles' timê — and therefore his kleos — arbitrarily, then Achilles says that kleos is not worth dying for.

Achilles can get kleos apthiton, but only at the price of killing many, many Trojans and at the price of dying young.

My son Sarpedon stated the Heroic Ethic clearly. Death is not optional, and therefore what warriors ought to do is to fight bravely and win kleos. By killing or being killed, warriors can either win kleos for themselves or give kleos to others.

Achilles, of course, has rejected the Heroic Ethic. He said that he loves life and therefore he no longer values kleos and timê. This is entirely different from what the other warriors believe.

Achilles, in rejecting kleos and timê, rejects everything that his warrior society believes in. He is rejecting the Heroic Ethic, and he is rejecting everything that he has built his life on up to this point.

Achilles is examining the Heroic Ethic and asking if it is worthwhile.

CHAPTER 13: The Trojans Attack the Ships

Zeus had driven Hector against the Greeks and had allowed him to earn great *kleos* by smashing the gates of the Greeks. Now, as Greeks fought and died to save their ships and as Trojans fought and died to save their wives and children, Zeus grew bored and stopped watching the war. His eyes turned north to Thrace. He did not believe that any god would disobey his orders and fight for the Greeks or for the Trojans.

Poseidon had been watching Zeus. Seeing that Zeus was no longer watching the war, Poseidon decided to help the Greeks. He pitied them. Walking only four steps, Poseidon traveled from Samothrace, an island in the northeastern Aegean, to Aegae, a city in the northern Peloponnesus. He yoked his horses to his battle-chariot and put on armor and drove his chariot and team of horses to Troy. Dolphins swam with the chariot.

In between Tenedos, an island near Troy, and Imbros, another island near Troy, is a sea-cave. Poseidon stopped there and unyoked his immortal horses. He gave them ambrosia to eat, and he put golden hobbles on their feet. Then he went to the Greek camps.

The Trojans fought alongside Hector, screaming war cries. Now was a chance to burn the Greek ships and ensure that Trojan wives and children would be safe from Greek enslavement and other atrocities by the Greeks.

Poseidon assumed the shape and voice of Calchas, the Greek prophet. He spoke to Great Ajax and Little Ajax, “Both of you, fight to save the Greeks! Now is not the time to rest. Elsewhere, the Greek warriors will be able to hold off the Trojans and their allies. Here the Trojans may very well break through. If you two fight as hard as you can, and inspire other Greek warriors to fight as hard as they can, then you can keep Hector and the Trojans away from the ships — even if Zeus helps Hector!”

Poseidon touched Great Ajax and Little Ajax with his staff and inspirited both warriors with courage and strength and fighting prowess. Then Poseidon sped away as quickly as a hawk high in the air swoops down to the plain to attack larks and swallows.

Little Ajax recognized that a god had visited them. Little Ajax said, “Great Ajax, one of the Olympian gods has visited us. This was not the prophet Calchas. Such speed! He had to have been a god! And now my spirit is transformed! I am ready to fight — and to fight well!”

Great Ajax said, “I can feel it, too. I feel strong, and I want to fight Hector face-to-face.”

Poseidon sped to other Greeks, those in the rear, resting, exhausted from the battle, and disheartened by seeing the Trojans attack so fiercely so close to the ships.

Poseidon said to Teucer, Leitus, Peneleos, Thoas, Deipyrus, Meriones, and Antilochus, “You are acting like raw recruits, not like experienced warriors! Have you no shame? If you don’t join the fighting now, the Trojans will win. The Trojans have now almost reached the ships, although before today they were like frightened deer — good for nothing but food for carnivorous beasts: jackals, leopards, and wolves. For months, the Trojans did not want to fight the Greeks. They stayed behind their walls. But now the Trojans are far from the walls of Troy. Agamemnon has been a bad leader, and many Greek warriors are standing around, doing nothing. Achilles and his warriors stay by their ships, not fighting. But so what! So Agamemnon erred by insulting Achilles! How can we not fight now! We must fight or lose honor and *kleos*!”

“I would not criticize someone who has been a coward from the beginning. Of course they are cowards now! But you have been warriors! Why are you holding back now! Hector has knocked down our gates, and the Trojans are near the ships!”

Inspired by Poseidon’s words, the Greek warriors went back into battle. They fought beside Great Ajax and Little Ajax. Even Ares, the god of war, would respect their fighting ability. So

would Athena. Here were good warriors to stop Hector. They stood side-by-side, helmet-by-helmet, and spear-by-spear, and they were prepared to gain *kleos*.

Hector and his Trojans stormed against them. Hector was like a boulder that a river has loosened. The boulder hurtles downward, trampling timber until it reaches the plain. Hector crashed against the Greek warriors, but the Greeks stopped him. They jabbed at him with their two-edged spears, and he was forced back. He shouted to his troops, “Attack! They cannot hold us away from the ships! If Zeus’ word to me is true, I will crush them on this day!”

Deiphobus, a son of Priam, moved forward. The Greek Meriones hurled his spear. A hit! The spear hit Deiphobus’ shield, but did not penetrate it. The shield was strong, and Meriones’ spear shaft snapped. Meriones retreated, furious that he had not killed Deiphobus and furious that he had ruined his weapon. He ran back to the ships to get another spear.

The other warriors continued to fight. Teucer killed Imbrius, who had wed an illegitimate daughter of Priam: Medesicaste. He lived in Pedaeon, but when the war started, he went to Troy to fight for his father-in-law. Teucer stabbed him under the ear, pulled out his spear, and down Imbrius fell like a tree that had been cut down with an ax.

Teucer charged forward to strip Imbrius’ armor, and Hector hurled his spear. Teucer saw it and dodged, barely avoiding death. But the spear hit the Greek Amphimachus in the chest. Hector charged forward to strip off Amphimachus’ helmet, and Great Ajax stabbed at him with a spear — Hector’s armor protected him from death. But Great Ajax stabbed at Hector’s shield and forced him away from the corpses of Imbrius and Amphimachus.

The Greeks hauled away both corpses by their feet. Stichius and Menestheus carried Amphimachus’ body away. Great Ajax and Little Ajax carried Imbrius’ body away. After two lions take away a goat from dogs, they lift it in their jaws so they can carry it away. Great Ajax and Little Ajax lifted the body of Imbrius and stripped his armor.

Little Ajax, furious over the death of Amphimachus, cut off Imbrius’ head and threw it like a ball at the Trojans. It landed at Hector’s feet.

Amphimachus was a grandson of Poseidon. Angered, the god of the sea spurred on the Greeks to fight the Trojans. He moved among the ships and camps and found the Cretan commander Idomeneus, who had been taking care of a wounded friend who had been gashed in the back of the knee. Idomeneus made sure a healer was with his friend, and then he went to his camp to get his armor — he wanted to return to battle.

Poseidon, taking the form and voice of Thoas, said to him, “Greeks used to boast about how well they would fight the Trojans. Were those empty boasts?”

Idomeneus replied, “Thoas, no Greek is to blame. All of us know how to fight — and fight well. No one is panicked. No one is a coward. It is Zeus’ will for the Trojans to triumph now. You yourself, Thoas, are a warrior. Encourage all Greek warriors you see.”

Poseidon said, “May any coward die and stay here and never return home! May anyone who stays away from the battle become food for dogs and birds! Quick, get your armor and let us fight together. Even cowards, when they fight together instead of singly, have some power. You and I, warriors fighting together, will be much more effective than any cowards who fight together.”

Poseidon left, and Idomeneus went to his camp. He put on his shining armor, left, and found Meriones, who had returned to the camp to get a spear.

Idomeneus said, “Meriones, friend, why aren’t you fighting? Are you wounded? Did your spear break? Do you have a message for me? I am ready to fight! I am ready to do battle!”

Meriones understood that Idomeneus was encouraging him to return to the battle. He replied, “Idomeneus, I have come to the camps to get a spear. If you have one I can use, it will save me time. I ruined my spear in a wasted throw against Deiphobus.”

Idomeneus said, “If you need a spear, I have twenty of them. I took them from Trojans I have killed. I don’t fight from a distance. I fight up close, and my reward is taking spears, shields, helmets, and armor from the warriors I kill.”

Meriones replied, “I also fight up close, and my ship and shelter have hoards of Trojan weapons and plunder. But my camp is far from here. I fight in the front lines — courageously. You are a witness to that.”

Idomeneus said, “Yes, I am. You are a warrior who would be picked to be part of an ambush. We need our best warriors for that. Ambushes reveal who is brave and who is cowardly. Cowards change color; their skin grows pale. They move around, excited. Their heart beats rapidly. Their teeth chatter. But the skin of a brave warrior does not grow pale. The brave warrior is in control of himself. The brave warrior is alert but not panicked. The brave warrior is ready to wreak damage against the enemy. The brave warrior is ready to wade in the blood of the enemy.

“No one can deny your bravery. If you were wounded in battle, your wound would be in the front, not in the back. The wound would be in your chest or in your belly as you charged forward.

“Let’s go to the front lines now. Go to my shelter and choose a spear to wield.”

Meriones ran to Idomeneus’ tent and seized a spear, and the two warriors headed for the front lines.

Meriones asked Idomeneus, “Where should we join the fighting? Where are we most needed: right, center, or left? I think we Greeks are most outfought on the left flank.”

Idomeneus replied, “Plenty of Greeks are guarding the middle. Great Ajax, Little Ajax, and Teucer can hold off Hector. Even if Hector is mad to shed Greek blood and burn our ships, he won’t be able to unless Zeus himself sets the ships on fire. Great Ajax is second to no mortal warrior. In single combat, Great Ajax would stand up to Achilles, although Achilles would be the victor in a footrace. So let’s fight on the left flank. Either we will win *kleos* for ourselves, or we will give *kleos* to our enemy.”

When the Trojans saw Meriones and Idomeneus, they attacked. Sometimes, wind scatters piles of dust on a dirt road. Much like that, the dust obscured the air as warriors fought. They slashed each other, and their armor shone. Only a man who loved war could find joy in that slaughter.

Zeus and Poseidon wished different outcomes for the warriors. Poseidon wanted a Greek victory every battle. Zeus wanted a Trojan victory on this particular day so that Hector could gain *kleos*, but Zeus had no intention of allowing all the Greek warriors to be killed. Zeus simply wanted to honor his promise to Achilles’ mother, Thetis.

Zeus was still not watching the battle, so Poseidon was still encouraging the Greeks to fight fiercely, but he was not doing so openly. Zeus was the stronger god, and Poseidon would not resist his will openly. But both gods wanted the deaths of many mortals.

Idomeneus, despite his grey hair, killed Othryoneus, who had come to Troy and asked to marry Priam’s most beautiful daughter, Cassandra. He did not pay a bride-price, but instead vowed to fight well for Troy and to drive the Greeks away. Priam nodded his head in assent to the marriage, but Idomeneus speared Othryoneus through his breastplate.

Idomeneus shouted over the corpse, “Can you keep your promise to Priam now, Othryoneus? I think not. So why not make an agreement with the Greeks? If you do, we will allow you to marry Agamemnon’s most beautiful daughter. We will lead her here from Greece so you can be married, but you must help us to destroy the city of Troy. If you make an agreement with us, the outcome will be better than the outcome of your agreement with Priam.”

Idomeneus grabbed one of Othryoneus' feet and tried to drag away the corpse, but Asius jumped from his chariot and tried to kill Idomeneus. He failed. Idomeneus speared Asius just under the chin and the spear came out the back of Asius' head. Asius fell the way a tree falls that has been cut by the builders of boats.

Asius' driver panicked and did not drive the chariot away from the Greeks. Antilochus, a son of Nestor, speared him through the breastplate. Asius' driver gasped and died, falling out of the chariot. Antilochus drove the chariot and horses to the Greek side.

Deiphobus, angry at the death of Asius, hurled a spear at Idomeneus, who ducked under his shield and avoided death as the spear flew past, merely grazing the shield. But the spear hit Hypsenor and split his liver. His knees could not hold him.

Deiphobus shouted, "Asius has died, but he will have company on his way to the Land of the Dead!"

Antilochus grieved for Hypsenor, who was wounded but not dead. Antilochus ran forward and stood over him, protecting him with his shield. The Greeks Mecisteus and Alastor helped Hypsenor, in pain and groaning, back to the ships.

Idomeneus kept fighting. He was ready to kill many Trojans or to go himself to the Land of the Dead. He killed Alcahous, who had married Hippodamia, the daughter of Anchises, who had fathered Aeneas with Aphrodite. Hippodamia's parents loved her. She was skilled at crafts. Idomeneus killed her husband, a brave man, by spearing him in the chest, cracking the metal that protected his ribs. Idomeneus' spear stuck in his heart, which beat and made the spear quiver — for a short time.

Idomeneus, king of Crete, shouted to Deiphobus, "We have killed three men — Asius, Asius' driver, and Alcahous — for the man you boasted about killing! Try to fight me! I dare you! I am related to Zeus himself. He fathered the Cretan king Minos, who fathered Deucalion, who fathered me, whose purpose in life right now is to make your life and the lives of all Trojans miserable."

Deiphobus wondered which was the better course of action: to fight Idomeneus by himself or get a friend to help him fight Idomeneus. He left and found Aeneas, who was by himself, sulking, angry at Priam, who he felt did not give him enough credit for the deeds he performed in battle.

Deiphobus said to Aeneas, "We need you now. Your sister's husband is dead, and we need to get the corpse so that we can give it a proper burial. Fight with me to recover the corpse of Alcahous, who helped to raise you when you were a child. Idomeneus has killed him."

Aeneas charged at Idomeneus, who did not scare easily or at all. He was an experienced warrior. A wild mountain boar will stand up to hunters and dogs, not retreating but ready to take a life or many lives. So Idomeneus stood up to Aeneas and did not retreat. But with his experience, he knew he needed help.

Idomeneus called for other Greeks to come to him: Ascalaphus, Aphareus, Deipyrus, Meriones, and Antilochus. He shouted, "Come here, friends, and help me face Aeneas! I am alone, and he is a young, powerful warrior. If he and I were the same age, I would fight him alone. Either I would win *kleos*, or he would!"

Idomeneus had called to his friends, and they came running. But Aeneas called to Deiphobus, Paris, and Agenor, and they and other warriors ran to him.

Greeks and Trojans fought over the corpse of Alcahous. The Greeks wanted the corpse so that they could ransom it or mistreat it by allowing dogs and birds to eat it, thus preventing Alcahous' *psyche* — his soul — from entering the Land of the Dead. The Trojans wanted the corpse so that they could give it a proper funeral and allow his *psyche* to enter the Land of the Dead.

Aeneas threw his spear at Idomeneus, but Idomeneus ducked and Aeneas' spear hit only earth.

Idomeneus speared Oenomaus in the belly and his entrails spilled on the ground. Oenomaus' hands clawed at the earth. Idomeneus pulled his spear out of Oenomaus' intestines, and Oenomaus' hands stilled. But Idomeneus could not strip Oenomaus' armor; the Trojans' weapons drove him back. Idomeneus did not run away, but he was forced back, slow step by slow step.

Deiphobus threw his spear at Idomeneus, a man he hated, but missed Idomeneus and instead hit Ascalaphus, son of the war god Ares. The spear went all the way through his shoulder and he fell, grabbed at the ground, and died.

Ares did not know that one of his sons had died. He was on Olympus, away from the battle as Zeus had ordered.

The fight over the corpse of Alcahous raged on. Deiphobus managed to strip away Alcahous' helmet, but Meriones stabbed him in the upper arm and Deiphobus dropped the helmet and it clanged on the ground. Meriones pulled his spear out of Deiphobus' upper arm and then retreated.

Deiphobus' brother, Polites, another son of Priam, grabbed him around the waist with both hands and dragged him away from the fighting and to the Trojans' horses and chariots, one of which bore him back to Troy with blood running down his arm.

Aeneas slit open the throat of Aphareus, who had hoped to kill him. Aphareus' head slumped, and he fell.

Antilochus saw Thoon attempting to run away. Antilochus sprang at him and severed the vein that runs the length of the back to the nape of the neck. Thoon fell on his back and reached his hands out to his friends. Antilochus wanted to strip off Thoon's armor, but Trojan weapons struck his shield, which protected him. Antilochus was not wounded as he lashed out with his spear at the Trojans who were trying to kill him.

Adamas, the son of Asius, was watching Antilochus. He ran at Antilochus and stabbed with his spear. It hit Antilochus' shield and broke. Half remained stuck in the shield, and half fell to the ground.

Adamas retreated, but Meriones speared him, thrusting his spear in between Adamas' naval and genitals. This is the worst injury that can be suffered in battle. Adamas grabbed the spear and writhed. He fought death the way a wild bull resists the huntsmen who have captured him and are beginning to drag him away. Adamas fought death, but death quickly won. Meriones pulled his spear out of Adamas' body, and Adamas' body became a corpse.

The Trojan Helenus charged the Greek Deipyrus and his sword split the side of Deipyrus' head, knocking off his helmet. A Greek picked up the helmet, and Deipyrus' eyes went dark.

The death of Deipyrus angered Menelaus, who charged Helenus. Arming himself with a bow, Helenus shot an arrow at Menelaus' chest. A direct hit, but the arrow bounced off Menelaus' breastplate. Black beans and chickpeas fly when tossed from a shovel by a winner. Much like that, Helenus' arrow bounced off Menelaus' chest.

Menelaus aimed at Helenus' hand that was grabbing the bow, and the spearhead punched through his hand and cracked his bow. Helenus retreated, wounded but alive, and Agenor removed the spear from Helenus' hand and made a sling for his arm.

Pisander and Menelaus rushed at each other. Menelaus hurled his spear. It missed Pisander, who stabbed with his spear at Menelaus' shield. The spear broke, but Pisander still hoped for victory. Menelaus drew a sword, and Pisander grabbed his ax. Both warriors hacked at each other, each hoping to kill the other. Pisander hacked at Menelaus' helmet. But Menelaus hacked Pisander between the eyes. Pisander's bones broke, his blood sprayed, and his eyes fell

out of his head. Pisander's body crashed. To get his sword out of Pisander's corpse, Menelaus had to step on Pisander's chest and then pull on the sword.

Menelaus stripped off Pisander's armor and boasted over the corpse, "You Trojans have not treated me well. Zeus is the god of *xenia*, but you Trojans stole my wife and much of my treasure. You had no reason to do such evil; Paris received good *xenia* in my palace. Now, you want to set fire to our ships and kill us all. That is not going to happen!

"Zeus, you are supposed to be wise, but you are helping the Trojans to kill and kill again. Why should you be favoring the Trojans? The Trojans want war. Usually, a person will get enough of something: sleep, even sex, and other good things. But the Trojans never get enough of war."

Menelaus gave the bloody armor of Pisander to his aides and then started fighting again.

Harpalion was the next Trojan ally — a Paphlagonian — to fight Menelaus. Harpalion stabbed Menelaus' shield, but the spear did not punch through to kill Menelaus. Harpalion retreated, but Meriones shot an arrow at him and hit him in the right buttock. The arrow reached his bladder. Harpalion sank to the ground and died, wriggling like an earthworm. His fellow Paphlagonians bore his corpse to Troy. His father, King Pylaemenes, walked beside the corpse and wept.

Paris wanted to avenge the death of Harpalion. He shot an arrow at Euchenor, whose father was a prophet: Polyidus of Corinth. Like Achilles, Euchenor had two fates. Euchenor's father had told him that he could fight at Troy and die in battle or stay at home and die of illness. Euchenor decided to go to Troy and die, both to avoid paying the tax that Agamemnon levied on those warriors who would not go to Troy and to avoid a slow death from illness. Paris' arrow hit Euchenor in the neck, and Euchenor's death was quick.

The warriors kept fighting on the right flank, but Hector did not know that his men were being bested there. Poseidon kept encouraging the Greeks to fight well.

But Hector fought well, too. He was still where he had broken through the gates. Here were the ships of Protesilaus and Great Ajax, and here the wall was lower. This was the weakest part of the Greek defenses, and Hector was attacking it.

The warriors resisting Hector included Menestheus, Phidas, Stichius, Bias, Meges, Amphion, Dracius, and Medon, the bastard son of King Oileus. Medon was Little Ajax' half-brother, but they lived in separate cities. Medon had been banished from the land of his birth because he had killed a relative — someone whom his stepmother valued. Also fighting here, beside each other, were Little Ajax and Great Ajax. They were like two oxen yoked together and working hard as sweat poured off them.

Many of the Greeks were ready to fight up close, but the Locrians — the people with whom Little Ajax was kinsman — preferred to fight from a distance, with arrows. The two kinds of warriors fought together. Greeks in heavy armor fought in the front lines, while behind them the Locrians sent swarms of arrows against the Trojans.

The Trojans were being outfought, so Polydamas ran up to Hector and said, "Listen to me! You are a great warrior, but these battle tactics are not working. Being a great warrior and being a great tactician are two separate things. The gods give gifts to mortals, but no single mortal gets all the gifts of the gods. One man is a great warrior, another man is a great dancer, another man is a great singer and musician, and Zeus gives yet another man great intelligence. The man with great intelligence can help many other men.

"Listen to what I think is the best course of action. Draw back. Find your best commanders. Form a plan of action. Is it best to keep attacking the Greeks? Or is it best to return to Troy? I am afraid that the Greeks may defeat us. Remember that Achilles is not

fighting now. He and his warriors are well rested. If he begins to fight, he will defeat us today the way we defeated the Greeks yesterday.”

Hector agreed. He called to Polydamas, “Stay here. I will return soon.”

Hector searched for Deiphobus, Helenus, Adamas the son of Asius, and Asius. Where were they? Dead or wounded. Adamas and Asius lay by the Greek ships; the Trojans had not recovered their corpses. The others, wounded, had returned to Troy.

But Hector did find Paris and said to him, “Where is Deiphobus? Where is Helenus? Where are Adamas and Asius? Where is Othryoneus? Is Troy to be conquered because you are mad for women?”

Paris replied, “I am fighting hard. On other days, I may have stayed away from battle, but not today. My mother did not give birth to a coward. Ever since you attacked the Greeks on this day, we have been fighting hard with no letup.

“The warriors whose names you mentioned are dead, except for Deiphobus and Helenus, who are wounded and back at Troy. Their wounds are in the hand or arm; Zeus did not let them die.

“Lead us. We are ready to fight. We are not afraid of battle. As long as our strength holds, we will fight.”

Hector was ready to fight again. The fighting was most fierce around the Trojans Cebriones, Polydamas, Phalces, Orthaeus, Polyphetes, and Palmys, and the newly arrived allies Ascanius and Morys. Imagine storm winds and thunder pounding sea waves and making them higher. The Trojans charged like that. Hector led them.

The Trojans tested the Greek lines, looking for a weak point, but the Greeks held firm.

Great Ajax challenged Hector, “Come closer! We can fight well, but Zeus is giving you aid today. Without his help, you could not defeat us. Do you hope to set fire to our ships? We will defend them. Before you can set fire to our ships, we will have conquered Troy. Soon, you will run from us and pray to Zeus to make your horses fast.”

A bird flew to Great Ajax’ right — the lucky side. The Greeks were encouraged by the bird-sign and cheered.

Hector yelled to Great Ajax, “I know that today is the Greeks’ day of doom. I know that you will die with the rest of the other Greeks. If you and I fight, my spear will rip your skin. If you and I fight, your corpse will feed dogs and birds.”

The Trojans charged and yelled, and the Greeks yelled as they prepared to resist the charge, and the air was filled with the cries of war.

Ares, the god of war, who was resting on Olympus, thought, *An aristeia is a warrior’s day of glory in battle, a day in which the hero is nearly unstoppable. The warrior fights so well that bards keep his memory alive after the warrior dies by singing about the warrior’s aristeia. Of course, many warriors in the Trojan War will have such days of excellence in battle.*

An aristeia can have a few different parts, although an aristeia need not have all of them to be considered an aristeia.

First, the warrior arms himself in armor that shines like fire.

Second, the warrior turns the tide of battle and wreaks havoc against the enemy and kills many opposing warriors.

Third, the warrior is wounded, but recovers, often with the help of a god, and reenters the battle.

Fourth, the warrior kills an especially important enemy.

Fifth, the opposing sides battle over the corpse of the opposing warrior.

A warrior who has an aristeia is a warrior whose name will be remembered after he dies.

CHAPTER 14: Hera Deceives Zeus

In his tent, Nestor heard the cries of the warriors on both sides. He said to Machaon, “The cries are growing fiercer, and they are near the ships! You stay here and drink wine. Hecamede will draw you a bath and wash the blood off of you. I am going to find out how the battle is going.”

Nestor grabbed a shield that belonged to his son, Thrasymedes, who was using Nestor’s shield. He also grabbed a spear. Outside his tent, he stopped, sick and stunned. Part of the Greek wall had been knocked down, and the Trojans were across the wall! What was the best thing to do: to get in his chariot and join the Greeks or go to Agamemnon and form a plan of action? He went to find Agamemnon as the warriors continued to cut and kill each other.

The other kings — those who had been wounded — were with Agamemnon; they knew that the battle was going badly for the Greeks. Diomedes, Odysseus, and Agamemnon were all too badly wounded to fight.

The shore in front of Troy was not wide enough to house all their ships, and so the Greeks had hauled many up on land in rows and built a wall to protect them. That was where the wounded kings met. They saw Nestor coming toward them and dreaded that he was bringing bad news.

Agamemnon said to Nestor, “Why have you come here, away from the battle where warriors are dying? Hector is keeping good his threat to me that he would force back our troops and burn our ships. So he threatened then, and so he does now! Our troops must be as angry at me as Achilles is. They must have no more will for battle.”

Nestor replied, “Indeed, we are facing a disaster. I’m not certain that even Zeus could help us. Part of the wall is down, and the Trojans are fiercely attacking. Look up and down the lines, and it is impossible to tell which section — right, middle, left — is the most threatened by the Trojans. Carnage is everywhere, and Trojan war cries fill the sky! We need a plan of action. We need tactics. Clearly, wounded warriors cannot fight.”

Agamemnon said, “The Trojans have almost reached the ships. The fortifications — the wall and the trench — are useless. They did not hold back the Trojans. We had hoped that they would be permanent barriers, but Zeus must be giving the Trojans victory. Zeus used to help us, and now he helps the Trojans, but always he must have planned an ultimate Trojan victory.

“Listen to me. Let us take the ships that lie along the shore and push them into the sea. When night comes, unless the Trojans attack during darkness, we will put the rest of the ships into the sea and sail for home. It is better to run away than to die.”

Odysseus, master of tactics, hissed, “Don’t be stupid, Agamemnon. With orders like that, you don’t deserve to command warriors. Instead, you should command cowards. Zeus has decreed that we fight, not run away. Do you really want to run away from the Trojans after we have endured so much for so many years?”

“What would happen if your warriors found about your plan? These are the warriors who live or die as they follow your orders. Our warriors are fighting, and yet you want to put ships in the sea? The warriors would see the ships and think that we are deserting them and leaving them to their deaths. They will look to the right and see death. They will look ahead of them and see death. They will look to the left and see death. They will then stop fighting and run for the ships with Trojan warriors pursuing them and slaughtering them. Your plan will get all of us killed! We need the warriors to keep fighting — not try to run away!”

Agamemnon said, “You are right, Odysseus. What you say is direct and true. I will not order you or anyone else to haul the ships to the sea against your will. But does anyone have a plan of action that we can follow?”

Diomedes replied, “I do. Please listen to me, although I am the youngest commander. Although I am young, I come from a notable family. My father is Tydeus, dead now and buried in Thebes. Porthus, his grandfather, gave birth to three sons: Agrius, Melas, and Oeneus, who is my grandfather. Oeneus stayed at home and did not wander, but my father wandered over the earth. He decided to live in Argos, where he married a daughter of Adrastus and lived in a grand house with lots of cropland and orchards and pastures for sheep. He was a superior spearman, as all of you know. So my family is notable, and if my advice is good, you ought to follow it.

“We need to return to the battle. Really, we have no choice. Because of our wounds, we cannot fight. We will stay out of the range of spears and arrows so that we do not double our wounds. But our warriors will see us and be encouraged — they will know that we are not planning to run away and leave them to die.”

This was good advice, and they went to the battle.

Poseidon had been watching. Taking the shape of an old veteran, he said to Agamemnon, “Achilles must be happy right now to see that his companions are dying, cut down by Trojan weapons. He has no compassion in him, so I hope he dies! I hope that a god kills him! But the gods are not angry at you, Agamemnon. They will not let all the Greeks die. Soon you will see the Trojans create a huge cloud of dust as they run away from us and to Troy!”

Poseidon then ran to the front lines and shouted as loud as nine thousand or ten thousand warriors — a cry loud enough to put courage in each Greek’s heart.

Hera was also watching. She saw Poseidon helping the Greeks, and she saw Zeus on Mount Ida looking away from the Trojan War, bored with the battle. She wanted the Greeks to win, and she hated that Zeus wanted the Trojans to win for now.

Hera wondered if she could form a plan that would allow the Greeks to be triumphant and push back the Trojans. How could she allow Poseidon to be more active in helping the Greeks?

Eventually, she found a plan. She would beautify herself and go to Zeus on Mount Ida. If Zeus were to have sex with her, he would go to sleep and Poseidon could do whatever he wanted on the battlefield to help the Greeks.

She went to her bedroom, built for her by Hephaestus, and prepared for her feminine *aristeia*. She used ambrosia to clean her body and then rubbed her body with olive oil to make it soft. The scent of this special olive oil wafted from Mount Olympus to below and made the earth smell sweet. She combed her hair and braided it, and then she dressed herself in robes that Athena had made. A golden brooch and a waistband kept the robes closed. She wore earrings and a headdress and a veil — Hera, who was a married woman, wore a headdress and a veil — and she put on sandals.

She was not finished yet. She went to Aphrodite, goddess of sexual passion, and asked for a favor: “Will you lend me something, or will you hold it against me that I favor the Greeks?”

Aphrodite replied, “Tell me what you want. If I can, I will lend it to you.”

Hera lied to get what she wanted: “I am going to visit Ocean and Mother Tethys, my friends who took care of me after Zeus overpowered his father, Cronus. Ocean and Mother Tethys are fighting, and they have not made love for a long time. I want to convince them to make up and to enjoy themselves in bed again. Lend me something that will accomplish that.”

Aphrodite said, “It would be wrong to deny your request. This is exactly what you need.”

She took off her breastband and lent it to Hera. The breastband was something that no mortal man or immortal god could resist.

Aphrodite said to Hera, “Take this breastband. Whoever wears it will immediately make males much more than merely interested.”

Hera smiled.

Aphrodite went to her home, and Hera went to the god Sleep before she went to Zeus. She needed one more thing for her plan.

To Sleep, whose twin is Death, she said, "I have something to ask of you. If you give it to me, I will owe you. I want you to put Zeus to sleep after I have made love to him. I will give you a solid gold throne that I will have my son, Hephaestus, make for you. He will also make you a stool for your feet."

But Sleep replied, "Hera, I would put to sleep whatever god you wish — except Zeus. The only way I will put Zeus to sleep is if he himself requests it. Remember when you had me put Zeus to sleep because of Heracles?"

Hera replied, "Of course I do. I hate all the bastard children my husband, Zeus, has fathered. One of them was Heracles. I also hate all the mortal women who have given birth to those bastards. It does not matter to me whether the women had sex with my husband willingly or not."

Sleep continued, "You wanted to cause trouble for Heracles after he sacked Troy because the Trojan king Laomedon would not give him the horses he had promised, so you made me make Zeus fall asleep. You called up a storm that caused Heracles to go far off course, and Zeus was furious when he woke up. He flung gods out of his way as he searched for me — he regarded me as being the guiltiest. I fled to the goddess Night, and Zeus gave up searching for me. Now you want me to do something that will get me in that much trouble again."

Hera replied, "You have nothing to worry about. Zeus loved his son Heracles. Do you think that he values the Trojan warriors as much as he did his son Heracles? But if you do what I say, I will get you a wife. I will arrange a marriage between you and Pasithea, one of the younger Graces."

Sleep said, "You will! Swear an oath, and it's a deal! I can't sleep during the day because I keep thinking about Pasithea."

Hera swore an oath in which she named all the Titans punished in Tartarus. She and Sleep then wrapped themselves in fog to hide themselves and went to Mount Ida, where Zeus was resting. Sleep climbed up a high pine tree before Zeus saw him, and Hera went alone to her husband.

Hera's breastband that she borrowed from Aphrodite, goddess of sexual passion, immediately worked. Her husband wanted to have sex with her.

Zeus said to Hera, "Where are you going? Why are you here?"

Hera replied, "I am going to visit Ocean and Mother Tethys, who are fighting and have not made love for a long time. They are my friends, and I want to reconcile their quarrel. I want them to enjoy themselves in bed again. My horses and chariot are nearby, but I came to you first so that you would know what I am doing. I do not want to make you angry."

Zeus said, "Why are you in such a hurry? You can visit Ocean and Mother Tethys tomorrow. Today — right now — have sex with me. I have never so wanted to have sex with anyone — mortal or immortal.

"I am hornier than I was when I had sex with the wife of Ixion. She bore to me a son: Pirithous."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with the wife of Ixion and that she bore you a bastard son, and I hate it.*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I was when I had sex with Danaë, who bore me a son: Perseus."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with Danaë and that she bore you a bastard son, and I hate it.*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I was when I had sex with Europa, who bore me twin sons: Minos and Rhadamanthys."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with Europa and that she bore you twin bastard sons, and I hate it.*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I was when I had sex with Alcmena, who bore me a son: Heracles."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with Alcmena and that she bore you a bastard son, and I hate it.*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I was when I had sex with Semele, who bore me a son: Dionysus."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with Semele and that she bore you a bastard son, and I hate it.*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I was when I had sex with the goddess Demeter, who bore me a daughter: Persephone."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with Demeter and that she bore you a bastard daughter, and I hate it.*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I was when I had sex with the goddess Leto, who bore me twins: Apollo and Artemis."

Hera thought, *I know that you had sex with Leto and that she bore you bastard twins, and I hate it. Zeus, my husband, you know nothing about how to seduce a wife!*

Zeus continued, "I am hornier than I have ever been. Let us have sex right here, right now!"

Hera said, "What are you saying? Here on Mount Ida! Any god and goddess can see us making love. If one sees us making love, he or she will tell the other gods and goddesses. I don't wish to be the subject of gossip. If you want to make love to me, we can go to your bedroom, which Hephaestus made for you, and shut the doors."

Zeus said, "Don't worry. I will bring clouds around Mount Ida to hide us. Not even the sun will see us."

Zeus had sex with Hera, and under and around them grew green grass and beautiful flowers. Zeus and Hera did not touch the ground. Drops of dew rained down on them.

Zeus immediately fell asleep afterward, and the god Sleep rushed to the Greek ships and told Poseidon, "Fight for the Greeks! Zeus is asleep for a while at least. He made love to Hera, and I made him go into a soothing sleep."

Poseidon said to the Greek warriors, "Do you want Hector to win? Do you want the Trojans to set fire to your ships! That's what he wants, now that Achilles is not fighting for us. But if we fight well, we need not miss Achilles. We can defeat Hector without his help.

"Listen to me. Let us make sure that the best fighters have the best armor. If a big, strong warrior has a small shield and a small, weak warrior has a big shield, make them exchange shields. We need to make sure that our best fighters stay alive."

This was good advice, and the Greek commanders knew it. Diomedes, Odysseus, and Agamemnon arranged exchanges of armor. Poseidon led the warriors into battle.

On one side, Hector led the Trojans, and on the other side, Poseidon led the Greeks. The surf pounded the shore, and the warriors clashed against each other and shrieked cries of war.

Not so loud was the sound of waves crashing on the shore, not so loud was the crackling of a rampaging forest fire, not so loud was a storm wind tearing branches off of oak trees — none of these was so loud as the cries of war as Trojans killed Greeks and Greeks killed Trojans.

Hector ran forward and threw his spear at Great Ajax. It hit him just where two straps — one for his shield and one for his sword — crossed his chest. The straps saved his life. Hector

was angry and backed up to rejoin his troops.

Great Ajax picked up a rock and threw it at Hector. It went over the edge of his shield and hit him on his chest close to his throat. Hector spun around and fell like an oak tree hit by a thunderbolt from Zeus falls, ripping up its roots and scaring passersby.

Hector fell, and his spear and helmet fell, too. The Greeks ran to try to kill him. The Trojans — who were faster than the Greeks — ran to save him. Aeneas, Polydamas, Agenor, Sarpedon, Glaucus, and all their Trojan and allied troops saved Hector's life. They protected him with shields and lifted him up and put him in a chariot and drove him away from the fighting.

When they reached the ford of the river Xanthus, they lifted him out of the chariot and poured water over him. Hector's eyes cleared. He got to his knees, vomited, and fell unconscious.

The Greeks fought the Trojans harder than ever, now that Hector was injured. Little Ajax speared Satnius, who was named after the river Satniois, where his father, Enops, and his mother, the nymph of the ford, had coupled. Little Ajax speared him in the side.

The Trojan Polydamas threw a spear and hit Prothoënor, the son of Antenor, in the shoulder. He fell and grabbed the ground with both hands. Polydamas boasted, "Once again I've thrown my spear and hit my target: a Greek who will go down to the Land of the Dead."

The Greeks detested that boast. Prothoënor had fallen at the feet of Giant Ajax, who, angered, threw his spear at Polydamas, who jumped to the side. The spear missed Polydamas but hit Archelochus, cutting through his neck. His torso, arms, and legs fell to the ground, but his head hit the ground first.

Great Ajax yelled at Polydamas, "Your spear hit Prothoënor, and my spear hit Archelochus. I think it's a good trade. This man looks like a warrior, not a coward. He must be the brother or the son of Antenor."

Great Ajax knew that Prothoënor was a son of Antenor. Acamas, Prothoënor's brother, straddled the corpse and speared the Greek Promachus, who was trying to drag away the corpse by the feet.

Acamas boasted to the Greeks, "You also can suffer and die. Some day all of you will be like Promachus. He did not live long after the death of my brother. Warriors pray for blood relatives. If the warrior dies in battle, a blood relative will avenge his death."

The Greeks wanted to avenge the death of Promachus. The Greek Peneleos charged the Trojan Acamas, who ran, so Peneleos stabbed Ilioneus, on whose father Hermes had showered riches but whose mother had given birth to only one son. Peneleos stabbed Ilioneus under an eyebrow. One eyeball was scooped out, and the spear went into Ilioneus' eye socket and out the back of his head. Ilioneus sat down, his hands to his sides, and Peneleos cut off his head. Hoisting his spear with Ilioneus' head at the end like the top of a poppy, Peneleos displayed the grisly flower to the Trojans and boasted, "Tell the loving parents of Ilioneus that he isn't coming home anymore. I have avenged the death of the Greek Promachus, whose wife will grieve when he does not return home from the war."

The Trojans were afraid now, and they fled, pursued by Greeks who killed them.

Great Ajax killed Hyrtius, commander of the Mysians.

Antilochus killed Phalces and Mermerus.

Meriones killed Morys and Hippotion.

Teucer killed Periphetes and Prothoon.

Menelaus killed Hyperenor, spearing him in the side and spilling his intestines.

Little Ajax killed the greatest number of Trojans. He was fast on his feet, and he outran many fleeing Trojans and sent them to the Land of the Dead.

CHAPTER 15: The Battle at the Ships

The Trojans fled, and the Greeks pursued and killed them. Zeus woke up and looked down at the battle. He sprang to his feet. This was not how the battle was supposed to go. The Greeks were winning, and Hector struggled to breathe as he vomited blood. Great Ajax, a mighty warrior, had earlier wounded him with a rock.

Zeus told Hera, “You are treacherous. You stopped Hector’s attack and made the Greeks victorious while I was sleeping. Don’t be surprised if you suffer for what you have done. I can whip you. Remember that I once strung you up in the air with two huge anvils strung on your feet. I tied your hands with a golden chain — you could not break it. The other Olympian gods wanted to help you, but I would not let them. If a god tried to help you, I caught him and threw him far away. The god hit the earth headfirst and endured agonizing pain. That was how angry I was at you when you sent my son, Heracles, off course after he defeated Troy. You always hated my son, and you planned pain for him. But I saved Heracles and took him to his home. If you don’t remember how I punished you then, I can easily help you to remember. Your seductiveness will not help you.”

Hera was afraid of her husband’s anger. She told him, “I did not *directly* tell Poseidon to help the Greeks. It must have been his own idea. He hates the Trojans. He pitied the Greeks when their backs were against their ships. My advice to Poseidon is to always obey your will!”

Zeus was pleased by Hera’s words although he still knew that she was, is, and will be treacherous to him. He told her, “I like what you are telling me. If you obey me and follow my orders, then Poseidon will have to bend to my will even when he would like to oppose me.

“Hera, go to Mount Olympus and tell Iris and Apollo to come to me. I will order Iris to go to Poseidon and order him to stop helping the Greeks. I will tell Apollo to help Hector rejoin the battle. Hector will rout the Greeks and send them back to their ships. Achilles will send his best friend, Patroclus, into battle. Hector will kill Patroclus but only after Patroclus has had an *aristeia* and has slaughtered many Trojans, including my own son, Sarpedon. Angry at the death of Patroclus, Achilles will kill Hector. From that time, the fighting will continue until the Greeks conquer Troy.

“I will not allow any god or goddess to take part in the war until I have kept my promise to Thetis and exalted her son, Achilles.”

Hera obeyed her husband — immediately. She flew to Mount Olympus as quickly as thought. The gods greeted her with cups of nectar. She accepted a cup from Themis, who asked her, “Why have you returned here? You look worried. I can guess that your husband, Zeus, has threatened you.”

Hera replied, “I don’t want to think about my husband’s threat. You know how angry Zeus can get and the ways that he can punish a god or goddess. Continue being the hostess here, Themis, and no doubt you will hear all. What my husband is planning will not bring joy to all the gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus.”

The gods looked concerned. Hera’s lips smiled, but her forehead frowned. She said, “Anyone who tries to oppose Zeus is a fool. We try to get our way, but he is stronger than we are, and he does not concern himself with our happiness. All of us must accept whatever pain he throws our way.”

Hera then sent some pain Ares’ way. She said, “Ares is going to feel some pain right now. His son, Ascalaphus, is dead — killed in battle. I do believe that Ares has claimed to be his father.”

Ares felt pain and grief. He slapped his thighs hard and said, “Would anyone here blame me if I went to the battle and avenged the death of my son? Would anyone here blame me if I

did that — even though Zeus might throw a thunderbolt at me that would knock me to the ground amid dust and dead warriors?”

Ares ordered the immortals Rout and Terror to hitch his horses to his chariot. He put on his armor — he wanted to avenge his son. But Athena stopped him. She tore his helmet from his head and snatched away his shield and spear. She told him, “Don’t be stupid, and don’t do something stupid. Haven’t you been listening to Hera? If you go to the battle now, soon you will return, whipped by Zeus. And Zeus won’t stop after causing you pain. He will leave the battle and come to Mount Olympus and batter us — *all* of us: the guilty and the innocent. Don’t be angry at the death of your son. A better warrior than your son has died by now or soon will die.”

Ares sat down.

Hera summoned Iris and Apollo to her and told them, “Go to Zeus on Mount Ida, and do whatever he orders you to do.”

Iris and Apollo flew to Zeus. He was pleased to see them arrive so quickly — Hera had followed the orders he had given to her.

Zeus told Iris, “Go to Poseidon and tell him to leave the battle. He can go to Mount Olympus or to the sea, whichever he chooses. Tell him that if he does not obey me to beware because I am stronger and older than he is. It is best for him to obey my orders.”

Iris swooped down to the battle and found Poseidon and gave him Zeus’ message. Poseidon was angry. He complained to Iris, “Who is Zeus to give me orders? He is my brother, along with Hades. Rhea is the mother and Cronus is the father of all three of us. Zeus is the oldest of us three brothers. We split the world into three parts, and we shook lots to see who would get each part of the world. I became the god of the sea, Hades became the god of the Land of the Dead, which is also known by the name Hades, and Zeus became the god of the sky. But common to all of us is Mount Olympus and the land.

“Why should I follow his orders? He is powerful, but he needs to be content with the sky and not try to control the land, too. If he wants to order someone around, let him give orders to his sons and daughters!”

Iris asked, “Do you really think it wise to give that answer to Zeus? How do you think he will react to it? Aren’t you willing to bend even a little? Be careful. The Furies are avenging goddesses who concern themselves with familial violence and punish those whom they regard at fault — remember that the Furies protect older brothers.”

Poseidon replied, “Yours are wise words — you are right, Iris. You have wisdom, but I am still angry when Zeus threatens me although I am his brother and equal. I will bend to his will. But I say this: If Zeus should decree that Troy not be conquered — against the wishes of Athena, Hera, Hephaestus, Hermes, and me — then the anger between us shall never end.”

Poseidon caused an earthquake and then dove into the sea. The Greek warriors immediately missed his leadership and presence.

Immediately afterward, Zeus sent Apollo away with his orders: “Go to Hector. Poseidon has left the battle. If he had not, we would have fought. I would have won, but it is better for both him and me that Poseidon simply do what I tell him to do. Take my shield — it will panic the Greeks. But most of all, put courage into Hector so that he will fiercely attack the Greeks.”

Apollo quickly followed his father’s orders. He swooped like a hawk from Mount Ida and found Hector. Hector was sitting up, recovering from being hit with the rock that Great Ajax had thrown at him. Hector began to recognize his fellow warriors. Zeus revived him, and Hector’s gasping and heavy sweating stopped.

Apollo said to him, “Hector, why are you so far away from the fighting?”

Hector replied, “Which of the gods are you? I am surprised that you don’t know that I was killing Greeks when Great Ajax threw a rock at me and hit my chest. I thought my time to journey to the Land of the Dead had come.”

Apollo said, “Be courageous. Zeus has sent me — Apollo — to help you and to protect you. I saved you once before. Get in your chariot, and command your Trojans to get in their chariots and attack the Greeks. I will go ahead of you and help you to drive the Greeks back.”

This was good news for Hector, who recovered fully from his wound. He was like a well-fed stallion breaking free of a tether and racing to a river to cool off in its currents. The stallion is alive and proud. Hector was eager to kill and kill again.

The Greeks saw the Trojans coming. The Greeks turned around and ran. Imagine dogs and huntsmen going after a stag or mountain goat but a mountain lion appears and attacks. The dogs and huntsmen flee. The Greeks had been attacking the Trojans, but when they saw Hector they turned around and ran.

But the Greek Thoas — a good spearman and one of the best young debaters — did not run, and he tried to convince other Greeks not to run. He called to the Greeks, “Look! Hector is back when I thought that he had died — killed by Great Ajax! Once more, a god has saved Hector. Zeus must be his friend.

“Warriors, follow my advice. All of you who consider yourselves common soldiers, leave and go back to the ships and prepare to defend them. But the best of us will fight Hector! I don’t think that he can get past us.”

The Greeks’ best warriors knew that this was good advice. They gathered around Great Ajax, Idomeneus, Teucer, Meriones, and Meges. The common soldiers withdrew to the ships.

The Trojans charged. Hector led them, but out in front was the god Apollo bearing Zeus’ shield — a shield that caused panic in opposing warriors. Hephaestus had made it for Zeus, and now Apollo wielded its power.

The Greeks stood their ground. Both sides shouted cries of war, and arrows darkened the sky. Many arrows hit their targets, cutting deep into the bodies of warriors. Many other arrows landed in the ground.

As long as Apollo did not shake Zeus’ shield and instead held it steady, both sides fought well. But when Apollo shook Zeus’ shield and stared at the Greeks, they panicked and fled. They looked like herds of cattle or flocks of sheep that are fleeing carnivorous beasts that pursue them when the cowherd or shepherd is gone and they have no defense. Hector and his Trojans killed Greeks and gained *kleos*.

Hector killed Stichius and Menelaus’ friend Arcesilaus.

Aeneas killed Medon and Iasus. Medon had the same father as Little Ajax: Oileus. However, Medon had killed a relative who was related to King Oileus’ wife. Iasus fought with the Athenian warriors.

The Trojan Polydamas killed the Greek Mecisteus.

The Trojan Polites killed the Greek Echius.

The Trojan Agenor killed the Greek Clonius.

Paris, illicit husband of Helen, killed the Greek Deiochus. Paris speared him in the shoulder as Deiochus fled; the spear exited Deiochus’ body through the chest.

The Trojans tore off the bloody armor from Greek corpses as the Greeks fled past the trench and inside the wall.

Hector shouted, “Leave the armor! Storm the ships! I will kill anyone who does not fight! His corpse will not be buried! The dogs and birds will eat it!”

Hector charged in his chariot, shouting a cry of war. The Trojans yelled with the joy of war and of killing, charging in the chariots in a line with Hector’s chariot.

Apollo made their way smooth. He kicked and filled in the trench for a distance as long as a man can throw a spear when he is really trying, and then he knocked down the Greek wall as easily as if he were a boy who builds a sand castle and then knocks it down for fun. Trojans charged over the fallen wall.

The Greeks ran to the ships. They prayed to the gods. Nestor prayed most fervently: He stretched his arms up to the sky and prayed, “Zeus, if anyone in Argos sacrificed to you and you accepted the sacrifice and promised us a safe return home, please remember your promise now! Don’t let us die here!”

Zeus heard Nestor’s prayer, and in reply he cracked thunder across the sky. The Trojans heard the thunder. Thinking that it was a favorable omen for them, they attacked more fiercely.

Imagine a huge wave crashing over the sides of a ship — that is how the Trojans charged over the fallen wall. The Trojans fought from chariots, but the Greeks fought from the decks of ships. The Trojans threw spears. The Greeks used long pikes to keep the Trojans from the ships. The pikes were normally used in sea battles.

As the armies fought, Patroclus heard them as he sat with the wounded Eurypylus, talking to him and treating his injuries with pain-killing drugs. Hearing the Trojans so close to the ships, he slapped his thighs hard and said, “Eurypylus, I need to leave now even though you need my help. I hear the sounds of fighting at the ships. An aide can help you; I need to rush to Achilles and try to convince him to fight. If a god helps me, I may be able to persuade him. I am his friend; he may listen to me.”

Patroclus left the shelter of Eurypylus and started running.

The Greeks were keeping the Trojans away from the ships, but they were not able to force the Trojans back. The line of battle between the two armies was taut like a chalk-line used to mark the timber of a ship. The two armies were evenly matched in fighting prowess now as the Greeks fought to save the ships and the Trojans fought to destroy the ships. Desperation gave the Greeks strength, and hope gave the Trojans strength.

Hector and Great Ajax were fighting over the same ship. Hector could not set it on fire; Great Ajax could not drive Hector away — Apollo was helping Hector. The Trojan Caletor brought fire to the ship, but Great Ajax speared him in the chest and Caletor fell dead at Hector’s feet.

Hector shouted to the Trojans, “Keep fighting! Rescue Caletor’s corpse before the Greeks can strip the armor. Caletor has fallen!”

Hector threw his spear at Great Ajax. He missed Great Ajax but hit Lycophron, who had killed a man in his homeland and had moved to Great Ajax’ land. Hector’s spear cut through Lycophron’s skull above the ear. Lycophron fell from the ship and his back hit the ground.

Great Ajax yelled, “Teucer, our friend is dead. We all lived in the same halls. We respected him. Are you ready to avenge his death?”

Teucer ran to Great Ajax’ side and fired off an arrow that hit Clitus, the charioteer of Polydamas. Clitus was struggling with the horses, trying hard to charge the Greeks and follow the orders of Hector, but Clitus met his fate. Teucer’s arrow hit him in the back of the neck, and he fell, leaving the chariot empty, but Polydamas caught the horses and gave the reins to Astynous, ordering him, “Keep the chariot nearby!” Then Polydamas returned to the battle for the ships.

Teucer readied himself to shoot an arrow at Hector. He saw an opening to a mortal spot, but Zeus was watching and caused the string of Teucer’s bow to break. The arrow went wide of the mark.

Teucer complained to Great Ajax, “A god must be helping the Trojans. A god has snapped the string of my bow — a new string that I fastened to my bow this morning so I could fill the

sky with arrows.”

Great Ajax said, “Set aside your bow and arrows since a god will not allow you to fight with them. Fight with a spear and a shield. We will not allow the Trojans to easily set fire to the ships.”

Teucer threw his bow in back of the battle line and armed himself with a shield, helmet, and spear. He stood by Great Ajax.

Hector had seen Teucer’s bowstring break. He shouted, “Trojans, fight on! Zeus is on our side. He has ruined the bowstring of the Greeks’ best archer. Zeus is giving us *kleos*; he is giving the Greeks defeat. Everybody, fight! We are fighting for Troy and our loved ones! There is no dishonor in fighting and even dying to keep a wife and sons safe!”

Great Ajax also shouted encouragement to his fellow Greeks, “Do you want Hector and the Trojans to set fire to the ships? Listen to him shout! He is inviting the Trojans to a battle, not to a dance! Let us fight up close and face-to-face. How we fight now determines whether we live or die!”

Hector killed Schedius.

Great Ajax killed Laodamas.

The Trojan Polydamas killed Otus, one of Meges’ friends.

Meges saw Otus die, and he quickly tried to kill Polydamas, but Apollo protected the Trojan and Meges missed. But Meges did stab Croesmus in the chest.

As Meges was stripping off Croesmus’ armor, the Trojan Dolops tried to kill him. Dolops was strong, and his spear went through Meges’ shield, but Meges’ breastplate saved his life. Euphetes had hosted Dolops’ father and had given him the breastplate that Dolops wore to war.

Meges cut at Dolops’ helmet, which fell to the ground, but Dolops did not retreat. Menelaus speared Dolops — the spear went into the back of Dolops’ shoulder and came out his chest. He fell facedown, and the two armies scrambled to strip off his armor.

Hector rallied his Trojans, especially Melanippus, a cousin of Dolops. Melanippus used to graze sheep at a distance from Troy, but when Greek ships and war arrived, he returned to Troy to fight. Priam respected him.

Hector shouted, “Melanippus! Your cousin is dead! Let’s kill the Greeks and avenge his death!”

Great Ajax also rallied his Greeks: “Be warriors! Make a reputation for yourselves! What will people say about you after this battle? Dread being called a coward! Be a hero instead! Win *kleos*!”

Great Ajax fired up the Greeks, and Zeus fired up the Trojans.

Menelaus saw Antilochus, the swift son of Nestor and challenged him, “Among the younger warriors, you are the fastest and you fight fiercely! Show us what kind of fighting skill you’ve got!”

Antilochus moved forward and hurled his spear. The Trojans tried to dodge the spear, but it hit Melanippus in the chest. He fell, and Antilochus rushed toward him like a dog jumping on a deer that a hunter has just wounded.

Hector saw Antilochus and rushed toward him. Antilochus saw Hector and turned and ran. Antilochus was like a wild beast that has killed a dog or a herdsman and runs away before groups of men are able to hunt him. Hector and the Trojans tried to kill Antilochus, but he made it safely back to his fellow Greek warriors.

The Trojans stormed the Greek ships. Zeus wanted to give Hector *kleos*, and so he gave him courage. Zeus wanted Hector to set on fire a Greek ship. The burning of a ship would fulfill Zeus’ promise to Thetis: It would show the Greeks how much they needed Achilles, who would soon fight and push the Trojans away from the ships and back to Troy.

Hector was wild to set the ships on fire. His eyes burned, and his mouth foamed. He was like a flash fire that consumes everything in its path. Zeus glorified Hector, whose life would soon end — Achilles would send him to the Land of the Dead.

But now Hector was killing Greeks. He fought where the greatest number of Greek warriors wearing fine armor fought — he wanted to kill the best of the Greeks. But despite his anger, he could not smash through their line. They were like a stone wall or a granite cliff. Storms and waves assault the granite cliff, but it does not move. Still, Hector charged at their mass like a huge wave storming at a ship. The huge wave — driven by a hurricane — crashes over the ship and the sailors are afraid.

The Greek warriors feared Hector as he charged again. He was like a lion killing sheep and cattle. A lone inexperienced herdsman cannot keep the lion from slaughtering the animals. All he can do is to herd the living animals away as the lion feasts on meat. The Greeks fled. Zeus and Hector made them flee, even though Hector killed only one Greek: Periphetes. His father was Copreus, a herald of Eurystheus. Copreus, following orders, summoned Heracles again and again to perform one of his famous twelve labors. Copreus was an ignoble father, and he had a noble but unlucky son. Turning to flee, Periphetes tripped on his shield and fell to the ground. Hector rushed up to him and speared him in the chest. The other Greeks saw him die — they were unable to prevent his death. They dreaded facing Hector.

The Greeks were now at the ships, and the Trojans were driving them back from the first row of ships lined up away from the shore. The Greeks had no choice but to retreat a little way, but they regrouped at the tents. Discipline made them take a stand, as did the thought of what would happen to them if the ships were set on fire.

Nestor pleaded with the Greeks to fight: “What do you want people to say about you after this battle is over? That you were a coward? Or that you were a hero? Remember that you have parents and other loved ones who will hear stories about you. Fight! Don’t run! Win *kleos*!”

The Greeks listened to Nestor. Athena cleared away the dust that had arisen from the fighting. The Greeks and the Trojans could clearly see each other on the battle lines. Each side knew the army it was fighting. Each side knew that this was an opportunity to earn *kleos*. All the Greek warriors clearly saw Hector and his Trojans — those fighting in the front lines and those who were the Trojan reserves.

Great Ajax fought as well as he had ever fought. He wanted to be where the fighting was most fierce. He jumped from the deck of one ship to the deck of another, stabbing Trojans with his long pike. He was like a skilled rider who yokes together four horses and races them while he jumps from one horse’s back to another horse’s back and another’s. The crowd watches, not believing that such skill can exist. Great Ajax jumped from deck to deck — fighting, and shouting to encourage the Greeks to hold off the Trojans.

Hector was like an eagle swooping down on flocks of geese, cranes, or swans. Hector swooped at a ship of war, and Zeus urged him on.

Again, troops battled at the ships. They fought so fiercely that it seemed as if all the troops were fresh. The Greeks were afraid that this was their day to die. The Trojans were hopeful that this was their day to win the war — they wanted to burn Greek ships and kill Greek warriors.

Finally, Hector achieved a moment that he had wanted ever since the Greeks came to Troy. He reached a ship. It had brought Protesilaus to Troy, but it would not take him home to Greece. Warriors fought at close range now: face-to-face. Their weapons were hatchets, battle-axes, swords, and short spears — not arrows and long spears for throwing. The weapons and blood of fallen warriors covered the ground. Hector held onto the ship and screamed, “Bring fire! This day makes up for all the other days. The Greeks came here to make war on us. I

wanted to fight, but Troy's elders insisted on trying to wait out a siege. Zeus helped the Greeks then, but Zeus is helping us now!"

Inspired by Hector, the Trojans fought more fiercely, and even forced back Great Ajax — Trojan weapons forced him to back up slow inch by slow inch, all unwillingly. He moved to a bridge erected between two ships and continued to spear Trojans with his pike. He shouted to his fellow Greeks, "Fight with fury! We are all the warriors we have! We have no warriors in reserve! We have nowhere to retreat! The sea is in back of us, the Trojans are in front of us, and the best and only thing we can do is fight!"

With each breath, Great Ajax speared a Trojan bringing fire to Hector. Great Ajax stabbed twelve Trojans.

Looking down at the battlefield, Zeus thought, *The warriors whom Great Ajax just killed were fated to die on this day. The same is true of all the other warriors who have died or will die today. Each mortal human being is given a certain amount of life. Each mortal human being is given a certain moira — share or portion or lot — of life. Each mortal human being has a fate.*

Fate is what is bound to happen. Fate is what we gods know was bound to happen. Mortals do not have that foreknowledge. When a warrior is hit in a mortal place with a weapon, only then does the warrior know that he was fated to die on that day.

The fate of warriors varies. Many warriors will die on the battlefield, but many warriors will survive. Some Greek warriors will return home and live a long life. Gods know the fate of mortals, but mortals almost always do not know their fate unless they receive help from a prophet or a god.

Achilles is unusual both in that he has two fates — almost all mortals have only one fate — and in that he knows that he has two fates. Very few mortals know when they are fated to die.

We gods and goddesses have unusual abilities, of course. We know the fates of human beings in advance. Thetis knows that Achilles, her son, has two fates. I know that Sarpedon is fated to die in this battle. I also know that Patroclus will kill Sarpedon, Hector — with help — will kill Patroclus, and Achilles will kill Hector.

Cities also have fates. Troy is fated to fall in the tenth year of the war.

Fate can be malleable. We gods can make things happen that may seem to go against fate. Troy is fated to fall, yet I can make the Trojans be victorious for a while. But Troy will still fall in the tenth year of the war.

I, Zeus, am powerful. Am I powerful enough to keep my son, Sarpedon, alive although he is fated to die on this day? I don't know. I want my son to live, and I am tempted to allow my son to keep living past the day he is fated to die, but I don't know what the consequences would be if I did that. Would going against fate create terrible consequences in the universe — consequences that even I would not be able to control? Almost certainly. Tempted though I am to allow Sarpedon to continue to live past this day, and despite the grief that I feel now and will feel again when he dies, it is best that I allow my son to die.

CHAPTER 16: Patroclus Fights and Dies

As Greeks and Trojans fought and killed each other, Patroclus reached Achilles' camp. Patroclus was crying, and his tears ran down his face like water runs down the face of a rock.

Achilles saw him coming, and he saw his tears. He said gently to his best friend, "Why are you crying, Patroclus? You are crying like a young girl holding on to her mother's skirts and begging to be picked up. The young girl looks up pleadingly at her busy mother, who picks her up. Your tears remind me of the tears of a little girl like that.

"But why are you crying? Do you have a message for our warriors or for me? Do you have a message from home? The last I heard, your father and my father were still alive. If our fathers have died, then we should cry.

"Or are you crying because the Trojans are defeating the Greeks? The Greeks are dying against their ships because Agamemnon insulted me.

"Please tell me why you are crying. Don't keep the reason a secret from me."

Patroclus groaned and answered, "Achilles, please don't be angry at me! The Greeks are being hit hard! Many of our champions are wounded and unable to fight! Diomedes, Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Eurypylos have all been wounded. Healers are trying to help them, but these warriors cannot fight.

"Achilles, I hope that I never grow as angry as you! You have courage and fighting ability, but you are not using them to defend the troops. Peleus must not be your father! Thetis must not be your mother! No, your parents must be the ocean and rocks.

"Are you worried about a prophecy? Are you worried about something that Thetis said that Zeus told her? So be it. But at least send me into battle wearing your armor. That way the Trojans will think that I am you, Achilles, and that will give the Greek warriors a chance to regroup. Our Myrmidons are fresh and ready to fight. The Trojans have been fighting hard and are exhausted. The Myrmidons and I can fight these Trojans and force them away from the ships!"

Patroclus did not know it, but he was pleading to go to his own death.

Achilles replied, "No, Patroclus, I am not worried about any prophecy. I am not worried about anything that my mother has said to me. But I am still angry at the way that Agamemnon treated me. I am the greatest Greek warrior, and yet he took my prize of honor — Briseis — away from me. To earn Briseis, I conquered an entire city. The Greeks awarded her to me. Agamemnon treated me like a beggar, not like an honored warrior!

"I cannot be angry forever. However, I said that I would not fight until the Trojans reached my own camp, my own ships. But I do not want all the Greeks to die. So put on my armor and fight with our Myrmidons! The Trojans are triumphant and have fought the Greek warriors back into this little strip of land where we have our camps and our ships. Why? Because I am not fighting. The Trojans do not see my distinctive armor and so they are not afraid. If they were to see my armor, they would flee.

"If Agamemnon were to come to me now with a real apology and not just a bribe, I would return to battle. Maybe he will do that later, after you have saved the Greeks and their ships.

"I hear the Trojans fighting at our camps. I do not hear the battle cries of Diomedes or hated Agamemnon. All I can hear is Hector urging his troops on to fight. All I can hear are the triumphant cries of Trojans. They are routing the Greeks.

"So fight, Patroclus, and save the Greeks. Fight the Trojans away from our camps and ships. Fight the Trojans before they set fire to all the ships.

"Listen, Patroclus, and remember. Fight hard. By doing so, you will win *kleos* for yourself and for me. If you fight hard and save the Greeks, I think that Agamemnon will give me a real

apology, Briseis, and treasure. But after you have forced the Trojans away from the camps and ships, stop fighting. Come back to my camp. Even if Zeus and Hera are allowing you to win great *kleos*, do not fight the Trojans on the plain in front of Troy. Leave that for me to do later.

“Remember, Patroclus, do not take the battle back to Troy. If you were to fight on the plain, Apollo, who respects the Trojans, may decide to fight you.

“Again, Patroclus, listen and remember: Once you have forced the Trojans away from the Greek camps and ships, return to my camp. Don’t continue to fight. Let the other warriors die on the plain.

“I wish that the Trojan warriors and the Greek warriors could all die fighting, and then you and I could conquer Troy all by ourselves!”

Great Ajax was still fighting magnificently, but he was exhausted. The Trojans were forcing him back. His left arm ached from holding up his shield. Trojan weapons kept hitting his helmet and shield. He breathed hard, gasping for breath, and sweat streamed down his body. Everywhere he looked, he saw enemy warriors.

Muses, sing to me how fire came to the Greek ships!

Hector battled Great Ajax and cut off the head of his spear. Suddenly, Great Ajax was holding a useless stick, not a deadly weapon. Great Ajax knew that Zeus was now on the side of the Trojans and was bringing them victory.

Great Ajax was forced to retreat — without a spear, he had no other choice.

The Trojans flung fire on a ship, and smoke filled the air.

Achilles saw the smoke. He slapped his thighs hard and ordered Patroclus, “Get ready for battle. At least one ship is on fire. The Trojans must *not* burn all the ships. The Greeks will have no way to escape the enemy. Put on my armor, and I will encourage the Myrmidons to fight well.”

Patroclus put on the armor of Achilles: greaves to protect his legs, breastplate, sword, shield, and helmet. He took two spears, but neither belonged to Achilles. Achilles’ spear was so big and heavy that only Achilles could use it well in battle. The Centaur Chiron had given it to Peleus, Achilles’ father. Its purpose was to kill warriors.

Patroclus ordered Automedon, the charioteer of Achilles, to yoke Achilles’ horses to the chariot. Automedon yoked Roan Beauty and Dapple to the chariot. Bold Dancer served as the trace horse. Achilles won the purebred Bold Dancer when he conquered King Eetion’s city.

Achilles gathered the Myrmidons together. They were armed and ready for battle. They were as hungry to fight and kill Trojans as wolves are hungry to hunt in a pack and rip apart their prey and eat the raw meat as their jaws drip with blood.

Achilles had brought fifty ships to Troy. Each ship carried fifty warriors. Five commanders led his troops into battle.

Menesthus led the first battalion. He was the son of the god of the river Spercheus — the river-god had slept with the mortal Polydora. But people called Menesthus the son of a mortal man, Boris, who had given Polydora many gifts and had married her.

Eudorus led the second battalion. Like Menesthus, he was born to an unmarried mother and he had an immortal father. Hermes lusted for Polymela after seeing her dancing and singing to the immortal Artemis, goddess of the hunt. Hermes climbed up to her bedchamber one night and slept with her, and she gave birth to Eudorus, a good leader and warrior. As soon as Eudorus was born, the mortal Echeclus led Polymela to his home and married her.

Pisander led the third battalion. He fought well with spears — better than any Myrmidon except Patroclus and Achilles.

Phoenix, Achilles’ old friend and father figure, led the fourth battalion.

Alcimedon led the fifth and final battalion.

After all the battalions were assembled and ready to fight, Achilles commanded them, “Myrmidons, remember the threats you made against the Trojans while I was angry and kept you out of battle! You blamed me. You complained, ‘Achilles is merciless. He forces his warriors not to fight. We might as well go home in our ships since Achilles feels such anger!’ You warriors denounced my anger and me! You have no need to complain now. You are going back into battle. Fight the Trojans away from the Greek camps and ships!”

The Myrmidon warriors moved closer together in tight fighting formation. They were as close as the stones in a well-built wall built for a house that can resist strong winds. And now Patroclus and Automedon came and stood in front of them, eager to fight in the vanguard — in the front lines!

Achilles went to his shelter and opened a chest that contained war-shirts and cloaks and rugs. It also contained his drinking cup — the one that he used to pour libations of wine to Zeus, the king of gods and men. He purified his drinking cup with sulphur and then rinsed it with water. He washed his hands and poured wine into his drinking cup.

Achilles poured out the wine as a sacrifice to Zeus and prayed, “You heard my earlier prayer and answered it. You made the Trojans triumphant. Once more, please listen to my prayer and answer it. I will not fight now, but I am sending my best friend, Patroclus, into battle with my Myrmidons. Give him so much courage and fighting ability that Hector will know that Patroclus is a mighty warrior in his own right and does not need me by his side to protect him. Give him *kleos*. Allow him to fight the Trojans away from the Greek camps and ships. But once he has done that, allow him to come back to my camp safely with my armor and with the Myrmidons!”

Zeus heard Achilles’ prayers, but he would grant only one of the two requests. Yes, Patroclus would drive the Trojans away from the Greek camps and ships. No, Patroclus would not safely return to Achilles’ camp.

Achilles stored the cup in his chest and then returned to watch Patroclus and the Myrmidons go into battle.

Patroclus and the Myrmidons swarmed into battle like wasps that have been angered by idiot boys who make travel on a road dangerous by torturing wasps and making them all too eager to fight for their home and for their young.

Patroclus shouted to the Myrmidons, “Be warriors and fight! Win *kleos* for Achilles. Achilles is the greatest Greek warrior, and we are the greatest Greek troops. We must fight well so that Agamemnon realizes how much he needs Achilles and us!”

The Trojans saw Achilles’ distinctive armor and his charioteer, and they thought that Achilles had returned to battle. They thought that Achilles had put aside his anger and was now fighting for the Greeks. The Trojans looked around — what would be a good escape route?

Patroclus made the first kill. He hurled his spear at the Trojans and their allies around the burning ship and hit the shoulder of Pyraechmes, the leader of the Paeonians. Pyraechmes fell, and his Paeonians panicked. Patroclus drove them away from the burning ship. The Greeks battered back the Trojans.

The Greeks were rallying. Zeus sometimes moves a storm cloud away from the top of a mountain, and suddenly the mountain peaks can be seen in the bright air. Much like that, the Greek warriors suddenly could be seen as they battered back the Trojans.

But the Trojans were not being routed. They had been forced away from the ships, but they stood and held their ground. The fierce fighting continued.

Patroclus saw Areilycus moving, and he speared him in the hip. The spear broke bone and came out through his body. Areilycus fell on his face.

Menelaus speared Thoas in the chest over his shield.

The Trojan Amphiclus tried to kill Meges, but Meges speared him at the top of his thickly muscled thigh. The spear tore through the muscles, and Amphiclus died.

Now the sons of Nestor gained glory! Two brothers killed two brothers!

Antilochus speared the Trojan Atymnius in the side and through his body. Atymnius fell at the feet of Antilochus.

Enraged at the death of Atymnius, his brother, the Trojan Maris charged forward and stood over his brother's corpse. Maris wanted to kill Antilochus, but Thrasymedes, Antilochus' brother, stabbed Maris in the shoulder. His spear cut through the tendons and the socket and tore off Maris' entire arm. Atymnius and Maris were the sons of Amisodarus, who had bred the Chimaera, which was a lion in the front, a snake in the rear, and a goat in between. The Chimaera had killed many men, and now Antilochus and Thrasymedes had killed the sons of the man who had bred the Chimaera.

Little Ajax ran at Cleobulus and could have taken him alive but instead plunged his sword in Cleobulus' neck and through his neckbone.

The Greek Peneleos and the Trojan Lycon hurled spears at each other and missed, and so now they fought with swords. Lycon chopped off the horsehair crest of Peneleos' helmet, but Peneleos' sword entered Lycon's neck through the ear. Lycon's head drooped as he fell, but some skin still connected his head to his body.

Meriones ran at the Trojan Acamas as he mounted his chariot. Meriones stabbed him through the right shoulder.

Idomeneus speared Erymas in his mouth. His skull split, his teeth shattered, and blood gushed from his nose and mouth as he died.

Wolves will harry a flock and kill sheep and lambs when a careless shepherd gives them the opportunity. Much like that, the Greek warriors killed Trojans, who were losing their lust for battle.

Great Ajax, newly rearmed with a spear, wanted to kill Hector, but Hector was an experienced warrior who was always alert for spears and arrows. Hector knew that the Greeks had the momentum, but he defended his warriors.

But the Greeks could not be stopped. Their battle cries filled the air. The Greeks were like a storm cloud that Zeus uses to bring cyclones. The Trojans retreated past the Greek wall and into the trench. Hector's horses carried him away as the Trojans struggled in the trench. In the confusion, chariots crashed.

Patroclus charged the Trojans and shouted, "Kill them all!"

The Trojan line broke, dust rose in the air, and the Trojans retreated. Horses galloped away from the Greek camps and ships. Trojans fell from and were run over by their own chariots.

Patroclus charged wherever he saw the greatest number of Trojan warriors. The immortal horses of Achilles kept him safe, and Patroclus sought Hector, but Hector's horses kept him away from Patroclus.

Zeus can grow angry at evil men who lie in assemblies. He sends rains to flood and wash away the land that men have plowed. The floodwaters scream as they rush down to the sea. Much like that, the Trojan horses screamed.

Patroclus drove to the front of the Trojans running to Troy and then he turned, wanting to stop them from reaching Troy. He wanted to slaughter them on the plain between the ships and the city. He killed and killed again, avenging the many Greeks whom the Trojans had killed in the battle at the ships.

The shield of the Trojan Pronous did not protect part of his chest — Patroclus speared him there.

The Trojan Thestor was crouching, terrified in his chariot. He dropped the reins. Patroclus speared him in the right jawbone between his teeth. The spearhead stopped in Thestor's head, and Patroclus lifted him out of the chariot just like a fisherman lifts a fish out of the sea. Patroclus dropped Thoas' body facedown on the battlefield.

Patroclus killed, and he killed quickly. He made corpses out of Amphoterus, Erymas, Epaltes, Tlepolemus, Echius, Pyris, Ipheus, Euippus, and Polymeus. The corpses lay on the earth that nourishes us all.

Sarpedon saw Patroclus killing so many warriors. He shouted to his Lycian warriors, "Where is your joy of war? Why are you running away? Attack! I will fight this warrior myself. We have seen him clearly enough that we know he is not Achilles although he is wearing Achilles' armor. I will find out who this warrior is — he is routing our troops!"

Sarpedon and Patroclus jumped from their chariots and charged each other and shouted war cries. They were like two vultures that swoop and attack each other.

Zeus watched from Mount Olympus and pitied his son, Sarpedon, whose fate had arrived. Zeus said to Hera, his wife, "Sarpedon is the mortal son I love the most. He is fated now to die at the hands of Patroclus. I don't know what to do. Should I pick him up and put him — alive — in his home country of Lycia? Or should I allow Patroclus to kill him, as is fated?"

Hera protested, "Sarpedon is a mortal man, and his fate was set when he was born. He is fated to die here — now. Do you wish to keep a mortal man from dying? If you save Sarpedon, the other gods and goddesses will want to save their sons. Many warriors battling in front of Troy have an immortal god or goddess for a parent. Do you think the result will be good?"

"I have a better idea. Allow Sarpedon to die as fated. Allow Patroclus to kill your son. After Sarpedon has died, send the immortals Death and Sleep to pick his corpse up and carry it to Lycia, where he can be properly buried so his *psyche* can enter the Land of the Dead. That is an honor that the dead deserve."

Zeus agreed to do as Hera wished, but he cried tears — not of water, but of blood — that wet the ground.

Patroclus and Sarpedon came close to each other, and Patroclus hurled his spear. He missed Sarpedon, but he killed Thrasymedes, Sarpedon's charioteer. His spear spilled Thrasymedes' intestines.

Sarpedon hurled his spear, missing Patroclus but hitting Bold Dancer, Achilles' mortal trace horse, in the shoulder. The horse fell, screaming, and died. Achilles' two immortal horses reared. Automedon quickly drew his sword and cut the dead horse free, and then he was able to control the chariot and two immortal horses again.

Sarpedon hurled his second spear, but it harmlessly passed over Patroclus' left shoulder.

Patroclus then hurled his second spear and struck Sarpedon between the midriff and the heart. Sarpedon fell the way that an oak or an elm falls that shipwrights have cut for lumber. Sarpedon fell in front of his chariot and horses. He clawed the ground and bellowed like a bull that a lion is killing. As Sarpedon died, he shouted, "Glaucus, be a leader and a warrior. Find the Lycians and protect my body. Get possession of it so that I may receive a proper funeral and my *psyche* can enter the Land of the Dead. Don't let the Greeks strip my armor. You will be ashamed whenever you remember that. Fight to get my corpse!"

Patroclus put one of his feet on Sarpedon's corpse and pulled out his spear. As he pulled out his spear, he pulled out Sarpedon's inner organs. Sarpedon's last breath and his inner organs exited his body together. The Myrmidons held on to Sarpedon's horses that were now straining to run away.

Glaucus had heard Sarpedon's last request, but Glaucus was wounded — Teucer had shot Glaucus' right arm with an arrow when Glaucus was fighting at the Greek wall.

Glaucus prayed, “Hear me, Apollo. Wherever you are, you can hear a prayer to you, especially one that comes from a man who is in pain. My right arm has an ugly wound. My entire arm throbs with pain. The blood keeps running, and I can’t use my shoulder or arm. I can’t pick up and use a spear. I can’t even hold a spear steady. I can’t fight, and the Lycians’ best warrior — Sarpedon — is dead. Sarpedon was Zeus’ son, and Zeus did not keep him alive!

“Help me, Apollo. Heal my wound. Stop the pain. Make me able to fight again. I want to rally the Lycians and get possession of the corpse of Sarpedon.”

Apollo heard and answered Glaucus’ prayer. The pain stopped. The blood clotted. Glaucus could use his arm and shoulder. He was ready to go to battle. He was grateful that Apollo had quickly answered his prayer.

Glaucus gathered the Lycians together, and then he ran for the Trojan lines and Hector. He found Polydamas, Agenor, Aeneas, and Hector, and he said, “Hector, have you forgotten your allies? We have come to Troy to fight for you far from our homes. We bleed and die here. But we need you to fight, too. Sarpedon is dead. I was close enough to recognize the warrior who killed him. He was Patroclus, who is wearing Achilles’ armor. Fight to get Sarpedon’s corpse! Don’t let the Greeks strip his armor! Don’t let the Greeks mutilate his corpse! The Myrmidons would gladly do that to get revenge for all the Greek warriors we killed as we attacked their ships!”

The Trojans grieved for Sarpedon, who had been a formidable warrior for their city. Hector drove them at the Greeks, and Patroclus rallied his troops. He yelled, “Great Ajax! Little Ajax! Fight! Sarpedon is dead — he was the first to tear down part of our defensive wall. Let’s get his corpse and tear off his armor! And let’s kill anyone who tries to stop us!”

Trojans and Greeks now fought around the body of Sarpedon. They shouted cries of war, and Zeus spread darkness around the corpse of his son Sarpedon to make the fighting more difficult.

The Trojans killed the first warrior in the battle over Sarpedon’s body. The Myrmidon Epigeus had ruled a city, but he killed a kinsman and fled for his life. He went to Peleus and Thetis and begged for help. They sent him to the Trojan War with Achilles. As Epigeus grabbed Sarpedon’s body, Hector hit him with a rock and split his skull in his helmet.

Grieving for Epigeus, Patroclus drove straight at the enemy army like a hawk diving at crows and starlings. Patroclus threw a rock and hit Sthenelaus in the neck, snapping the tendons that hold the head up.

Hector and the Trojans retreated a short distance — the distance of a spear toss in a game of strength or in battle. Glaucus was the first to turn back to fight the Greeks. Bathycles was about to catch up to Glaucus when Glaucus suddenly turned and speared him in the chest. A brave Greek died. Bad news for the Greeks. Good news for the Trojans.

Trojans and Greeks swarmed over Sarpedon’s body.

Meriones speared Laogonus under his jaw and ear. Laogonus’ *psyche* left his corpse.

Aeneas hurled his spear at Meriones, but Meriones saw the spear and ducked. Aeneas’ spear stuck in the ground and quivered. Aeneas shouted, “Meriones, you should be dead! I barely missed you!”

Meriones replied, “Aeneas, you are a good warrior, but you can’t kill everyone you would like to kill. Like me, you are mortal. If I were to spear you in the intestines, I would win *kleos* and you would earn a trip to the Land of the Dead.”

Patroclus said to Meriones, “Why waste time with threats? They won’t force the Trojans away from Sarpedon’s body. The only thing that will do that is a fight with many deaths. Don’t talk! Fight!”

The sound of weapons hitting shields and bodies was as loud as the sound of men cutting trees on a mountain. The woodsmen's axes can be heard far away, and so could the warriors' swords and spears.

Fallen weapons, blood, and dust hid Sarpedon's body. Not even a scout with sharp eyes could see him clearly. But the warriors kept fighting over the corpse — they were like flies buzzing over a milk-filled bucket.

Zeus kept watching the battle over the corpse of his son. He was thinking of the best way for Patroclus to meet his fate. He would die, yes, but how? Should he die in the battle over the corpse of Sarpedon? Should Hector kill Patroclus now and strip Achilles' armor off Patroclus' body? Or should Patroclus kill and kill again and earn more *kleos*?

Zeus decided to allow Patroclus to earn more *kleos*. Patroclus would drive Hector and the other Trojans back to Troy. Zeus created fear in Hector, and Hector jumped in his chariot and shouted, "Trojans, retreat!" Hector knew that Zeus was now favoring Patroclus and the Greeks.

With Zeus' aid, the Greeks routed the Trojans and the Lycians. Sarpedon, the Lycians' leader, was dead, and they were now afraid. Now the Greeks stripped the armor off Sarpedon's body. Patroclus gave it to aides to take to the ships.

Zeus ordered Apollo, "Get the corpse of my son, Sarpedon, and wipe the blood off him. Take him away from the battle. Bathe his corpse in a river, anoint him with oil, and dress him in fine robes. Then give Sarpedon's body to the immortals Sleep and Death to take home to Lycia. There his corpse will receive a proper funeral. This is an honor that the living owe the dead."

Apollo obeyed. He went to the battlefield and picked up Sarpedon's body. He wiped off the blood, bathed Sarpedon in a river, and dressed him in fine clothing. He then handed over the corpse to the immortals Sleep and Death, who took the corpse to Lycia.

Patroclus kept fighting. He ignored Achilles' order to return to the camp after he had forced the Trojans away from the ships. Zeus put the urge to fight in Patroclus.

Patroclus killed and killed again and won great *kleos*. He killed Adrestus, Autonus, Echeclus, Perimus, Epistor, Melanippus, Elasmus, Mulius, and Pylartes. The other Trojans fled.

Patroclus and the Greeks might have conquered Troy, but Apollo himself stood on the city's ramparts and fought off their attack. Three times Patroclus hurled himself against the city ramparts, and three times Apollo forced him back. The fourth time Patroclus began to hurl himself at Troy, Apollo shouted, "Patroclus, stop! Troy is not fated to fall before you! And it is not fated to fall before Achilles!"

Patroclus then backed away, respecting the god.

Hector thought about what he should do. Should he continue to fight? Should he call his army to go back inside the walls of Troy? Apollo assumed the form of the mortal Asius and said, "Hector, keep fighting out here! You are a mighty warrior. Challenge Patroclus. Apollo may help you to kill him!"

Hector ordered his charioteer, "Cebriones, let's go where the fighting is fiercest!"

Hector sought Patroclus, the most devastating Greek warrior now on the battlefield. Patroclus saw Hector, got off his chariot, and seized and hurled a rock. He threw it hard, and he hit Hector's charioteer. The rock hit Cebriones in between his eyes and crushed his skull. Cebriones' eyes hit the ground before the rest of his body did.

Patroclus taunted the corpse, "This man has great ability as a tumbler! He knows how to dive! He would do well at diving for oysters in the sea!"

Patroclus ran to the corpse of Cebriones as Hector leapt from his chariot and rushed toward Patroclus. The two warriors fought over the corpse the way that lions fight over a freshly killed

stag. Hector grabbed the corpse's head, and Patroclus grabbed one of the corpse's feet. They fought to gain possession of the corpse.

The East and South winds sometimes roar in a wooded mountain valley, and the branches of trees thrash against each other. Trees fall with a crash. Greeks and Trojans crashed against each other. Each side fought to defeat the other side; no warrior thought of fleeing. Around the corpse of Cebriones, arrows, spears, and rocks flew. Weapons struck shields. Cebriones lay dead; he was no longer a master horseman.

The fighting continued until and past noon, and then the Greeks mounted a fiercer offensive. They dragged the corpse of Cebriones away from the Trojans and stripped its armor.

Patroclus charged the Trojans three times, and each time he charged he killed nine warriors.

But the fourth time Patroclus charged, he met his fate.

Apollo came up behind Patroclus and hit him with the force of a god. Patroclus was stunned. Apollo knocked off Patroclus' helmet, broke his spear, knocked his shield to the ground, and ripped off his breastplate. Patroclus was vulnerable and exposed to the enemy warriors.

A young warrior named Euphorbus speared Patroclus in the back in between the shoulder blades. Although Euphorbus was young, he was a good warrior. This was his first battle in which chariots were used, and he had killed twenty charioteers.

Euphorbus wounded Patroclus, but he did not kill him. He pulled his spear out of Patroclus' body and ran back to the Trojan troops. Euphorbus would not finish off Patroclus, vulnerable as he was.

Hector saw the wounded Patroclus trying to stagger back to the Greek troops. Hector rushed forward and speared him in the intestines and the spear went through his body and out his back. Patroclus fell. A lion and a boar sometimes fight. The boar is fierce, but the lion kills him as the boar struggles to breathe. So Hector killed Patroclus.

Hector said, "Patroclus, you thought that you could conquer Troy. You thought that you could make slaves of the Trojan women and drag them to your ships and take them to Greece. Fool! The Trojans and I are fighting so that the Trojan women can continue to be free. I fight for them, but as for you, I will allow the vultures to eat your corpse!"

"Achilles must have given you this order: 'Don't return to my camp until after you have killed Hector.' You tried to obey the order, but you failed."

Struggling to breathe, Patroclus replied, "Victory is yours — today. You have defeated me, but Zeus and Apollo are the ones who killed me. Without the help of the gods, you and nineteen other Hectors would have all died at the end of my spear. Apollo and my fate killed me. The mortal Euphorbus helped. You are only the third of those who killed me, and you simply finished me off after I was already disarmed and wounded. I am a dying man, and I have the gift of prophecy. You do not have much longer to live. Death and your fate are swiftly coming for you. I see that you will die at the end of the spear of a great warrior — Achilles!"

Patroclus died, and his *psyche*, mourning the loss of life, went to the Land of the Dead.

Hector said, "Who can tell what the future will bring? Why are you trying to prophesy? Achilles may very well go down to the Land of the Dead before I do. Achilles may die at the end of my spear!"

Hector put his foot on Patroclus' chest and pulled out his spear. He then ran after the charioteer Automedon and tried to kill him, but Achilles' immortal horses kept Automedon out of danger and away from death.

CHAPTER 17: The Fight Over Patroclus' Corpse

Red-haired Menelaus saw that the Trojans had slain Patroclus. He ran to the corpse and stood over it to protect it like a mother cow protects her first-born calf. Menelaus stood over the corpse with his spear and his shield.

Euphorbus wanted the fruits of his kill, so he challenged Menelaus. Close to the corpse, he boasted to Menelaus, "I was the first Trojan to wound Patroclus. I speared him. Let me have the corpse to further my *kleos*. If not, I will kill you, also."

War-seasoned Menelaus replied, "Zeus, listen to this arrogant youngster! Listen to his boasts! The leopard, the lion, and the wild boar are all proud, but none is as proud as the sons of Panthous: Euphorbus and Hyperenor. Earlier, Hyperenor challenged me. He insulted me and said that I was the weakest of all the Greek warriors. I sent him home, but he did not go home alive. His homecoming brought no joy to his wife and his parents. And now you challenge me! Go back to the other Trojan troops. Stay safe. Challenge me, and I will give you a bloody death. I will give you a bloody education about whom you ought not to challenge."

Euphorbus did not retreat to the Trojan troops. He replied, "Menelaus, now you will pay for the life of my brother whom you killed. You boast about making his wife a widow. You boast about bringing grief to his and my parents. I can lessen their grief by bringing them gifts: your bloody head and your bloody armor. I will give them to my parents: Panthous and Phrontis. But let's stop talking. It's time to fight and see who will kill the other."

Euphorbus stabbed Menelaus' shield. The shield was stronger and bent the point of Euphorbus' weapon. Euphorbus retreated, and Menelaus pursued him and speared him in the throat. Menelaus put all his strength into the thrust of his spear. The spear went through Euphorbus' soft neck, and Euphorbus fell. He was a young man, and he paid attention to his hair, which he braided like the hair of the Graces. He decorated his hair with gold and silver clips. But his hair and clips were bloody now.

A farmer will tend a young olive tree on a hilltop. The farmer waters it carefully, and the young olive tree bursts into bloom. But a gale wind arises and rips it out of the earth, and it lies on the ground, fallen and dead. Euphorbus was like that young olive tree.

Menelaus had killed him, and now Menelaus stripped him of his armor.

Menelaus was like a powerful and dangerous mountain lion that sees a herd and picks out the best heifer. The mountain lion bites the heifer's neck and kills it and then begins eating the heifer. The dogs and shepherds make a lot of noise, but they are too afraid to attack the mountain lion.

The Trojans were afraid to challenge Menelaus as he stripped the armor from Euphorbus' corpse.

Apollo took the shape of the Trojan Mentor and challenged Hector, who was trying to capture Achilles' immortal horses. Disguised as a mortal man, Apollo said to Hector, "You have better things to do than chase Achilles' immortal horses. Only Achilles, whose mother is immortal, can control them. Menelaus is protecting Patroclus' corpse. He has killed Euphorbus!"

Hector surveyed the battlefield and saw Menelaus stripping the armor off Euphorbus' corpse, which was still spurting blood. Hector charged Menelaus and filled the air with a war cry. Menelaus heard Hector and said to himself, "What is the best thing for me to do? If I leave Euphorbus' armor and Patroclus' corpse, won't I be criticized? After all, Patroclus was fighting to help redeem the honor that Paris stole from me. But am I able to fight Hector and his Trojans by myself? They can circle me and kill me. I am one warrior against many. Be

Careful. Hector is having a day of glory; Zeus is helping him. If Zeus is helping Hector, the Greek warriors will forgive me for retreating.

“I need help to fight Hector. If I can find Great Ajax, he and I together could fight Hector and his Trojans. Then we could bring Patroclus’ corpse back to Achilles’ camp. This is a bad situation, and this course of action is the best that we can do in it.”

Hector and the Trojans kept charging toward Menelaus, and he retreated. He left behind Patroclus’ corpse, but he kept turning to look back to be ready to fight if necessary. He was like a lion that the dogs and farmhands force away from the farm. The lion does not want to leave, but the dogs and farmhands force it to.

Menelaus reached the other Greeks and looked for Great Ajax, who was fighting on the left flank. Great Ajax was trying to convince the other Greek warriors to fight fiercely — Apollo had made them afraid. Menelaus ran to him and said, “Friend, help me. Patroclus is dead. Help me to recover his body so that we may bring it to Achilles. Hector is now stripping Achilles’ armor from Patroclus’ body so we cannot bring the armor back to Achilles.”

Great Ajax went with Menelaus. Hector was eager to chop off Patroclus’ head and then drag the rest of the corpse to Troy to feed the dogs and birds. But Great Ajax charged him, and Hector threw Achilles’ armor to aides to take back to Troy. Hector retreated, and Great Ajax guarded Patroclus’ corpse. He was like a lion guarding its cubs when hunters see them. Menelaus stood beside Great Ajax.

Glaucus, who was now the leader of the troops from Lydia, said to Hector, “Where is your fighting fury? You need to start planning how to save Troy without the help of the Lycians. Why should we fight for you if you are going to allow the Greeks to let dogs and birds eat Sarpedon’s body? Sarpedon fought fiercely for Troy when he was alive. Now you are unwilling to fight for him and save his body from dogs and birds. If I can get the Lycians to obey my orders, we will leave Troy and return to Lycia. If only you could fight well enough to get Patroclus’ corpse and drag it to Troy, we could trade it for Sarpedon’s armor and corpse.”

Glaucus did not know that Apollo had taken Sarpedon’s body to Lycia. He thought that the Greeks had taken Sarpedon’s armor and body back to the Greek ships.

Glaucus continued, “Patroclus was a great warrior and Achilles’ great friend. The Greeks will definitely trade to get his body back. But you are afraid to fight Great Ajax. He is a better, stronger, fiercer warrior than you!”

Hector replied, “Glaucus, you are a good man and a good warrior, but you are speaking nonsense. I thought that you were more intelligent. I am not afraid to fight Great Ajax. But Zeus is more powerful than any mortal. Zeus can turn a brave man into a coward. Zeus can also make a brave man even braver. He both gives and takes away *kleos*. Watch me fight! See if I am a coward or if I can stop a Greek from trying to protect Patroclus’ corpse.”

Hector shouted to the Trojans, “Be ready to fight. I am going to put on the armor of Achilles — armor that I stripped from Patroclus’ corpse!”

He ran after the aides who were taking Achilles’ armor to Troy. Away from the fighting, Hector took off his own armor and put on Achilles’ armor. When Achilles’ father grew old, he gave this armor to Achilles, but Achilles would not grow old.

Zeus saw Hector putting on Achilles’ armor. He knew that Hector would soon die. Zeus said, “Poor Hector. You are not thinking of dying, but death is quickly coming for you. The armor you are putting on is that of a great warrior — a great warrior whose kind and gentle and strong friend you killed. You stripped Achilles’ armor from Achilles’ friend. I will give you strength and fierceness in battle to recompense you for your death that is soon to come. You will never return from battle alive, Hector. You will never give Achilles’ armor to your loving wife, Andromache.”

Zeus bowed his head. He changed Achilles' armor so that it fitted Hector well. Ares filled Hector with fighting fury. Hector motivated his men to fight well: Mesthles, Glaucus, Medon, Thersilochus, Asteropaeus, Disenor, Hippothous, Phorcys, Chromius, and the prophet Ennomus, who knew how to interpret bird-signs. Hector told them, "Listen to me, all of you allies. When I called on you to come to Troy and fight, it was not for show. I needed and need you to protect Trojan women and children. That is what I want. I tax the Trojans to give you gifts and food so that you will fight fiercely. So let us now fight the Greeks. Let us feel the joy of war. If anyone can force back Great Ajax and drag the dead Patroclus to our chariots to haul back to Troy, that warrior will get half of the spoils and he will get *kleos* that will be the equal of my own."

This reward was worth fighting for. The Trojans and Trojan allies attacked Great Ajax, hoping to get the body of Patroclus and drag it to Troy, but their hope was foolish. Great Ajax was a mighty warrior, and he had killed many men around the corpse of Patroclus. Still, Great Ajax said to Menelaus, "We are outnumbered. Theirs is a mighty force. I don't think that we can stay here, alone. I am afraid that Patroclus' corpse will feed dogs and birds inside the walls of Troy, and I am afraid that you and I will die here. Hector and his Trojans are covering the battlefield. Shout for help. I hope that someone will hear you."

Menelaus was known as the lord of the war cry. He shouted, "All Greek captains who fight for Agamemnon and me and drink our wine and command your own men, help us. I can't see where you are because of the dust kicked up by so many warriors, but come and save Patroclus' corpse. Don't let the Trojans feed it to the dogs and birds!"

Little Ajax heard him and ran to help. He arrived first, followed by Idomeneus and Idomeneus' second-in-command, Meriones. More captains followed them, but only the gods can name them all.

Hector charged the Greeks the way that surf charges into the mouth of a swollen river. The surf booms as it crashes against land. The Trojans charged the Greeks, but the Greeks were ready to fight them. They stood ready to fight in a circle around Patroclus' body holding their shields in front of them. Zeus created a heavy fog to help hide Patroclus' corpse. Zeus had not hated Patroclus when the mortal was alive, and Zeus did not want Trojan dogs to eat Patroclus' corpse.

The Trojans forced the Greeks to retreat and leave Patroclus' corpse behind although they did not kill any Greeks. Instead, they tried to drag away Patroclus' corpse. Great Ajax, the best warrior of the Greeks except for Achilles, led the Greeks as they attacked the Trojans. He fought in front like a wild boar that charges dogs and hunters and makes them run and pursues them. Now Great Ajax charged the Trojans and forced them to scatter although they wanted to drag Patroclus' body back to Troy.

The Trojan Hippothous had tied a shield strap around Patroclus' ankle. He was dragging the corpse away, hoping to win *kleos* and praise from Hector. Great Ajax charged Hippothous and speared him through his helmet, cracking the horsehair crest. Hippothous' brain burst out of his skull as he dropped Patroclus' foot. Hippothous' body fell onto Patroclus' body, face-to-face. Hippothous died far from Larissa, his home. The spear of Great Ajax prevented Hippothous from repaying his parents who had reared him. He died too young.

Hector hurled his spear at Great Ajax, but he dodged death and the spear hit Schedius, who was from Phocis. Hector's spear went through his collarbone and came out through his shoulder. He fell, and his armor rattled.

Great Ajax stabbed Phorcys, who was trying to protect the corpse of Hippothous. Great Ajax ripped open Phorcys' belly and his intestines fell out. Phorcys fell and clawed at the

ground. The Trojans backed away, and the Greeks dragged away the corpses of Hippothous and Phorcys and stripped off their armor.

The Trojan warriors were on the verge of running back to Troy, overcome by fear, and the Greeks would have seized great *kleos* because of their own great merit despite the will of Zeus. But Apollo took the form of the Trojan Periphas, the son of a herald to Aeneas' father. Disguised as a mortal, Apollo spurred Aeneas to fight fiercely: "Aeneas, no one can save himself when the gods are against him. But here and now Zeus is *for* you and the Trojans. Zeus wants the Trojans to triumph over the Greeks. So why are you and the other Trojans so afraid and so unwilling to fight?"

Aeneas looked at the god and recognized him, and then Aeneas shouted to the Trojans, "Hector! Trojan captains! Don't retreat to Troy! A god just told me that Zeus wants us to fight and win. So charge the Greeks! Don't let them take Patroclus' corpse back to the ships! Not without a fight!"

Aeneas went to the front of the Trojan line and the Trojans turned around and faced the Greeks. Aeneas speared Leocritus all the way through his body. Leocritus' friend Lycomedes grieved but hurled his spear and buried it in the liver of the Trojan ally Apisaon, the best of the warriors from Paeonia, except for Asteropaeus.

Asteropaeus wanted revenge, but the Greeks maintained a good defensive formation, protecting themselves with their shields, surrounding Patroclus' corpse, and defending it with their spears.

Great Ajax gave the Greeks orders: "Protect the corpse! Nobody try to be a hero! Stay in defensive formation, and don't jump in front of the line to try to make a kill. Stand shoulder to shoulder, and protect the corpse of Patroclus."

Warriors on both sides inflicted mortal wounds, and blood covered the ground. But the Trojans suffered many more deaths than the Greeks, who fought in tight formation. Greek warriors defended Greek warriors.

The battle around Patroclus was difficult to see because of the haze of dust kicked up by warriors and fog sent by Zeus, but other parts of the battlefield were clear, lit well by bright sunlight on a cloudless day. Some warriors fought from a distance, shooting arrows and dodging arrows. Others fought face-to-face and suffered as warriors hacked at opposing warriors.

Fighting in the front lines on one side of the battle, the Greeks Antilochus and Thrasymedes did not know that Patroclus had died. They thought that he was still alive and fighting in the front lines although Nestor had ordered them to keep watch and note who had died and whether any Greeks were retreating.

The fighting and the dying continued all day. The work of war did not stop.

Around the corpse of Patroclus, warriors sweated. In the fight to possess Patroclus' body, the warriors engaged in a tug of war. A tanner sometimes gives a huge bull's hide to his laborers, and they stretch it, pulling it as hard as they can. Much like that, Greeks and Trojans grabbed Patroclus' body and pulled. The Trojans hoped to bring the corpse to Troy. The Greeks hoped to bring the corpse to their ships and to Achilles. Ares, god of war, delighted in the struggle and the slaughter.

Achilles still did not know that the Trojans had killed Patroclus, whose death had occurred far from the ships and by the walls of Troy. Achilles believed that Patroclus was still alive and would return soon. Achilles thought, *Would Patroclus try to conquer Troy without my help?* No.

Achilles' mother, the goddess Thetis, had told him many things, but she had never told him directly that Patroclus would die without him nearby to protect him and keep him alive.

The fight continued over Patroclus' body, and a Greek shouted, "We can't return to our ships without Patroclus' body! We will lose *kleos*! It is better to die here and now than to let the Trojans take his corpse to Troy!" And a Trojan shouted, "Keep fighting even if you are fated to die beside the corpse of Patroclus!"

So they fought and kept fighting, but away from the fighting Achilles' immortal horses wept. Achilles' charioteer tried to get the horses to return to the ships, but they resisted. Sometimes, he whipped them. Sometimes, he tried to coax them with winning words. But they stayed and continued to mourn. Their heads hung low like the depictions of horses on a gravemarker. Achilles' immortal horses wept, grieving for the death of Patroclus and the coming death of Achilles.

Zeus saw the immortal horses, and he pitied them. He said, "Why did we give you to a mortal: Achilles' father, Peleus? He will die, but you horses are immortal and will never grow older or die. Did we want you to suffer? Did we want you to learn about the pain of mortals? Mortals suffer more than any other being on the earth. Almost all animals are mortal, but they do not know that they are mortal and do not think about their coming deaths. Gods are immortal and know that they will never die. Only human beings are mortal and know that they will die and think about their coming deaths. This makes mortals wretched. However, I will never allow Hector to capture you immortal horses and use you to pull his chariot. He has Achilles' armor. That is enough. Hector can boast now, but he will die soon. But I will give you immortal horses strength so that you can save the life of Automedon and take him back to the ships. I am giving the Trojans a day of glory. They will kill and kill again until they drive the Greeks back to their ships."

Odysseus was still wounded and unable to fight. Watching the battle from the ships, he thought, *The gods are born and they grow older until they reach a certain age and then they stop aging. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades are all mature men and they will never grow older. Apollo and Hermes are young men, and they will never grow older. Human beings can grow old. Human beings are mortal, and they can die at a young age or at an old age, but they will definitely die. Is this a bad thing? Not necessarily. Mortality makes our decisions important. We have only a very limited amount of time to live. Will we spend it wisely or foolishly? A god can waste thousands of years on trivial pursuits and still have eternity to do something important. Human beings can't. And who is a hero? A hero is someone who risks his life to save other people. Great Ajax is a hero. He fought magnificently to keep the Trojans from setting fire to our ships. He saved himself, true, but he saved the rest of us, too. Only a mortal can be a hero. A god in a good mood may go into a burning house and save someone, but the god is risking little. The god can't die. If the god is injured — or wounded in battle — the god will quickly heal. And saving someone will take only a little of the eternity of time that lies before the god. A mortal who tries to rescue someone from a burning building is risking everything: life. Mortality need not be a curse; mortality is what makes heroism possible.*

Zeus gave Achilles' immortal horses strength, and they galloped, taking Automedon with them. Automedon did his best to control the horses. They came close to the Trojans, but no spearman stood in the chariot, so no one could kill a Trojan.

Alcimedon shouted, "Automedon, what are you doing? These are poor battle tactics! You have no spearman! Patroclus is dead, and Hector is wearing Achilles' armor that Patroclus wore to battle!"

Automedon replied, "Alcimedon, you are a good charioteer. You are better at controlling these horses than anyone except Achilles and Patroclus. You take over and drive this team. I'll fight on foot."

Alcimedon climbed aboard the chariot, and Automedon jumped to the ground. Hector saw them and said to Aeneas, “I see Achilles’ team. They have drivers who cannot control them. You and I can capture them, if you work with me. These two Greeks can’t stand up to us.”

Hector and Aeneas, and their fellow Trojans Chromius and Aretus, moved to capture the horses and to kill Automedon and Alcimedon. But Automedon was alert. He shouted, “Alcimedon, keep the horses close to me. Hector hopes to kill both of us and take the horses. He is so implacable that he will do that or die in the attempt.”

Then Automedon called for help: “Great Ajax! Little Ajax! Menelaus! Let other warriors defend Patroclus’ body. Because of you three, we Greeks are still alive. Here come Aeneas and Hector — they are Troy’s best warriors! They are better warriors than I, but the gods may bless me as I hurl my spear.”

Automedon hurled his spear and hit Aretus’ shield. The shield broke, and the spear rammed through Aretus’ shield and war-belt and stuck in his stomach. A farmhand sometimes kills a bull for butchering. He swings an ax and hits the bull behind its horns. The bull rears up and then falls. Much like that, Aretus reared up and then fell on his back. The spear quivered in his intestines.

Hector hurled his spear at Automedon, who saw it coming and dodged death. Now Hector and Automedon would have fought with swords, but Great Ajax and Little Ajax arrived in answer to Automedon’s call for help, and the Trojans backed away. Hector, Aeneas, and Chromius left the dead Aretus behind. Automedon started to strip off Aretus’ armor, shouting, “I have made the *psyche* of Patroclus feel a little better although this dead warrior is only half the man that Patroclus was.”

Automedon then climbed into Achilles’ chariot. His hands and feet were dripping blood just like the paws of a lion that has killed and fed on a bull.

The fight for Patroclus’ body intensified. Zeus sent Athena to the battlefield to encourage the Greeks. He wanted the Greeks to rally — briefly — on the day of Hector’s triumph. Zeus sometimes sends a lurid rainbow as an omen to warn humans of approaching war or a blizzard that will put an end to all kinds of work. Iris, whose mode of transportation is the rainbow, sometimes brings news of war and other tragedies. Now Athena came wrapped in a lurid cloud to encourage the Greeks to kill and kill again. Lurid clouds sometimes forecast bad weather.

The first Greek she encouraged was Menelaus. She assumed the form of Phoenix and said to him, “You will be ashamed if the Greeks succeed in taking the corpse of Patroclus to Troy and allow the dogs and birds to eat it, so fight fiercely and encourage your men to fight fiercely!”

Menelaus replied, “Phoenix, I pray to Athena that she will give me strength and courage to defend Patroclus’ body. Hector is fierce and never stops stabbing with his spear. He never stops killing. Zeus is giving him *kleos* today.”

Menelaus had prayed to Athena instead of any of the other gods — she was thrilled. She answered his prayer and gave him strength and courage. She also gave him persistence. A horsefly is persistent. It wants human blood. Each time the man brushes the horsefly away, back again it comes. It wants to feed on human blood.

Standing over the corpse of Patroclus, Menelaus hurled his spear and hit Podes, cutting his war-belt and ripping his skin and body. Podes fell. He had been a drinking buddy to Hector, and he had been courteous and wealthy.

Apollo assumed the form of the Trojan ally Phaenops, a man whom Hector valued most of his foreign allies. The disguised Apollo said, “Hector, why are you afraid of Menelaus? He has not been a great warrior before today, but now you are holding off from attacking him although he has killed your friend Podes.”

Hector felt grief and rushed to fight Menelaus, and at that moment Zeus hurled a thunderbolt from Mount Ida, and he shook his storm-shield that could cause any army to panic. Zeus was now giving the Trojans triumph and routing the Greeks.

Peneleos was the first Greek to be hurt. Polydamas speared his shoulder and hit bone.

Hector speared Leitus in the wrist. No longer could he fight the Trojans with spears. Leitus ran for the ships.

Hector rushed at Idomeneus, but Idomeneus speared him. He hit Hector's breastplate, but his spear broke. The Trojans shouted, first in horror and then in relief. Hector hurled his spear at Idomeneus and missed him but hit Coeranus, the charioteer and aide of Meriones. Idomeneus was fighting on foot that day, but Coeranus saved Idomeneus' life by driving the chariot up to him. Although Coeranus saved Idomeneus' life, he lost his own life. Hector's spear came up under Coeranus' jaw. His teeth fell from his mouth, and his tongue was cut in two. He fell to the ground, taking the reins with him.

Meriones grabbed the reins and said to Idomeneus, "Whip the horses and drive to the ships. The Greeks will not be victorious today." Idomeneus obeyed.

Great Ajax and Menelaus saw that the Trojans were winning. In frustration, Great Ajax said, "Anyone can see that Zeus favors the Trojans now. All Trojan weapons hit a Greek target, even when weak warriors hurl them. Our spears hit only ground. They are harmless to Trojans. What is the best thing we can now do? How can we save our own lives and still carry Patroclus' body back to the ships? Right now, Hector is invincible. We cannot stop him. We need to get word to Achilles that Patroclus is dead. I am sure that he does not know. But I can't see anyone we can send to Achilles. This dust and fog make it impossible to see! Zeus, at least make it so that we can see! If you are going to kill us, at least do it in the clear sunlight!"

Zeus heard and granted Great Ajax' prayer. The dust and fog dissipated, and the sun shone. Great Ajax could see.

He said to Menelaus, "Look for Antilochus, Nestor's son. He is a swift runner. If he is still alive, he is the one to carry the bad news to Achilles, to tell Achilles that his great friend Patroclus is dead."

Menelaus was exhausted but obeyed. A lion grows exhausted from fighting the dogs and men who guard sheep and cattle. The lion craves meat, but the dogs and men fight him all night long. The lion charges and charges again, but the men and dogs fight him and drive him away from the sheep and cattle each time. Finally, at dawn, the lion leaves, exhausted and hungry.

Menelaus left Patroclus' body, reluctantly. He was afraid that the Trojans would capture the corpse. He said to Great Ajax, Little Ajax, and Meriones, "Remember how gentle and kind Patroclus was when he was alive. Protect his corpse, now that he is dead."

Menelaus then left and searched for Antilochus, looking to the left and to the right like a sharp-eyed eagle that flies high, looks for and sees a rabbit, and swoops down and tears its life away. Menelaus hoped that Antilochus was still alive. Fortunately, he quickly saw him on the left flank. Menelaus called to him, "Antilochus, today victory goes to Troy. They have killed Patroclus. Run to Achilles and tell him the horrible news: Patroclus is dead. Hector killed him. If Achilles acts quickly, he may be able to help us to bring Patroclus' body — stripped of armor as it is — back to the ships."

Antilochus hated the message that he had to bring to Achilles: His best friend was dead. He gave his armor to his aide Laodocus, and then he ran as fast as he could to Achilles' camp. Antilochus wept as he ran.

Menelaus put Thrasymedes in charge of the men whom Antilochus had commanded, and then he ran to defend the corpse of Patroclus, standing alongside Great Ajax, Little Ajax, and

Meriones. He told the two Ajaxes, “Antilochus is taking the news of Patroclus’ death to Achilles. But how can Achilles help us? He has no armor! He is a big, strong, powerful man, and ordinary armor will not fit him. He will be furious at Hector, but how can he fight him? Achilles is not invulnerable, although he does have a goddess for his mother. So what can we do to take Patroclus’ body back to the ships?”

Great Ajax said, “You and Meriones grab hold of the body and carry it. Little Ajax and I will protect you and fight Hector and the Trojans. We two Ajaxes are no strangers to war, no strangers to protecting others.”

Menelaus and Meriones lifted Patroclus’ body onto their shoulders. The Trojans and their allies closed in to attack. The Trojans were like dogs that attack a wounded boar before the hunters can reach it. The hounds want to rip apart the boar, but it turns back and charges the pack of hounds. They are afraid, and they scatter out of the boar’s path. The Trojans charged them, and Great Ajax and Little Ajax turned toward them, and the Trojans were afraid.

They made their way to the ships as the Trojans pursued them like a flash fire racing its way to a city, catching houses on fire as winds whip it to frenzy. Much like that, the Trojans bore down on the Greeks. Menelaus and Meriones worked like mules pulling heavy loads of timber as they worked to get Patroclus’ body to the ships.

The two Ajaxes fought off the Trojans. Great Ajax and Little Ajax were like a rocky ridge that stops the waters of a flood. The Trojans kept coming, led by Hector and Aeneas. They were like hawks or falcons pursuing crows or starlings as they pursued the Greeks, who raced for the ships.

CHAPTER 18: The Shield and Weapons of Achilles

Pursued by Trojans and protected by the two Ajaxes, Menelaus and Meriones carried the corpse of Patroclus to the ships as Antilochus arrived at Achilles' camp. Achilles was worried. He said to himself, "Once again, the Greeks are routed, but why? They shouldn't be. Mother once revealed to me a prophecy that I fear that I am just now beginning to understand. She said that while I still lived, the best of the Myrmidons — the warriors I lead — would die at Troy. Patroclus must be dead — I know it. I warned him to stop fighting once he had saved the ships. I warned him not to fight on the plain before Troy. I warned him not to attempt to fight Hector."

As Achilles worried, Antilochus, panting and with tears streaming down his face, came up to him and said, "Patroclus is dead. The two armies are fighting over his body. Hector now has your armor!"

Achilles grabbed handfuls of dust from the ground and poured it over his face to express his grief in the classic Greek manner. He tore his hair. His slave women knew kind, gentle Patroclus, and they mourned his death. They beat their breasts to express their grief in the classic Greek manner. They fell to the ground like Achilles had. Antilochus, weeping warm tears, grabbed Achilles' hands because he was afraid that Achilles would end his own life, cutting his own throat with a knife or sword. Achilles screamed with grief.

Achilles' mother, Thetis, seated near her father, the Old Man of the Sea, in a sea cave, heard Achilles' cries of mourning. She also cried out in mourning. And the Nereids — minor goddesses of the sea like Thetis — came to her, also mourning: Glauce, Thaleia, Cymodoce, Nesaea, Speio, Thoe, Halië, Cymothoë, Actaia, Limnoreia, Melite, Iaea, Amphithoe, Agave, Doto, Proto, Pherousa, Dynamene, Dexamene, Amphinome, Callianeira, Doris, Panope, Galatea, Nemertes, Apseudes, Callianassa, Clymene, Ianeira, Ianassa, Maera, Orithyia, Amatheia, and others. The Nereids beat their breasts.

Thetis mourned, "Sisters, I grieve. I am the mother of a son who is flawless and great. He is a warrior and a hero. I reared him, but then he sailed to Troy to fight Trojans. I will never be able to hug him as he walks through the doors of the palace of his father. He will not live long. Most of the short amount of life he has left will be wracked with grief. But I will go to him, although I cannot stop his grief. I will go to him, and he will tell me why he grieves."

Thetis and the other Nereids left the sea cave and swam to Troy. They all came ashore and walked to Achilles. He lay on the ground. Greek artwork sometimes shows a woman cradling the head of a man in her hands as he lies on the ground. The man is a dead warrior, and the woman is a mother or wife who grieves for him. Exactly like that, Thetis cradled Achilles' head in her hands. Crying warm tears, she asked him, "Why are you crying, my son? What is wrong? Please tell me. Don't keep it hidden from me. Zeus has done everything that you wanted him to do. The Trojans have forced the Greeks back to their ships. The Trojans have killed many Greeks."

Groaning, Achilles replied, "All you say is true, mother. Zeus has done everything I asked him to do. But Patroclus, the man I valued most as a friend, is dead. I valued him as much as I valued my own life, and he is dead — Hector butchered him and stripped him of my armor, armor that the gods gifted to Peleus the day he married you. I wish that Peleus had taken a mortal wife and that you had stayed with the other Nereids. Now you must mourn your own son's death. I have nothing to live for except to kill Hector. I will watch Hector gasp as he dies, mortally wounded by my spear. That is the price he will pay for killing Patroclus!"

Thetis replied, "If what you say is true, you have little time left to live. After Hector dies, you will quickly die."

Achilles replied, “Then let me die as quickly as possible! I was unable to save the life of Patroclus. He died far from home. If I had been with him, I could have kept him from death. I have been sitting here in my camp, and I have not been fighting the Trojans. No Greek is a better warrior than I am, although other Greeks are better at public speaking. I wish that anger would disappear from the earth and from Mount Olympus. Anger is too destructive. Just look at the anger that Agamemnon created within me.

“But enough. I will end my anger at Agamemnon so that I can turn my anger fully against Hector. He is a murderer. He murdered Patroclus in cold blood. I don’t even care that he did it on the battlefield — in my eyes, it is murder. I will kill him, and then I will freely meet my own death. Whenever Zeus wishes to end my life will be all right with me as long as I have first killed Hector. Heracles is the greatest Panhellenic hero, and even he met his fate, Hera’s anger and fate brought him down. As long as I send Hector down to death first, I will die willingly. Now I will earn great *kleos* as I kill Trojan warriors and make their wives widows. I am well rested, and I will kill and kill again. Don’t try to stop me from returning to battle. You can’t stop me.”

Thetis replied, “All you say is true. But you have no armor that fits you. Hector is wearing your armor, but he will not live long. His fate quickly approaches. Do not go into battle now. You can’t. Wait until I come back tomorrow, and I will bring you armor created by Hephaestus, the blacksmith-god.”

Thetis told the Nereids, “Go to my father, the Old Man of the Sea, and tell him all that has happened. I will go to Olympus, and I will ask Hephaestus to make armor for my son.”

The Nereids dived into the sea, and Thetis flew to Olympus.

Guarding Patroclus’ body, the Greeks, pursued by Hector, reached the ships. Again and again the Trojans attacked. It seemed impossible that the Greeks could carry the corpse of Patroclus to Achilles’ camp. Three times Hector grabbed Patroclus’ feet. Three times the Greeks fought him off the corpse. Always, Hector attacked again. Shepherds sometimes cannot scare a hungry lion away from a kill, and the Greeks could not scare Hector away from the corpse.

Hector would have captured the corpse, but Hera — without Zeus’ knowledge — sent Iris to take a message to Achilles: “You must help recover the corpse of Patroclus. This battle by the ships is over who will have possession of the corpse. The Greeks are struggling to take it to you; the Trojans are struggling to take it to Troy. Hector wants the corpse so that he can cut off the head and display it on a stake on the palisade of Troy. Get up! Don’t let dogs and birds eat the corpse of your friend!”

Achilles asked, “Which god has sent you to me with this message?”

Iris replied, “Hera sent me. Zeus knows nothing of this, nor do any of the other gods.”

Achilles asked, “How can I fight the Trojans? I have no armor: Hector is wearing it. My mother, Thetis, told me not to go to war until she brings me armor made by Hephaestus, the god of fire. Even the armor of Great Ajax is not big enough for me, except for his shield, and he is using it in battle. I am sure that he is fighting hard to save the corpse of Patroclus.”

Iris thought of a plan and said to Achilles, “We gods know that the Trojans have your armor. But go and show yourself — without armor — to the Trojans. They will be afraid of you, and the Greeks can carry Patroclus’ body into your camp.”

Achilles rose, and Athena slung her shield over his shoulder. He stood in front of the Greeks and Trojans fighting over Patroclus. Behind him the sun set, and Achilles’ head and hair blazed with fire sent by Athena. Smoke rises from a city under siege on an island. Enemies attack it, and defenders stand on the city walls and defend the city. When the sun sets,

the city lights beacon fires to ask neighbors for help. Much like that, Achilles' fire-capped head blazed.

Achilles shouted three times. Each time Athena shouted with him. The shouts panicked the Trojans; the shouts were as loud as war trumpets blown by the enemies attacking a city. The Trojan horses panicked, too, as did the charioteers. Three times the flame-capped Achilles cried out, and three times the Trojans and their allies were thrown into confusion. Twelve fighting Trojans died as horses reared — the Trojans were crushed by horses and chariots or were impaled on their own spears.

The Greeks took advantage and carried the corpse of Patroclus to the camps and put it on a litter. Achilles looked at his dead friend and grieved. Achilles had sent his best friend into battle, but he never welcomed him home — alive — again.

Hera drove the sun into the sea. Hector's day of glory was over.

The Trojans held a council even before they ate. No one sat; all stood. The decision to be made was serious: Should they return to Troy tonight and stay behind the high, strong walls of Troy, or should they camp out on the battlefield tonight and fight the great Achilles tomorrow? While he had been absent from the battle, the Trojans had been triumphant, but now Achilles was ready to fight again.

Polydamas, a good man at debate and a man who was born the same night that Hector was born, advised, "Let's go back to Troy now. We are too close to the ships and too far from the walls of Troy. While Achilles stayed angry at Agamemnon and refrained from fighting, we defeated the Greeks. Like you, I hoped to set fire to their ships. But now Achilles is back. He is furious at the death of his friend, and he will return to battle. He will kill Trojan warriors and enslave Trojan wives and conquer Troy itself. So let us retreat behind the high, strong walls of Troy.

"This night has stopped Achilles from fighting, but he will fight tomorrow, and all too many of us will learn how deep is his anger at us. Whoever escapes his wrath and makes it alive back to Troy will be lucky. Tomorrow, dogs and birds will feast on Trojan flesh. I do not want to hear Trojan cries of grief tomorrow. So let us return to Troy tonight. Instead of fighting on the plain, we will stay on the walls of Troy and fight from there. Achilles will never be able to conquer the walls of Troy; he will be forced to return to the ships still thirsty for vengeance."

Hector objected, "No, Polydamas! I don't want to go back to Troy and be crammed behind its walls. I don't want to be in a cage. Troy was once a rich city, but our wealth has been sold to pay the costs of war. Finally, Zeus is allowing me to seize *kleos* at the Greek ships. He is allowing me to be triumphant as I defend Trojan wives, children, and parents. He is allowing me to cram the Greeks inside their own camps with their backs up against the sea. I will not retreat back to Troy! Everyone will follow my orders. Eat and set guards around our camps. If any Trojan warrior thinks that he will die tomorrow, he can give his property now to other Trojans. Better that than to allow the Greeks to have it. Tomorrow at dawn we attack. If it really was Achilles we saw tonight and if he really wishes to return to battle, then we fight him tomorrow. I will never run from him. Either he will win *kleos* by killing me or I will win *kleos* by killing him. The god of war supports those who succeed at killing."

The Trojans unwisely shouted their approval of Hector's words. Athena made them approve of Hector's advice — and not of Polydamas' advice.

They set the guards and prepared their evening meal.

All night, the Greeks mourned the death of Patroclus. They shouted cries of grief. Achilles' strong hands touched Patroclus' chest as he mourned. A hunter sometimes takes away the cubs of a lion when the lion is away hunting. The lion returns, but where are its cubs? Angry, it runs

to find the thief. But where is the thieving hunter? Achilles groaned with the lion's anger and misery. He cried to his Myrmidons, "I promised Menoetius, the father of Patroclus, that Patroclus would return safely home after we had sacked Troy. I promised that Patroclus would have his fair share of plunder. But Zeus will not give to us what I planned. Both Patroclus and I are fated to die at Troy and make its ground red with our blood. Like Patroclus, I will never see my father again. I will never greet and hug him.

"Patroclus, I will follow you into the Land of the Dead. I will not bury you now. Before I bury you, I will kill Hector, the Trojan who killed you. I will capture alive twelve Trojan warriors, and I will cut their throats in a human sacrifice in front of the pyre that will burn your corpse down to bones. Until I vent my anger on the Trojans, you will lie here unburied. The slave women I have won will mourn your death. You and I fought hard to win these slave women by sacking cities allied to Troy."

Achilles ordered his friends to heat water using a three-footed cauldron. They washed away the blood that had clotted in Patroclus' wounds. They bathed his body, and they rubbed it with olive oil. They closed his wounds with an ointment. They then put his corpse on a bier and covered it with a white cloth. All night they mourned the death of Patroclus.

Zeus and Hera watched all, and Zeus said to Hera, "Are you happy? You have gotten what you wanted: You wanted Achilles to return to war against the Trojans. Now Achilles will be as unreasonably angry as you so often are. Is it possible that you — and not Thetis — is his mother? Is it possible that you are the mother of the Greeks?"

Hera replied, "Yes, I have gotten what I wanted. The Trojans will suffer many, many deaths at the hands of weapon-bearing Achilles tomorrow. But why shouldn't I get what I want? Often, a mortal man will kill a man he hates. I am a goddess. I am so much more than a mere mortal. So why shouldn't I get what I want?"

As Zeus and Hera argued, Thetis reached the house of Hephaestus, the blacksmith god. As is so often the case, he was at work. Although his legs were lame, his arms and shoulders and chest were powerful and his mind and creativity and sense of aesthetics were marvelous. He was sweating as he created twenty three-legged cauldrons. Much of the work he had finished, including bolting golden wheels to them. Still needing to be done was attaching their handles. This work he had just started: He was hammering in the rivets.

Thetis approached the famous smith, but his wife, Charis, saw her first and warmly welcomed her. She held Thetis' hand and said to her, "Thetis, welcome to our house. You are loved and honored here, and we are happy that you have come. We have often wished that you would more frequently visit us. Come in, please, and let me give you *xenia*."

Charis led Thetis into the home and sat her in a chair and slipped a stool under her feet. She called to her husband, "Hephaestus, we have a visitor: honored Thetis. Perhaps you can do a favor for her."

Hephaestus replied, "Thetis? Here? Wonderful! She is always welcome. She saved my life when I was born. My mother, Hera, looked me over, saw that my legs were lame, and threw me from Mount Olympus. She did not want the other gods and goddesses to know that she had given birth to an infant with crippled legs.

"Thetis found me and breastfed me. Another goddess, Eurynome, also breastfed me. These two goddesses reared me for nine years, and I became a blacksmith. I created brooches, pins, necklaces, and other jewelry. The only ones who knew where I was were the two goddesses. And now Thetis is here. I must do anything I can for her — I owe her so much. Quick, give her something to eat and drink while I put away my current blacksmithing project."

Hephaestus packed away his tools and washed his arms, shoulders, chest, and neck, and then he put on a shirt. Using a staff, he hobbled in to see Thetis. Handmaids, whom he had

created out of gold but who were otherwise like real girls, waited on him, his wife, and his guest.

He said to Thetis, “Welcome. You should visit more often. I will do for you whatever I can do.”

Thetis started to cry. She said, “Hephaestus, Zeus has given me misery. The prophecy said that I would give birth to a man who would be greater than his father. Zeus did not want me to give birth to a son who would overpower him, and so he married me to a mortal man: Peleus. I married him. I had to, but I didn’t want to. Now he is old and will soon die, and now I grieve because my son will also soon die. I reared my son, and he grew strong, but he went to fight in the Trojan War, and now I will never again give him a hug as he returns home — alive — to his father’s palace. My son, Achilles, has little time left to live, and he is miserable. I cannot bring him out of his misery. There is nothing I can do. The Greeks awarded him a young woman after he sacked the city of King Eetion, but Agamemnon tore the young woman from him. Achilles grieved for her and stopped fighting. The Trojans triumphed because my son was not fighting, and the Greeks begged my son to fight and wanted to give him treasure. He refused to fight, but he did send his best friend, Patroclus, into battle wearing Achilles’ own armor. Patroclus and the Trojans battled all day, and Patroclus and the Greeks could have conquered Troy but Apollo caused Patroclus to die. Apollo gave the *kleos* of killing Patroclus to Hector. Now I beg you on my knees to give my son armor: shield, breastplate, helmet, and greaves. When the Trojans killed Patroclus, Hector took Achilles’ armor that Patroclus had been wearing. Now Achilles lies on the ground grieving for Patroclus.”

Hephaestus replied, “I will make your son the best armor that ever was made. Whoever sees it will marvel at it. I wish that I could change your son’s fate.”

Hephaestus returned to his forge and turned the bellows on the fire. He commanded, “To work!” The bellows, all on their own, blew on the fire and made it hotter — the right degree of heat for the work to be done. He heated bronze, tin, gold, and silver, and he grabbed his hammer and tongs.

First Hephaestus created the shield. He made the rim with three layers of metal. The shield itself had five layers of metal. The shield strap he made of silver. Then he focused on the design of the shield: a design that would depict much of what was known of the universe and of human civilization.

On the shield, Hephaestus created the earth and the sky and the sea and the sun and the moon and the constellations: Pleiades, Hyades, Orion, and the Great Bear.

On the shield, Hephaestus created two populous cities.

In one city weddings and wedding feasts took place. Torches burned. The brides came out of the women’s dwellings. Choirs sang. Young men danced. Flutes and harps played. Women stood in their doorways and watched.

In the same city people ran to the marketplace to witness a lawsuit. Two men argued over the blood-price for a murdered kinsman. One person offered money. The other argued against the proposed recompense, preferring to get satisfaction with more money or with the blood or exile of the murderer. The crowd watched excitedly. Elders rendered their judgments. Two talents of gold lay before them. The elder who rendered the most righteous judgment would be awarded the gold.

Outside the other city, an army lay in siege. The warriors were divided about what to do. Should they conquer the city and take all its wealth? Or should they accept half of the city’s wealth and lift the siege? Inside the city the male citizens were arming. They did not want to surrender. They wanted to make a raid that would lift the siege and give them freedom. The warriors marched out of the city, and women and children and old men stood on the walls of

the city. Wearing gold armor, Ares and Athena led the warriors. The gods towered over the mortal warriors. They reached the zone from which they would attack: a place where they watered the herding animals. Two scouts waited as two enemy herdsmen approached, playing music on pipes, as they drove their animals to the besieging army. The scouts killed the herdsmen and stole the animals. The besieging army heard the cries of alarm and raced to the site where the scouts had ambushed the herdsmen. Both armies fought each other at the river, throwing spears and killing and dying. Havoc and Strife and Death — all immortals — fought alongside the mortal men. Their bodies grew red with the blood of mortals.

Hephaestus created a field that farmers plowed, driving their teams from one end of the field to the other, and back again. Farmhands gave the plowmen wine to refresh them so that they could continue to work. The earth the farmers plowed was black although Hephaestus had made it out of solid gold — Hephaestus had that skill.

Hephaestus created the estate of a king. Harvesters reaped the grain with scythes. Boys gathered the stalks and brought them to laborers who bound them with rope. The king watched, happy with the bountiful harvest. His heralds prepared a great feast and roasted meat from the ox they had slaughtered. Women servants generously measured out the barley. Soon the reapers and all the others would eat the noonday meal.

Hephaestus created a vineyard loaded with ripe grapes and long vines. Around the vineyard was a ditch, and around the ditch was a fence that he made of tin. Grape pickers walked on the path leading to the vineyard, and boys and girls carried away the grapes in baskets. A boy played the lyre and sang about the ending year. His was a fine voice, and the boys and girls stepped in rhythm to his song.

Hephaestus created a herd of cattle with long horns. The cattle walked from the dung-filled farmyard out to green pastures. Four herdsmen and nine dogs kept the herd moving, but lions attacked a bull and killed it and were eating it. The herdsmen tried to make the dogs attack the lions, but the dogs were afraid.

Hephaestus created a meadow in a valley. Flocks grazed there amid the shepherds' homes.

Hephaestus created a circle that depicted a dance. Boys and girls — handsome and pretty — danced and danced. The girls wore linen robes and the boys wore fine tunics. The girls wore garlands of flowers on their heads, and the boys wore daggers on their belts. Sometimes they danced in rings and sometimes they danced in rows. A crowd had gathered to watch the dancers, and tumblers performed tricks.

Finally, Hephaestus created the Ocean River on the rim of the shield — the Ocean River that surrounds the entire earth.

After creating the shield, Hephaestus created a breastplate, a helmet, and greaves.

Having finished the armor, Hephaestus laid all of it at the feet of Thetis. She gathered it in her arms and flew to Achilles' camp. When Achilles went into battle, he would carry on the shield on his arm a depiction of the universe with the exception of Hades — the Land of the Dead — and Mount Olympus — the abode of the major gods.

CHAPTER 19: Achilles Arms for Battle

Dawn arrived, and Thetis reached Achilles' camp. Achilles was still lying facedown, mourning Patroclus' death. The other Greeks also were mourning Patroclus' death. Thetis held Achilles' hand and said to him, "Achilles, get up and leave your friend's body. You must. Patroclus is dead. But look at the new armor that Hephaestus, god of fire, created for you. No mortal has ever worn such fine armor!"

Thetis put the brightly polished armor on the ground beside Achilles. The armor blazed, and the Greeks saw it and trembled. No one could look directly at the armor — except Achilles and the gods. Achilles looked at the armor, and he knew that he would be wearing it when he killed Hector. His anger at Hector deepened, and he said to Thetis, his mother, "You are right. Only a god could make such armor. No mortal man has ever seen or worn armor such as this, and no mortal man could ever create armor such as this. I will put on this armor, and I will kill Hector.

"But I am worried about the corpse of Patroclus. It will decay. Insects will get to it, and worms will eat his flesh. Patroclus' *psyche* has left his body; now his body will rot."

Thetis replied, "Don't worry about the corpse of Patroclus. I will take care of it and ensure that it does not rot. I will keep the insects and the worms away from it. Patroclus' body could lie here an entire year, and it still would not rot. I will put nectar and ambrosia — the food and drink of the gods — in Patroclus.

"Now call a council and be reconciled with Agamemnon. You and he must not be angry at each other anymore. Afterward, you can arm for battle."

Thetis instilled courage into Achilles, and she instilled nectar and ambrosia, the food and drink of the immortal gods, into the corpse of Patroclus to ensure that the corpse would not rot.

Achilles went among the Greeks, calling the leaders to a council. They readily came, wanting to see what Achilles would do — Achilles who had stayed away from the fighting for so long. Diomedes and Odysseus arrived at the council. Still hurting from their wounds, they moved slowly. The last Greek leader to arrive was Agamemnon. He also still hurt from his wound — Coon had slashed his arm in battle.

Achilles spoke first, "Agamemnon, you and I foolishly fought over a mere girl. It would have been better if she had died when I conquered Lyrnessus, the city she lived in — Artemis should have killed her with an arrow. If she had died then, many more Greeks would be alive now. Our arguing with each other has been good only for Hector and his Trojans. It has not been good for the Greeks. People will remember, I think, our argument and its consequences. Epic poets will sing about it. But let us end our argument now. It is over. Done. Finished. All the anger I felt at you I now turn to Hector. Call the Greeks to combat so I can begin fighting and killing Trojans! I can convince them to stay behind the walls of Troy and not camp on the plain before Troy!"

These were words that the Greeks wanted to hear. They shouted with pleasure.

Agamemnon said, "Greeks, listen. Do not interrupt. Listen as I speak to Achilles. I have been blamed for the argument between us, but it was not my fault! Zeus and Fate and the Furies are at fault! They are the ones who made me insane when I took Achilles' prize — Briseis — away from him. I was utterly mad! What can a mortal do when the gods are against him? The goddess Ate, who is also called Ruin, is the main one at fault — she blinded me as she has blinded so many other mortals!

"Ate even blinded Zeus once! Hera had the help of Ate as she deceived Zeus. Alcmena was about to give birth to the great hero Heracles in Thebes. Zeus wanted him to be the king of the

surrounding region, so he said to the other gods, ‘Listen to me. Today a woman will give birth to a son — my son who will rule the region around him.’

“Hera hates all the bastard children fathered by her husband, Zeus. She set out to make a fool of her husband.

“Hera said to him, ‘I don’t believe you — not unless you swear an inviolable oath. Swear by the river Styx that a son born today from your line will rule the region around him.’

“Zeus swore the oath; he did not know that Hera was trapping him.

“Hera flew to Argos, where the wife of Sthenelus, son of Peleus, whose father was Zeus, was seven months pregnant. Hera, the goddess of marriage, caused her to give birth two months early to a son: Eurystheus. She also kept Alcmena from giving birth.

“Hera then rushed back to Zeus and taunted him: ‘Today a new ruler is born from your line: Eurystheus. As you promised in your inviolable oath, he will rule the region around him.’

“Zeus was furious at being tricked, but the oath he had sworn was inviolable. Eurystheus, not Heracles, would be a ruler. But he grabbed the goddess Ate and threw her from Mount Olympus. Never again can she return to Olympus, so now she ruins the lives of mortals. Zeus thought of the goddess Ate whenever Eurystheus forced Heracles to perform one of his famous twelve labors.

“Ate harmed Zeus, and Ate harmed me! Ate made it possible for Hector to reach our ships.

“But that was then. Now let us put everything right again. I promised you, Achilles, magnificent gifts if you would fight again. I will give you everything I promised. Odysseus was the emissary who conveyed my promise to you. Aides will bring those gifts from my ships and convey them to you now.”

Achilles replied, “Agamemnon, I don’t care about the gifts. Keep them, or give them to me. I don’t care which. Right now, let’s go to battle — right now! We have Trojans to kill!”

Odysseus, a practical man, said, “We can’t fight yet, Achilles. We are hungry. A hungry man cannot fight for long. He will grow weak and be useless in battle. So let us eat and drink, and that way we can fight all day until the sun sets. Our legs and arms will not fail us, and we can kill and kill again. So order everyone to eat.

“Also, allow Agamemnon to bring the gifts so that every man can see that he has given to you everything that he promised. And allow Agamemnon to swear an oath that he has not touched Briseis — that he has not forced her to sleep with him.

“Also, Achilles, be sure to show Agamemnon the respect that is due to him.

“Achilles, allow Agamemnon to prepare a feast for you in his tents. You two should break bread.

“Agamemnon, show your warriors the respect that is due to them. It is not a disgrace for you to give gifts to Achilles, whom you have wronged. It is kingly to reconcile with those whom you have wronged.”

Agamemnon replied, “Odysseus, all you have said is right. I will swear the oath: I have not touched Briseis — I have not slept with her. I swear this oath to the gods. Everyone, including Achilles, should stay here until everything I promised to give to Achilles has been brought from my ships.

“Odysseus, pick out a few men to help you to bring here everything I promised to give to Achilles, including the women. I will have Talthylus prepare a wild boar for sacrifice to Zeus and the sun.”

Achilles, however, was impatient to return to the fighting. He said to Agamemnon, “Let us leave these things for a different time. I am set on fighting and killing Trojans. Why should I sit down to a feast when I could be doing what I want to do most? If it were my decision, I

would lead the Greeks, hungry as they are, into combat now. Only after many Trojans are dead and the sun has set would I lay out a feast for everyone.

“I myself will not eat or drink. Patroclus is dead. His body is ready for burial. Instead of feasting, I will kill and kill again.”

Odysseus, a practical man, said, “Achilles, you are stronger by far than I am. You are the greatest warrior among the Greeks. But I am older, and I know more about ordinary warriors. Listen to me. We ordinary men must eat. Hungry men cannot fight. Warriors cannot mourn the dead by starving. It cannot and will not work. War is wearying work.

“We ordinary men mourn the dead, but our mourning must come to an end. Warriors should mourn the dead the day they die and then move on with their lives. Everyone who is still alive must eat and drink. That way, we can continue to go to war.

“So, after we eat and drink, no warrior who is capable of fighting will hold back. May pain and death come to those who shirk the work of war. Today, many Trojans will die.”

Odysseus led men to Agamemnon’s ships: Meges, Meriones, Thoas, Lycomedes, and Melanippus. They brought out the gifts that Agamemnon had promised to give to Achilles if he would fight again: seven tripods, twenty polished cauldrons, twelve stallions, ten bars of gold, seven women skilled in crafts, and Briseis. They brought the gifts back to the meeting place.

Talthybius had the wild boar ready for sacrifice. Agamemnon drew his dagger and cut a few tufts of hair from the boar. He lifted his arms and prayed, “Zeus and the Furies, I swear that I never touched Briseis — I never slept with her. If I have falsely sworn this, may the gods punish me!”

He cut the boar’s throat, and Talthybius swung the boar and threw it into the water for the fishes to enjoy.

Achilles said, “Zeus, you sometimes send miseries to men. You make us blind. Otherwise, Agamemnon could never have made me so angry. He would never have taken Briseis away from me. Zeus, you wanted the Greeks to die.

“Warriors, eat and drink quickly. I am eager to go to war.”

The Greeks went to their own camps and prepared their meals. Achilles’ Myrmidons happily took Agamemnon’s gifts back to Achilles’ ships.

Briseis arrived at Achilles’ camp, where she saw the corpse of Patroclus. She threw herself on the corpse and wailed, “Patroclus, you were my friend. You looked out for me. When Agamemnon forced me to leave, you were alive. Now you are dead. I used to be married, but now I am a widow. My husband died defending his city, Lyrnessus, one of the cities that Achilles conquered. I saw Achilles kill my husband. I watched my husband and my three brothers die in battle. I loved them all. You, Patroclus, kept me from crying. You promised that you would convince Achilles to make me his lawful, wedded wife. Being a wife is better than being a slave. You promised that in Greece Achilles would marry me. I mourn your death. Gentle Patroclus, you were always kind to me.”

Briseis cried, and the female slaves around her cried.

The Greek warriors tried to convince Achilles to eat. He would not, saying, “Stop bothering me. I will not eat at least until the sun sets.”

The Greek warriors knew that Achilles meant what he said, so they did not press him to eat. Some Greek leaders stayed and tried to comfort him, including Agamemnon and Menelaus, Odysseus, Nestor, Idomeneus, and Phoenix. He could not be comforted.

Achilles remembered past times and he said, “Often, Patroclus, you would set out the meal for us, but now you are dead. Plenty of food lies in my ships, but I shall not eat. I grieve for you! I want you to be alive! I cannot feel worse than I do now — not even if I were to hear news that my father has died! My father, I know, is mourning back home in Greece because he

is separated from his only son. Instead of being with him, I am here, fighting Trojans because of the misdeeds of Helen. I cannot feel worse than I do now — not even if I were to hear news that my son — Neoptolemus — has died.

“I had hoped that only I would die at Troy and that you, Patroclus, would return home alive. You would bring my son from Scyros to my father’s high-vaulted palace and show him all of my wealth and servants.

“I don’t even know whether my father is alive or dead. He may be alive although he is very old and waits to hear news of me. Soon, if he is alive, he will learn that I have died.”

Zeus and Athena were watching Achilles. Zeus said to Athena, “Have you abandoned Achilles? Don’t you respect him? He is grieving, and he refuses to eat. Put nectar and ambrosia into his stomach. Give him the nourishment of the gods.”

Athena flew through the air like a hawk, and she put nectar and ambrosia into Achilles’ stomach. During battle, he would not grow weak. Then she returned to her father, Zeus.

The Greek troops marched out of the camps, ready for battle. Zeus sometimes sends thickly falling snowflakes to earth. The marching Greek warriors were as numerous as those snowflakes.

Achilles armed himself for battle. He ground his teeth. His eyes blazed. He was on fire to fight. He put on the armor that Hephaestus had made for him. He put on his greaves. He put on his breastplate, and he slung his sheathed sword over his shoulder. He lifted his shield — a masterpiece created by Hephaestus. The shield gleamed like a full moon or like a watch fire on a mountain — a watch fire seen by sailors on ships at sea. The light reflected from Achilles’ shield shone far into the sky. Achilles then put on his helmet with waving plumes. He tested the fit on the armor. He spun to see whether the armor fitted him. Yes, it did. He spun to see if he could move easily while wearing the armor. Yes, he could. Finally Achilles grabbed his spear. It was a gift from the Centaur Chiron to Achilles’ father, Peleus. The spear had been made to kill warriors.

Achilles’ aides Alcimus and Automedon yoked Achilles’ immortal horses to his chariot. Automedon grabbed a whip and jumped on the chariot; he was Achilles’ charioteer. Achilles was ready for battle. He said to his immortal horses, “Roan Beauty and Charger, do better this time. Bring me back alive to the ships! You failed to bring Patroclus back alive!”

Hera gave the immortal horse Roan Beauty the ability to speak. Roan Beauty said, “We will bring you back alive, Achilles! Today. But you will die soon at the hands of a god and your fate.

“We are not responsible for the death of Patroclus or the stripping of your armor. Apollo is responsible for Patroclus’ death — he gave *kleos* to Hector.

“We immortal horses are as swift as the wind, but we will be unable to save you. Your fate, a god, and a mortal man will end your life!”

The Furies took away the voice of Roan Beauty. The immortal horse could no longer speak.

Achilles said, “Why are you prophesying my death? I know I will die soon after I kill Hector. I know that I will die at Troy far from home, far from my mother and father. But before I die, I will kill many Trojans and especially Hector!”

Achilles went to war.

Zeus was watching. He thought, *I can see at least part of the future. Achilles is now both less and more than human. He is both less than a living human and more than a living human being.*

Achilles is such a remarkable being that he will refuse to recognize his human limits. Achilles’ anger is more than human. It is excessive — the anger of a god. Previously, he was

angry at Agamemnon. Now, he is angry at Hector. His anger was and is more than it should be. Achilles' anger at Agamemnon got many Greeks killed, including Achilles' best friend, Patroclus.

Why is Achilles so angry now? It is because he does not accept the human condition. The human condition is that humans live for a time and then they die. Achilles has no problem accepting the human condition for himself. As long as he can kill many Trojans and especially Hector first, he is willing to die. But Achilles will not accept the human condition when it comes to Patroclus. Achilles sent Patroclus into battle, and Patroclus died. Patroclus is mortal. All mortals die. But Achilles desperately wants Patroclus to be alive again, and that cannot happen. Therefore, Achilles' anger now is more excessive than it was when he was angry at Agamemnon. Because he is so angry, Achilles is now both less and more than human.

Achilles is such a remarkable being that he is almost a god. Only the gods eat ambrosia and drink nectar, yet that is the food and drink that is nourishing Achilles' body. I myself gave Athena the order to put ambrosia and nectar in Achilles' stomach.

Achilles is such a remarkable being that only a god can slow down or stop his killing. Achilles will kill all human beings who oppose him. Achilles will kill all Trojans he comes across except for those whom he captures so that he can kill them later as a human sacrifice. Achilles will be almost a god in this battle, and only a river-god can successfully oppose him. Only Apollo or some other god will be able to distract Achilles enough that some Trojans will escape him and return to Troy.

Achilles is such a remarkable being that his death is foreshadowed in his life. Achilles will die. Achilles knows that. When Thetis mourned the death of Patroclus, it was as if she were mourning the death of Achilles. When Thetis held Achilles' head as he lay in the dust grieving for Patroclus, she was just like a woman mourning a fallen warrior. Other foreshadowings of Achilles' nearing death will take place. Achilles is less than a living human being because in some ways it is as if he were already a corpse.

Achilles is not now a normal human being. Achilles has two natures because of his parents. His mother, Thetis, is a goddess, so part of Achilles' nature is divine. His father, Peleus, is mortal, so part of Achilles' nature is mortal. Achilles' two sides are now in opposition. Achilles is almost an immortal god, yet his coming death is foreshadowed in his life. Also, an ordinary human being would grieve for a while for Patroclus, and then he would return to living his normal life. Achilles finds it very, very difficult to do that.

Achilles completely rejects the human condition — the fact that human beings and their loved ones are mortal and they die. Achilles will put off holding a funeral for Patroclus. Patroclus' psyche will have to appear before Achilles in a dream and beg to be buried before Achilles will hold the funeral for Patroclus. It takes the gods to protect the body of Patroclus and keep it from decaying. Thetis put nectar and ambrosia in Patroclus to keep the body from decaying. Because of Achilles' anger at Hector and desire to kill him, Patroclus has not had a funeral yet, and so his psyche cannot enter the Land of the Dead. This is horrible for a psyche.

Because of his grief at the death of Patroclus, Achilles has put his life on hold. Achilles will not eat or drink or sleep or wash or have sex with Briseis. Thetis wants Achilles to stop putting his life on hold and to do all of these things. Achilles finds it very, very difficult to do any of these things right now.

Achilles must learn to accept the human condition.

CHAPTER 20: Achilles Returns to Battle

As the Greeks prepared for war, Zeus on Mount Olympus ordered the goddess Themis to call a council of the gods. She summoned all gods and all goddesses to the halls of Zeus. Every river-god and every nymph came to the halls of Zeus. No one resisted Zeus' order. Poseidon also came and asked Zeus, "Why are you summoning a council of the gods? Is this about the Trojan War? A major battle is about to occur."

Zeus replied, "Poseidon, god of the sea and of earthquakes, you are correct. I am concerned about the mortal warriors of the Trojan War. I myself will stay here on Olympus and watch the war. The rest of you gods and goddesses are welcome to go down to the war and help whichever side you want to help. Gods must take part in the war. Unless some gods oppose Achilles, he is so powerful that he will destroy all the Trojans. Before, they shook with fear to see him. Now, with his intensified anger — all because of the death of Patroclus — I am afraid that his *menis* — his anger that is equivalent to the anger of the gods — will cause him to conquer Troy although it is not fated to fall at his hands."

The gods and goddesses went to Troy to support their sides. On the side of the Greeks were Hera, Athena, Poseidon, Hermes, and Hephaestus. On the side of the Trojans were Ares, Apollo, Artemis, Leto, the god of the river Xanthus, and Aphrodite.

Achilles and the Greeks went to war. The Trojans were afraid as they looked at Achilles. His armor shone like fire. Now the Olympian gods merged with the mortal warriors. On the side of the Greeks, Athena shouted a cry of war. On the side of the Trojans, Ares answered her with his own cry of war.

The gods roused the mortals whose side they supported, whether Greek or Trojan. Poseidon, who supported the Greeks, created an earthquake. The entire earth shook, and Hades, the god of the Land of the Dead, screamed. He was afraid that the earthquake would rip open the earth, and living men and gods would be able to look down into the Land of the Dead and see its horrors.

The opposing gods faced each other. Poseidon opposed Apollo. Athena opposed Ares. Hera opposed Artemis. Hermes opposed Leto. Hephaestus opposed the god of the river that gods call the Xanthus and mortals call the Scamander.

Achilles went into battle looking for Hector above all — it was Hector whom Achilles most wanted to kill. But Apollo encouraged Aeneas to face Achilles and fight him. Apollo assumed the form of Lycaon, one of Priam's sons, and said, "Aeneas, you used to make threats against the Greeks and boast to the Trojans about what you would do to them. Where have the threats and boasts gone? Didn't you boast that you would fight Achilles face-to-face?"

Aeneas replied, "Lycaon, son of Priam, why are you encouraging me to fight Achilles face-to-face? I really do not want to. Achilles is powerful, and he is angry. I have met him face-to-face before. On the day that he conquered Lyrnessus and raided our flocks, he found me on Mount Ida and chased me. I ran from him and escaped — but only with help from Zeus. If not for the help of Zeus, I would have died at the hands of Achilles and of Athena — she was helping to keep him safe. She was also encouraging him to kill Trojans and their allies. No mortal can face Achilles and live. The gods are on his side. But even if he did not have the help of the gods, his strength and skill in war are overwhelming. His spear flies straight and causes mortal wounds. Still, if Zeus would stop giving Achilles the advantage, Achilles would have to work hard to defeat me."

Apollo, still disguised as Lycaon, replied, "Like Achilles, you are a heroic warrior. Why not ask for help from the gods? Isn't Aphrodite, an Olympian goddess, your mother? Achilles' mother is also a goddess, but she is lesser than Aphrodite. Thetis is a minor sea goddess, the

daughter of the Old Man of the Sea. So fight Achilles! Don't let his pride and his threats scare you!"

Apollo convinced Aeneas to fight Achilles. He went to the front line to find and to fight him. Hera was watching, and she shouted, "Poseidon! Athena! Aeneas is coming to fight Achilles. Apollo has encouraged him. Either drive Aeneas back, or one of us must stand by Achilles and help him. We need to let Achilles know that many gods respect him. The gods who support the Trojans are worthless! We have come down to the war to make sure that Achilles does not die on this day. Later, he will die, as fated. We need to let Achilles know that we gods support him, or he may be terrified when he sees a god — we can be terrifying to humans."

But Poseidon said to Hera, "We need not get involved in the war right now. The Greeks are much more powerful and much stronger than the Trojans. Let us move to one side, out of the way, and watch the war. Let the mortals do all of the fighting. But if Ares or Apollo decides to oppose Achilles and keep him from fighting, then we can oppose them. We gods can then fight each other. The fight will not last long. Defeated, the gods who support the Trojans will go back to Olympus."

Poseidon, Hera, and Athena went to one side of the battle and relaxed. They rested on a breastwork that Athena and the Trojans had built for Heracles to use when he fought and killed the sea-monster that was threatening the daughter of Laomedon: Hesione. Fog hid the gods so that the mortals could not see them. The gods who supported the Trojans went to the other side of the battle and relaxed. Zeus stayed on Mount Olympus.

The two armies rushed toward each other. In the middle, Achilles and Aeneas faced each other. Achilles was like a lion. Many men hunt the lion, but the lion has only contempt for the men and ignores them until one of the hunters spears him. Then the lion crouches to spring and attack. Furious, the lion is determined to kill or be killed. Just like the lion, Achilles was proud and furious.

Achilles said to Aeneas, "Why are you so far away from your fellow Trojans? Do you really want to fight me? Do you think that if you kill me that you will become king of Troy? That won't happen. Priam will instead make one of his own sons king of Troy. Or do you hope to win a fine estate — a gift of the Trojans — if you kill me? I do not think you will kill me. We met once before, remember? You were guarding sheep, alone, and you fled down Mount Ida for your life. You were so scared that you did not even look behind you. You escaped me then. You fled to Lyrnessus, which I conquered with the help of Athena and Zeus. I made all the women of Lyrnessus slaves. You escaped me on that day — Zeus helped you. But I doubt that you will escape me now, although you must be hoping that you will stay alive. Don't challenge me! Go back to your troops! If you fight me, I will kill you!"

Aeneas replied, "Don't try to scare me with words, Achilles. I am not a child or a fool. I am a warrior. We know each other, and we know about each other's parents, although I have not seen your parents and you have not seen my parents. You are the son of Peleus, a king, and of Thetis, a sea-nymph. I am the son of Anchises and of Aphrodite. Either your parents or my parents will mourn the death of a son today. We will fight, not just talk.

"If you want to know more about my family, here is my story. Let us start with Dardanus, the son of Zeus who founded Dardania before the city of Troy was founded. Dardanus had a son: King Erichthonius. This king was rich and owned three thousand mares. The North wind assumed the form of a stallion and had sex with some of the mares — twelve colts were the result. These offspring could run on the tops of corn stalks without breaking them and could run on the tops of sea waves.

“King Erichthonius fathered Tros, a Trojan lord. Tros fathered three sons: Ilus, Assaracus, and Ganymede. Ganymede was a beautiful man, and the gods took him away so that he could be Zeus’ cupbearer.

“Ilus fathered Laomedon, who fathered five sons: Tithonus, Priam, Lampus, Clytius, and Hicetaon.

“Assaracus fathered Capys, and Capys fathered Anchises, who fathered me.

“Priam fathered Hector.

“That is my lineage.

“In battle Zeus helps some warriors and he hurts other warriors. Zeus is a strong god — the strongest of all gods.

“Achilles, let’s have no more talking. We could hurl insults at each other, but this is a battlefield. Let us fight.”

Aeneas hurled his spear at Achilles. It hit Achilles’ shield — a masterpiece created by Hephaestus. Achilles was afraid that Aeneas’ spear would punch through the shield, but the work of Hephaestus was and is better than Achilles realized. Aeneas’ spear broke through two layers of the shield, but the middle layer — made of gold — stopped it. The layers around the gold were made of tin, and the outermost layers were made of bronze. Achilles was strong enough to carry a shield that was made of metal, including heavy gold.

Achilles hurled his spear. It hit the edge of Aeneas’ shield, and Aeneas ducked. The spear tore through the two layers — bronze and oxhide — at the edge of Aeneas’ shield and then buried itself in the earth. Aeneas was afraid — the spear had come close to killing him.

Achilles drew his sword and shouted a war-cry and charged Aeneas, who picked up a huge rock that no two men of today could lift, although Aeneas did so easily. Aeneas would have thrown the rock at Achilles, whose armor and shield would have protected him. Achilles would then have killed Aeneas with his sword, but Poseidon was watching the battle.

Poseidon said to the gods with him, “Aeneas is close to dying and going down to the House of the Dead. Achilles is about to kill him — all because Apollo tempted Aeneas to fight Achilles! Aeneas is a fool — Apollo is not going to save him! Why should Aeneas die? He is a good person. He has always sacrificed to the gods. Why should he die because of Paris and Helen? So let us save Aeneas’ life. Zeus wants Aeneas to stay alive because Aeneas is fated to survive the Trojan War. He is fated to stay alive so that he may have descendants and the bloodline of Dardanus will not vanish from the earth. Dardanus was the son of Zeus, and Zeus loved him more than his other mortal sons. After Troy falls, Aeneas will rule the surviving Trojans and their children.”

Hera replied, “Do as you wish, Poseidon. If you want Aeneas to live, save him. If you want him to die, let him die. But Athena and I will stay here. We have sworn never to help the Trojans, even when their city burns and falls.”

Poseidon went to Aeneas and Achilles. He put fog in front of Achilles’ eyes, and then he pulled Achilles’ spear out of the ground and lay the spear near Achilles. Then he picked up Aeneas and threw him far away to the side of the battle.

Poseidon went to Aeneas and said, “Aeneas, what god tempted you to fight Achilles? Are you mad! Achilles is a much better warrior than you are, and the gods respect Achilles more. Do not fight him. If you do, you will die. But Achilles will soon die. After he dies, then fight whomever you wish. Achilles is the Greek capable of killing you against your fate.”

Poseidon then went to Achilles and removed the fog in front of his eyes. Achilles looked around. Aeneas was no longer present. Achilles said to himself, “It is impossible. I threw my spear at Aeneas, and now my spear is lying beside me. And I can’t see Aeneas. The gods truly

love that warrior. So him I will not be able to kill. No matter. I will rally the Greeks, and we will kill the many Trojans who remain.”

Achilles shouted to the Greek warriors, “No more staying away from the fighting. Let each warrior find a Trojan to kill. I am powerful, but I am a single warrior. Not even the gods Ares and Athena — masters of war — could fight an army singlehandedly. But I will fight the best I can. I will attack the Trojans head-on. No Trojan will want to fight me — they will be afraid to meet me face-to-face.

At the same time, Hector rallied the Trojans: “Don’t be afraid of Achilles! Fight him with spears rather than with words! Achilles makes many boasts. Some he will make good on, some he will partially do, and others he will be unable to accomplish! I will seek him and fight him!”

But Apollo told Hector, “Don’t fight Achilles face-to-face! Fight him with other Trojan warriors to help you. If you try to fight him by yourself, he will kill you with his spear or his sword.”

Hector kept his warriors near him, but Achilles charged the Trojans and killed and killed again. He killed Iphition, whose mother was a river-nymph and whose father was named Otrynteus. Iphition charged at Achilles, and Achilles speared him in the head, splitting his skull. Achilles boasted, “Here you die, Iphition — far from home.”

Achilles killed Demoleon, again with a wound to the head. Achilles’ spear stabbed Demoleon’s temple, going through his helmet’s cheekpiece. Demoleon’s brain splattered inside his helmet.

Achilles killed Hippodamas, who jumped from his chariot and fled from Achilles. Achilles speared him in the back. Hippodamas died bellowing like a bull about to be sacrificed.

Achilles killed Polydorus, the youngest son of Priam. Priam did not want him to fight, but Polydorus was proud of his fast running. He ran by Achilles, and Achilles speared him in the back. The spear went through his breastplate and came out his naval, taking his intestines with it. Polydorus died screaming with his intestines in his hands.

As he killed, Achilles demonstrated his skill at warfare. The head is a smaller target than the chest. A warrior who misses an enemy’s chest could hit the stomach, shoulders, or head. A warrior who misses an enemy’s head is likely to miss altogether. Achilles often killed Trojans by inflicting head wounds.

As he killed, Achilles demonstrated his lack of mercy. He killed every Trojan he could, including those fleeing from him. Achilles often killed Trojans by inflicting back wounds.

Hector saw his brother Polydorus die, and Hector charged Achilles, who saw him. Achilles said to himself, “This is the person who has caused me the most grief, who has killed Patroclus. At last, I can fight him.”

Achilles shouted at Hector, “You are now going to die.”

Hector replied, “Don’t try to scare me with words. I am a warrior. I know that you are a great warrior. I am much weaker than you are, but I may still be able to kill you. I have killed warriors before.”

Hector hurled his spear at Achilles, but Athena gently blew her breath, and the spear flew back to Hector and fell at his feet. Achilles charged at Hector eager to kill him, but Apollo surrounded Hector in fog and kept him away from Achilles’ weapons — a god has that power. Three times Achilles stabbed with his spear — three times his spear encountered only fog. The fourth time Achilles stabbed with his spear, he realized that he would not be able to kill Hector — yet.

Achilles said, “Hector, you dog, you have dodged your death. Apollo has saved your life. But we will meet again in battle, and then I will kill you. Right now, I will kill as many Trojans as I can.”

Achilles killed Dryops, spearing him in the neck.

Achilles killed Demuchus, spearing him in the knee and then taking his life with a sword.

Achilles killed two sons of Bias: Laogonus and Dardanus. He threw them from their chariot and killed one with a spear and the other with a sword.

Tros supplicated Achilles and begged for mercy. He grabbed Achilles' knees, hoping to stay alive, hoping that Achilles would not kill him. He was wrong. This Achilles was not merciful — not to Trojans and their allies. Achilles used his sword to slit open Tros' liver. Tros' wound gushed with blood, and his *psyche* went to the Land of the Dead.

Achilles killed Mulius. Achilles rammed his spear through one of Mulius' ears so that it came out through the other ear.

Achilles killed Echeclus. Achilles used his sword to split open Echeclus' head. Achilles' sword was hot from blood and friction.

Achilles killed Deucalion. Achilles speared Deucalion's arm, rendering it useless. Deucalion stood with his arm dangling and waited for Achilles to kill him. Achilles used his sword to cut off Deucalion's head. The head and helmet dropped to the ground, and marrow spurted from Deucalion's spine.

Achilles killed Rhigmus and his charioteer, Areithous. Achilles speared Rhigmus in the belly, and Rhigmus fell out of the chariot. Rhigmus' charioteer, Areithous, tried to escape, but Achilles speared him in the back and Areithous fell out of the chariot beside Rhigmus.

Achilles was like a wild fire, blazing through a mountain gorge and feasting on dry timber and creating chaos. Achilles used his chariot to kill Trojans, running over them and their corpses like oxen stomp on barley. The axle under Achilles' chariot was covered with blood. The handrails of his chariot were covered with blood. Blood sprayed into the air from the hooves of the horses pulling his chariot. Blood sprayed into the air from his chariot's wheels. Blood covered Achilles' powerful arms.

Zeus thought, *At one time, Achilles showed mercy to his enemies. This is something that Andromache, Hector's wife, knows. Achilles killed her father, King Eetion, but he did not strip his armor and he did give the corpse a proper funeral. Achilles showed respect to his enemy King Eetion. Also, Achilles did not make Andromache's mother a slave but instead allowed her to be ransomed. In addition, Achilles used to often respect suppliants and allow them to stay alive so they could be ransomed.*

In battle, suppliants beg for their life. The suppliant takes one arm and puts it around the knees of the person he is supplicating. This keeps the warrior from moving. The suppliant often uses his other hand to reach up and grab the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. Then the suppliant begs for mercy. By doing these things, the suppliant is showing that he does not have a weapon. One hand is around the warrior's knees; the other hand is grabbing the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. Obviously, the suppliant is not holding a weapon in either hand. In addition, the suppliant is making the warrior pay attention to the suppliant. One hand is around the warrior's knees, so the warrior can't move. The other hand is grabbing the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. The warrior is forced to pay attention to the suppliant. Most importantly, the act of supplication shows that the suppliant is completely vulnerable. The suppliant is unarmed, and the suppliant's throat is exposed because he is looking up at the warrior.

Achilles used to respect suppliants. Not now.

CHAPTER 21: Achilles Fights the River

Achilles continued attacking Trojans, and he split their army into two parts at the ford of the river Xanthus. One half of the Trojans ran across the plain toward Troy. The previous day the Greeks had fled across the plain to escape from Hector. Now the Trojans fled across the plain to escape from Achilles. Hera spread thick fog across the plain to slow down the Trojans so that Achilles could kill more of them.

Achilles trapped the other half of the Trojans in the river. They spun around in whirlpools. They screamed. They had little control of their movements. They were like locusts feeling the heat of a fire and flying into the air and heading toward a river as the fire burns them and beats them down. Now, because of Achilles, the river was choked with men and horses.

Achilles dropped his spear on the riverbank and plunged into the river with his sword, eager to kill and kill again. Trojans groaned and screamed. Stabbed by Achilles' sword, they bled and the river water grew red. Like fish fleeing from a dolphin that devours all it can, the Trojans attempted to flee from Achilles.

Even Achilles grew tired because of all the effort he exerted while killing. He captured twelve young Trojans warriors alive so that he could kill them later as a human sacrifice at the funeral of Patroclus. He took the young Trojans from the river and onto the riverbank. They were dazed; they were as helpless as fawns. He tied their hands behind them with their own war-belts, and he gave them to aides to take back to the ships. Then he returned to killing.

Now he saw Lycaon, a son of Priam, climbing out of the river. Achilles had captured him not long ago. Achilles had been on a night raid, and he had found Lycaon in Priam's orchard, where he was cutting branches from a fig tree so that he could use them to make rails for a chariot. Achilles captured him. Achilles had sold him off as a slave to King Euneus of Lemnos, but Eetion of Imbros ransomed him and sent him to Arisbe, and from there Lycaon went back to Troy and his father, Priam.

Lycaon stayed with his father for eleven days, and the twelfth day — this day — he returned to war and again ran into Achilles — an Achilles now without mercy, an Achilles very willing to send him to the Land of the Dead. Lycaon was disarmed — no shield, no helmet, no spear.

Achilles, recognizing him at once, said, "These Trojans keep coming back. I captured this man and sold him as a slave in Lemnos, and here he is again! Let me see if I can keep him from coming back this time. My spear should accomplish that goal. Either he will return yet one more time or the life-giving earth will cover him and keep him from rising."

Lycaon was afraid. He wanted to live. He stumbled toward Achilles, wanting to grab his knees and plead for mercy. Achilles raised his spear — Lycaon ducked underneath it and grabbed Achilles' knees with one hand and Achilles' spear with the other. He begged, "Achilles, have mercy on me. Respect me — a suppliant! Don't kill me! When you captured me, I ate your food, that day you captured me in my father's orchard. You sold me and made a lot of money. I have been at home in Troy for only a few days. I have suffered much already, and yet again fate has placed my life in your hands. Zeus must hate me! My mother, Laothoë, must have given birth to a man with a short life. Priam wed my mother, one of his many wives. My mother gave birth to two sons. You have already killed one of her sons — don't kill the other! You have already killed my brother Polydorus. You speared him in the back as he ran, and the spear came out his navel. He died screaming and holding his intestines. Now I may face a horrible death. You are angry at the death of kind and gentle Patroclus, whom Hector killed. But I am only a half-brother to Hector. We have the same father, but we did not come out of the same womb."

Achilles replied, “You are a fool if you think I will allow you to be ransomed. Don’t even speak of it. Before Hector killed Patroclus, sometimes I would spare the lives of a few Trojans. I would take them alive and then sell them as slaves. No longer. I will spare the lives of no Trojans. I especially will not spare the lives of Trojans who have Priam as their father.

“Friend, you are going to die anyway. You are mortal. Why are you complaining? Look at me. I am handsome. I am strong. I have an immortal goddess as a mother. Does that make me immortal? No. I will die. Someday, not long from now, my death and my fate are coming. Perhaps at dawn, perhaps at sunset, perhaps at noon, a warrior will kill me with a spear or an arrow.”

Lycaon knew that he was going to die. He let go of Achilles’ spear, and he sank to the ground. Achilles drew his sword and plunged it to the hilt into Lycaon’s neck. Lycaon died quickly, his blood spilling as he fell on the ground.

Achilles grabbed Lycaon’s foot and threw him in the river. Lycaon’s corpse washed downstream and Achilles shouted after it, “Stay with the fish. They will eat your corpse! No need for a funeral! Your mother will not be able to give your body a proper funeral. The river Scamander will carry your corpse to the sea. The fish will dine on your fat.

“Trojans, die! I will kill and kill again until I reach Troy. Try to run from me, and I will run you down and kill you! Not even this river will be able to save you. You have sacrificed to the river-god many bulls and horses. Those sacrifices won’t help you. All of you Trojans will pay with your blood for the death of Patroclus and the other Greeks!”

The river-god of the Xanthus River grew angry at Achilles and his words. A Trojan river-god, he supported the Trojans and wished to slow down or stop Achilles’ rout of the Trojans. The river-god was angry at pitiless Achilles for killing so many Trojans.

Achilles charged Asteropaeus, whose father was the son of the river-god of the Axius River. The river-god of the Xanthus River filled Asteropaeus, who carried two spears, with courage.

Achilles asked, “Who are you? Where do you come from? Pity all warriors who attempt to fight me!”

Asteropaeus replied, “I am a Trojan ally, not a Trojan. I come from a land that is far away. This is the eleventh day since I arrived at Troy. The Axius River fathered Pelagon, and he is my father. I know who you are, Achilles. Let’s fight!”

Achilles raised his spear, but ambidextrous Asteropaeus threw both of his spears at the same time. One spear hit Achilles’ shield, but the third layer — the gold layer — stopped it. The other spear grazed Achilles’ arm, cutting the skin and drawing blood. Achilles threw his spear. It missed, plunging half its length into the ground because of Achilles’ great strength.

Achilles drew his sword and rushed at Asteropaeus, who tried but failed to pull Achilles’ spear out of the ground. Three times he grabbed the spear and pulled, but the spear would not move. The fourth time he tried to pull out the spear, Achilles was on him, cutting open his midriff so that his intestines fell out onto the ground.

Normally, Achilles was too eager to kill to stop and strip off his fallen enemies’ armor, but he was angry at being wounded and so he stripped off the armor of Asteropaeus, telling the corpse, “Stay there with the other corpses! You say that your ancestry includes a river-god? My ancestry includes Zeus himself. My grandfather is Aeacus, and his father was Zeus, who is much stronger than any river-god.

“Look at this river beside us! Can it help you? No! No river — not even the Ocean River — is more powerful than Zeus!”

Achilles pulled his spear from the ground and left Asteropaeus lying in the river, fish nibbling at his fat.

Achilles charged Asteropaeus' warriors — the Paeonians — who fled from him now that their leader was dead. Achilles killed and killed again. He killed Thersilochus, Mydon, Astypylus, Mnesus, Thrasius, Aenius, and Ophelestes.

Achilles would have killed more Paeonians, but the river-god of the Xanthus River cried out, "Achilles, stop! You are strong, and you are merciless. You have the help of the gods! If you must kill Trojans, do it on the plain, not in my river, which is choked with so many corpses that the water cannot reach the sea. The amount of slaughter you are committing horrifies me!"

Achilles replied to the river-god, who is called Scamander by mortals and Xanthus by the gods, "I will kill on the plain, as you want, but I will not stop killing Trojans and their allies until either I kill Hector or he kills me."

Achilles ran to the plain, but the river-god cried out to Apollo, "Why are you holding back and doing nothing? Don't you have orders from Zeus to help the Trojans and save their lives until the sun sets?"

Hearing that, Achilles became angry and not recognizing the limits of a human being, he ran to the river and jumped into its waters, eager to fight the river-god, who caused the waters to rise and throw all of the corpses in the river out onto the plain. The river-god also hid the still living Trojans in the river's water so that Achilles could not find and kill them.

The river-god caused a tremendous wave to slam against Achilles' shield and stagger him. Achilles grabbed a full-grown elm tree and held on to it, but the elm tree fell into the river, taking much of the riverbank with it. Achilles rose to the surface and rushed toward the plain. But the river-god was not finished with Achilles, although Achilles ran as fast as a swooping eagle. The river-god caused the river's waters to run after Achilles. A farmhand sets up an irrigation system to bring water to plants, but the water gets out of control. Too much water flows, and what should be a trickle becomes a flood that threatens the farmhand. Much like that, the waters threatened Achilles. Mortals should not fight gods unless they have the permission of gods more powerful than the ones they are fighting.

Achilles kept whirling about trying to find the river-god to fight him, wondering if all the gods were now opposed to him. Again and again, huge waves crashed down on Achilles, trying to knock him off his feet.

Achilles prayed, "Zeus! Won't even one god rescue me! If I escape this river-god, I will face any fate you give me. My mother must have lied to me. She said that I would die before the walls of Troy, killed by the arrows of Apollo. A better death than drowning would be for Hector to kill me. He is the best Trojan warrior. Hector is a hero, and anyone he kills in battle is a hero, even if Hector strips the fallen warrior's armor. Better a death like that than to be drowned like a young pig-keeper who falls into a river!"

Poseidon and Athena heard Achilles' prayer. They assumed human form and came to assist him and give him courage. They grabbed his hands and brought him onto the plain.

Poseidon said, "Achilles, have courage! Don't be afraid. Two gods — Athena and I — are helping you. Your mother did not lie. You will not drown in the river. Soon this river will subside.

"Listen to us. Keep killing Trojans until you have routed them back to Troy. Do not stop killing Trojans until you have killed Hector. Then return to the ships. You will win *kleos* today!"

Poseidon and Athena left Achilles, and filled with courage by Athena, he ran down the plain in search of Trojans to kill.

But the river-god was not finished. The waters flooded the plain, and corpses rolled in the waters. Still angry at Achilles, the river-god of the Xanthus River called to the river-god of the other Trojan river — the Simois, "Arise, brother, and attack Achilles! He can this day conquer

Troy — no Trojan can stop him in battle! Use your waters as weapons against him, and together we can stop him. He is strong, and his armor is glorious, and we can drown him and keep the Greeks from ever finding his corpse. I myself will bury his corpse under river-silt! His grave-mound will be under water!”

The waters attacking Achilles grew stronger and more powerful, but Hera was watching. She said to her son, Hephaestus, the god of fire, “Fire opposes water. You are the one who ought to fight the river-god. You are a worthy opponent. Rescue Achilles with your fire! I will order the West and the South winds to blow and make the fire burn hotter. Burn the river-god into submission. Don’t listen to the river-god’s threats or flattery! Keep burning the river-god until I order you to stop!”

Hephaestus followed her orders. His fire burned the plain and the corpses lying on the plain — corpses that Achilles had scattered. In the autumn the North wind blows on a wet field and dries it, gladdening the farmer who can now work in the field. Much like that, Hephaestus and the winds parched the plain and burned the corpses, and then Hephaestus turned the fire on the trees and the river. Elms burned, willows burned, tamarisk bushes burned, and lotus, galingale, reeds, and rushes burned. Eels and fish writhed and jumped in agony.

The river-god, conquered, shouted, “Hephaestus, stop! I give up! I cannot oppose you and win. Let Achilles kill the Trojans! Why should I worry about mortals!”

The river-god screamed. The river’s waters bubbled just like a cauldron bubbles as it melts pig-fat.

The river-god then shouted, “Hera, why is Hephaestus attacking me so much more than any other? Have I ever done anything to you? I have not done anything more than the others who help the Trojans! If you want me to stop helping the Trojans, I will obey! But tell your son — Hephaestus — to stop torturing me! I swear not to do anything to help keep Troy from falling!”

Hera heard the river-god, and she shouted, “Stop, Hephaestus! Enough! There is no need for one god to fight another god over some mortals!”

Hephaestus heard her and quenched his fire, and the waters of the river settled back into their natural channel.

The river-god was defeated, but now many of the gods decided to go to war. Not Zeus. He remained on Mount Olympus. Amused, he watched the battle of the gods.

Ares charged Athena and shouted, “Flea of a dog, I have not forgotten when you helped Diomedes to wound me. You yourself grabbed his spear and guided it into my body. Now it’s payback time!”

He stabbed at her shield — without result. Athena backed away and grabbed a boulder from the ground. It was jagged and weighty; it was an old boundary stone. She threw it at Ares and hit his neck. He fell, and his godly body covered seven acres. Athena laughed at him and said, “Fool, I am better than you are! Ask Hera, who is angry at you because you support the Trojans!”

Athena moved away, and Aphrodite came over to assist Ares and take him away from the gods’ battlefield. He groaned. He could not support his weight. Hera saw Aphrodite. Hera said to Athena, “Your work is not done yet. Look at Aphrodite as she helps Ares. Bring her down!”

Athena charged at Aphrodite. Athena used her fists to beat Aphrodite’s breasts — a painful punishment. Aphrodite sank to the ground with Ares. Neither Aphrodite nor Ares wanted to go to war against Athena.

Athena boasted, “You are no match for me! May all the gods who support the Trojans have the same ‘success’ in battle as you two! Then the Trojan War will soon be over, with Troy conquered at last!”

Hearing Athena, Hera smiled.

Poseidon challenged Apollo, his nephew, to fight: “Why not try to take me down? The other gods are fighting, so why shouldn’t we? Won’t we two be disgraced unless we come to blows? You should throw the first punch. You are younger than I am. I have experienced more and know more than you do.

“But you must have a short memory. You and I labored here at Troy. Zeus punished us when we rebelled against him — Zeus sent us to Troy to work for an entire year for Priam’s father, Laomedon, who promised us wages. I labored at building the walls of Troy, and you worked as a shepherd of the king’s flocks — but Laomedon refused to pay us the wages he had promised us. He cursed us. He sent us away. He threatened to bind us and make us slaves. He threatened to cut off our ears with an ax. So we went back to Mount Olympus, angry. So why do you now support the Trojans?”

Watching and listening on Mount Olympus, Zeus thought, *Poseidon and Apollo were able to get revenge against Laomedon, the father of Priam. Apollo sent a plague to Troy, and Poseidon sent a sea-monster to terrorize Troy. An oracle told Laomedon that to stop the plague he would have to sacrifice his daughter Hesione to the sea-monster, so Laomedon chained her to a rock so that the sea-monster could kill her. But Heracles showed up at Troy and offered to kill the sea-monster and save Hesione in return for a team of excellent horses. Heracles kept his part of the deal, but Laomedon, treacherous as ever, reneged on giving the horses to Heracles. Angry at this treachery, Heracles conquered Troy and killed Laomedon.*

Apollo replied, “Poseidon, I should not fight you because of some wretched mortal men. Mortal men are like leaves. They flourish for a moment, and then they die. You and I need not fight. Let the mortals fight.”

Apollo left. He would be ashamed to fight his uncle, a god older than he.

But Apollo’s twin sister, Artemis, insulted him: “So, Apollo, you are a coward who flees from Poseidon. You give him *kleos* without his having to fight you. Why are you even carrying that bow if you aren’t willing to use it? Never let me hear you boast on Mount Olympus that you are willing to fight Poseidon.”

Apollo did not reply to Artemis, but Hera had heard her words. Hera, who was Artemis’ aunt, said to her, “Artemis, do you have the nerve to fight me with your bow and arrows? You have the power to kill women in childbirth, but I doubt that you have the power to defeat me. You are much more talented at hunting wild animals in the woods than you are at fighting a goddess! So let me teach you not to fight me!”

Hera’s left hand grabbed Artemis’ wrists, and Hera’s right hand stripped away Artemis’ bow and quiver of arrows. She then used the weapons to hit Artemis’ ears. Hera smiled as Artemis writhed and Artemis’ arrows fell on the ground. Artemis cried and ran away from Hera like a dove escaping the attack of a hawk. She left her weapons behind as she fled.

Hermes told Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, “I would never fight you. It is not wise to fight any goddess who has slept with Zeus. So leave. Tell everyone that you defeated me in battle.”

Leto gathered her daughter’s bow, quiver, and arrows and followed Artemis to Mount Olympus. Artemis arrived first and sought refuge in the arms of Zeus, her father. Crying like a little girl, she sat on her father’s lap.

Zeus hugged her and asked, “Who has hurt you, child? It is as if you have been punished for doing something unseemly in public.”

Artemis replied, “Your own wife — Hera — hit me! It’s all her fault!”

Apollo arrived at Mount Olympus next. He was worried. Troy was not fated to fall on this day, but the Trojans were routed and the Greeks were triumphant, and Troy could fall despite

its fate.

The other gods and goddesses soon returned to Mount Olympus. Their battle had been very brief.

Achilles kept on slaughtering Trojans and Trojan allies. Fire can kill many people in its path, and Achilles killed every enemy he could.

Priam was watching from the high walls of Troy. He saw Achilles triumphant, killing and killing again. He saw the routed Trojans trying to make it to Troy alive. He cried out, "Open the gates of Troy! Let our routed troops inside Troy! Achilles is pursuing them. Once our warriors are inside the gates, close them. Don't let Achilles in!"

The Trojan guards opened the gates, and Apollo decided to help the Trojan warriors, who ran to the gates, hoping to save their lives as Achilles pursued them.

Apollo put courage into the heart of Agenor, a minor Trojan warrior and one of the many sons of Antenor. Agenor saw Achilles running toward him, and Agenor wondered what he should do. He said to himself, "Should I run away from Achilles and run toward Troy as the other Trojans are doing? Is that the best course of action? Achilles is fast, and he will catch up to me and kill me. Or should I leave the other Trojans and run away from Achilles on the plain toward Mount Ida? Is that the best course of action? I could hide from Achilles in the underbrush and stay alive. Then I could wash off my sweat in the river and make my way to Troy. But that is also a bad choice. If I run away from Achilles, he will run after me and kill me. Achilles is much, much stronger and faster than I am. I will not be able to run away from my death at his hands.

"Have I not even one good choice? I could face Achilles here and now. He is stronger than I am. I will almost certainly die, but still I may be able to kill him and bring hope to the Trojans. If I were to fight Achilles a hundred times, at least ninety-nine of those times would result in him killing me. But maybe — not certainly, but maybe! — the hundredth time I would kill Achilles! That is what I will do. I will fight Achilles and almost certainly die. But maybe I will defeat him. At the very least, Achilles will take a few minutes to kill me and that will allow some of my fellow Trojans to escape."

Zeus, who sometimes knows the thoughts of men, thought, *The battle of the gods was silly. The gods who did not fight ended up with more dignity than those who did fight. Many battles of the gods are silly. The gods cannot die, and their wounds heal quickly. In contrast, the battles of mortals are deadly serious. Mortals die, and their psyches go down to the Land of the Dead.*

Agenor is a hero. Heroes are willing to risk their lives to help other human beings. Agenor is willing to fight Achilles although he knows that almost certainly Achilles will kill him. Agenor is not going to run away from Achilles. Instead, Agenor is willing to sacrifice his life in an effort to kill Achilles, knowing that his effort will almost certainly fail. Gods cannot die; gods cannot be heroes. But even a warrior who is usually a minor warrior can be a hero.

Agenor stood, waiting for Achilles. Agenor was willing to fight to the death, just like a panther that attacks a huntsman who has a pack of dogs. The panther is not afraid. Even if the panther is speared, she still fights. Either she will kill the huntsman, or the huntsman will kill her.

Agenor held his shield in front of his chest, and gripped his spear. He said to Achilles, "You must be hoping to conquer Troy today. It won't happen. We still have plenty of warriors — hundreds — left to defend their wives, children, and parents. You will meet your fate at Troy."

Agenor hurled his spear at Achilles. It hit Achilles below the knee, but it bounced off his armor.

Achilles charged Agenor, but something happened that Agenor had not anticipated — Apollo saved his life. Apollo wrapped fog around Agenor and took him away from Achilles.

Apollo assumed the form of Agenor, returned to Achilles, and fooled him. Apollo allowed Achilles to chase him — Achilles wanted to kill Agenor. Apollo teased Achilles by letting him almost but not quite catch up to him. Apollo ran away from Achilles, leading him to the Scamander River and away from Troy.

Meanwhile, Trojan warriors ran back to Troy. Defeated, they crowded into the city, grateful that they were fast enough to save their lives.

CHAPTER 22: Hector Fights Achilles

In Troy, the warriors who had fled like fawns away from Achilles drank to quench their thirst. Outside the walls, the Greek troops approached the city. Still outside Troy's walls was Hector, standing by the Scaean Gates. His fate approached.

Apollo now revealed himself to Achilles, saying, "Look at the god you are chasing. You thought that you were chasing Agenor! I tricked you. I wanted to save Trojan warriors. Look! They have reached the walls of Troy! But you are out here, far from the walls. You have been trying to kill me, but you can't — I am immortal!"

Achilles was furious. He shouted at Apollo, "You saved many Trojans whom I would have killed! You have stolen *kleos* away from me. Because you are an immortal god, I cannot punish you, but if I were powerful enough to kill you, I would!"

Achilles ran to Troy. He was like a stallion pulling a chariot in a race.

Priam, King of Troy, saw Achilles first. Achilles blazed like the star known as Orion's Dog, the star that brings dangerous fevers to mortals. Priam saw Achilles' armor glinting, and he groaned and called to Hector, who was still standing outside the walls of Troy, "Don't try to fight Achilles, my son! You have no friends by you to help you! Achilles will kill you without mercy! He is a much stronger warrior than you. I wish that the gods would answer my prayers and kill him and allow the dogs and birds to eat his flesh. Seeing that would relieve much of my misery!"

"Achilles has taken so many of my sons away from me. Either he killed them, or he captured them and sold them into slavery far away. I look, but I cannot find my young sons Lycaon and Polydorus. They are two sons whom Laothoë bore to me. If Achilles captured them alive, I will ransom them with bronze and gold, treasure that is still left to me. We still have treasure left in Troy — treasure that Laothoë's father gave to me as a dowry. But Lycaon and Polydorus may be already dead. Their mother and I will grieve long for them. The Trojans, however, will grieve for them for only a moment because they were minor warriors.

"But you, Hector, are the main defense of Troy! All Troy will grieve long for you if Achilles kills you! So come into the city — be safe behind the walls. You can still defend the Trojan men and the Trojan women. Don't let Achilles kill you and gain *kleos*!"

"Hector, pity me! I am an old man. I am not senile, but old age has withered my limbs. I have already looked on much horror, and no doubt Zeus knows that the end of my life will be additional horror. What will I see at the end of my life? With you dead, I will see my sons killed, my daughters dragged away to become sex-slaves, my treasure carried away, infants killed by being flung to the ground from the high walls of Troy, and the wives of my sons carried away to be slaves and serve their masters in bed!"

"As for me, an enemy will kill me and my dogs will eat my body. The dogs that I have raised to guard me will lap up my blood.

"Young men who die in battle have a noble death. They win *kleos* as they defend wives, children, parents, and citizens. But when an old man dies, the dogs chew his head and his genitals. Does a crueler sight exist?"

Priam groaned, but Hector stayed outside the walls of Troy.

Hecuba, Hector's mother, cried and opened her robe. She revealed a breast and held it. She called to Hector, "My child, look at *this*! Pity me, your mother, who breastfed you. Come behind the walls of Troy and fight Achilles from here. Don't try to fight Achilles outside the walls of Troy in single combat. Achilles has no pity. If he kills you, I won't be able to mourn over your body. Neither will Andromache, your wife, who loves you. Achilles will take your corpse back to the ships and allow the dogs and birds to eat your flesh!"

Both Priam and Hecuba wept and cried out to Hector, but he stayed outside the walls of Troy, waiting for Achilles. A poisonous snake can lie in wait, ready to strike and kill. So Hector waited for Achilles.

As he waited, Hector said to himself, “I must fight Achilles. I have no other good course of action. If I go inside the walls of Troy, I must face Polydamas, who urged me last night to return to Troy now that Achilles is once again fighting for the Greeks. I would not do as Polydamas advised. I was wrong. I should have followed his advice. Now the Trojan army is defeated. Now many Trojan warriors and allies are dead who would be still alive if I had followed Polydamas’ advice. Now many Trojan parents lack sons who would be still alive if I had followed Polydamas’ advice. Now many Trojan sisters lack brothers who would be still alive if I had followed Polydamas’ advice. Now many Trojan women are widows who would be still wives if I had followed Polydamas’ advice. I am ashamed to face the Trojans. Someone will point this out — correctly: ‘Hector destroyed his army because he was so confident in his own strength.’

“Now the best thing I can do is to fight Achilles and kill him. That is the best course of action available to me, and that is the best outcome.

“But suppose I put aside my weapons and armor and greet Achilles with respect. I could promise to give Helen back to the Greeks and give back the treasure that Paris stole from Menelaus. As war reparations, I could give half of the treasure that is inside Troy. I could swear an oath that we will hide no treasure from the Greeks.

“But why even daydream about such things. Achilles will have no pity for me, no mercy. If I don’t wear armor, he will kill me anyway. Instead of killing me like the warrior I am, he will kill me as if I were an unarmed woman.

“I can’t reason with Achilles. I can’t talk to him. It is not as if we are a boy and a girl talking together and sharing secrets.”

Hector was trying very hard not to think of Andromache, his wife.

Hector continued speaking to himself, “All I can do now is to fight Achilles. Zeus will give one of us — maybe even me — the victory.”

Achilles was close now, looking like Ares, the god of war, running straight at Hector. Achilles’ armor blazed like a fire or the sun.

Hector looked at him and lost his nerve. He was afraid, and he ran. He had no time to get through the Scaean Gates before Achilles reached him, so he ran away, around the city. Achilles was like a hawk chasing a dove, eager to tear it to pieces.

They ran and ran, passing the washing grounds outside the city. Two streams were there: one hot and steaming, and the other cold. In the days of peace, women would gather here to wash their laundry and then dry it on the grass. In the days of peace, so many things were different. People, including women and children, could leave the city and be safe. Shepherds could take their sheep to good pasture. Now only armed warriors left the city. The blessings of peace were gone. The people of Troy had traded the blessings of peace away for Helen so that Paris and she could have an adulterous relationship.

Achilles and Hector ran. Hector was a great warrior, but Achilles was a greater warrior. The two raced for a prize. They raced for a life — the life of Hector. They were like stallions racing in funeral games to celebrate the life of a fallen warrior. They were racing for a fine, notable prize worth racing for.

Achilles chased Hector three times around Troy, and the gods watched them.

Zeus said to the other gods, “I pity Hector. He is a mortal I respected, who respected me. Hector sacrificed many oxen to me both on Mount Ida and inside the walls of Troy. Now Achilles is chasing him, eager to take his life. Achilles is a faster runner than Hector.

“Gods, what should we do? Should we intervene and save the life of Hector or allow Achilles to take his revenge and kill him?”

Athena replied, “Hector is only a mortal. He has a fate — like all mortals, he is fated to die. You can do as you wish, but if you save his life, you will cause trouble.”

Zeus said, “Athena, I was merely pitying Hector. I do not intend to save his life. Go, and do to him whatever you wish to do.”

Athena flew from Olympus to outside the walls of Troy.

Achilles kept chasing Hector. He was like a hound hunting a fawn until the hound finds and kills the fawn. Hector could not outrun Achilles. Hector tried to run to the walls of Troy so that the Trojans could throw spears at Achilles, but Achilles headed off every attempt, making sure that Hector stayed in between Achilles and the other Greek warriors.

Hector ran like a man in a nightmare. He runs and runs and he can’t escape his pursuer, and his pursuer cannot catch him. Apollo gave Hector enough speed to keep just ahead of Achilles.

Achilles shook his head at the Greek warriors, warning them not to try to kill Hector. Only Achilles would kill Hector. Only Achilles would avenge the death of Patroclus.

When Achilles and Hector reached the washing springs for the fourth time, Zeus held his scales. On one scale he placed Hector’s fate, and on the other scale, he placed Achilles’ fate. Hector’s fate sank; on this day, his *psyche* would journey to the Land of the Dead. Apollo then left Hector.

Athena said to Achilles, “Now we will kill Hector. He cannot escape us. Not even Apollo can save his life. Stay here, and I will convince Hector to face and fight you.”

Athena assumed the form of Deiphobus, one of Hector’s brothers. She said to him, “Brother, I have come to help you fight Achilles. You and I can face him together.”

Hector replied, “Deiphobus, you are the brother closest to me, the one I have loved the most out of all the sons whom Priam and Hecuba produced. Now I love you even more. Only one brother left the walls of Troy to come and help me. All my other brothers have stayed where they are safe.”

Athena, still disguised as Deiphobus, said, “The others were afraid, both for themselves and for me, and they did not want to leave Troy. Even Priam and Hecuba wanted me to stay behind the walls of Troy. Everyone begged me to stay there.

“But now let’s fight Achilles. Either he will kill both of us, or you will kill him.”

Athena was luring Hector to his death.

Hector said to Achilles, “I will no longer run from you, Achilles. I was afraid, and I ran three times around the walls of Troy. No longer will I run. Now I want to fight you. Either you will kill me, or I will kill you.

“But first let us make an agreement with the gods as our witnesses. I swear to the gods that if I kill you I will not mistreat your corpse. I will strip your armor from you, but I will give your corpse to the Greeks so that they can give your body a proper funeral and your *psyche* will be allowed to enter the Land of the Dead and not be kept from it, wailing. The dead belong with the dead.”

Achilles frowned and said, “No, Hector! You and I shall make no agreements. Do lions and men make agreements? Do wolves and lambs make agreements? No, the only thing that they have in common is that they hate each other. The same is true of you and me. We have no love for each other. The only thing we desire for the other is death. But let’s fight. Use whatever courage you have, but it won’t do you any good. You do not have long to live. You will pay for the grief you have caused me.”

Achilles hurled his spear, but Hector ducked and avoided death. Athena instantly grabbed Achilles’ spear and gave it back to him — but Hector did not see her.

Hector said to Achilles, “You missed! You were sure that I would die, but that is not something you can know for sure. You are bluffing. You are trying to scare me with words. You may kill me, but you will not spear me in my back. I will not run. Even if the gods help you, the most you can do is to spear me in the front of my body. But maybe I can kill you with my spear — I want to bury it in your body. With you dead, the Trojans will have an easier time in battle.”

Hector hurled his spear and it hit Achilles’ shield right in the center — but the spear bounced harmlessly off it. Hector did not have a second spear, so he asked Deiphobus to give him his spear — but Deiphobus was not present. Hector realized that he was alone, and he knew that he must die.

Hector shouted, “My fate has arrived! The gods have let me know that I must die now. I thought that my brother Deiphobus was helping me, but Athena was tricking me. And now my death has arrived — the death that long ago all the gods must have planned for me. So let me die — but let me go down fighting!”

Hector drew his sword and charged Achilles. Hector was dangerous like an eagle attacking a lamb. But Achilles also charged, holding his shield in front of him. He also held his spear, the metal point of which blazed like the evening star.

Achilles thought about how best to kill Hector, who was wearing Achilles’ armor — armor that Hector had stripped from the corpse of Patroclus. Achilles knew the armor well, and he knew that the armor left the warrior’s throat exposed. As Hector charged him, Achilles stabbed him in the throat. The mortal wound did not damage the windpipe, so Hector was able to choke out some words as he lay dying.

Achilles spoke first: “Hector, when you stripped my armor from the corpse of Patroclus and put it on, you must have thought that you would be safe — even from me! I was far away, but I am a better warrior than you and I am the avenger of Patroclus’ death. You are not yet done paying for his death. The dogs and birds will mutilate your corpse as they feed on it. You will not be buried, but we Greeks will bury Patroclus. Your *psyche* will not be allowed to enter the Land of the Dead.”

Gasping, Hector pleaded, “I beg you by your parents and by the gods, don’t let the dogs and birds mutilate my corpse. My father and mother will ransom my corpse with bronze and gold. Give my corpse to the Trojans so that it can receive a proper funeral and my *psyche* can enter the Land of the Dead. The dead belong with the dead.”

Achilles frowned and said, “Don’t beg, dog! If I could, I myself would eat your corpse. I would hack off strips of your flesh and eat them raw. You have caused me agonies of grief.”

Zeus thought, Hector killed Achilles’ best friend, but Achilles has killed or sold into slavery many of Hector’s brothers. The person who has the bigger grievance is Hector, not Achilles. Achilles sent his best friend into battle — Achilles should have known that Patroclus could die in battle. What is the essence of war? The death of a loved one.

Achilles continued, “I will not allow you to be ransomed. No one will be able to keep the dogs and birds away from your corpse — not even for ten or twenty times the ransom you speak of, not even if they give me all that now and promise more later. I will not allow you to be ransomed even if Priam offers me your weight in gold. Your father and mother shall never give you a funeral. Instead, the dogs and birds will eat your flesh!”

Hector replied, “You have no mercy. You are incapable of pity. I am dying, and so I have the gift of prophecy. Your mutilation of my corpse will make the gods angry. Soon, Paris and Apollo will kill you before the Scaean Gates.”

Hector died. His *psyche* went down to the Land of the Dead, but not until his corpse had received a proper funeral would it be allowed to enter. His *psyche* mourned at having died in

the prime of manhood. His *psyche* mourned at not being allowed to cross the river that kept it from the Land of the Dead. His *psyche* mourned at not being allowed to enter Hades.

Achilles said to the corpse, “Die! Die! Die! Now that you are dead, I will die willingly whenever Zeus chooses to bring my fate to me.”

Achilles pulled his spear out of Hector’s neck, and then he stripped the armor — Achilles’ old armor — from Hector’s body. The other Greek warriors now came close to look at the corpse of Hector, Troy’s greatest warrior. Every Greek warrior stabbed the corpse of Hector. They laughed and said, “Hector isn’t so tough now — not like he was when he burned one of our ships!”

Achilles said to the other Greeks, “Now that the gods have allowed me to kill Hector, we will have to see what the Trojans plan to do next. Will they surrender to us? Will they make a last stand? But first, I have to attend to unfinished business. Patroclus is still unburied. His corpse is lying in my camp. I will never forget Patroclus, not even in the Land of the Dead, a place where souls are thought to lose all memory.

“Now we have triumphed! Let us take the corpse of Hector to our ships. Let us cry out in triumph: Hector is dead!”

Achilles was not finished shaming the corpse of Hector. He cut holes in Hector’s ankles. Through them he threaded rawhide ropes. He tied the ropes to his chariot and left Hector’s head lying on the ground. Then Achilles mounted his chariot and drove away, dragging Hector’s handsome head in the dust.

Hecuba, Hector’s mother, tore the veil and headdress from her face and screamed as she looked at her son’s corpse being dragged away with no hope for a funeral.

Priam cried, and the citizens of Troy cried with him. They cried as if Troy were in flames and were being sacked. They knew that soon — now that Hector was dead — Troy would fall to the Greeks.

Priam wanted to get Hector’s corpse back immediately so he could bury it and allow Hector’s *psyche* to enter the Land of the Dead. He wanted to ransom it immediately. Troy’s citizens physically held him back.

Priam cried to his citizens, “Let me go! I must go to Achilles and give him treasure. I must ransom the corpse of my son. Maybe Achilles will respect an old man. His own father is an old man now. He raised Achilles, who has been a horror to me — he has killed so many of my sons. I mourn Hector most of all. I mourn him so much that I could die. I wish that Hector could have died here, in my arms — then his mother and I could give him a proper funeral!”

Hecuba mourned, “How can I live without you, Hector? I was so proud of you. You were the defender of Troy. Trojan citizens honored you. But now you are dead.”

Andromache still did not know that she had become a widow. No one had brought to her the news that Achilles had killed Hector. She was still in their home, weaving and embroidering flowers onto a robe. She had ordered her serving women to heat water so that Hector could have a hot bath when he returned home from the fighting. She did not know that Achilles was dragging Hector’s head in the dust.

Andromache heard screams coming from the walls of Troy. She knew that something bad had happened. She stopped weaving; she shook with fright. She ordered her serving women, “Two of you go with me to the walls. I must find out what has happened — I just heard the screams of Hecuba, Hector’s mother. Something horrible must have happened! Maybe Achilles has killed my husband!”

She ran to the walls, her serving women following her. She looked down on the plain. She saw Achilles dragging the corpse of her husband behind his chariot. She fainted, and as she fainted she tore her veil and headdress from her face.

Zeus thought, *I see so much when Andromache — and Hecuba earlier — tears off her veil and headdress. Married women wear veils and headdresses. When in Greek art a warrior tears off the veil and headdress from the head of a woman, it means that woman is now a widow and a slave. If the woman is young and pretty, like Andromache, she will be forced to serve her master in bed — she will be a sex-slave, just like Briseis and Chryseis. If the woman is older, like Hecuba, she will be a slave. The tearing off of a married woman's headdress and veil is a way of representing that the woman's marriage is being violated. The word for a married woman's veil and headdress is kredemna. This is also the word for the ramparts and battlements of a city. When the ramparts and battlements of a city are thrown down, that city has been conquered. When Andromache tears off her veil and headdress, her kredemna, we see in that image the coming fall of Troy. Now that Hector is dead, the fall of Troy is inevitable — the Greeks will conquer Troy.*

Andromache regained consciousness and struggled to breathe. The women of Troy tried to help her.

Andromache cried, “Hector, both of us are destroyed! We share the same sad fate, although you were born and raised in Troy and I was raised elsewhere. I wish that I had never been born!

“Now your *psyche* is journeying to the Land of the Dead, and I am still alive: a widow with a baby boy who has no father. What will happen to him now that you are dead and can no longer protect him? Even if he does not die during the war, his life will be filled with misery. Strangers will steal his land. Fatherless children have no friends. He will be humiliated and hungry. He will go to your former friends, and they will give him some food, but not enough. He will not starve, but he will be hungry. Bullies will beat him and tell him, ‘Go away. You have no father. You are not welcome here.’ Then he will come crying to me, his mother, a widow.

“But when you were alive, our son ate well. He ate the best, tastiest cuts of meat. When he was tired, he would go to sleep in the arms of his nurse; he was safe, secure, with no worries. He was called the Lord of the City because he was your son. You were the great hope of the Trojans to fight off the Greeks and keep Trojan citizens alive and free.

“But now your corpse will lie by the Greek ships. Worms will crawl through your corpse and eat it after the dogs and birds have eaten their fill.

“Your corpse will lie naked although in our home we have fine clothing. The clothing will never serve as your shroud, so I will burn it. I will sacrifice the clothing to honor you.”

Andromache cried, and the Trojan women cried.

CHAPTER 23: Funeral Games for Patroclus

The Greeks took Hector's body to the ships. Most of the Greeks went to their camps, but Achilles commanded his Myrmidons, "Let us honor Patroclus. Drive your chariots three times around the corpse of Patroclus. Then we will unhitch the horses from the chariots and eat the evening meal."

They did that, and Achilles cried in grief. The Myrmidons also grieved, and the sand around Patroclus' body was wet from tears.

Achilles touched Patroclus' chest and said, "Farewell, Patroclus. I will do everything that I have promised you that I would do. As I promised, I have killed Hector — the dogs and birds will eat his flesh. I have captured twelve Trojan young men. As I promised, I will sacrifice them at your funeral."

Achilles threw Hector's corpse facedown beside the corpse of Patroclus. One corpse was well cared-for; the other was not.

The Myrmidons removed their armor and took care of the horses, and Achilles and his Myrmidons prepared the evening meal. They butchered many cattle, sheep, goats, and swine.

At the request of the other Greek commanders, Achilles went to Agamemnon's camp. They wanted him to eat with Agamemnon. They also wanted him to wash the blood from his body. Achilles refused, saying, "No. I have taken an oath. I will not wash until I have placed the corpse of Patroclus on a pyre and burned it. Agamemnon, I request that when dawn arrives you order the warriors to cut timber for Patroclus' pyre. We must do everything necessary for Patroclus' *psyche* to enter the Land of the Dead. Patroclus' body must be cremated, and then we can begin to fight again."

Agamemnon agreed. The Greeks ate and then returned to their own ships to sleep.

Achilles lay alone on the beach, mourning for Patroclus. Exhausted from fighting and from grief, he managed to fall asleep. Immediately, Patroclus appeared to him in a dream.

Patroclus said to Achilles, "Have you forgotten me now that I am dead? You never forgot me while I was still alive. You must give me a proper funeral — quickly. Burn my corpse and collect the bones so that I may enter the Land of the Dead. My *psyche* is not allowed to cross the river and pass through the gates that lead to the Land of the Dead — not until my corpse receives a proper funeral. The horrible punishment that you want to give to Hector you are also giving to me because you have not burned my corpse. I mourn. I weep. I cannot enter the Land of the Dead. I wander up and down on the wrong side of the river. I am unable to reach my eternal home. Hermes, the Guide of the Dead, will not allow me to cross the river. I beg you to help me reach the Land of the Dead.

"I will never be alive again. I will never be with you and talk with you again. I am dead, and the dead belong with the dead.

"Achilles, your fate is coming for you. You will die — soon — before the walls of Troy.

"I have one final request to ask you. Let your bones and my bones be together in death. Let them be together just as we have been together since our youth. I came to your father's palace because I had killed a man and was fleeing for my life. I was just a boy when I killed a man with whom I had been gambling. I had not meant to kill him. My father, Menoetius, took me to the palace of your father, Peleus. You and I finished growing up together. I was your aide. Put my bones in the gold two-handled urn that your mother gave you. Later, your bones can join mine."

Achilles replied, "Patroclus, I will do everything that you have asked me to do. Let me hug you once more."

Achilles tried to hug Patroclus three times, but there was nothing substantial for him to touch. Each time he tried to hug Patroclus, it was if he were trying to hug smoke.

Patroclus disappeared, and Achilles woke up. He said to himself, “Even after we are dead, something of our personality remains. We are not alive, we are a phantom, but something of us remains. I saw Patroclus, and I talked to him.”

Dawn arrived, and Agamemnon ordered men to cut timber for the funeral pyre of Patroclus — his corpse must be cremated. Agamemnon put Meriones, Idomeneus’ aide, in charge. They cut down trees, split them, and dragged them back to the ships to the spot where Achilles would burn the corpse of his best friend. Achilles planned to build a funeral mound there; it would house the bones of Patroclus and of himself.

They built the pyre, and Achilles ordered his Myrmidons, “Harness your chariots. We must take the corpse of Patroclus to the pyre.”

They placed the corpse of Patroclus in a chariot, and they covered his corpse with locks of hair they cut off to honor him. In tears, Achilles held the head of his best friend.

They reached the site of the pyre. Achilles cut off a long lock of his own hair. He had been growing the lock long in order to cut it off to honor the river-god Spercheus back home in Greece, but Achilles would never return home.

Achilles cried out, “Spercheus, my father wanted me to cut off this long lock of hair in order to honor you once I returned home. He also wanted me to sacrifice many animals to you once I returned home. But now I will never return home, and so I cut off this lock to honor my fallen friend.”

Achilles placed the lock of his hair in the hands of Patroclus.

Achilles then said to Agamemnon, “You are the leader of the Greek army. The warriors will obey your orders. I request that you dismiss the warriors so that they can go and butcher animals for the evening meal. My Myrmidons and I will attend to the cremation of Patroclus’ body. But I request that you and the other main commanders stay here.”

Agamemnon agreed and dismissed the troops. He and the other main commanders stayed.

The mourners prepared the pyre. It was a hundred feet long and a hundred feet wide, and they placed the corpse of Patroclus on top. They sacrificed sheep and cattle, and Achilles cut fat from their bodies and covered Patroclus’ body with it. He wanted to ensure that the corpse would completely burn.

Achilles put jars of honey and oil beside the corpse. He sacrificed four stallions and threw their bodies on the pyre. He cut the throats of two of the nine dogs that Patroclus had fed — he wanted to be sure that enough dogs remained to feast on Hector’s corpse. Achilles also sacrificed the twelve young Trojans; enraged, he hacked them with his sword.

Achilles said to his friend’s corpse, “Just as I promised, I have sacrificed twelve Trojan youths. Their bodies I will burn, but I will never burn the body of Hector — the dogs will eat his corpse!”

Achilles was wrong about the dogs — the gods protected the corpse of Hector. Aphrodite stood guard over the corpse, and she beat away any dog that came near it. She also anointed the body with oil to protect it when Achilles dragged the body behind his chariot. Apollo, god of the sun, also protected the corpse. He put a cloud between the sun and Hector’s body to keep the body in shadow and protect it from the sun’s rays.

The funeral pyre of Patroclus was not burning the way it should burn. It was burning feebly, not fiercely. Achilles prayed. He promised splendid sacrifices to the West wind and the North wind if they would blow and make the fire burn.

Iris, the messenger of the gods, heard Achilles and took his prayer to the West wind and the North wind. All of the winds were banqueting in the halls of the West wind. Iris stood in the

doorway, and the winds invited her in to feast with them.

Iris declined: "Thank you, but no. I am off to the land of the Ethiopians to share in their sacrifice. I have come here to bring you the prayer of Achilles. He promises splendid sacrifices to you, the West wind and the North wind, if you will blow and make Patroclus' funeral pyre burn."

Iris sped away, and the West wind and the North wind blew. The winds reached the seas and created waves. They reached the funeral pyre, and the fire burned fiercely. All night the winds blew and the fire burned. All night Achilles poured wine onto the ground as a sacrifice to the gods. All night Achilles mourned for Patroclus. He mourned for Patroclus the way a father mourns a son who dies on the day that he was to be married.

After the morning star came and then the Dawn, the fire burned down and the winds headed for home and the waves died down. Achilles lay down. Exhausted, he slept.

Agamemnon and the other commanders arrived.

Achilles woke up and requested, "Agamemnon, commanders, please pour wine over the fire to put it out. Then we will collect the bones of Patroclus. They are in the center of the pyre, away from the bones of the human sacrifices. We will put the bones of Patroclus in an urn made of gold. We will seal it tight until I myself am dead. For now, we will build a small funeral mound for Patroclus. Later, after I am dead, you can build the funeral mound higher."

The Greek commanders obeyed Achilles' wishes. They poured wine over the fire. They gathered Patroclus' white bones. They put the bones in a golden urn and sealed it tightly and then placed it in Achilles' shelter. They also built the funeral mound.

The Greek commanders were ready to leave, but Achilles asked them to stay. He wanted to hold funeral games to honor Patroclus. Achilles brought out valuable prizes from his ships: cauldrons, tripods, stallions, mules, cattle, women, and metals.

The first event was the chariot race. The winner of the chariot race would win a beautiful woman who was skilled in crafts and a tripod with two handles. The runner-up would win an unbroken six-year-old mare that was pregnant with a mule foal. The third-place finisher would win a cauldron. The fourth-place finisher would win two bars of gold. The last-place finisher would win a jar with two handles.

Achilles announced to the Greeks, "Agamemnon, Menelaus, all you Greeks, let the funeral games for Patroclus begin. Here are the prizes for the charioteers. If the funeral games were being held for another hero, and if I were a competitor and not the host, I would win first place. My team of horses is the best — my horses are immortal. Poseidon gave these immortal horses to my father, and he gave them to me. But I will not race. My horses are mourning for Patroclus, who took such good care of them. The heads of my horses hang down, their manes in the dust, mourning a fallen warrior. But the rest of you can compete, if you trust in your horses and chariot."

The competitors stepped forward. Eumelus was a good charioteer with the best team of horses except for Achilles' own. Diomedes would use horses that he had taken from Aeneas — horses that had descended from those belonging to Tros. Menelaus would use Blaze, a mare belonging to Agamemnon, and Brightfoot, his own stallion. Blaze used to belong to Echepolus, but he gave Blaze to Agamemnon to pay his fine so that he would not have to go to Troy and fight. He was rich, and he preferred to stay in Greece. The fourth charioteer was Antilochus, one of the sons of Nestor, and the fifth and final charioteer was Meriones, the aide of Idomeneus.

Nestor gave Antilochus advice in racing tactics: "Antilochus, you are young, but the gods have shown that they respect you. You have learned horsemanship. You have racing skills. Still, out of all the teams that are competing in the race, your team is the slowest. Nevertheless,

the charioteer is as important as the team of horses. A good charioteer can make up for the slowness of his horses by using skill and tactics.

“Too many charioteers drive their horses carelessly. They make wide turns and lose ground. A skilled charioteer will make a tight turn, staying close to the turning point. That way, the charioteer does not travel too much distance and does not lose time.

“In this race, the turning point is a stump that is six feet high. Make a tight turn there. Keep close to the stump but do not hit it or you will lose the race. As you make your turn, lean to the left, in the direction in which you are turning. Whip the horse on the right to make it run faster than the horse on the left. Make the left horse stay close to the stump as you turn the chariot. In the straightaway you will trail the other teams, but you can make up time and distance in the turn.”

Nestor sat down to watch the race.

The charioteers boarded their chariots, and Achilles shook the lots that had been placed in a helmet. Antilochus got the inside track. Next came Eumelus, then Menelaus and Meriones, and Diomedes got the outside track. The referee at the stump was Phoenix, who would ensure that all competed by the rules as they turned and headed for the finish line.

At the signal, the chariots took off. The charioteers whipped their horses and yelled. Dust rose in the air, and the horses' manes were swept back by the wind the racing horses created. The chariots bounced, and the charioteers drove their teams of horses.

They reached the halfway mark, turned, and then began the final jockeying for position. Eumelus, who had the best horses, was far in front. Diomedes was in second place, close and coming closer.

The gods were watching, and the gods had favorites, and the gods were not above cheating. Apollo knocked Diomedes' whip out of his hands. His team slowed. But Athena grabbed the whip and placed it back in Diomedes' hands. She then smashed the yoke of Eumelus' chariot. The yoke of his chariot plowed a furrow, and Eumelus fell out of the chariot. Contact with the ground ripped skin from his elbows, mouth, and nose. He hit his forehead. He was disappointed and frustrated — he had been far in the lead.

Now Diomedes raced ahead, first by far of all the charioteers. In second place was Menelaus, and close behind him was Antilochus.

Antilochus yelled to his father's horses, “Faster! We can't pass Diomedes — he is too far in front! But we can pass Menelaus! If you don't pass Menelaus, Blaze will beat you — she is a mare! I warn you that if you don't pass Menelaus, my father will kill both of you horses! Faster! We can pass Menelaus where the road narrows!”

Antilochus' horses galloped faster. Just ahead was a place where winter rains had washed out part of the road. Enough hard dirt remained for one chariot to drive on, but around it was soft mud and holes that would slow down or ruin a chariot and injure horses. Only a fool would drive a chariot on such dangerous land.

Now Antilochus started to pass Menelaus although ahead there was not enough hard ground for two chariots. One charioteer would have to slow down to avoid the total disaster of two chariots crashed and two teams of horses injured. Menelaus was in front; he had the right of way. The rules of chariot racing stated that Menelaus should stay in the lead until the chariots passed the narrow place, and then Antilochus could attempt to pass him. But Antilochus ignored the rules. He was a young man, willing to take unnecessary, dangerous chances, and he wanted to win the second-place prize: the unbroken, pregnant mare.

Menelaus shouted at Antilochus, “Don't try to pass me here! Wait until we are past the narrow place, and then you can try to pass me! Don't wreck both of our chariots — don't destroy both of our teams of horses!”

Antilochus kept trying to pass, and Menelaus slowed his horses to avoid a disaster.

As Antilochus drove past him, Menelaus shouted at him, “You used to have good sense, or so we thought. We were wrong! The only way you will take the second-place prize is to perjure yourself by swearing to the gods that you did not break the rules of chariot racing!”

Menelaus then shouted to his horses, “Gallop! We can still catch up with Antilochus’ horses! They are older than you! They don’t have staying power!” His horses galloped after Antilochus’ chariot.

Achilles and the other Greek commanders waited for the chariots to arrive. Idomeneus stood on a good spot to see far, and he was the first to see the chariots and horses coming.

He said to the other Greek commanders, “Am I the only one who sees the chariot in front? I think we have a new leader. Eumelus was in front at the beginning of the race, but now it’s someone else. Eumelus must have run into trouble of some kind. Maybe he dropped his reins. Maybe his horses failed to safely make the turn. He may have smashed his chariot, and maybe his horses have run away.

“But look! I think I see Diomedes in the lead!”

Little Ajax disagreed — vehemently. He had faith in the chariot driving of Eumelus and in the swiftness of Eumelus’ horses. Little Ajax said to Idomeneus, “Don’t talk nonsense! You are an older man, and you don’t see as well as younger men. Eumelus is still in the lead — he must be!”

Idomeneus replied, “Little Ajax, you are a fool. Stubborn, too. Let’s make a bet. Let’s bet a tripod or a cauldron each and let Agamemnon be the judge of the chariot race. You will learn to be quiet after you have paid the price of losing the bet.”

Little Ajax and Idomeneus were ready to fight, but Achilles, a dissolver of quarrels, said to them, “No more! No more insulting each other, and no more fighting! Think of where you are! This is not the time or the place for such behavior! When you cool down, you will realize that. Wait, and the winner of the chariot race will soon arrive and you will see who is right.”

Diomedes and his horses stormed to the finish line in first place, well ahead of everybody else. His horses were lathered, and Diomedes was covered with dust from the race. Diomedes’ aide Sthenelus collected his first-place prizes: the beautiful woman who was skilled in crafts, and the tripod. He took them to Diomedes’ camp.

Antilochus crossed the finish line, but Menelaus closely pursued him. His horses had been behind by the length of a spear-throw, but now the distance between them was very small. Menelaus would have passed Antilochus if only the racecourse were longer. Meriones, Idomeneus’ aide, finished fourth. His horses were slow, and the other charioteers were more skilled than he.

Finishing last was the charioteer who, if all had gone well, would have finished first: Eumelus. Achilles wished to give credit to Eumelus for his fine team of horses and for his skill as a charioteer, and so he said, “The best charioteer finishes last. Allow me to give him a better prize than his finish allows — we all know his skill at driving chariots. Allow me to award him the second-place prize. Diomedes has won first place.”

Everyone agreed with Achilles’ desire — everyone but Antilochus. An older man would have agreed with Achilles’ desire, but Antilochus was still young and learning. He said, “Achilles, I will be furious if you give Eumelus the mare that I have won. Yes, Eumelus would have won if the yoke of his chariot had not broken, but he should have prayed to the gods. Then he could have finished the race in a better position. You want to give Eumelus a better prize? No problem. In your shelters you have gold, bronze, sheep, female slaves, and racehorses. Pick out a prize for him and give it to him. But I won’t give up my prize — the mare! Eumelus will have to fight me before he gets it!”

This was an awkward situation, but Achilles, a solver of problems, knew how to handle it. He smiled. He liked Antilochus.

Achilles replied, “You want me to give Eumelus a prize from my shelters? Good idea. I will give Eumelus the breastplate that I stripped from Asteropaeus. It is bronze and tin, and I know that Eumelus will value it.”

Achilles’ aide, Automedon, brought the breastplate from Achilles’ tents, and Achilles was right — Eumelus did value it.

But now more unpleasantness arose. Menelaus was still angry at Antilochus for passing him at the narrow part of the road. He said, “Antilochus, you cheated in the chariot race. You disregarded safety and the rules of chariot racing. You deliberately passed me at a narrow part of the road — a part where there was not enough room for two chariots to race side by side. The rules of chariot racing state that one chariot can pass another only when the passing can be done safely. I want justice, and I want everyone to realize that I am in the right and am not exerting power over you simply because I am older and more powerful than you. Here’s what we will do. You can keep the mare if and only if you swear an oath to the gods that you did not cheat in the chariot race.”

Antilochus matured. He realized that Menelaus was right, and he admitted it in public.

Antilochus said, “I am at fault, Menelaus. I cheated exactly as you said I did. I am young, and sometimes I act like it. Young men sometimes act without intelligence, and I acted that way. You take the second prize: the mare. And if you want an additional prize, anything I have in my shelter, I will get it and give it to you. Just tell me what you want. I do not want to make an enemy of an older man, and I will not swear a lying oath to the gods. I apologize for my bad actions.”

Antilochus led the mare to Menelaus and handed her bridle to him.

Generosity can breed generosity, just as anger can breed anger. Menelaus’ heart melted like dew dripping from corn. Achilles had been generous to Eumelus, and now Menelaus was generous to Antilochus.

Menelaus said, “Antilochus, I accept your apology. I am no longer angry at you. In the past, you have always exhibited good sense. Please continue to do so. Let me give credit where credit is due. You, Nestor, and your brother have served me well in my fight to get Helen back. You can keep the mare. I don’t want people to think that I am unforgiving.”

Menelaus gave the mare to Antilochus’ aide, and he led it away. Menelaus accepted the third-place prize: a cauldron. Meriones accepted the fourth-place prize: two bars of gold.

One prize was left: the two-handled jar.

Achilles, a master of etiquette, wanted to honor Nestor. He said to Nestor, “Here is a prize for you, old friend. When you look at it, remember the funeral of Patroclus. We will never see him again among the living. You are too old to compete for prizes, but nevertheless you should have a prize.”

Achilles handed the two-handled jar to Nestor, who was pleased to be so honored.

Nestor said to Achilles, “You are right about my old age. I cannot race, and I cannot box. Not now. No longer. But I was young at one time, and then I could compete in funeral games! When the Epeans buried Amarynceus, I was present and competed in the games. In boxing, I was the victor, defeating Clytomedes. In wrestling, I was the victor, defeating Ancaeus. In foot racing, I was the victor, defeating swift Iphiclus. In the spear-throwing competition, I was the victor, outhurling Phyleus. Only in chariot racing did I come in second, and it took two men working together to beat me. The two sons of Actor — twins — cut in front of me and defeated me. One steered, and the other twin whipped the team. That’s the kind of athlete I was when I was young. Now I am old, but once I was a champion athlete.

“But let me stop talking. You need to hold the funeral games to honor Patroclus. But I value this gift. You honor me, Achilles, and I hope that the gods may give you joy!”

Achilles had enjoyed listening to Nestor’s story.

The next event was the boxing match, and Achilles set out two prizes: a six-year-old unbroken mule for the victor, and a two-handled cup for the runner-up.

Achilles said to the Greeks, “Two men will box for these prizes. If you are willing, step up and box. The victor will take away the mule, and the other boxer will take away the two-handled cup.”

Epeus, a huge boxing champion, stood up. He was willing to fight anyone, and he intended to win. He placed a hand on the mule and announced, “This is my prize — the first-place prize. Anyone who is willing to come in second place can box me. I may not be the best warrior, but I am the best boxer. No man is good at doing everything. But be warned — I will not go easy on you. I will break your ribs, and I will beat you so badly that you will need help leaving the field of our combat.”

The Greeks were silent following his boast. But then Euryalus stood up and met Epeus’ challenge. Diomedes helped him get ready for the boxing match. He fastened the boxer’s belt on him and wrapped his hands with strips of rawhide.

The boxers at first traded jabs, testing each other, and they then traded heavier blows. They then boxed in earnest, grinding their teeth and trying to knock each other out. Epeus looked for an opening, found one, and hurled his fist at Euryalus’ head. Euryalus’ knees bent, and he crashed to the ground. A fish can jump out of the water and be carried by a strong North wind to land, where it will become unconscious. Much like that, Epeus’ fist made Euryalus fall to the ground, unconscious. Epeus, a kind man, lifted him, and Euryalus’ friends dragged him away and sat him down, still half-unconscious and spitting blood. They got the two-handled cup for him.

The third event was the wrestling match. Achilles set out a large tripod — worth twelve oxen — for the winner. The runner-up would win a woman, skilled in crafts and worth four oxen. Achilles said to the assembled Greeks, “Two men are needed to wrestle for first prize.”

The challengers were Great Ajax and Odysseus. Great Ajax was stronger, but Odysseus knew more wrestling moves.

The two locked arms. They were like rafters bolted together to keep a roof from being ripped apart by storm winds. They wrestled, and sweat poured from their bodies and their bones made cracking noises. The two were evenly matched. Odysseus was unable to force Great Ajax to the ground and pin him, and Great Ajax was unable to force Odysseus to the ground and pin him. The two wrestlers were so evenly matched that the Greeks watching them grew bored.

Finally, Great Ajax said to Odysseus, “Either you lift me, or I will lift you. Victory will go to the wrestler whom Zeus favors!”

Great Ajax lifted Odysseus, but Odysseus used his heels to kick Great Ajax in the back of his knees, and Great Ajax fell with Odysseus on top of him. Now the Greeks watching the wrestling match were interested.

Odysseus tried to lift Great Ajax, but he could not lift him completely off the ground. Odysseus hooked his leg around Great Ajax, and both fell to the ground.

The two wrestlers would have attempted a third time to achieve a clear victory, but Achilles said, “Enough. There is no profit in killing yourselves. Both of you are the victors. Share the prizes between you. Now let the other Greeks have a chance at winning prizes.”

Great Ajax and Odysseus wiped off their sweat and the dust and put their shirts back on.

The next event was the footrace. The first prize was a silver bowl: a work of art created by craftsmen of Sidon. Phoenicians had taken it across the sea and given it to Euneus, king of Lemnos, who had given it to Patroclus in order to buy Lycaon, the son of Priam, as a slave. The runner-up would win an ox, and the third and last runner would win a half-bar of gold.

Competing were Little Ajax, known for his swiftness; Odysseus, who liked prizes; and Antilochus, the son of Nestor and the fastest runner among the young warriors.

Achilles pointed out where the runners would turn, and the three runners took off. Little Ajax was in the lead with Odysseus behind him. As much space was between Little Ajax and Odysseus as there is between the breast of a weaver and the weaver's rod after she has pulled it toward her. As Odysseus ran, his feet hit Little Ajax' footprints before the dust stirred up by Little Ajax could settle.

Odysseus prayed to Athena, who respected him, "Goddess, help me!"

Athena heard and answered Odysseus' prayer. She made him faster.

Near the finish line, Little Ajax slipped on some cow manure. He fell, and the manure got in his mouth and nostrils. Odysseus finished in first place.

Little Ajax, who finished second, kept spitting out manure. He said, "Athena made sure that Odysseus would win. She must love the mortal."

The Greeks laughed.

Antilochus, who finished last, said, "The gods prefer mature men over young men. Little Ajax is just a few years older than I am, but Odysseus is much older. You could almost call him an old man, but his old age is the early, healthy, vigorous part of old age. It is difficult for anyone to beat Odysseus in a footrace — that is, for everyone except swift Achilles."

Achilles was flattered, and he also wondered, *Did Antilochus deliberately finish last? As the son of Nestor, who is too old to compete, Antilochus ought to compete in the funeral games, but perhaps Antilochus has learned from his earlier interaction with Menelaus not to make older men angry in any way.*

Achilles said to Antilochus, "Thank you for your praise. Allow me to give you a better third-place prize. Instead of a half-bar of gold, here is a full bar of gold."

Antilochus was happy to receive the better prize.

The next event was the duel. Two warriors would fight and draw blood but not kill each other. Achilles brought out a broadsword, a spear, a shield, and a helmet.

Achilles announced, "Two warriors will fight with armor and spears. Whoever draws blood first will win the broadsword. Both warriors will share the spear, shield, and helmet. I will also give both of them a feast in my shelter."

The two challengers were Great Ajax and Diomedes. They charged at each other three times, trying to draw blood. The third time they charged, Great Ajax stabbed his spear through Diomedes' shield but failed to wound him — Diomedes' breastplate stopped Great Ajax' spear!

Diomedes tried to stab Great Ajax with his spear and draw blood from Great Ajax' throat.

The Greeks were afraid for Great Ajax. They cried for Achilles to stop the combat. They declared the contest a draw. Achilles stopped the combat and gave Diomedes the broadsword.

The next event was throwing a lump of pig-iron that King Eetion had used to test his strength before Achilles had killed him in battle and conquered his city.

Achilles announced, "This is the prize for first place. There is enough iron here to keep the winner in iron for five years. Even if he lives far out in the country, he won't have to go to a market to buy iron. He will have plenty at home."

The competitors were Polypoetes, Leonteus, Great Ajax, and Epeus, who threw first. His throw was so poor that the Greeks laughed. Leonteus out-threw Epeus. Great Ajax out-threw

Leonteus. Finally, Polypoetes far out-threw Great Ajax. Polypoetes won with a throw that out-distanced the field of competitors by as far as a herdsman could throw his staff.

Zeus, who was watching the funeral games, thought, *Great Ajax always seems to finish in second place in the games. Odysseus was perhaps a little better than Great Ajax in wrestling, and Great Ajax came in second in throwing the lump of pig-iron. Diomedes was a little better than Great Ajax in dueling. Diomedes is an offensive warrior, while Great Ajax is a defensive warrior. Diomedes is known for his aristeia in which he wounded Aphrodite and Ares. Great Ajax is known for his defense of the ships. Here offense conquers defense. Similarly, the Trojans, who are on the defensive, will be conquered by the Greeks, who are on the offensive. Great Ajax also comes in second in real life. Achilles is the greatest Greek warrior, while Great Ajax is the second greatest Greek warrior. Even when Great Ajax was heroically almost single-handedly fighting the Trojans at the ships, he still came in second — he was forced back after Hector cut off the head of his spear, one ship was set on fire, and it was up to Patroclus to save the Greeks. After Achilles is dead and his armor is distributed, Great Ajax again will come in second. When the vote is taken on whom to give Achilles' armor, Odysseus — not Great Ajax — will be awarded the armor.*

The next event was the archery contest. The first-place prize was ten double-headed axes; the second-place prize was ten single-headed axes. Achilles tied the foot of a dove to the mast of a ship, and he challenged two archers to shoot the dove.

Achilles said, "Whoever shoots the dove will win first prize, but whoever hits the cord that ties the dove to the mast will win second prize."

The competitors were the master archer Teucer and Meriones, Idomeneus' aide.

They shook lots, and Teucer shot first. He failed to pray to the gods, and so he missed the dove. Instead, he hit the cord that tied to the dove to the mast. Freed, the dove took flight.

Meriones was already holding an arrow in his hands. He quickly took the bow from Teucer, prayed to Apollo and promised him sacrifices, aimed, and shot the dove. The arrow went through the dove's body and fell at Meriones' feet. The dove settled back on the mast, fluttered briefly, died, and fell.

The final event was the spear-throwing contest. The first prize was a cauldron, and the second prize was a spear.

Two competitors stepped forward: Agamemnon and Meriones.

Achilles, a master of tact, said, "This is a contest that we do not even need to hold. Everyone, including Meriones, already knows what an excellent spear-thrower you are, Agamemnon. You are going to win, and so let me give you the first prize. We need not hold the contest."

Achilles said this to honor Agamemnon, who could get angry when things did not go his way. Achilles, who knew that sometimes the best man did *not* win, as seen in the chariot race in which the best man, Eumelus, finished last, did not want Agamemnon to risk a last-place finish.

Meriones, an older and wiser man than Antilochus had so recently been, agreed with Achilles' decision.

Agamemnon was pleased at the honor shown to him. Generosity breeds generosity, and Agamemnon gave away his prize. He gave the cauldron to Talthybius, his herald.

The funeral games were over. Patroclus had received a proper funeral. So now Hermes, the Guide of the Dead, went down to the Land of the Dead. He landed on the bank of the river opposite the entrance to the Land of the Dead. There, he saw the *psyches* of the dead who had not yet crossed the river. Some, such as Patroclus, had received proper funerals and were ready

to enter the Land of the Dead. Other *psyches* had not yet received proper funerals. They wailed. They were dead, and they wanted to be with the dead.

Hermes separated the *psyches* who were allowed to enter the Land of the Dead from those who were not. Hermes led the *psyches* of Patroclus and the others to a ford where they crossed. On the other side of the river, Hermes opened the gates barring the way to the Land of the Dead. He led the *psyches* inside.

If a *psyche* can be happy, the *psyche* of Patroclus was happy. The dead belong with the dead.

Soon, Hermes would lead Priam across a river and then he would open a gate so that Priam could visit Achilles, who would soon die.

CHAPTER 24: Achilles and Priam

Now that the funeral games for Patroclus were over, the Greeks returned to their camps. They thought of the evening meal and sleep.

Achilles still mourned Patroclus. He could not sleep. He lay on his back and then his side and then his stomach. He could not sleep. He got up and walked on the shore. In an attempt to get some relief, he mounted his chariot and dragged the corpse of Hector three times around Patroclus' funeral mound. Then Achilles tried again to go to sleep.

Apollo pitied Hector and kept his body from rotting. Apollo wrapped an invisible shield around Hector so that Hector's skin would not tear as Achilles dragged him around Patroclus' funeral mound.

Achilles continued to abuse the corpse of Hector, and the gods pitied Hector. Most of the gods wanted Hermes to steal Hector's body, but not Poseidon, Hera, and Athena. They still hated Troy, Priam, and Priam's sons. They were still as angry as they were when the war had started ten years previously. Poseidon was still angry at Troy because of King Laomedon although he had been dead for many years. Hera and Athena were still angry because they had lost a beauty contest. Paris had accepted the bribe of Aphrodite and had spurned the bribes of Hera and Athena. Paris had accepted Aphrodite's bribe of Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world.

Apollo, god of plague and of medicine, disliked the abuse of Hector's corpse. Unburied corpses bring plague to living men.

On the morning of the twelfth day since Hector had been killed, Apollo said to the other gods, "Gods can be hard-hearted. Hector always treated us well. He always made sacrifices of oxen and goats to us. Now the gods will not allow Hector's wife, father, and mother and the other Trojans to see his corpse and to grieve over it. Hector's family longs to give his corpse a proper funeral.

"But many of you gods support Achilles, a man without mercy or pity. He is like a lion that pitilessly kills lambs to satisfy his hunger. Achilles has no decency and shame.

"Other men have suffered a worse loss than his. He has lost a friend, but others have lost a brother or a son. These others mourn, they grieve, they cry, and then they continue to live their lives. That is what mortals are supposed to do. The Fates have given mortals hearts that can endure such heavy grief.

"But Achilles refuses to accept the human condition. He slaughtered Hector, he mutilated Hector's ankles, and now he drags him behind his chariot — he lets Hector's head drag in the dust. This does Achilles no good. He will never see Patroclus alive again. Achilles needs to learn to accept the human condition. He needs to actually live what little is left of his life, not waste it with excessive grieving!"

Hera was angry and lashed out at Apollo: "Hector and Achilles are not equals. Hector's parents are mortal. He was formed from the seed of his father, and he nursed at the breasts of his mother. But Achilles' mother is immortal. His mother is Thetis, a goddess I myself reared and then gave to Peleus, a mortal man. All of you gods attended the wedding, including you, Apollo. You played your lyre. Because Hector and Achilles are not equals, we should not treat them as equals. If Achilles has anger like the anger of the gods, he is worthy of it. You, Apollo, regard Hector with too much respect."

Zeus cautioned his wife, Hera, "Don't be angry at another god. These mortals are not worth it. Neither Achilles nor Hector will attain the rank of an immortal god. Both of them are and will remain mortal. Still, many of us gods respect Hector — I certainly do. He always kept me well supplied with sacrifices of animals and wine.

“But we won’t steal the corpse of Hector to give it back to his parents. Thetis is almost always near Achilles. She would see what we were doing.

“One of you gods must go to Thetis and call her to me. I have made up my mind: Achilles must allow King Priam to ransom the corpse of his son — Hector must receive a proper funeral!”

Iris carried Zeus’ message to Thetis. She went down to the sea and plunged into the water and dove like a weighted hook carrying death to fish. She found Thetis in a cave with other sea-nymphs; all of them were mourning the fate of Achilles. They knew that he would die before the Scaean Gates of Troy.

Iris told Thetis, “Zeus calls for you to appear before him immediately.”

Thetis replied, “Why? What does Zeus want with me? I don’t want to see any of the Olympians now. But I will go. I must obey the command of Zeus.”

Thetis put on a dark veil, and she and Iris left the cave. Iris led the way, and once they reached the shore they flew to Mount Olympus.

Thetis sat down beside Zeus, taking the seat that Athena vacated for her, and Hera handed Thetis a golden cup of nectar and said a few words to welcome her. The Olympians were showing Thetis good *xenia*.

Thetis sipped some nectar, and then she gave the cup back to Hera.

Zeus said to Thetis, “Thank you for coming to Olympus despite all the grief that you are feeling. I myself recently suffered the death of my mortal son Sarpedon.

“For nine days, we gods have been arguing about the way that Achilles has been treating the corpse of Hector. Many gods want Hermes to steal Hector’s body and give it back to his parents. But I have a better way. I do not want to go behind your back. I want to give Achilles *kleos*, and I want you to continue to respect me.

“Go to Achilles and tell him that the gods are angry at the way he has been treating the corpse of Hector. Tell him that I myself am angry at him because he mistreats Hector’s body and will not allow Hector’s father to ransom the corpse. Perhaps Achilles will respect my wishes and give Hector’s body to Priam.

“At the same time that I am sending you to Achilles, I will send Iris to Priam to command him to bring treasure to Achilles and ransom the corpse of Hector.”

Thetis immediately agreed to do the will of Zeus. She flew from Mount Olympus to Achilles’ camp. He was still mourning the death of Patroclus. He was grieving and shedding tears. The Myrmidons around him were doing the work of living men: slaughtering a sheep and preparing food for the morning meal.

Thetis sat beside her son, stroked his face, and talked to him gently, “Achilles, how much longer will you grieve for your friend? Don’t you ever think of food or sleep? Having sex with a woman is a good thing. Don’t you ever think of that? Remember that you do not have much longer to live. Your fate is coming and bringing death to you.

“Listen to me. Zeus has a message for you. The gods are angry at you because of the way that you have been treating the corpse of Hector. Zeus himself is angry at you. He wants you to allow Priam to ransom with treasure his son’s body.”

Achilles replied, “If that is what Zeus wants to do, I’ll do it. If Priam brings me a ransom, I will accept it.”

Mother and son continued to talk.

Zeus sent Iris speeding down to Troy. He told her, “Be quick! Tell Priam to go to Achilles’ camp and take treasure. He must go with only a herald, an aged man, to accompany him. He will need someone to drive the mules that pull his wagon. Achilles will accept the ransom, and Priam will then bring the corpse of Hector back to Troy.

“We will send Priam a guide. Hermes, the Guide of the Dead, will escort Priam to the camp of Achilles. Hermes is the escort of the dead, taking *psyches* across the ford of the river and opening for them the gates leading to the Land of the Dead.

“Priam need not be afraid — Achilles will respect him and his supplication. Achilles will also not allow anyone else to kill Priam. Achilles’ anger and grief have been excessive, but he is not a madman or a fool. He will not rebel against my will. Achilles will respect whoever supplicates him for the corpse of Hector.”

Iris raced with Zeus’ message to Troy, where she found Priam and his sons, all of them grieving for Hector. Priam had smeared manure on his head and neck — he mourned his dead son. Throughout his palace, the women mourned for Hector, crying aloud with their grief. Widows remembered the many Trojan warriors whom Achilles had killed.

Iris spoke gently to Priam, but recognizing that she was a goddess, he trembled. She said to him, “Have courage! I am here with good news. Zeus pities you, and he will help you to recover the corpse of your son Hector. Take treasure to Achilles to ransom your son. Be accompanied by only an old herald to drive the mules that pull your wagon. Do not be afraid that Achilles will kill you. He will respect you, accept the ransom, and let you take Hector’s body back to Troy. Zeus is even sending you a guide: Hermes will take you to Achilles’ camp. Achilles will not hurt you, and he will keep the other Greeks from hurting you. Achilles will now respect suppliants.”

Iris sped away.

Priam ordered his sons to hitch a team of mules to a wagon. He went to his treasure chamber, and he sent for his wife, Hecuba, and said to her, “A goddess came to me from Zeus and ordered me to ransom the corpse of our son. What do you think? I think that I need to go to Achilles’ camp.”

Hecuba was afraid and cried, “Don’t go! You used to have sense! If you go to Achilles’ camp, he will kill you just like he has killed so many of our sons! All we can do now is to mourn for Hector. Achilles is feeding his corpse to the dogs and birds. I wish I could eat Achilles’ heart and liver — raw. Only that would avenge what he has done to our son Hector, who fought Achilles and never thought of fleeing!”

Zeus, who was listening on Mount Olympus, thought, *How like a mortal mother! Hecuba has chosen not to remember that Hector fled from Achilles three times around the walls of Troy.*

Priam replied, “I have decided to go to Achilles. The message came to me from Zeus, who sent a goddess to deliver it to me. If a mortal prophet had advised me to go to Achilles, I would not. I would think that the prophet was wrong. But not Zeus! And not his goddess messenger! I looked her in the eyes — we were face-to-face. I am going to Achilles, and if I am fated to die in his camp, so be it. At least I can hold Hector in my arms and mourn him before I die!”

Priam lifted the lid of a chest and took out twelve robes, twelve cloaks, twelve blankets, twelve capes, and twelve shirts. He also picked out ten bars of gold, two tripods, four cauldrons, and a magnificent cup: a gift from the Thracians. Priam wanted the corpse of his son so much that he was willing to sacrifice even this magnificent work of art.

Many Trojans surrounded Priam in his palace. Priam was nervous and afraid to meet Achilles, and so he took out his emotions on his citizens: “Get out! Don’t you have somewhere else to be! I am in pain! Achilles has killed my son Hector! You should grieve for him, too — without Hector to protect you, you will be the victims of the Greeks! I hope that I die before I see my city fall!”

Priam shook his staff at them, and they quickly left.

Nine of Priam's sons remained, and he criticized them: Helenus, Paris, Agathon, Pammom, Antiphonus, Polites, Deiphobus, Hippothous, and Dius. None of these sons was Hector, and Priam wanted Hector to be alive. He shouted at them, "Get to work! I wish that all of you had been killed instead of Hector! Of all my sons who were heroes, not one of them is still alive! Mestor, Troilus, and Hector are all dead! Ares, the god of war, killed them all! All I have left are you, and you are better dancers than warriors! You eat well, but you don't fight well. You are robbing the Trojans of the best food. Get my wagon ready! Now!"

Hector's nine sons prepared the wagon and hitched up the mules to it. They put the ransom for Hector's body in the back of the wagon.

Priam and his aged herald Idaeus were ready to go, but Hecuba carried a cup of honeyed wine to her husband and requested, "Pour out a libation to Zeus and pray for a safe and successful return. Ask also for a sign — now! — that your prayer will be answered. Ask for a bird flying to the right — the lucky side! If you see the sign, then go, although you go against my will. If you do not see the sign, then stay here and be safe!"

Priam replied, "It is the right thing to do."

He poured water over his hands, and he poured out the libation of honeyed wine to Zeus. He prayed, "Zeus, let Achilles receive me and be kind and merciful. Send us a bird-sign that you will grant my prayer. Allow me to see that bird-sign so that I know that it is safe for me to see Achilles and ransom my son."

Zeus sent a huge eagle that flew to Priam's right — the lucky side! Priam, Hecuba, the aged herald, and Priam's sons looked at the eagle and knew that it was a favorable omen.

Priam and his herald drove out of Troy. His wife and sons followed him to the gates and then returned to their homes. They were crying as if Priam were soon to die.

Zeus saw the two men going across the plain toward the ships, and he summoned Hermes to be their guide: "Hermes, you are the guide of many men. Go to Priam, and guide him to the camp of Achilles. Make sure that no one sees him and recognizes him."

Hermes put on his sandals that make him swift, and he grabbed his wand that enchants men or puts them to sleep as Hermes wishes.

Looking like a young man, newly able to grow a beard, he flew near to Priam's wagon. Darkness now covered the region.

Priam and his herald had driven to the river but had not crossed it. They watered their mules at the river. The herald saw Hermes and said to Priam, "Danger! I see someone! We may be killed! We should either flee or beg for mercy!"

Priam was frightened, and he stared at the oncoming man. Hermes walked up to Priam and said, "Greetings, old man! Where are you going? Aren't you afraid of the Greeks? How would you feel if they were to see you — especially with so much treasure in your wagon? You are old, and your wagon-driver is too old to fight off anyone. But don't worry about me. I would never hurt you. You remind me of my own father."

Priam replied, "I am facing hard times, but even now Zeus is looking after me. He has sent you to me. You are a lucky omen! Your parents are blessed to have a son like you."

Hermes said, "My parents are proud of me, just like you said. But tell me what you are doing with this treasure. Are you sending it away so that it may be kept safe for you? Are you fleeing from Troy, certain that the city will fall now that its finest warrior has fallen — Hector, your own son, who fought well and bravely?"

Priam replied, "Who are you? Who are your parents? How do you know about my son?"

Hermes said, "I have often seen Hector fight in battle. I saw him when he pushed the Greeks against their ships and nearly set their entire fleet on fire! That day he killed and killed again! I am a Myrmidon; I am the aide of Achilles. Achilles kept us out of the fighting for a

while. I am the son of an aged father named Polyctor. He had seven sons who shook lots to see who would go to Troy — my lot fell out. I have come to scout the terrain because tomorrow the Greeks are planning to fight again.”

Priam requested, “If you really are the aide of Achilles, please tell me about my son’s body. Is it still intact, or has Achilles chopped it into pieces and fed them to the dogs?”

Hermes reassured him: “Hector’s body is still intact. It lies by Achilles’ ships. Although Hector has been dead for twelve days, his corpse has not decayed — no worms eat his flesh. Achilles daily drags the corpse around the funeral mound of Patroclus, but the corpse’s skin does not break. Many Greeks stabbed the corpse, but those wounds have been sealed. The gods themselves are taking care of the corpse of your son. He is dead, but the gods respect him.”

Priam was happy, and he said, “Making sacrifices to the gods is the right thing to do. Hector always made fitting sacrifices in honor of the gods. He remembered them, and now they remember him — now that he is dead. Please take this cup as a gift. Please safely escort me to the camp of Achilles.”

Hermes said, “I will not take the cup. That soon will belong to Achilles, and I will not rob him of what will soon be his. But I will gladly and safely escort you to his camp. I will take you further when needed. I will take you across the ford of a river and open the gates.”

Hermes climbed on the wagon, took the reins in his hands, and drove across a ford of the river. He drove the wagon to the trench and some gates of the Greek wall. In the darkness the sentries were beginning to eat their evening meal — Hermes made them sleep. He opened the gates and drove the wagon through. A second set of gates led to Achilles’ camp. A heavy pine beam was used to bar the gates. Three ordinary men were needed to lift the beam; Achilles was the only mortal man who could bar and unbar the gates by himself. But now Hermes easily unbarred the gates and drove the wagon into Achilles’ camp.

Hermes said to Priam, “Old man, I am the god Hermes. Zeus sent me to be your escort. I will not stay by you now. I should not meet Achilles face-to-face — yet. Go in and clasp Achilles’ knees and beg him to let you ransom your son. Beg him by his father. Beg him by his mother. Beg him by his own son. Move his heart!”

Hermes returned to Olympus.

Priam got off the wagon and left his aged herald behind. Courageously, he went to Achilles’ dwelling. Achilles was sitting. With him were his aides Automedon and Alkimus. Achilles had just finished eating, and the table was still before him.

Priam walked up to Achilles, knelt, clasped his knees with one hand, and with the other brought Achilles’ hands to his lips and kissed them — Priam kissed the hands that had killed so many of his sons in battle.

Achilles recognized Priam and marveled. He marveled at Priam the way people marvel at a man who has murdered a man and fled for his life and then suddenly appears. Automedon and Alkimus stared at Priam.

Priam begged, “Remember your own aged father, Achilles. He is as old as I am. The people in the territories around him must be threatening him now, old as he is, and he does not have you to defend him. But at least he has the joy of hearing that you are still alive, and he hopes to see the day that you leave Troy and return home.

“Now consider me. Some of my sons were heroes, but none of my hero sons is now alive. When the war started, I had fifty sons. Nineteen sons were born to me by one mother, and all of the others were born to me by various women in my palace. Many of my sons died in battle.

“But I had one hero son left: Hector. You killed him! I have come with treasure to ransom his body. Respect the gods! Pity me! Remember your aged father! I deserve pity. I have

endured what no man has ever endured before — I have kissed the hands of the man who killed my son!”

Achilles remembered his aged father, and he grieved. Both men grieved together. Priam wept for Hector. Achilles wept sometimes for his aged father, sometimes for Patroclus.

Achilles took Priam’s hand and gently raised him up. This gesture meant that he would respect the suppliant — he would allow Priam to ransom Hector’s body.

Achilles said, “You, old man, have suffered so much — I have caused you so much suffering! You have shown great courage in coming here to my camp without warriors to protect you. You have shown great courage in facing the man who has killed so many of your sons — sons you love. Sit down on this chair. We must get over our grief. We have mourned so long. What good does it do us?”

“The gods are the only beings who do not suffer the grief that you and I and other mortals feel. Zeus has two jars in his palace. In one jar are miseries; in the other jar are blessings. From these jars Zeus gives gifts to mortal men. Many men receive gifts from both jars; sometimes they enjoy good things, and sometimes they suffer miseries. But to some men Zeus gives gifts only from the jar of miseries; these men are always unhappy — they wander the earth in misery and hunger. No mortal man receives gifts only from the jar of blessings.

“My own father received gifts from both jars. When he was born, he was blessed. He was wealthy and respected. The gods gave him an immortal goddess to marry. But now his gifts come from the jar of miseries. He had a son — only one son: me. And now his son will soon die. His son will not return to Greece to take care of him. No. I will die here at Troy, where I have brought so much misery to your children and to you.

“And you, Priam, have received gifts from both jars. You used to be prosperous. You used to rule a large and wealthy realm. You had many sons and much wealth. But now Troy is at war. Your warriors suffer in battle. So many of your sons and citizens have died.

“But you must continue to live your life. Excessive grieving is not good. Hector will never come to life again. All too quickly, your own life will end.”

Priam said, “Don’t make me sit here in your shelter, Achilles. Give me my son back, and let me leave immediately! Take the ransom, and let me care for my son’s body.”

Achilles replied, “Don’t make me angry, old man. As I have said, I will give you back your son. A goddess — my mother — brought me a message from Zeus telling me to do that. Also, I know that your guide must have been a god. How else is it possible for you to come into my camp? How else could you get past the sentries? Who else could unbar my gates? Don’t make me angry! I don’t want to kill you and violate the rules of *xenia*!”

Achilles knew himself, and he knew other people. He knew that he and Priam were still enemies. Hector had killed Patroclus, and Achilles had killed Hector. Tension still existed between Priam and Achilles. Achilles knew that if Priam were to see the uncared-for corpse of Hector, still filthy from being dragged on the ground, Priam could grow angry. Achilles knew that if Priam were to grow angry, then in turn he could grow angry and kill Priam. Achilles knew that he could not give Hector’s body to Priam in its present state.

Priam was afraid, and he sat down on a chair.

Achilles left his shelter with his aides. They unhitched the mules and led Priam’s aged herald into the shelter so he could sit near Priam. They unloaded much of the ransom, but left two capes and a shirt to clothe the corpse of Hector. Achilles ordered some slave women to wash Hector’s body and rub it with olive oil and then to dress the corpse in the fine clothing. After this had been done, he put Hector’s body on a bier and lifted it onto the back of the wagon.

Achilles prayed to the *psyche* of Patroclus, “Do not be angry at me, Patroclus, if in the Land of the Dead you hear what I have done — I have let Priam have his son. He gave me treasure, and I shall give you your share. I will burn some clothing for you.”

Achilles went back into his shelter and said to Priam, “Your son lies in your wagon, as I promised, and in the morning you will see him and take him to Troy. Now let us eat. As much as we have grieved, we still must eat. Even Niobe, who suffered the deaths of all twelve of her children in one day, remembered to eat. Niobe was proud. She had given birth to six sons and six daughters, and she boasted aloud, ‘I am more worthy of respect than the goddess Leto, who has given birth to only two children: the twins Apollo and Artemis.’ Leto’s children were angry at the disrespect shown to their mother, and with the anger of the gods, they killed all of Niobe’s children, shooting them with arrows. Niobe’s children lay for nine days in their own blood, unburied. On the tenth day, the gods buried her children, and then Niobe, who had grieved for so long, ate.

“We too must eat. Later, you can grieve again for your son, after you have taken him to Troy.”

Achilles slaughtered a sheep, and his aide skinned and cooked it, and then everyone, including Priam and Achilles, ate.

Achilles and Priam looked at each other, marveling. Then Priam said, “Let me go to bed now, Achilles. I have not slept for a long time — not since you killed my son. Instead of sleeping, I lay awake, moaning with grief. I smeared manure on my head and neck. Finally, I have eaten food and drank wine again. Before this meal, I had eaten and drunk nothing.”

Achilles ordered his aides and slaves to make beds for Priam and his aged herald and for himself. But Achilles, a man who thought ahead, said to Priam, “You and your herald should sleep outside my shelter. The Greek commanders often come to my shelter to consult with me, and if one of them were to see and recognize you, he may tell Agamemnon. Then things could go badly for you and your son.

“But tell me one more thing: How much time do you need to mourn and bury Hector? I will keep the Greeks from fighting for that much time. Agamemnon respects me now, and he will agree to my request.”

Priam replied, “You will show me great kindness if you give us nine days to mourn Hector, and two days to burn his body, bury him, build his funeral mound, and hold a feast in his honor. On the twelfth day, we will fight — if we have to.”

The fighting was necessary. Trojans and Greeks were still at war.

Achilles said, “I will give you the time you ask for, Priam. We will not fight until after you have mourned Hector and given him a proper funeral.”

He touched Priam’s wrist, and then Priam and his herald went to their beds outside Achilles’ shelter.

Achilles went to sleep in his own shelter. Briseis slept by his side.

Zeus, who was watching from Mount Olympus, thought, *Achilles no longer has the anger of the gods. Achilles has stopped his excessive anger. Achilles has stopped his excessive grief. Achilles has accepted the human condition. Now that Achilles has accepted the human condition, he is ready to die.*

Most of the gods and mortal men slept now, but not Hermes. He kept thinking about what he should do. It was important for him to get Priam safely back to Troy, unseen by the Greek guards.

Hermes appeared before the sleeping Priam and said, “You are in the midst of your enemies. Yes, Achilles spared your life, but many Greeks here would like to kill you. You have ransomed your son with a treasure, but if you are captured, it will take three times that amount

of treasure to ransom you. Think what will happen if Agamemnon were to learn that you are here.”

Priam woke up, and he woke up his herald. Hermes harnessed the mules and got the wagon ready, and he drove all of them out of the Greek camps. No guards saw them.

When they reached the ford of the river Xanthus, Hermes left them, and Priam and his herald went to Troy alone. Priam’s daughter Cassandra was the first to see them bearing the corpse of Hector back to Troy. She cried, “Look, Trojan men and Trojan women! Hector is coming home! He was our greatest warrior and our greatest hope!”

The Trojans arose and grieved. They left Troy to go out to the wagon and meet Priam. Hector’s wife and mother flung themselves on the wagon taking his corpse home. They tore their hair, and they held Hector’s head.

Priam ordered his citizens, “Let the wagon through! When we are inside the gates of Troy, then you can have your fill of mourning!” The Trojans moved away from the wagon, and the herald drove inside the walls of Troy. They took Hector’s body into Priam’s palace and placed it on a bed, and women sang laments.

Andromache cradled her husband’s head in her arms and grieved, “My husband, you died so young! You have left me a widow with a baby boy! I do not think that he will live to become an adult. Troy will soon be conquered now that you are no longer alive to defend it and keep its citizens safe and free. Now the women and children will become the slaves of the Greeks. At best, our son will be the slave of a harsh master. Worse, a Greek will take him to the high walls of Troy and throw him to the ground because you killed the Greek’s brother, father, or son — you killed so many Greek warriors! Now all of Troy grieves for you, Hector. You have brought grief to your parents, but most of all to me, your widow. You did not die near me and say some last words to me that I could remember as I weep for you!”

Andromache cried, and the women of the palace cried.

Hecuba grieved, “Hector, you were the son I loved most. The gods respected you while you were alive, and they still respect you now that you are dead. Achilles captured many of my sons and sold them far away as slaves. But he killed you with his spear, and he dragged your corpse around the funeral mound of Patroclus, Achilles’ friend whom you killed. Now you are with me, and I can mourn you.”

The women of the palace shouted cries of mourning.

Helen grieved, “Hector, you were the kindest to me of all of Paris’ brothers. Paris brought me to Troy — I wish I had died before that happened! This is the twentieth year since I have arrived here, and in all of those twenty years, never did you taunt or insult me. If anyone were ever cruel to me, you would talk to them and make them stop their cruelty, no matter who it was: one of your brothers or sisters or sisters-in-law or even your own mother. Your father has always been as kind to me as you were. I mourn for you, and I mourn for myself. I have no friends left in Troy — the Trojans regard me with loathing!”

Helen cried, and the Trojans cried, and Priam ordered, “Cut timber and bring it into Troy. The Greeks will not attack you. Achilles has promised to give us eleven days in which to mourn Hector and give him a proper funeral.”

Trojan men cut and hauled timber into the city for nine days. On the tenth day, they placed Hector’s body on the pier and burned it. In the morning, they poured wine over the fire and collected his white bones. His brothers and brothers-in-law mourned as they gathered the bones, covered them with fine cloth, and placed them in a golden chest that they lowered into a grave over which they placed huge stones. They built a mound over the grave with lookouts alert in case of a Greek attack, and they ate a feast in honor of Hector.

And so the Trojans buried Hector, the most human of heroes.

Appendix A: Important Terms

Achaean:

Another name for the Greeks.

Aristeia (a-ris-STAY-a):

A warrior's period of excellence in battle.

Athanatoi:

Immortals, gods.

Displacement:

Occasionally in the *Iliad*, a scene will occur at a time when it ought not to logically occur. This is known as displacement. Consider the scene in which King Priam asks Helen to identify some of the Greek heroes. By the end of the ninth year or the beginning of the tenth and last year of the Trojan War, King Priam would know who the leading Greeks are, so this episode logically ought not to occur at this time. Logically, this episode ought to occur early in the war. Homer has displaced this episode. Aesthetically, of course, this episode makes sense. For the audience of the *Iliad*, it is still early in the *Iliad*, and so Homer needs to introduce some of the leading Greeks to his audience.

Double Motivation:

Many actions in the *Iliad* are motivated both by humans and by gods. For example, at one point in Book 11 of the *Iliad* Great Ajax is forced back by the Trojans. On the human level, he has been fighting very hard for a long time, and he is tired. No wonder the Trojan warriors force him back! But we also read that Great Ajax is forced back by Zeus. Often, we can explain actions purely on the human level, but Homer tells us that the gods are also involved in the actions.

Geras:

A particular prize of honor, often a spear-thrower.

Human Condition:

Humans are mortal; we will die someday.

In Medias Res:

In the middle of the story.

Klea Andron:

The glories of men.

Kleos:

Glory or fame or reputation.

Kleos is reputation. It is what people say about you after you are dead. Early in the *Iliad*, Achilles is very interested in his *kleos*.

Kleos is important because it is the only kind of meaningful immortality that ancient Greek society has. This society believes in a kind of afterlife, but it is insubstantial. Souls go down to the Land of the Dead, but there they have no meaningful kind of afterlife. In some accounts of the afterlife in the Land of the Dead, souls don't know who they are until they have a drink of blood. At that time, they regain their memory and are able to converse with other souls. Without the drink of blood, they are like gibbering bats.

According to classics scholar Elizabeth Vandiver, *kleos* can be translated as glory or fame or, sometimes, reputation. What it literally means is what other people say about you, what is spoken aloud about you (*The Iliad of Homer* 45).

Kleos Aphthiton:

Undying *kleos* or imperishable glory. Undying glory, reputation, and fame.

Kredemna:

1) The veil and headdress of a married woman. 2) The ramparts and battlements of a city.

Menis:

Anger (used of a god and of Achilles).

Moirai:

Fate. Share or portion or lot of life.

Over-determination:

Many actions in the *Iliad* occur because of the actions both of humans and of the gods. This double motivation is sometimes called by critics over-determination. Over-determination stresses the inevitability of certain actions — they had to occur. In literature, over-determination occurs when an action is explained by more than one cause when only one cause is enough to explain why the action occurred.

Proem:

Short introduction.

Psyche (SOO-KAY):

The spirit, soul.

Sophrosyne:

Restraint, recognition of human limits, and lack of presumption. Diomedes has this quality.

Theos (THAY os):

God (with a small 'g').

Thnetoi:

Mortals.

***Timê* (TEE-MAY):**

Timê is gifts of honor. After a city has been captured, what is inside the city is given out as gifts of honor. If a warrior has fought bravely, that warrior will get *timê*. An important kind of *timê* is a *geras* or spear-tribute or sex-slave. *Timê* is the physical expression of honor; *timê* can take the form of booty, gifts, or a particular prize (*geras*).

In the *Iliad*, *kleos* and *timê* are related. The more *timê* a warrior has, the more *kleos* the warrior has. Achilles is upset when Agamemnon takes away his *geras* because Agamemnon is taking away his *timê* and therefore is taking away his *kleos*. At this time Achilles values *kleos* more than anything else in the world. Achilles — early in the *Iliad* — is willing to give up his life in order to have *kleos*.

***Xenia*:**

The guest-host relationship. Civilized people of the ancient world followed rules of hospitality. Uncivilized people (and other beings) did not. This is an odd phrase, and we don't have exactly that concept in our culture. In ancient Greece, no inns, motels, or hotels existed. If you traveled, you would stay with a family. You would knock on the door of a house and ask for hospitality. The residents of the house, if they observed *xenia*, would let you stay with them. They would feed you, give you a place to sleep, and offer you water for bathing or washing. As the guest, you of course would not murder your host or run away with your host's wife. Instead, you would entertain your hosts by giving them news and telling them about your travels. The Trojan War started because of a breach of *xenia*. Paris, prince of Troy, stayed with Menelaus, King of Sparta, and ran away with his wife, Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. *Xenia* was taken seriously in the ancient world. Zeus was Zeus *Xenios*, Zeus the god of *Xenia*. He often punished people who did not respect the protocols of *xenia*.

***Xenoi*:**

Plural of *xenos*.

***Xenos*:**

Guest, host, stranger, friend, foreigner.

Appendix B: Background Information

Roman Gods and Goddesses

The Greek gods and goddesses have Roman equivalents. The Greek name is followed by the Roman name:

Aphrodite: Venus

Apollo: Apollo (same name)

Ares: Mars

Artemis: Diana

Athena: Minerva

Hades: Pluto

Hephaestus: Vulcan

Hera: Juno

Hermes: Mercury

Poseidon: Neptune

Zeus: Jupiter

Note: The Romans referred to Odysseus as Ulysses.

• **What are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?**

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are epic poems that have been created by Homer. Here are two definitions of “epic poem”:

- a long narrative poem about the adventures of [a] hero or the gods, presenting an encyclopedic portrait of the culture in which it is composed.

Source:

<teacherweb.com/NC/OrangeHighSchool/MrMitchCox/HandyLiteraryandAnglo-SaxonTerms.doc>

- a long narrative poem telling of a hero’s deeds.

Source: <wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>

The *Iliad* tells the story of one incident that lasted a few weeks during the last year of the Trojan War: a quarrel between Achilles, the mightiest of the Greek (Achaean) warriors, and Agamemnon, leader of the Greek armies against Troy. Both Achilles and Agamemnon are kings of their own lands, but Agamemnon is the leader among the many kings fighting the Trojans and the Trojan allies. The quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon has devastating consequences.

• **What is the mythic background of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?**

The mythic background of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* consists of the Trojan War myth and myths about the Greek gods and goddesses.

• **For what other works did this mythic background provide narrative material?**

The Trojan War myth provided material for many other epic poems, both Greek and Roman, some of which have survived, and for many plays, including both tragedies and comedies, by both Greek and Roman authors. The Trojan War myth is one of the most important myths in the world.

During Roman times, the Trojan War myth provided material for Virgil’s great epic poem the *Aeneid*, which tells the story of Aeneas and how he survived the fall of Troy and came to Italy to found (establish) the Roman people. He and his Italian wife, Lavinia, became important ancestors of the Romans. Later, Dante used material from the Trojan War myth and its

aftermath in his *Divine Comedy*. Material from the Trojan War myth has appeared in opera and in drama. Of course, James Joyce uses this material in his novel *Ulysses*.

• **Why is it important to understand the Trojan War myth when reading the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?**

Homer's audience knew the story of the Trojan War. How did Homer's audience get its understanding of the Trojan War? Partly through stories told by their parents and grandparents. As they were growing up, they heard tales about the myth. Therefore, Homer assumes a lot of knowledge in his audience. Homer does not tell the story of the Trojan Horse; he assumes that his audience already knows the story. Homer does not tell the story of the Trojan War; he assumes that his audience already knows the story. Without a knowledge of the Trojan War, the audience will not be able to appreciate fully the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

• **What is the *Iliad* about?**

The *Iliad* tells the story of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. Following the quarrel, Achilles (the mightiest Greek warrior) withdraws from the fighting, which allows the Trojans to be triumphant in battle for a while. The *Iliad* tells about Achilles' anger and how he finally lets go of his anger.

• **What is the *Odyssey* about?**

The *Odyssey* is about a different Greek hero in the Trojan War: Odysseus, whose Roman name is Ulysses. Following the ten years that the Trojan War lasted, Odysseus returns to his home island of Ithaca, where he is king. It takes him ten years to return home because of his adventures and mishaps. Much of that time he spends in captivity. When he finally returns home, he discovers that suitors are courting his wife, Penelope, who has remained faithful to him and who wants nothing to do with the suitors, who are rude and arrogant and who feast on Odysseus' cattle and drink his wine as they party all day. In addition, Telemachus, Odysseus' son, has found it hard to grow up without a strong father-figure in his life. The *Odyssey* tells the story of how Odysseus returns home to Ithaca and reestablishes himself in his own palace.

• **What does *nostos* mean?**

Nostos means "Homecoming" or "Return." This is important to know because this is the theme of the *Odyssey*. In this epic poem, we read about the homecoming of Odysseus to Ithaca, the island where he is king. Odysseus has been away from Ithaca for 20 years. He spent ten years fighting in the Trojan War, and it took him an additional ten years to return to Ithaca, after having lost all his ships and men.

The great theme of the *Iliad* is *kleos*, which means imperishable glory or the reputation that lives on after one has died if one has accomplished great deeds during one's battles. The great theme of the *Odyssey* is *nostos*.

The *Iliad* is concerned with the Trojan War, and the *Odyssey* is concerned with the aftermath of the Trojan War.

• **What is the *Aeneid* about?**

The *Aeneid* is a Roman epic poem by Virgil that tells the story of Aeneas, a Trojan prince who survived the fall of Troy and led other survivors to Italy. His adventures parallel the adventures

of Odysseus on his return to Ithaca. In fact, they visit many of the same places, including the island of the Cyclopes. One of Aeneas' most notable characteristics is his *pietas*, his respect for things for which respect is due, including the gods, his family, and his destiny. His destiny is to found the Roman people, which is different from founding Rome, which was founded long after his death. Aeneas journeyed to Carthage, where he had an affair with Dido, the Carthaginian queen. Because of his destiny, he left her and went to Italy. Dido committed suicide, and Aeneas fought a war to establish himself in Italy. After killing Turnus, the leader of the armies facing him, Aeneas married the Italian princess Lavinia, and they became important ancestors of the Roman people.

• **What is the basic story of the Trojan War?**

Paris, Prince of Troy, visits Menelaus, King of Sparta, and then Paris runs off with Menelaus' wife, Helen, who of course becomes known as Helen of Troy. This is a major insult to Menelaus and his family, so he and his elder brother, Agamemnon, lead an army against Troy to get Helen (and reparations) back. The war drags on for ten years, and the greatest Greek warrior is Achilles, while the greatest Trojan warrior is Hector, Paris' eldest brother. Eventually, Hector is killed by Achilles, who is then killed by Paris, who is then killed by Philoctetes. Finally, Odysseus comes up with the idea of the Trojan Horse, which ends the Trojan War.

That is a brief retelling of the Trojan War, but many, many myths grew up around the war, making it a richly detailed myth.

• **Does Homer allude to all of the details of the Trojan War?**

Homer does not allude to all the details of the Trojan War. For example, one myth states that Achilles was invincible except for his heel. According to this myth, his mother, the goddess Thetis, knew that Achilles was fated to die in the Trojan War; therefore, to protect him, she dipped him into a pool of water that was supposed to make him invulnerable. To do that, she held him by his heel. Because she was holding him by his heel, the water did not touch it and so that part of Achilles' body remained vulnerable.

Homer never alludes to this myth; in fact, this myth plays no role whatsoever in Homer's epic poems. Achilles is not invulnerable. If he were, he could fight in battle naked, as long as he wore an iron boot over his vulnerable heel. In Homer, Achilles is vulnerable to weapons, and he knows it. At one point, he would like to join the fighting, but he cannot, because he has no armor. No one who reads the *Iliad* should think that Achilles is invulnerable except for his heel.

Myth changes and develops over time, and it is possible that Homer had no knowledge of this myth because it had not been created yet. Or it is possible that Homer knew of this myth but ignored it because he had his own points to make in his epic poem.

Another myth that may or may not be alluded to is the Judgment of Paris. It may be alluded to in a couple of places in the *Iliad*, but scholars disagree about this.

• **Who is Achilles, and what is unusual about his mother, Thetis?**

Achilles, of course, is the foremost warrior of the Greeks during the Trojan War. His mother, Thetis, is unusual in that she is a goddess. The Greeks' religion was different from many modern religions in that the Greeks were polytheistic (believing in many gods) rather than

monotheistic (believing in one god). In addition, the gods and human beings could mate. Achilles is unusual in that he had an immortal goddess as his mother and a mortal man, Peleus, as his father. Achilles, of course, is unusual in many ways. Another way in which he is unusual is that he and Thetis have long talks together. Often, the gods either ignore their mortal offspring or choose not to reveal themselves to them. For example, Aeneas' goddess mother is Aphrodite (Roman name: Venus). Although Aphrodite does save Aeneas' life or help him on occasion, the two do not have long talks together the way that Achilles and Thetis do.

- **What prophecy was made about Thetis' male offspring?**

The prophecy about Thetis' male offspring was that he would be a greater man than his father. This is something that would make most human fathers happy. (One exception would be Pap, in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Pap does not want Huck, his son, to learn to read or write or to get an education or to live better than Pap does.)

- **Who is Zeus, and what does he decide to do as a result of this prophecy?**

Zeus is a horny god who sleeps with many goddesses and many human beings. Normally, he would lust after Thetis, but once he hears the prophecy, he does not want to sleep with Thetis. For one thing, the gods are potent, and when they mate they have children. Zeus overthrew his own father, and Zeus does not want Thetis to give birth to a greater man than he is because his son will overthrow him. Therefore, Zeus wants to get Thetis married off to someone else. In this case, a marriage to a human being for Thetis would suit Zeus just fine. A human son may be greater than his father, but he is still not going to be as great as a god, and so Zeus will be safe if Thetis gives birth to a human son.

- **Who is Peleus?**

Peleus is the human man who marries Thetis and who fathers Achilles. At the time of the *Iliad*, Peleus is an old man and Thetis has not lived with him for a long time.

- **Why is Eris, Goddess of Discord, not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis?**

Obviously, you do not want discord at a wedding, and therefore, Eris, Goddess of Discord, is not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis. Even though Eris is not invited to the wedding feast, she shows up anyway.

- **Eris, Goddess of Discord, throws an apple on a table at the wedding feast. What is inscribed on the apple?**

Inscribed on the apple is the phrase "For the fairest," written in Greek, of course. Because Greek is a language that indicates masculine and feminine in certain words, and since "fairest" has a feminine ending, the apple is really inscribed "for the fairest female."

- **Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite each claim the apple. Who are they?**

Three goddesses claim the apple, meaning that each of the three goddesses thinks that she is the fairest, or most beautiful.

Hera

Hera is the wife of Zeus, and she is a jealous wife. Zeus has many affairs with both immortal goddesses and mortal women, and Hera is jealous because of these affairs. Zeus would like to

keep on her good side.

Athena

Athena is the goddess of wisdom. She becomes the patron goddess of Athens. Athena especially likes Odysseus, as we see especially in the *Odyssey*. Athena is a favorite of Zeus, her father. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

Aphrodite

Aphrodite is the goddess of sexual passion. She can make Zeus fall in love against his will. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

• **Why doesn't Zeus want to judge the goddesses' beauty contest?**

Zeus is not a fool. He knows that if he judges the goddesses' beauty contest, he will make two enemies. The two goddesses whom Zeus does not choose as the fairest will hate him and likely make trouble for him.

Please note that the Greek gods and goddesses are not omnibenevolent. Frequently, they are quarrelsome and petty.

By the way, Athens, Ohio, lawyer Thomas Hodson once judged a beauty contest featuring 25 cute child contestants. He was running in an election to choose the municipal court judge, and he thought that judging the contest would be a good way to win votes. Very quickly, he decided never to judge a children's beauty contest again. He figured out that he had won two votes — the votes of the parents of the child who won the contest. Unfortunately, he also figured out that he had lost 48 votes — the votes of the parents of the children who lost.

• **Who is Paris, and what is the Judgment of Paris?**

Paris is a prince of Troy, and Zeus allows him to judge the three goddesses' beauty contest. Paris is not as intelligent as Zeus, or he would try to find a way out of judging the beauty contest.

• **Each of the goddesses offers Paris a bribe if he will choose her. What are the bribes?**

Hera

Hera offers Paris political power: several cities he can rule.

Athena

Athena offers Paris prowess in battle. Paris can become a mighty and feared warrior.

Aphrodite

Aphrodite offers Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

• **Which goddess does Paris choose?**

Paris chooses Aphrodite, who offered him the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

This is not what a Homeric warrior would normally choose. A person such as Achilles would choose to be an even greater warrior, if that is possible.

A person such as Agamemnon is likely to choose more cities to rule.

When Paris chooses the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife, we are not meant to think that he made a good decision. Paris is not a likable character.

- **As a result of Aphrodite's bribe, Paris abducts Helen. Why?**

Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman to be his wife. As it happens, that woman is Helen. Therefore, Paris abducts Helen, with Aphrodite's approval.

Did Helen go with Paris willingly? The answer to this question is ambiguous, and ancient authorities varied in how they answered this question.

- **To whom is Helen already married?**

Helen is already married to Menelaus, the King of Sparta. Paris visits Menelaus, and when he leaves, he carries off both a lot of Menelaus' treasure and Menelaus' wife, Helen. Obviously, this is not the way that one ought to treat one's host.

- **Who are Agamemnon and Menelaus?**

Agamemnon and Menelaus are the sons of Atreus. They are brothers, and Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, is the older brother and the brother who rules a greater land, as seen by the number of ships the two kings bring to the Trojan War. Menelaus brings 60 ships. Agamemnon brings 100 ships.

- **Who is responsible for leading the expedition to recover Helen?**

Agamemnon is the older brother, so he is the leader of the Greek troops in the Trojan War.

- **Why do the winds blow against the Greek ships?**

When the Greek ships are gathered together and are ready to set sail against Troy, a wind blows in the wrong direction for them to sail. The goddess Artemis (Roman name: Diana) is angry at the Greeks because she knows that the result of the Trojan War will be lots of death, not just of warriors, but also of women and children. This is true of all wars, and it is a lesson that human beings forget after each war and relearn in the next war.

- **Why does Artemis demand a human sacrifice?**

Artemis knows that Agamemnon's warriors will cause much death of children, so she makes him sacrifice one of his daughters so that he will suffer what he will make other parents suffer.

- **Who does Agamemnon sacrifice?**

Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigeneia. This is a religious sacrifice of a human life to appease the goddess Artemis.

- **What do Menelaus and Agamemnon do?**

After the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Menelaus set sail with all the Greek ships for Troy. They land, then they engage in warfare.

- **Who are Achilles and Hector?**

Achilles is the foremost Greek warrior, while Hector is the foremost Trojan warrior. Both warriors are deserving of great respect.

• **Does Homer assume that Achilles is invulnerable?**

Absolutely not. Achilles needs armor to go out on the battlefield and fight.

• **What happens to Hector and Achilles?**

Hector kills Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, in battle. Angry, Achilles kills Hector.

• **What is the story of the Trojan Horse?**

Odysseus, a great strategist, thought up the idea of the Trojan Horse. Epeus built it.

The Greeks build a giant wooden horse, which is hollow and filled with Greek warriors, and then they pretend to abandon the war and to sail away from Troy. Actually, Agamemnon sails behind an island so that the Trojans cannot see the Greek ships. The Greeks also leave behind a lying Greek named Sinon, who tells the Trojans about a supposed prophecy that if the Trojans take the Trojan Horse inside their city, then Troy will never fall. The Trojans do that, and at night the Greeks come out of the Trojan Horse, make their way to the city gates and open them. Outside the city gates are the Greek troops led by Agamemnon, who have returned to the Trojan plain. The Greek warriors rush inside the city and sack it.

Virgil's *Aeneid* has the fullest surviving ancient account of the Trojan Horse. Of course, he tells the story from the Trojan point of view. If Homer had written the story of the Trojan Horse, he would have told it from the Greek point of view. For the Greeks, the Trojan War ended in a great victory. For the Trojans, the Trojan War ended in a great disaster.

• **Which outrages do the Greeks commit during the sack of Troy?**

The Greeks committed many outrages during the sack of Troy:

Killing of King Priam

King Priam is killed by Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, aka Pyrrhus, at the altar of Zeus. This is an outrage because anyone who is at the altar of a god is under the protection of that god. When Neoptolemus kills Priam, an old man (and old people are respected in Homeric culture), Neoptolemus disrespects the god Zeus.

Killing of Hector's Young Son

Hector's son is murdered. Hector's son is a very small child who is murdered by being hurled from the top of a high wall of Troy. Even during wartime, children ought not to be murdered, so this is another outrage.

Rape of Cassandra

Cassandra is raped by Little Ajax even though she is under Athena's protection. Cassandra is raped in a temple devoted to Athena. This is showing major disrespect to Athena. Again, the Greeks are doing things that ought not to be done, even during wartime.

Sacrifice of Polyxena

The Greeks sacrificed Priam's young daughter Polyxena. The Trojan War begins and ends with a human sacrifice of the life of a young girl. This is yet another outrage.

- **How do the gods react to these outrages?**

The gods and goddesses make things difficult for the Greeks on their way home to Greece.

- **What happens to the Greeks after the fall of Troy?**

Nestor is a wise, pious, old man who did not commit any outrages. He makes it home quickly.

Apparently, Odysseus' patron goddess, Athena, is angry at all of the Greeks, because she does not help him on his journey home until ten years have passed.

Little Ajax, who raped Cassandra, drowns on his way home.

Agamemnon returns home to a world of trouble. His wife, Clytemnestra, has taken a lover during his ten-year absence, and she murders Agamemnon.

Menelaus is reunited with Helen, but their ship is driven off course, and it takes them years to return home to Sparta.

- **What happens to Aeneas?**

Aeneas fights bravely, and he witnesses such things as the death of Priam, King of Troy; however, when he realizes that Troy is lost, he returns to his family to try to save them. He carries his father on his back, and he leads his young son by the hand, but although he saves them by leading them out of Troy, his wife, who is following behind him, is lost in the battle.

Aeneas becomes the leader of the Trojan survivors, and he leads them to Italy, where they become the founders of the Roman people.

- **Who were the Roman people?**

The Romans had one of the greatest empires of the world.

- **In the Homeric epics, are human beings responsible for their actions?**

Yes, human beings are responsible for their actions in the Homeric epics.

- **Despite Aphrodite, is Paris responsible for his actions?**

Of course, Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife if Paris chose her as the fairest of the three goddesses who wanted the golden apple. However, Paris is responsible for his actions when he runs away with Helen, the lawful wife of Menelaus. Paris could have declined to run away with Helen.

- **Is Agamemnon responsible for his actions?**

Artemis required the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter before the winds would blow the Greek ships to Troy, but Agamemnon is still responsible for his actions. He could have declined to sacrifice his daughter, and he could have given up the war.

- **What happens to humans who do impious acts?**

Humans who do impious acts are punished for their impious acts.

- **What is the Greek concept of fate?**

The Greeks believe in fate. We are fated to die at a certain time, although we do not know when we will die.

In addition, people may be fated to do certain things in their lives. For example, Oedipus is fated to kill his father and to marry his mother.

Similarly, certain events are fated to happen. For example, Troy is fated to be conquered in the Trojan War.

- **Do the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* tell the entire story of the Trojan War?**

No, they tell only a small part of the story. The *Iliad* tells the story of an event that occurred in a few weeks of the beginning of the final year of the Trojan War. The story of the Trojan War is not fully told in either epic poem. Neither is the story of the Trojan Horse, although knowledge of it is essential for understanding the *Iliad*, and although the Trojan Horse is talked about briefly in the *Odyssey*.

- **What happened the first time the author of this retelling read the *Iliad*?**

I read the *Iliad* for the first time the summer before I started college. It was my way of preparing myself to be educated. As I got near the end of the *Iliad*, I started wondering, "Where is the Trojan Horse?" When I got to the end of the *Iliad*, I was very surprised that Troy had not yet fallen.

- **Did other epics exist?**

Yes, other epics did exist, and we do have some Roman epics that were written much later than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, of course. The ancient Greek epics from the time of Homer have not survived. Fortunately, we know from ancient commentators that we have the really good epic poems. The epics that have been lost were not as good as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

- **What do the Homeric epics assume?**

The Homeric epics assume that you know the mythic background, which is why I have written about it here.

- **What is the society described in the Homeric epics like?**

Homeric society is very different from our society; it is patriarchal, slave-holding, monarchical, and polytheistic:

Patriarchal

This is a society in which the men have the power. Of course, the goddesses are a special case and are more powerful than human men. However, even in the world of gods and goddesses, the gods have more power. The king of the gods is Zeus, a male. Often, contemporary US American society is thought of as patriarchal. I won't deny that, but the ancient Greek society was much more patriarchal than contemporary US American society.

Slave-Holding

Slaves exist in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, women are spoils of war, and young, pretty women become sex-slaves to the warriors who have killed their husbands. In the *Odyssey*, slaves are servants in the palace and on the farm. Slavery is taken for granted in the Homeric epics.

Monarchical

Kings exist in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Agamemnon is a king, Menelaus is a king, Achilles is a king, and Odysseus is a king.

Polytheistic

As we have seen, the ancient Greeks and Romans believed in many gods with a small g. We moderns tend to believe or to disbelieve in one God with a capital G.

• **What do we mean by *theos*?**

The Greek word *theos* (THAY os) is usually translated as “god” with a small g. Yes, this is a good translation of the word, but we modern readers can be misled by it because of our familiarity with the word “God” with a capital G.

• **Are the gods personified forces of nature?**

Originally, the gods seem to have been personified forces of nature. They are more than that in the Homeric epics, but they are still in part personified forces of nature.

One example is that Zeus is the god of the sky and lightning. Of course, in the *Iliad* Zeus is much more than merely the god of the sky and lightning. Maybe that is how belief in Zeus arose, but Zeus became much more than that.

Another example is that Poseidon is the god of the sea.

Another example is that Ares is war. (Here we have an embodiment of human culture rather than an embodiment of a force of nature.) In the *Iliad*, Zeus says that Ares is hated. He is hated because he is war.

Another example is that Aphrodite is sexual passion. She is the personification of sexual passion. We can say that she inflicts sexual passion on other people, but in addition, she is sexual passion. This is not just a way of speaking. Someone may say, “Aphrodite filled me with lust”; in other words, Aphrodite is a way of explaining human emotion. However, in the Homeric epics, Aphrodite is more than a way of explaining human emotion. In Book 3 of Homer’s *Iliad*, Aphrodite forces Helen to go to bed with Paris. She threatens Helen, and she takes Helen to Paris’ bedroom.

• **Are the gods anthropomorphic?**

These gods are anthropomorphic. They have human form, with some differences. The gods and goddesses are larger and better looking and stronger than human beings. However, they look like human beings, and they speak the language of human beings. They also eat, drink, and have sex like human beings. They also feel the human emotions of jealousy (Hera is jealous of Zeus’ love affairs), passion (Zeus sleeps with many, many females, both mortal and immortal), anger (Ares becomes angry when he is wounded by Diomedes in battle), and grief (Zeus grieves because his son Sarpedon is fated to die).

- **Are the gods omnibenevolent, omniscient, or omnipotent?**

The Homeric gods are not omnibenevolent, omniscient, or omnipotent.

Not Omnibenevolent

Clearly, the gods are not omnibenevolent. They are not all-good; they are not even just. Some of the gods are rapists. Hera is very capable of exacting vengeance on innocent people. The gods are very dangerous, and they can do bad things to human beings. One example is the myth of Actaeon. He was out hunting with his dogs, and he saw the goddess Artemis bathing naked. He did not mean to see her naked, but she exacts vengeance anyway. She turns him into a stag, and he is run down and killed by his own dogs. He suffers horribly because his mind is still human although his body is that of a male deer.

Not Omniscient

In addition, the gods are not omniscient. We see this in the *Odyssey*. Athena has been wanting to help Odysseus, but she does not want to anger Poseidon, who is opposed to Odysseus. Therefore, Athena waits until Poseidon's attention is turned elsewhere, and then she helps Odysseus. Another example is that when Hera seduces Zeus in the *Iliad*, he does not know that she is tricking him. Hera wants to seduce Zeus so that he will go to sleep, and the Achaeans will be triumphant in the battle. If Zeus were omniscient, he would have known that she was tricking him. Of course, the gods do know a lot. For example, they know a human being's fate. In addition, the gods hear prayers addressed to them.

Not Omnipotent

The gods are very powerful, but they are not omnipotent. The gods can change their shape. They can take the shape of a bird or of a particular human being. The gods can travel very quickly. Poseidon can cause earthquakes, and Zeus can cause lightning. The gods cannot go back on their inviolable oaths. For example: When Alcmena was about to give birth to Heracles, Zeus announced that on a certain day a boy would be born who was both a descendant of Perseus, an ancient hero, and who would rule over the city of Mycenae, which later Agamemnon ruled. Unfortunately, this news allowed Hera to interfere. Hera is the goddess of childbirth, and she was able to delay the birth of Heracles. She also was able to speed up the birth of Eurystheus, who was a descendant of Perseus. By doing this, Hera brought it about that Eurystheus, not Heracles, ruled Mycenae. Hera made sure that Eurystheus was born on that day, and not Heracles. After all, Zeus had sworn an inviolable oath that a descendant of Perseus born on that day would rule Mycenae, and the gods, including Zeus, cannot go back on their inviolable oaths.

- **What does *xenia* mean?**

Xenia is often defined as the guest-host relationship. English does not have a word like *xenia*, although "hospitality" is sometimes used as a translation of *xenia*. However, "hospitality" is too weak a word for what the ancient Greeks meant. The word *xenia* carries with it an obligation to the gods. Zeus is the god of *xenia*, and when people abuse their sacred duty of *xenia*, they are disrespecting Zeus.

- **In which way is *xenia* a reciprocal relationship?**

Xenia is a reciprocal relationship between guest and host in both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.

Xenia is a reciprocal relationship between two *xenoi*. (*Xenoi* is the plural; *xenos* is the singular.)

Xenos can mean five different things, depending on the context: guest, host, stranger, friend, and foreigner.

• **Which meanings does *xenos* have?**

In ancient Greece, no hotels or motels existed. If you were traveling and you arrived at a town in the evening, you would look for hospitality at a home. In such a case, you and your host would be *xenoi*.

In this case, you would be a guest, a stranger, and a foreigner. You would be a guest in this home. Because your host doesn't know you, you would be a stranger. Because you aren't from this town, you would be a foreigner.

Of course, your host would be a host.

In addition, you and your host would be friends. You would not be friends in the sense that you have known and liked each other for a long time. You would be friends because you have participated in the guest-host relationship.

By the way, *xenia* is a root word of *xenophobia*, or fear of strangers.

In addition, modern Greece has the tradition today of *xenophilia*, or of showing hospitality to tourists.

• **Which safeguards protect against the violation of *xenia*?**

There can be a lot of danger in such a relationship. What would happen if either the guest or the host were a robber and a killer? Bad things.

Therefore, there needs to be some kind of safeguard in place. The host must not murder his guest. The guest must not murder his host.

Sinbad's Poverty Tour: Early in Sinbad the comedian's career, he knew that he needed to have more experience if he wanted to be a stand-up comedian. Therefore, he went out on what he called his Poverty Tour. He simply loaded up the truck of his car with some tools and clothing, drove to a city, and looked for places where he could do his act. He would tell the owner of the club that he wouldn't charge him or her anything and he would pass the hat around for tips after his act. This was OK with the owners, as it saved them money. Of course, Sinbad didn't make much money that way, and he often slept in his car. To solve that problem, when he did his act for the last time at night, he would ask the audience if someone would let him sleep on their couch. Of course, Sinbad is a big guy and he can take care of himself. He would look over the prospective host, and if he looked OK, he would go home with him and sleep on the couch. If the prospective host looked dangerous, Sinbad would say that he was going to get his car, but he would drive off. Sinbad was a good guest, by the way. In his day job, he had done plumbing and carpentry work. He would unobtrusively look around his host's apartment, find something that needed fixed, and then he would say, "Hey, I've got my tools in my car. Let me fix that for you." Sinbad said that he always left the apartments where he stayed as a guest in better shape than they were when he arrived.

The ancient Greeks did have a safeguard for *xenia*: Zeus *Xenios*, which means Zeus, the god of *xenia*. Anyone who does not follow the rules of *xenia* is not doing the will of Zeus. This offends Zeus, and eventually the offender will pay for his transgression.

• **In which way was the cause of the Trojan War a violation of *xenia*?**

Of course, the Trojan War began because of a violation of *xenia*. The Trojan Paris was a guest of Menelaus, King of Sparta. When you are a guest, you aren't supposed to run away with your host's wife and much of his treasure. We know what happened to Troy as a result of this transgression of *xenia*: the Greeks conquered Troy. As you can see, *xenia* is important in the *Odyssey*, but it is important also in the *Iliad*.

• **An example of bad *xenia*.**

How evil were the people of Sodom? When a stranger arrived in their city, each citizen would give him a piece of gold that had been marked with the name of the giver. The stranger would be grateful, of course, to receive the gold, but he would quickly find that he was unable to spend it. Each time he would attempt to buy food, the shop owners would refuse to sell it to him. In addition, the stranger found that he was unable to leave the city — the guards would not allow him to pass through the gates. Therefore, the stranger — despite his pile of gold coins — would slowly starve to death. When the stranger had starved to death, the citizens would come by the pile of gold coins, pick up the coin with their name marked on it and wait to starve to death another stranger.

Conclusion

Be sure to read a good translation of Homer's *Iliad* once you have read this retelling.

I recommend that you read the translations by Robert Fagles and by Ian Johnston.

I also recommend Elizabeth Vandiver's course on the *Iliad*, which is available from the Teaching Company. I have used information presented in that course in this section titled "Background Information."

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Appendix D: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

Appendix E: Some Books by David Bruce

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Arden of Faversham: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Arraignment, or Poetaster: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The New Inn, or The Light Heart: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Sejanus' Fall: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's A Tale of a Tub: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings

Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose

The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling

From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica

George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's Eastward Ho! A Retelling

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling

George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling

George Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling

George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling

George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling

George-a-Greene: A Retelling

The History of King Leir: A Retelling

Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose

Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose

J.W. Gent's The Valiant Scot: A Retelling

Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica

John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English

John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling

John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling

John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling

John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling

John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling

John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling

John Lyly's Campaspe: A Retelling

John Lyly's Endymion, The Man in the Moon: A Retelling

John Lyly's Galatea: A Retelling

John Lyly's Love's Metamorphosis: A Retelling

John Lyly's Midas: A Retelling

John Lyly's Mother Bombie: A Retelling

John Lyly's Sappho and Phao: A Retelling

John Lyly's The Woman in the Moon: A Retelling

John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling

King Edward III: A Retelling

Mankind: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)

Margaret Cavendish's The Unnatural Tragedy: A Retelling

The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling

The Summoning of Everyman: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)

Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling

The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling

Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling

Thomas Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside: A Retelling

Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women: A Retelling

Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's The Roaring Girl: A Retelling

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's The Changeling: A Retelling

The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems

Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose