

**BOOK 6**

The battle was left to rage on the level expanse  
Between Troy's two rivers. Bronze spearheads  
Drove past each other as the Greek and Trojan armies  
Spread like a hemorrhage across the plain.

Telamonian Ajax, the Achaean wall,  
Was the first Greek to break the Trojan line  
And give his comrades some daylight.  
He killed Thrace's best, Acamas,  
Son of Eussorus, smashing through the horn  
Of his plumed helmet with his spear  
And driving through until the bronze tip  
Pierced the forehead's bone. Acamas' eyes went dark.

10

Diomedes followed up by killing Axylus,  
Teuthras' son, a most hospitable man.  
His comfortable home was on the road to Arisbe,  
And he entertained all travellers, but not one  
Came by to meet the enemy before him  
And save him from death. Diomedes killed  
Not only Axylus but Calesius, his driver,  
Two men who would now be covered by earth.

20

Then Euryalus killed Opheltius and Dresus  
And went on after Aesepus and Pedasus,

Twins whom the naiad Abarbarea  
Bore to Bucolion, Laomedon's eldest  
Though bastard son. He was with his sheep  
When he made love to the nymph. She conceived,  
And bore him the twins whom Euryalus  
Now undid. He left their bright bodies naked.

Then Polypoetes killed Astyalus;  
Odysseus got Pidytes with his spear;  
And Teucer took out Aretaon, a good man.  
Nestor's son Antilochus killed Alerus;  
The warlord Agamemnon killed Elatus,  
Who lived in steep Pedasus on the Satnioeis;  
Leitus killed Phylacus as he fled;  
And Eurypylus unmanned Melanthius.

30

But Menelaus took Adrastus alive.  
Adrastus' terrified horses became entangled  
In a tamarisk as they galloped across the plain,  
And, breaking the pole near the car's rim,  
Bolted toward the city with the others.  
Their master rolled from the car by the wheel  
And fell face-first into the dust. Menelaus  
Came up to him with his long-shadowed spear,  
And Adrastus clasped his knees and prayed:

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"Take me alive, son of Atreus, and accept  
A worthy ransom from the treasure stored  
In my father's palace, bronze, gold, wrought iron.  
My father would lavish it all on you if he heard

I was still alive among the Achaean ships."

50

The speech had its intended effect.  
Menelaus was about to hand him over  
To be led back to the ships, but Agamemnon  
Came running over to call him on it:

"Going soft, Menelaus? What does this man  
Mean to you? Have the Trojans ever shown you  
Any hospitality? Not one of them  
Escapes sheer death at our hands, not even  
The boy who is still in his mother's womb.  
Every Trojan dies, unmourned and unmarked."

60

And so the hero changed his brother's mind  
By reminding him of the ways of conduct and fate.  
Menelaus shoved Adrastus aside,  
And Agamemnon stabbed him in the flank.  
He fell backward, and the son of Atreus  
Braced his heel on his chest and pulled out the spear.

Then Nestor shouted and called to the Greeks:

"Soldiers of Greece, no lagging behind  
To strip off armor from the enemy corpses  
To see who comes back to the ships with the most.  
Now we kill men! You will have plenty of time later  
To despoil the Trojan dead on the plain."

70

Nestor's speech worked them up to a frenzy,

And the Trojans would have been beaten  
Back to Ilion by superior force  
Had not Helenus, Priam's son  
And Troy's prophet, approached Aeneas and Hector:

"Aeneas and Hector, the Trojans and Lycians  
Are counting on you. You two are the leaders  
In every initiative in council and battle—  
So make a stand here. Go through the ranks  
And keep our men back from the gates,  
Before they run through them and fall  
Into their women's arms, making our enemies laugh.

80

Once you have bolstered our troops' morale,  
We will stand our ground and fight the Danaans,  
Tired as we are. We have our backs to the wall.  
Hector, go into the city and find our mother.

Tell her to take a company of old women  
To the temple of Athena on the acropolis  
With the largest and loveliest robe in her house,  
The one that is dearest of all to her,

90

And place it on the knees of braided Athena,  
And promise twelve heifers to her in her temple,  
Unblemished yearlings, if she will pity  
The town of Troy, its wives and its children,  
And if she will keep from holy Ilion  
Wild Diomedes, who is raging with his spear.

I think he's the strongest of all the Achaeans.  
We never even feared Achilles like this,  
And they say he is half-divine. But this man  
Won't stop at anything. No one can match him."

100

Hector took his brother's advice.  
He jumped down from his chariot with his gear  
And toured the ranks, a spear in each hand.  
He urged them on, and with a trembling roar  
The Trojans turned to face the Achaeans.  
The Greeks pulled back. It looked to them  
As if some god had come from the starry sky  
To help the Trojans. It had been a sudden rally.  
Hector shouted and called to the Trojans:

110

"Soldiers of Troy, and illustrious allies,  
Remember to fight like the men that you are,  
While I go to the city and ask the elders  
Who sit in council, and our wives, to pray  
To the gods and promise bulls by the hundred."

And Hector left, helmet collecting light  
Above the black-hide shield whose rim tapped  
His ankles and neck with each step he took.

Then Glaucus, son of Hippolochus,  
Met Diomedes in no-man's-land.  
Both were eager to fight, but first Tydeus' son  
Made his voice heard above the battle noise:

120

"And which mortal hero are you? I've never seen you  
Out here before on the fields of glory,  
And now here you are ahead of everyone,  
Ready to face my spear. Pretty bold.

I feel sorry for your parents. Of course,  
You may be an immortal, down from heaven.  
Far be it from me to fight an immortal god. 130  
Not even mighty Lycurgus lived long  
After he tangled with the immortals,  
Driving the nurses of Dionysus  
Down over the Mountain of Nysa  
And making them drop their wands  
As he beat them with an ox-goad. Dionysus  
Was terrified and plunged into the sea,  
Where Thetis received him into her bosom,  
Trembling with fear at the human's threats.  
Then the gods, who live easy, grew angry 140  
With Lycurgus, and the Son of Cronus  
Made him go blind, and he did not live long,  
Hated as he was by the immortal gods.  
No, I wouldn't want to fight an immortal.  
But if you are human, and shed blood,  
Step right up for a quick end to your life."

And Glaucus, Hippolochus' son:

"Great son of Tydeus, why ask about my lineage?  
Human generations are like leaves in their seasons.  
The wind blows them to the ground, but the tree 150  
Sprouts new ones when spring comes again.  
Men too. Their generations come and go.  
But if you really do want to hear my story,  
You're welcome to listen. Many men know it.  
Ephyra, in the heart of Argive horse country,

Was home to Sisyphus, the shrewdest man alive,  
Sisyphus son of Aeolus. He had a son, Glaucus,  
Who was the father of faultless Bellerophon,  
A man of grace and courage by gift of the gods.  
But Proetus, whom Zeus had made king of Argos,

160

Came to hate Bellerophon  
And drove him out. It happened this way.

Proetus' wife, the beautiful Anteia,  
Was madly in love with Bellerophon  
And wanted to have him in her bed.

But she couldn't persuade him, not at all,  
Because he was so virtuous and wise.

So she made up lies and spoke to the king:  
'Either die yourself, Proetus, or kill Bellerophon.

He wanted to sleep with me against my will.'

170

The king was furious when he heard her say this.  
He did not kill him—he had scruples about that—  
But he sent him to Lycia with a folding tablet  
On which he had scratched many evil signs,

And told him to give it to Anteia's father,  
To get him killed. So off he went to Lycia,  
With an immortal escort, and when he reached  
The river Xanthus, the king there welcomed him  
And honored him with entertainment

For nine solid days, killing an ox each day.

180

But when the tenth dawn spread her rosy light,  
He questioned him and asked to see the tokens  
He brought from Proetus, his daughter's husband.  
And when he saw the evil tokens from Proetus,  
He ordered him, first, to kill the Chimaera,

A raging monster, divine, inhuman—  
A lion in the front, a serpent in the rear,  
In the middle a goat—and breathing fire.  
Bellerophon killed her, trusting signs from the gods.  
Next he had to fight the glorious Solymi, 190  
The hardest battle, he said, he ever fought,  
And, third, the Amazons, women the peers of men.  
As he journeyed back the king wove another wile.  
He chose the best men in all wide Lycia  
And laid an ambush. Not one returned home;  
Blameless Bellerophon killed them all.  
When the king realized his guest had divine blood,  
He kept him there and gave him his daughter  
And half of all his royal honor. Moreover,  
The Lycians cut out for him a superb 200  
Tract of land, plow-land and orchard.  
His wife, the princess, bore him three children,  
Isander, Hippolochus, and Laodameia.  
Zeus in his wisdom slept with Laodameia,  
And she bore him the godlike warrior Sarpedon.  
But even Bellerophon lost the gods' favor  
And went wandering alone over the Aleian plain.  
His son Isander was slain by Ares  
As he fought against the glorious Solymi,  
And his daughter was killed by Artemis 210  
Of the golden reins. But Hippolochus  
Bore me, and I am proud he is my father.  
He sent me to Troy with strict instructions  
To be the best ever, better than all the rest,  
And not to bring shame on the race of my fathers,



The noblest men in Ephyra and Lycia.  
This, I am proud to say, is my lineage."

Diomedes grinned when he heard all this.  
He planted his spear in the bounteous earth  
And spoke gently to the Lycian prince:

220

"We have old ties of hospitality!  
My grandfather Oeneus long ago  
Entertained Bellerophon in his halls  
For twenty days, and they gave each other  
Gifts of friendship. Oeneus gave  
A belt bright with scarlet, and Bellerophon  
A golden cup, which I left at home.  
I don't remember my father Tydeus,  
Since I was very small when he left for Thebes  
In the war that killed so many Achaeans.  
But that makes me your friend and you my guest  
If ever you come to Argos, as you are my friend  
And I your guest whenever I travel to Lycia.  
So we can't cross spears with each other  
Even in the thick of battle. There are enough  
Trojans and allies for me to kill, whomever  
A god gives me and I can run down myself.  
And enough Greeks for you to kill as you can.  
And let's exchange armor, so everyone will know  
That we are friends from our fathers' days."

230

240

With this said, they vaulted from their chariots,  
Clasped hands, and pledged their friendship.

But Zeus took away Glaucus' good sense,  
For he exchanged his golden armor for bronze,  
The worth of one hundred oxen for nine.

**W**hen Hector reached the oak tree by the Western Gate,  
Trojan wives and daughters ran up to him,  
Asking about their children, their brothers,  
Their kinsmen, their husbands. He told them all,  
Each woman in turn, to pray to the gods. 250  
Sorrow clung to their heads like mist.

Then he came to Priam's palace, a beautiful  
Building made of polished stone with a central courtyard  
Flanked by porticoes, upon which opened fifty  
Adjoining rooms, where Priam's sons  
Slept with their wives. Across the court  
A suite of twelve more bedrooms housed  
His modest daughters and their husbands.  
It was here that Hector's mother met him,  
A gracious woman, with Laodice, 260  
Her most beautiful daughter, in tow.  
Hecuba took his hand in hers and said:

"Hector, my son, why have you left the war  
And come here? Are those abominable Greeks  
Wearing you down in the fighting outside,  
And does your heart lead you to our acropolis  
To stretch your hands upward to Zeus?  
But stay here while I get you

Some honey-sweet wine, so you can pour a libation  
To Father Zeus first and the other immortals,  
Then enjoy some yourself, if you will drink.  
Wine greatly bolsters a weary man's spirits,  
And you are weary from defending your kinsmen."

Sunlight shimmered on great Hector's helmet.

"Mother, don't offer me any wine.

It would drain the power out of my limbs.

I have too much reverence to pour a libation

With unwashed hands to Zeus almighty,

Or to pray to Cronion in the black cloudbanks

Splattered with blood and the filth of battle.

But you must go to the War Goddess's temple

To make sacrifice with a band of old women.

Choose the largest and loveliest robe in the house,

The one that is dearest of all to you,

And place it on the knees of braided Athena.

And promise twelve heifers to her in her temple,

Unblemished yearlings, if she will pity

The town of Troy, its wives, and its children,

And if she will keep from holy Ilion

Wild Diomedes, who's raging with his spear.

Go then to the temple of Athena the War Goddess,

And I will go over to summon Paris,

If he will listen to what I have to say.

I wish the earth would gape open beneath him.

Olympian Zeus has bred him as a curse

To Troy, to Priam, and all Priam's children.

If I could see him dead and gone to Hades,  
I think my heart might be eased of its sorrow."

Thus Hector. Hecuba went to the great hall  
And called to her handmaidens, and they  
Gathered together the city's old women. 300  
She went herself to a fragrant storeroom  
Which held her robes, the exquisite work  
Of Sidonian women whom godlike Paris  
Brought from Phoenicia when he sailed the sea  
On the voyage he made for high-born Helen.  
Hecuba chose the robe that lay at the bottom,  
The most beautiful of all, woven of starlight,  
And bore it away as a gift for Athena.  
A stream of old women followed behind. 310

They came to the temple of Pallas Athena  
On the city's high rock, and the doors were opened  
By fair-cheeked Theano, daughter of Cisseus  
And wife of Antenor, breaker of horses.  
The Trojans had made her Athena's priestess.  
With ritual cries they all lifted their hands  
To Pallas Athena. Theano took the robe  
And laid it on the knees of the rich-haired goddess,  
Then prayed in supplication to Zeus' daughter:

"Lady Athena who defends our city, 320  
Brightest of goddesses, hear our prayer.  
Break now the spear of Diomedes  
And grant that he fall before the Western Gate,

That we may now offer twelve heifers in this temple,  
Unblemished yearlings. Only do thou pity  
The town of Troy, its wives and its children."

But Pallas Athena denied her prayer.

**W**hile they prayed to great Zeus' daughter,  
Hector came to Paris' beautiful house,  
Which he had built himself with the aid  
Of the best craftsmen in all wide Troy:  
Sleeping quarters, a hall, and a central courtyard  
Near to Priam's and Hector's on the city's high rock.  
Hector entered, Zeus' light upon him,  
A spear sixteen feet long cradled in his hand,  
The bronze point gleaming, and the ferrule gold.  
He found Paris in the bedroom, busy with his weapons,  
Fondling his curved bow, his fine shield, and breastplate.  
Helen of Argos sat with her household women  
Directing their exquisite handicraft.

330

340

Hector meant to shame Paris and provoke him:

"This is a fine time to be nursing your anger,  
You idiot! We're dying out there defending the walls.  
It's because of you the city is in this hellish war.  
If you saw someone else holding back from combat  
You'd pick a fight with him yourself. Now get up  
Before the whole city goes up in flames!"

And Paris, handsome as a god:

"That's no more than just, Hector,  
 But listen now to what I have to say. 350  
 It's not out of anger or spite toward the Trojans  
 I've been here in my room. I only wanted  
 To recover from my pain. My wife was just now  
 Encouraging me to get up and fight,  
 And that seems the better thing to do.  
 Victory takes turns with men. Wait for me  
 While I put on my armor, or go on ahead—  
 I'm pretty sure I'll catch up with you."

To which Hector said nothing.

But Helen said to him softly: 360

"Brother-in-law  
 Of a scheming, cold-blooded bitch,  
 I wish that on the day my mother bore me  
 A windstorm had swept me away to a mountain  
 Or into the waves of the restless sea,  
 Swept me away before all this could happen.  
 But since the gods have ordained these evils,  
 Why couldn't I be the wife of a better man,  
 One sensitive at least to repeated reproaches?  
 Paris has never had an ounce of good sense 370  
 And never will. He'll pay for it someday.  
 But come inside and sit down on this chair,  
 Dear brother-in-law. You bear such a burden

For my wanton ways and Paris' witlessness.  
Zeus has placed this evil fate on us so that  
In time to come poets will sing of us."

And Hector, in his burnished helmet:

"Don't ask me to sit, Helen, even though  
You love me. You will never persuade me.  
My heart is out there with our fighting men.  
They already feel my absence from battle.  
Just get Paris moving, and have him hurry  
So he can catch up with me while I'm still  
Inside the city. I'm going to my house now  
To see my family, my wife and my boy. I don't know  
Whether I'll ever be back to see them again, or if  
The gods will destroy me at the hands of the Greeks."

380

And Hector turned and left. He came to his house  
But did not find white-armed Andromache there.  
She had taken the child and a robed attendant  
And stood on the tower, lamenting and weeping—  
His blameless wife. When Hector didn't find her inside,  
He paused on his way out and called to the servants:

390

"Can any of you women tell me exactly  
Where Andromache went when she left the house?  
To one of my sisters or one of my brothers' wives?  
Or to the temple of Athena along with the other  
Trojan women to beseech the dread goddess?"

The spry old housekeeper answered him:

"Hector, if you want the exact truth, she didn't go  
To any of your sisters, or any of your brothers' wives,  
Or to the temple of Athena along with the other  
Trojan women to beseech the dread goddess.  
She went to Ilion's great tower, because she heard  
The Trojans were pressed and the Greeks were strong.  
She ran off to the wall like a madwoman,  
And the nurse went with her, carrying the child."

400

Thus the housekeeper, but Hector was gone,  
Retracing his steps through the stone and tile streets  
Of the great city, until he came to the Western Gate.  
He was passing through it out onto the plain  
When his wife came running up to meet him,  
His beautiful wife, Andromache,  
A gracious woman, daughter of great Eëtion,  
Eëtion, who lived in the forests of Plakos  
And ruled the Cilicians from Thebes-under-Plakos—  
His daughter was wed to bronze-helmeted Hector.  
She came up to him now, and the nurse with her  
Held to her bosom their baby boy,  
Hector's beloved son, beautiful as starlight,  
Whom Hector had named Scamandrius  
But everyone else called Astyanax, Lord of the City,  
For Hector alone could save Ilion now.  
He looked at his son and smiled in silence.  
Andromache stood close to him, shedding tears,  
Clinging to his arm as she spoke these words:

410

420



"Possessed is what you are, Hector. Your courage  
Is going to kill you, and you have no feeling left  
For your little boy or for me, the luckless woman  
Who will soon be your widow. It won't be long  
Before the whole Greek army swarms and kills you.  
And when they do, it will be better for me  
To sink into the earth. When I lose you, Hector,  
There will be nothing left, no one to turn to,  
Only pain. My father and mother are dead.  
Achilles killed my father when he destroyed  
Our city, Thebes with its high gates,  
But had too much respect to despoil his body.  
He burned it instead with all his armor  
And heaped up a barrow. And the spirit women  
Came down from the mountain, daughters  
Of the storm god, and planted elm trees around it.  
I had seven brothers once in that great house.  
All seven went down to Hades on a single day,  
Cut down by Achilles in one blinding sprint  
Through their shambling cattle and silver sheep.  
Mother, who was queen in the forests of Plakos,  
He took back as prisoner, with all her possessions,  
Then released her for a fortune in ransom.  
She died in our house, shot by Artemis' arrows.  
Hector, you are my father, you are my mother,  
You are my brother and my blossoming husband.  
But show some pity and stay here by the tower,  
Don't make your child an orphan, your wife a widow.  
Station your men here by the fig tree, where the city

430

440

450

Is weakest because the wall can be scaled.  
 Three times their elite have tried an attack here  
 Rallying around Ajax or glorious Idomeneus  
 Or Atreus' sons or mighty Diomedes,  
 Whether someone in on the prophecy told them  
 Or they are driven here by something in their heart."

460

And great Hector, helmet shining, answered her:

"Yes, Andromache, I worry about all this myself,  
 But my shame before the Trojans and their wives,  
 With their long robes trailing, would be too terrible  
 If I hung back from battle like a coward.  
 And my heart won't let me. I have learned to be  
 One of the best, to fight in Troy's first ranks,  
 Defending my father's honor and my own.  
 Deep in my heart I know too well  
 There will come a day when holy Ilion will perish,  
 And Priam and the people under Priam's ash spear.  
 But the pain I will feel for the Trojans then,  
 For Hecuba herself and for Priam king,  
 For my many fine brothers who will have by then  
 Fallen in the dust behind enemy lines-  
 All that pain is nothing to what I will feel  
 For you, when some bronze-armored Greek  
 Leads you away in tears, on your first day of slavery.  
 And you will work some other woman's loom  
 In Argos or carry water from a Spartan spring,  
 All against your will, under great duress.  
 And someone, seeing you crying, will say,

470

480

'That is the wife of Hector, the best of all  
The Trojans when they fought around Ilion.'  
Someday someone will say that, renewing your pain  
At having lost such a man to fight off the day  
Of your enslavement. But may I be dead  
And the earth heaped up above me  
Before I hear your cry as you are dragged away."

490

With these words, resplendent Hector  
Reached for his child, who shrank back screaming  
Into his nurse's bosom, terrified of his father's  
Bronze-encased face and the horsehair plume  
He saw nodding down from the helmet's crest.  
This forced a laugh from his father and mother,  
And Hector removed the helmet from his head  
And set it on the ground all shimmering with light.  
Then he kissed his dear son and swung him up gently  
And said a prayer to Zeus and the other immortals:

500

"Zeus and all gods: grant that this my son  
Become, as I am, foremost among Trojans,  
Brave and strong, and ruling Ilion with might.  
And may men say he is far better than his father  
When he returns from war, bearing bloody spoils,  
Having killed his man. And may his mother rejoice."

And he put his son in the arms of his wife,  
And she enfolded him in her fragrant bosom  
Laughing through her tears. Hector pitied her  
And stroked her with his hand and said to her:

510

"You worry too much about me, Andromache.  
 No one is going to send me to Hades before my time,  
 And no man has ever escaped his fate, rich or poor,  
 Coward or hero, once born into this world.  
 Go back to the house now and take care of your work,  
 The loom and the shuttle, and tell the servants  
 To get on with their jobs. War is the work of men,  
 Of all the Trojan men, and mine especially."

With these words, Hector picked up  
 His plumed helmet, and his wife went back home,  
 Turning around often, her cheeks flowered with tears.  
 When she came to the house of man-slaying Hector,  
 She found a throng of servants inside,  
 And raised among these women the ritual lament.  
 And so they mourned for Hector in his house  
 Although he was still alive, for they did not think  
 He would ever again come back from the war,  
 Or escape the murderous hands of the Greeks.

520

### Paris meanwhile

Did not dally long in his high halls.  
 He put on his magnificent bronze-inlaid gear  
 And sprinted with assurance out through the city.

530

*Picture a horse that has fed on barley in his stall  
 Breaking his halter and galloping across the plain,  
 Making for his accustomed swim in the river,*

*A glorious animal, head held high, mane streaming  
Like wind on his shoulders. Sure of his splendor  
He prances by the horse-runs and the mares in pasture.*

That was how Paris, son of Priam, came down  
From the high rock of Pergamum,  
Gleaming like amber and laughing in his armor,  
And his feet were fast.

540

He caught up quickly  
With Hector just as he turned from the spot  
Where he'd talked with his wife, and called out:  
"Well, dear brother, have I delayed you too much?  
Am I not here in time, just as you asked?"

Hector turned, his helmet flashing light:

"I don't understand you, Paris.  
No one could slight your work in battle.  
You're a strong fighter, but you slack off—  
You don't have the will. It breaks my heart  
To hear what the Trojans say about you.  
It's on your account they have all this trouble.  
Come on, let's go. We can settle this later,  
If Zeus ever allows us to offer in our halls  
The wine bowl of freedom to the gods above,  
After we drive these bronze-kneed Greeks from Troy."

550

**BOOK 9**

So the Trojans kept watch. But Panic,  
Fear's sister, had wrapped her icy fingers  
Around the Greeks, and all their best  
Were stricken with unendurable grief.

*When two winds rise on the swarming deep,  
Boreas and Zephyr, blowing from Thrace  
In a sudden squall, the startled black waves  
Will crest and tangle the surf with seaweed.*

The Greeks felt like that, pummeled and torn.

Agamemnon's heart was bruised with pain  
As he went around to the clear-toned criers  
Ordering them to call each man to assembly,  
But not to shout. He pitched in himself.  
It was a dispirited assembly. Agamemnon  
Stood up, weeping, his face like a sheer cliff  
With dark springwater washing down the stone.  
Groaning heavily he addressed the troops:

"Friends, Argive commanders and counsellors:  
Great Zeus, son of Cronus,  
Is a hard god, friends. He's kept me in the dark  
After all his promises, all his nods my way

That I'd raze Ilion's walls before sailing home.  
It was all a lie, and I see now that his orders  
Are for me to return to Argos in disgrace,  
And this after all the armies I've destroyed.  
I have no doubt that this is the high will  
Of the god who has toppled so many cities  
And will in the future, all glory to his power.  
So this is my command for the entire army:  
Clear out with our ships and head for home.  
There's no hope we will take Troy's tall town."

30

He spoke, and they were all stunned to silence,  
The silence of an army too grieved to speak,  
Until at last Diomedes' voice boomed out:

"I'm going to oppose you if you talk foolishness—  
As is my right in assembly, lord. Keep your temper.  
First of all, you insulted me, saying in public  
I was unwarlike and weak. Every Greek here,  
Young and old alike, knows all about this.  
The son of crooked Cronus split the difference  
When he gave you gifts. He gave you a scepter  
And honor with it, but he didn't give you  
Strength to stand in battle, which is real power.  
Are you out of your mind? Do you really think  
The sons of the Achaeans are unwarlike and weak?  
If you yourself are anxious to go home,  
Then go. You know the way. Your ships are here  
Right by the sea, and a whole fleet will follow you  
Back to Mycenae. But many a long-haired Achaean

40

Will stay, too, until we conquer Troy. And if they won't—  
Well, let them all sail back to their own native land.  
The two of us, Sthenelus and I, will fight on  
Until we take Ilion. We came here with Zeus."

50

He spoke, and all the Greeks cheered  
The speech of Diomedes, breaker of horses.  
Then up stood Nestor, the old charioteer:

"Son of Tydeus, you are our mainstay in battle  
And the best of your age in council as well.  
No Greek will find fault with your speech  
Or contradict it. But it is not the whole story.  
You are still young. You might be my son,  
My youngest. Yet you have given prudent advice  
To the Argive kings, since you have spoken aright.  
But I, who am privileged to be your senior,  
Will speak to all points. Nor will anyone  
Scorn my words, not even King Agamemnon.  
Only outlaws and exiles favor civil strife.  
For the present, however, let us yield to night  
And have our dinner. Guards should be posted  
Outside the wall along the trench. I leave  
This assignment to the younger men. But you,  
Son of Atreus, take charge. You are King.  
Serve the elders a feast. It is not unseemly  
Your huts are filled with wine which our ships  
Transport daily over the sea from Thrace.  
You have the means to entertain us and the men.  
Then choose the best counsel your assembled guests

60

70



Can offer. The Achaeans are in great need  
Of good counsel. The enemies' campfires  
Are close to our ships. Can this gladden any heart?  
This night will either destroy the army or save it."

80

They all heard him out and did as he said.  
The guard details got their gear and filed out  
On the double under their commanders:  
Thrasymedes, Nestor's son; Ascalaphus  
And Ialmenus, sons of Ares; Meriones,  
Aphareus, and Diphyrus; and Creion,  
The son of Lycomedes. Each of these seven  
Had a hundred men under his command.  
Spears in hand, they took up their positions  
In a long line between the wall and the trench,  
Where they lit fires and prepared their supper.

90

Agamemnon meanwhile gathered the elders  
Into his hut and served them a hearty meal.  
They helped themselves to the dishes before them,  
And when they had enough of food and drink,  
The first to spin out his plan for them was Nestor,  
Whose advice had always seemed best before,  
And who spoke with their best interests at heart:

"Son of Atreus, most glorious lord,  
I begin and end with you, since you are  
King of a great people, with authority  
To rule and right of judgment from Zeus.  
It is yours to speak as well as to listen,

100

And to stand behind others whenever they speak  
To our good. The final word is yours.  
But I will speak as seems best to me.  
No one will have a better idea  
Than I have now, nor has anyone ever,  
From the time, divine prince, you wrested away  
The girl Briseis from Achilles' shelter,  
Defying his anger and my opposition.  
I tried to dissuade you, but you gave in  
To your pride and dishonored a great man  
Whom the immortals esteem. You took his prize  
And keep it still. But it is not too late. Even now  
We must think of how to win him back  
With appeasing gifts and soothing words."

110

And the warlord Agamemnon responded:

"Yes, old man, you were right on the mark  
When you said I was mad. I will not deny it.  
Zeus' favor multiplies a man's worth,  
As it has here, and the army has suffered for it.  
But since I did succumb to a fit of madness,  
I want to make substantial amends.  
I hereby announce my reparations:  
Seven unfired tripods, ten gold bars,  
Twenty burnished cauldrons, a dozen horses—  
Solid, prizewinning racehorses  
Who have won me a small fortune—  
And seven women who do impeccable work,  
Surpassingly beautiful women from Lesbos

120

130

I chose for myself when Achilles captured the town.  
And with them will be the woman I took,  
Briseus' daughter, and I will solemnly swear  
I never went to her bed and lay with her  
Or did what is natural between women and men.  
All this he may have at once. And if it happens  
That the gods allow us to sack Priam's city,  
He may when the Greeks are dividing the spoils  
Load a ship to the brim with gold and bronze,  
And choose for himself the twenty Trojan women  
Who are next in beauty to Argive Helen.  
And if we return to the rich land of Argos,  
He will marry my daughter, and I will honor him  
As I do Orestes, who is being reared in luxury.  
I have three daughters in my fortress palace,  
Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa.  
He may lead whichever he likes as his bride  
Back to Peleus' house, without paying anything,  
And I will give her a dowry richer than any  
A father has ever given his daughter.  
And I will give him seven populous cities,  
Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,  
Sacred Pherae, Antheia with its meadowlands,  
Beautiful Aepeia, and Pedasus, wine country.  
They are all near the sea, on sandy Pylos' frontier,  
And cattlemen live there, rich in herds and flocks,  
Who will pay him tribute as if he were a god  
And fulfill the shining decrees of his scepter.  
I will do all this if he will give up his grudge.  
And he should. Only Hades cannot be appeased,

140

150

160

Which is why of all gods mortals hate him most.  
And he should submit to me, inasmuch as I  
Am more of a king and can claim to be elder."

And then spoke Nestor, the Gerenian rider:

"Son of Atreus, most glorious Agamemnon,  
Your gifts for Achilles are beyond reproach.  
But come, we must dispatch envoys  
As soon as possible to Achilles' tent,  
And I see before me who should volunteer.  
Phoenix, dear to Zeus, should lead the way,  
Followed by Ajax and brilliant Odysseus.  
Odius and Eurybates can attend them as heralds.  
Now bring water for our hands and observe silence,  
That we may beseech Zeus to have mercy on us."

170

Nestor spoke, and his speech pleased them all.  
Heralds poured water over their hands,  
And then youths filled bowls to the brim with drink  
And served it all around, first tipping the cups.  
Having made their libations and drunk their fill,  
They went out in a body from Agamemnon's hut.  
Gerenian Nestor filled their ears with advice,  
Glancing at each, but especially at Odysseus,  
On how to persuade Peleus' peerless son.

180

They went in tandem along the seething shore,  
Praying over and over to the god in the surf  
For an easy time in convincing Achilles.

They came to the Myrmidons' ships and huts  
And found him plucking clear notes on a lyre— 190  
A beautiful instrument with a silver bridge  
He had taken when he ransacked Eëtion's town—  
Accompanying himself as he sang the glories  
Of heroes in war. He was alone with Patroclus,  
Who sat in silence waiting for him to finish.  
His visitors came forward, Odysseus first,  
And stood before him. Surprised, Achilles  
Rose from his chair still holding his lyre.  
Patroclus, when he saw them, also rose,  
And Achilles, swift and sure, received them: 200

"Welcome. Things must be bad to bring you here,  
The Greeks I love best, even in my rage."

With these words Achilles led them in  
And had them sit on couches and rugs  
Dyed purple, and he called to Patroclus:

"A larger bowl, son of Menoëtius,  
And stronger wine, and cups all around.  
My dearest friends are beneath my roof."

Patroclus obliged his beloved companion.  
Then he cast a carving block down in the firelight 210  
And set on it a sheep's back and a goat's,  
And a hog chine too, marbled with fat.  
Automedon held the meat while Achilles  
Carved it carefully and spitted the pieces.

Patroclus, godlike in the fire's glare,  
Fed the blaze. When the flames died down  
He laid the spits over the scattered embers,  
Resting them on stones, and sprinkled the morsels  
With holy salt. When the meat was roasted  
He laid it on platters and set out bread  
In exquisite baskets. Achilles served the meat,  
Then sat down by the wall opposite Odysseus  
And asked Patroclus to offer sacrifice.  
After he threw the offerings in the fire,  
They helped themselves to the meal before them,  
And when they had enough of food and drink,  
Ajax nodded to Phoenix. Odysseus saw this,  
And filling a cup he lifted it to Achilles:

220

"To your health, Achilles, for a generous feast.  
There is no shortage in Agamemnon's hut,  
Or now here in yours, of satisfying food.  
But the pleasures of the table are not on our minds.  
We fear the worst. It is doubtful  
That we can save the ships without your strength.  
The Trojans and their allies are encamped  
Close to the wall that surrounds our black ships  
And are betting that we can't keep them  
From breaking through. They may be right.  
Zeus has been encouraging them with signs,  
Lightning on the right. Hector trusts this—  
And his own strength—and has been raging  
Recklessly, like a man possessed.  
He is praying for dawn to come early

230

240

So he can fulfill his threat to lop the horns  
From the ships' sterns, burn the hulls to ash,  
And slaughter the Achaeans dazed in the smoke.  
This is my great fear, that the gods make good  
Hector's threats, dooming us to die in Troy  
Far from the fields of home. Up with you, then,  
If you intend at all, even at this late hour,  
To save our army from these howling Trojans.  
Think of yourself, of the regret you will feel  
For harm that will prove irreparable.

250

This is the last chance to save your countrymen.  
Is it not true, my friend, that your father Peleus  
Told you as he sent you off with Agamemnon:  
'My son, as for strength, Hera and Athena  
Will bless you if they wish, but it is up to you  
To control your proud spirit. A friendly heart  
Is far better. Steer clear of scheming strife,  
So that Greeks young and old will honor you.'

260

You have forgotten what the old man said,  
But you can still let go of your anger, right now.  
Agamemnon is offering you worthy gifts  
If you will give up your grudge. Hear me  
While I list the gifts he proposed in his hut:  
Seven unfired tripods, ten gold bars,  
Twenty burnished cauldrons, a dozen horses—  
Solid, prizewinning racehorses  
Who have won him a small fortune—  
And seven women who do impeccable work,  
Surpassingly beautiful women from Lesbos  
He chose for himself when you captured the town.

270

And with them will be the woman he took from you,  
Briseus' daughter, and he will solemnly swear  
He never went to her bed and lay with her  
Or did what is natural between women and men.  
All this you may have at once. And if it happens  
That the gods allow us to sack Priam's city,  
You may when the Greeks are dividing the spoils  
Load a ship to the brim with gold and bronze, 280  
And choose for yourself the twenty Trojan women  
Who are next in beauty to Argive Helen.  
And if we return to the rich land of Argos,  
You would marry his daughter, and he would honor you  
As he does Orestes, who is being reared in luxury.  
He has three daughters in his fortress palace,  
Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa.  
You may lead whichever you like as your bride  
Back to Peleus' house, without paying anything, 290  
And he would give her a dowry richer than any  
A father has ever given his daughter.  
And he will give you seven populous cities,  
Cardamyle, Enope, grassy Hire,  
Sacred Pherae, Antheia with its meadowlands,  
Beautiful Aepeia, and Pedasus, wine country.  
They are all near the sea, on sandy Pylos' frontier,  
And cattlemen live there, rich in herds and flocks,  
Who will pay you tribute as if you were a god  
And fulfill the shining decrees of your scepter. 300  
All this he will do if you give up your grudge.  
But if Agamemnon is too hateful to you,  
Himself and his gifts, think of all the others



Suffering up and down the line, and of the glory  
 You will win from them. They will honor you  
 Like a god.

                                And don't forget Hector.  
 You just might get him now. He's coming in close,  
 Deluded into thinking that he has no match  
 In the Greek army that has landed on his beach."

310

And Achilles, strong, swift, and godlike:

"Son of Laertes in the line of Zeus,  
 Odysseus the strategist—I can see  
 That I have no choice but to speak my mind  
 And tell you exactly how things are going to be.  
 Either that or sit through endless sessions  
 Of people whining at me. I hate like hell  
 The man who says one thing and thinks another.  
 So this is how I see it.

I cannot imagine Agamemnon,  
 Or any other Greek, persuading me,  
 Not after the thanks I got for fighting this war,  
 Going up against the enemy day after day.  
 It doesn't matter if you stay in camp or fight—  
 In the end, everybody comes out the same.  
 Coward and hero get the same reward:  
 You die whether you slack off or work.  
 And what do I have for all my suffering,  
 Constantly putting my life on the line?  
 Like a bird who feeds her chicks  
 Whatever she finds, and goes without herself,

320

330

That's what I've been like, lying awake  
Through sleepless nights, in battle for days  
Soaked in blood, fighting men for their wives.

I've raided twelve cities with our ships  
And eleven on foot in the fertile Troad,  
Looted them all, brought back heirlooms  
By the ton, and handed it all over

To Atreus' son, who hung back in camp  
Raking it in and distributing damn little.

340

What the others did get they at least got to keep.  
They all have their prizes, everyone but me—  
I'm the only Greek from whom he took something back.

He should be happy with the woman he has.  
Why do the Greeks have to fight the Trojans?

Why did Agamemnon lead the army to Troy  
If not for the sake of fair-haired Helen?

Do you have to be descended from Atreus  
To love your mate? Every decent, sane man  
Loves his woman and cares for her, as I did,

350

Loved her from my heart. It doesn't matter  
That I won her with my spear. He took her,  
Took her right out of my hands, cheated me,  
And now he thinks he's going to win me back?  
He can forget it. I know how things stand.

It's up to you, Odysseus, and the other kings  
To find a way to keep the fire from the ships.

He's been pretty busy without me, hasn't he,  
Building a wall, digging a moat around it,  
Pounding in stakes for a palisade.

360

None of that stuff will hold Hector back.

When I used to fight for the Greeks,  
Hector wouldn't come out farther from his wall  
Than the oak tree by the Western Gate.  
He waited for me there once, and barely escaped.

Now that I don't want to fight him anymore,  
I will sacrifice to Zeus and all gods tomorrow,  
Load my ships, and launch them on the sea.

Take a look if you want, if you give a damn,  
And you'll see my fleet on the Hellespont  
In the early light, my men rowing hard.

370

With good weather from the sea god,  
I'll reach Phthia after a three-day sail.  
I left a lot behind when I hauled myself here,  
And I'll bring back more, gold and bronze,

Silken-waisted women, grey iron—  
Everything except the prize of honor

The warlord Agamemnon gave me  
And in his insulting arrogance took back.

So report back to him everything I say,  
And report it publicly—get the Greeks angry,

380

In case the shameless bastard still thinks  
He can steal us blind. He doesn't dare

Show his dogface here. Fine. I don't want  
To have anything to do with him either.

He cheated me, wronged me. Never again.  
He's had it. He can go to hell in peace,

The half-wit that Zeus has made him.  
His gifts? His gifts mean nothing to me.

Not even if he offered me ten or twenty times  
His present gross worth and added to it

390

## ILIAD

All the trade Orchomenus does in a year,  
All the wealth laid up in Egyptian Thebes,  
The wealthiest city in all the world,  
Where they drive two hundred teams of horses  
Out through each of its hundred gates.

Not even if Agamemnon gave me gifts  
As numberless as grains of sand or dust,  
Would he persuade me or touch my heart—  
Not until he's paid in full for all my grief.

400

His daughter? I would not marry  
The daughter of Agamemnon son of Atreus  
If she were as lovely as golden Aphrodite  
Or could weave like owl-eyed Athena.  
Let him choose some other Achaean  
More to his lordly taste. If the gods  
Preserve me and I get home safe  
Peleus will find me a wife himself.  
There are many Greek girls in Hellas and Phthia,  
Daughters of chieftains who rule the cities.

410

I can have my pick of any of them.  
I've always wanted to take a wife there,  
A woman to have and to hold, someone with whom  
I can enjoy all the goods old Peleus has won.  
Nothing is worth my life, not all the riches  
They say Troy held before the Greeks came,  
Not all the wealth in Phoebus Apollo's  
Marble shrine up in craggy Pytho.  
Cattle and flocks are there for the taking;  
You can always get tripods and chestnut horses.  
But a man's life cannot be won back

420

Once his breath has passed beyond his clenched teeth.  
My mother Thetis, a moving silver grace,  
Tells me two fates sweep me on to my death.  
If I stay here and fight, I'll never return home,  
But my glory will be undying forever.  
If I return home to my dear fatherland  
My glory is lost but my life will be long,  
And death that ends all will not catch me soon.  
As for the rest of you, I would advise you too  
To sail back home, since there's no chance now  
Of storming Ilion's height. Zeus has stretched  
His hand above her, making her people bold.  
What's left for you now is to go back to the council  
And announce my message. It's up to them  
To come up with another plan to save the ships  
And the army with them, since this one,  
Based on appeasing my anger, won't work.  
Phoenix can spend the night here. Tomorrow  
He sails with me on our voyage home,  
If he wants to, that is. I won't force him to come."

430

440

He spoke, and they were hushed in silence,  
Shocked by his speech and his stark refusal.  
Finally the old horseman Phoenix spoke,  
Bursting into tears. He felt the ships were lost.

"If you have set your mind on going home,  
Achilles, and will do nothing to save the ships  
From being burnt, if your heart is that angry,  
How could I stay here without you, my boy,

All by myself? Peleus sent me with you 450  
On that day you left Phthia to go to Agamemnon,  
A child still, knowing nothing of warfare  
Or assemblies where men distinguish themselves.  
He sent me to you to teach you this—  
To be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.  
I could not bear to be left behind now  
Apart from you, child, not even if a god  
Promised to smooth my wrinkles and make me  
As young and strong as I was when I first left  
The land of Hellas and its beautiful women. 460  
I was running away from a quarrel with Amyntor,  
My father, who was angry with me  
Over his concubine, a fair-haired woman  
Whom he loved as much as he scorned his wife,  
My mother. She implored me constantly  
To make love to his concubine so that this woman  
Would learn to hate the old man. I did as she asked.  
My father found out and cursed me roundly,  
Calling on the Furies to ensure that never 470  
Would a child of mine sit on his knees.  
The gods answered his prayers, Underworld Zeus  
And dread Persephone. I decided to kill him  
With a sharp sword, but some god calmed me down—  
Putting in my mind what people would say,  
The names they would call me—so that in fact  
I would not be known as a parricide.  
From then on I could not bear to linger  
In my father's house, although my friends  
And my family tried to get me to stay,

Entreating me, slaughtering sheep and cattle, 480  
Roasting whole pigs on spits, and drinking  
Jar after jar of the old man's wine.  
For nine solid days they kept watch on me,  
Working in shifts, staying up all night.  
The fires stayed lit, one under the portico  
Of the main courtyard, one on the porch  
In front of my bedroom door. On the tenth night,  
When it got dark, I broke through the latches  
And vaulted over the courtyard fence,  
Eluding the watchmen and servant women. 490  
I was on the run through wide Hellas  
And made it to Phthia's black soil, her flocks,  
And to Lord Peleus. He welcomed me kindly  
And loved me as a father loves his only son,  
A grown son who will inherit great wealth.  
He made me rich and settled me on the border,  
Where I lived as king of the Dolopians.  
I made you what you are, my godlike Achilles,  
And loved you from my heart. You wouldn't eat,  
Whether it was at a feast or a meal in the house, 500  
Unless I set you on my lap and cut your food up  
And fed it to you and held the wine to your lips.  
Many a time you wet the tunic on my chest,  
Burping up wine when you were colicky.  
I went through a lot for you, because I knew  
The gods would never let me have a child  
Of my own. No, I tried to make you my child,  
Achilles, so you would save me from ruin.  
But you have to master your proud spirit.

It's not right for you to have a pitiless heart. 510  
Even the gods can bend. Superior as they are  
In honor, power, and every excellence,  
They can be turned aside from wrath  
When humans who have transgressed  
Supplicate them with incense and prayers,  
With libations and savor of sacrifice.  
Yes, for Prayers are daughters of great Zeus.  
Lame and wrinkled and with eyes averted,  
They are careful to follow in Folly's footsteps,  
But Folly is strong and fleet, and outruns them all, 520  
Beating them everywhere and plaguing humans,  
Who are cured by the Prayers when they come behind.  
Revere the daughters of Zeus when they come,  
And they will bless you and hear your cry.  
Reject them and refuse them stubbornly,  
And they will ask Zeus, Cronus' son, to have  
Folly plague you, so you will pay in pain.  
No, Achilles, grant these daughters of Zeus  
The respect that bends all upright men's minds.  
If the son of Atreus were not offering gifts 530  
And promising more, if he were still raging mad,  
I would not ask you to shrug off your grudge  
And help the Greeks, no matter how sore their need.  
But he is offering gifts and promising more,  
And he has sent to you a delegation  
Of the best men in the army, your dearest friends.  
Don't scorn their words or their mission here.  
No one could blame you for being angry before.  
We all know stories about heroes of old,



How they were furiously angry, but later on  
Were won over with gifts or appeased with words.  
I remember a very old story like this, and since  
We are all friends here, I will tell it to you now.

540

The Curetes were fighting the Aetolians  
In a bloody war around Calydon town.  
The Aetolians were defending their city  
And the Curetes meant to burn it down.  
This was all because gold-throned Artemis  
Had cursed the Curetes, angry that Oeneus  
Had not offered her his orchard's first fruits.  
The other gods feasted on bulls by the hundred,  
But Oeneus forgot somehow or other  
Only the sacrifice to great Zeus' daughter.  
So the Archer Goddess, angry at heart,  
Roused a savage boar, with gleaming white tusks,  
And sent him to destroy Oeneus' orchard.  
The boar did a good job, uprooting trees  
And littering the ground with apples and blossoms.  
But Oeneus' son, Meleager, killed it  
After getting up a party of hunters and hounds  
From many towns: it took more than a few men  
To kill this huge boar, and not before  
It set many a hunter on the funeral pyre.  
But the goddess caused a bitter argument  
About the boar's head and shaggy hide  
Between the Curetes and Aetolians.  
They went to war. While Meleager still fought  
The Curetes had the worst of it  
And could not remain outside Calydon's wall.

550

560

But when wrath swelled Meleager's heart,  
As it swells even the hearts of the wise,  
And his anger rose against Althaea his mother,  
He lay in bed with his wife, Cleopatra,  
Child of Marpessa and the warrior Idas.  
Idas once took up his bow against Apollo  
To win lissome Marpessa. Her parents  
Called the girl Halcyone back then  
Because her mother wept like a halcyon,  
The bird of sorrows, because the Archer God,  
Phoebus Apollo, had stolen her daughter.  
Meleager nursed his anger at Cleopatra's side,  
Furious because his mother had cursed him,  
Cursed him to the gods for murdering his uncle,  
Her brother, that is, and she beat the earth,  
The nurturing earth, with her hands, and called  
Upon Hades and Persephone the dread,  
As she knelt and wet her bosom with tears,  
To bring death to her son. And the Fury  
Who walks in darkness heard her  
From the pit of Erebus, and her heart was iron.  
Soon the enemy was heard at the walls again,  
Battering the gates. The Aetolian elders  
Sent the city's high priests to pray to Meleager  
To come out and defend them, offering him  
Fifty acres of Calydon's richest land  
Wherever he chose, half in vineyard,  
Half in clear plowland, to be cut from the plain.  
And the old horseman Oeneus shook his doors,  
Standing on the threshold of his gabled room,

And recited a litany of prayers to his son,  
As did his sisters and his queenly mother.  
He refused them all, and refused his friends,  
His very best friends and boon companions.  
No one could move his heart or persuade him  
Until the Curetes, having scaled the walls  
Were burning the city and beating down  
His bedroom door. Then his wife wailed  
And listed for him all the woes that befall  
A captured people—the men killed,  
The town itself burnt, the women and children  
Led into slavery. This roused his spirit.  
He clapped on armor and went out to fight.  
And so he saved the Aetolians from doom  
Of his own accord, and they paid him none  
Of those lovely gifts, savior or not.

600

610

Don't be like that. Don't think that way,  
And don't let your spirit turn that way.  
The ships will be harder to save when they're burning.  
Come while there are gifts, while the Achaeans  
Will still honor you as if you were a god.  
But if you go into battle without any gifts,  
Your honor will be less, save us or not."

620

And strong, swift-footed Achilles answered:

"I don't need that kind of honor, Phoenix.  
My honor comes from Zeus, and I will have it  
Among these beaked ships as long as my breath  
Still remains and my knees still move.

Now listen to this. You're listening? Good.  
Don't try to confuse me with your pleading  
On Agamemnon's behalf. If you're his friend  
You're no longer mine, although I love you.  
Hate him because I hate him. It's as simple as that.  
You're like a second father to me. Stay here,  
Be king with me and share half the honor.  
These others can take my message. Lie down  
And spend the night on a soft couch. At daybreak  
We will decide whether to set sail or stay."

630

And he made a silent nod to Patroclus  
To spread a thick bed for Phoenix. It was time  
For the others to think about leaving. Big Ajax,  
Telamon's godlike son, said as much:

640

"Son of Laertes in the line of Zeus,  
Resourceful Odysseus—it's time we go.  
I do not think we will accomplish  
What we were sent here to do. Our job now  
Is to report this news quickly, bad as it is.  
They will be waiting to hear. Achilles  
Has made his great heart savage.  
He is a cruel man, and has no regard  
For the love that his friends honored him with,  
Beyond anyone else who camps with the ships.  
Pitiless. A man accepts compensation  
For a murdered brother, a dead son.  
The killer goes on living in the same town  
After paying blood money, and the bereaved

650

Restrains his proud spirit and broken heart  
Because he has received payment. But you,  
The gods have replaced your heart  
With flint and malice, because of one girl,  
One single girl, while we are offering you  
Seven of the finest women to be found  
And many other gifts. Show some generosity  
And some respect. We have come under your roof,  
We few out of the entire army, trying hard  
To be the friends you care for most of all."

660

And Achilles, the great runner, answered him:

"Ajax, son of Telamon in the line of Zeus,  
Everything you say is after my own heart.  
But I swell with rage when I think of how  
The son of Atreus treated me like dirt  
In public, as if I were some worthless tramp.  
Now go, and take back this message:  
I won't lift a finger in this bloody war  
Until Priam's illustrious son Hector  
Comes to the Myrmidons' ships and huts  
Killing Greeks as he goes and torching the fleet.  
But when he comes to my hut and my black ship  
I think Hector will stop, for all his battle lust."

670

He spoke. They poured their libations  
And headed for the ships, Odysseus leading.  
Patroclus ordered a bed made ready  
For Phoenix, and the old man lay down

680

On fleeces and rugs covered with linen  
And waited for bright dawn. Achilles slept  
In an inner alcove, and by his side  
Lay a woman he had brought from Lesbos  
With high, lovely cheekbones, Diomede her name,  
Phorbas' daughter. Patroclus lay down  
In the opposite corner, and with him lay Iphis,  
A silken girl Achilles had given him  
When he took steep Scyrus, Enyeus' city.

By now Odysseus and Ajax  
Were in Agamemnon's quarters,  
Surrounded by officers drinking their health  
From gold cups and shouting questions.  
Agamemnon, the warlord, had priority:

"Odysseus, pride of the Achaeans, tell me,  
Is he willing to repel the enemy fire  
And save the ships, or does he refuse,  
His great heart still in the grip of wrath?"

Odysseus, who endured all, answered:

"Son of Atreus, most glorious Agamemnon,  
Far from quenching his wrath, Achilles  
Is filled with even more. He spurns you  
And your gifts, and suggests that you  
Think of a way to save the ships and the army.  
He himself threatens, at dawn's first light,  
To get his own ships onto the water,

And he said he would advise the others as well  
To sail for home, since there is no chance now  
You will storm Ilion's height. Zeus has stretched  
His hand above her, making her people bold.  
This is what he said, as these men here  
Who came with me will tell you, Ajax  
And the two heralds, prudent men both.  
Phoenix will spend the night there. Tomorrow  
He sails with Achilles on his voyage home,  
If he wants to. He will not be forced to go."

710

They were stunned by the force of his words  
And fell silent for a long time, hushed in grief,  
Until at last Diomedes said in his booming voice:

720

"Son of Atreus, glorious Agamemnon,  
You should never have pleaded with him  
Or offered all those gifts. Achilles  
Was arrogant enough without your help.  
Let him do what he wants, stay here  
Or get the hell out. He'll fight later, all right,  
When he is ready or a god tells him to.  
Now I want everyone to do as I say.  
Enjoy some food and wine to keep up  
Your strength, and then get some sleep.  
When the rosy light first streaks the sky  
Get your troops and horses into formation  
Before the ships. Fight in the front yourselves."

730

The warlords assented, taken aback

ILIAD

By the authority of Diomedes' speech.

Each man poured libation and went to his hut,  
Where he lay down and took the gift of sleep.



## BOOK 10

All the other leaders of the Greek alliance  
 Dozed through the night, subdued by soft sleep.  
 But not Agamemnon. Sleep had no hold  
 On the troubled mind of the army's commander.

*Think of lightning: Hera's rich hair streams  
 In the sky when her husband builds storms—  
 Heavy rain, or unspeakable hail, or snow  
 That sifts down over cultivated land,  
 Or the barbed-wire mouth of a battlefield.*

Thus Agamemnon, the density of the groans  
 From his heart's deep core, his visceral fear.

10

Whenever he looked out over the Trojan plain  
 He marvelled at how many fires burned  
 Before Ilion's walls, and at the din of flutes  
 And pipes, and the dull roar of humanity.  
 And whenever he looked at the Greek ships  
 He pulled clumps of his hair out from the roots  
 In appeal to Zeus on high, and his heart ached.  
 Nestor came to mind. He would go to Nestor  
 And the two would find some way to save the army.  
 He sat up and pulled on his tunic,  
 Then laced on his sandals and threw a lion skin

20

Over his shoulders, a fiery, reddish thing  
That reached down to his feet. And he took his spear.

Menelaus was just as troubled and sleepless.  
What would happen to all the Argives  
Who had crossed the water for his sake  
And come to Troy with war in their hearts?  
He drew around his shoulders the dappled pelt  
Of a leopard, put a bronze helm on his head,  
And gripping his spear he went through camp  
To waken his brother, the great warlord  
Whom the common folk honored as a god.  
He found Agamemnon by the stern of his ship,  
Putting on his armor and glad to see his brother.  
Menelaus, good at the war cry, said to him:

30

"Brother, why are you arming yourself?  
To rouse someone to scout out the Trojans?  
I am afraid you will find few volunteers  
For this mission. To go alone by night  
And spy on the enemy would take a brave man indeed."

40

The warlord Agamemnon answered:

"You and I need a plan, Menelaus,  
A good one, to save the army and the ships,  
Now that Zeus has turned away from us.  
He seems to prefer Hector's sacrifices to ours.  
I have never seen or heard of any one man  
Ever doing as much harm in a single day

As Hector has done today to our boys  
By himself alone—and he is not even the son  
Of a goddess or god! Go now, run quickly  
Through the ships and summon Ajax  
And Idomeneus, while I go to Nestor  
And see if he will go to the sentinels  
And alert them. They would listen to him,  
For his son is captain of the guard,  
He and Meriones, Idomeneus' comrade.  
It was to them especially we gave this command."

50

And Menelaus, good at the war cry:

"What are you telling me to do?  
To wait there with them until you come?  
Or run back after I have delivered your orders?"

60

And the warlord Agamemnon:

"Wait there, or we may miss each other  
As we cross the camp with all its paths.  
But give a shout wherever you go  
And wake the men up. Call each man by name  
And by his father's name, honoring them all.  
Let's you and I not be too proud to work.  
Zeus gave us this burden when we were born."

70

And so Agamemnon sent his brother off  
But went himself to visit Nestor,  
A shepherd to his people, and found him

Lying on a soft bed next to his hut  
And black ship. Beside him lay his rich gear—  
Shield, two spears, and gleaming helmet—  
And the shimmering belt he always wore  
When he armed to lead his men into battle.  
Nestor just didn't give in to grievous old age.  
He rose on his elbow and lifted his head,  
And asked these questions of Atreus' son:

80

"Who are you, going alone through camp  
In the dead of night when everyone's asleep?  
Are you looking for one of your mules  
Or one of your friends? Speak out,  
And don't sneak up on me. What do you want?"

And Agamemnon, the great warlord:

"Nestor, son of Neleus, our great glory,  
You will know Agamemnon, Atreus' son,  
The man whom Zeus besets with more troubles  
Than any man alive, as long as I draw my breath  
And my knees still bend. I'm roaming like this  
Because sleep won't come, so worried am I  
About the war and the Achaeans' troubles.  
I'm so afraid for the army I'm losing my mind.  
I toss and turn, my heart pounds through my chest,  
And I can't stop trembling. If you want to help,  
Since it seems you can't sleep either,  
Come with me and let's go to the sentinels  
So we can make sure they haven't fallen asleep

90

100

From fatigue and forgotten their watch.  
The enemy are bivouacked close by,  
And for all we know they might attack by night."

And Nestor, the old Gerenian horseman:

"Most glorious son of Atreus, lord Agamemnon,  
Zeus in his wisdom will not fulfill  
All of Hector's hopes. No, his troubles  
Will be worse than ours, if only Achilles  
Would have a change of heart and give up his grudge.  
Of course I will go with you, but we should  
Wake up some others—Tydeus' son,  
And Odysseus, and the swift Ajax,  
And Meges too. And someone should go  
And summon the godlike Ajax as well,  
And Idomeneus, for their ships are the farthest.  
As for Menelaus, dear and honored as he is,  
And even if it makes you angry, I will not shrink  
From having a word with him myself, for sleeping  
At a time like this and leaving you all the work.  
He should be hard at work beseeching all our best.  
This is a crisis we can no longer ignore."

110

120

The warlord Agamemnon answered him:

"You may remind him of his responsibilities  
Another time, old sir, and with my blessings.  
He is often unwilling to exert himself,  
Not through sloth or lack of discernment,

But in deference to my leadership.  
Just now, though, he awoke before I did  
And came to me, and I sent him out  
To summon the men you are asking for. 130  
But we should go. We will find them at the gates  
Among the guards, where I said they should gather."

And Nestor, the old Gerenian horseman:

"This is how he will earn the army's respect  
And their compliance when he issues commands."

So saying he pulled on his tunic,  
Laced sandals onto his supple feet,  
And buckled around him a purple cloak,  
Two-ply and broad, with a thick nap.  
He grasped a mighty spear, tipped with honed bronze, 140  
And went off through the ships.

Odysseus,

Who could match wits with Zeus, was the first  
The old Gerenian horseman woke up.  
His voice echoed in Odysseus' dreaming mind,  
And the Ithacan came out of the hut and said:

"Why are you going alone through the camp  
In the dead of night? What's the emergency?"

And Nestor, the horseman of Gerenia:

"Son of Laertes in the line of Zeus,

Odysseus the strategist, don't be angry.  
We are under great duress. Come with us  
So we can rouse another whom we should consult  
As we decide whether to fight or flee."

And Odysseus, the master strategist,  
Got a shield from his hut and went with them.  
They came to Diomedes, son of Tydeus,  
And found him outside his hut with his gear.  
His men were sleeping all around him  
Using their shields for pillows, their spears  
Driven upright in the ground on their spikes.  
The bronze glittered like summer lightning.  
The hero was asleep on an oxhide,  
A bright rug under his head. Nestor woke him,  
Rolling him over with his heel, and scolded:

160

"Up, son of Tydeus. Are you going to sleep all night?  
Don't you know the Trojans are encamped  
On the rising ground close by the ships?"

Diomedes was awake and up in an instant,  
And his words flew fast as he said to Nestor:

170

"You're tough, old man, and you never quit.  
Couldn't one of the younger generation  
Make the rounds waking up captains  
All through camp? You're impossible, though."

And Nestor, the horseman of Gerenia:

"That was well said, friend. I myself have  
Perfectly good sons, and there are many others  
Who could make the rounds and do the summoning.  
But we are very hard-pressed. It all stands  
On a razor's edge now for the entire army,  
Ruin or survival. Now go rouse swift Ajax  
And Meges—if you really feel sorry for me."

180

Thus spoke Nestor. And Diomedes threw  
Over his shoulders a tawny lion skin  
That reached to his feet. Grasping his spear  
He went off to rouse and fetch the warriors.

When they joined the sentinels they found them  
Wide awake, crouching down with their gear.

*Dogs will watch a sheepfold all night long  
With bloodshot eyes, but when they hear  
A predator approaching through the woods  
And then the noise of men and hounds around it,  
Their sleepiness completely disappears.*

190

So too these human eyes as the sentinels  
Kept watch through the night, turning  
Toward the plain over and over again  
Whenever they thought they heard Trojans coming.

It warmed Nestor's heart, and the old man  
Encouraged them with winged words:



"Just so, my boys, keep your watch. Stay awake,  
Or we will become sport for our enemies."

200

And he hurried on through the trench, followed  
By all the captains summoned to this council,  
And by Meriones and Nestor's glorious son,  
Whom they invited also. So they went through  
And up from the trench and sat themselves down  
In an open spot where the ground was clear  
Of dead bodies, the very spot where Hector  
Had turned back from slaughtering the Greeks  
When night enfolded him. Sitting down there  
They held council, and Nestor began:

210

"Well, my friends, is no one man enough  
To go among the Trojans and take captive  
Some straggler, or otherwise overhear  
What the enemy intends? Will they stay put  
Out here by the ships, or withdraw to the city  
Now that they have beaten the Achaeans back?  
A man might learn all this and return  
Unscathed, and his glory among men  
Would reach the sky—and he would get gifts  
From every leader commanding ships here,  
From each a black ewe with a lamb beneath.  
What could be finer? And he would forever be  
Invited to feasts and to drinking parties."

220

He finished, and they were hushed in silence.

Then Diomedes rose to the occasion:

"Nestor, my pride as a man urges me  
To go into the enemy camp over there,  
But if another were to go with me  
It would help, and I would be more confident.  
When you work as a team, your partner helps see  
What will work out best. Solo, you might see,  
But not as much, and you're short on wits."

230

There was no shortage of volunteers  
To accompany Diomedes. Both Ajaxes  
Were ready, those servants of War,  
Ready was Meriones, and Nestor's son,  
Ready Menelaus, the son of Atreus,  
And Odysseus, who could endure anything,  
Ready to infiltrate the Trojan lines.  
Then the warlord Agamemnon spoke out:

240

"Diomedes, son of Tydeus, dear to my heart,  
Choose as your comrade whomever you want,  
The best of all these who put themselves forth.  
Do not, out of deference, choose a lesser man  
And leave a better behind, deferring to birth  
And seniority, even if one is more royal."

In truth, he was afraid for red-haired Menelaus.  
Diomedes, good at the battle cry, said:

"If you really want me to make my own choice,

250

How could I pass over godlike Odysseus,  
 Who has what it takes for any kind of work,  
 The heart, the courage—and is Athena's friend.  
 If he goes with me we could make it back  
 Through blazing fire. He doesn't miss a thing."

And Odysseus, who had endured many campaigns:

"Diomedes, don't overrate my merits or my faults.  
 You're talking to Greeks who know what's what.  
 We'd better head out. It's very late,  
 Getting on toward dawn. The stars have shifted  
 And more than two-thirds of the night is gone."

260

With that they put on their formidable gear.  
 Thrasymedes gave Diomedes a sword—  
 He had left his own at his ship—and a shield.  
 On his head he put a leather helmet  
 Without horn or crest, the kind they call  
 A skullcap and that young warriors wear.  
 Meriones gave to Odysseus a bow,  
 A quiver, and a sword, while on his head  
 He put a helmet made of hide, stiffened  
 With numerous taut leather thongs inside  
 And faced outside with the gleaming white teeth  
 Of a tusker boar set thick in alternate rows  
 Cunningly and well. It was lined with felt.  
 This helmet had been stolen by Autolycus  
 From Amyntor's palace in Eleon,  
 And he gave it to Amphidamas of Cythera

270

To take to Scandeia, and Amphidamas  
Gave it as a guest gift to Molus,  
Who gave it to his son Meriones to wear.  
Now it protected Odysseus' head.

When the two of them had all their gear on  
They headed out. Hard on their right  
Pallas Athena sent a heron flying,  
And although they couldn't see the bird in the dark  
They heard its night cry. Glad at the omen  
Odysseus said a prayer to Athena:

"Hear me, child of Zeus Aegis-Holder.  
You are ever by my side  
In all my troubles, and you look over me  
Wherever I go. Be my friend  
Once more, Athena, as never before.  
Grant that we return to the ships in glory,  
Having done great deeds to confound the Trojans."

And Diomedes, good at the battle cry:

"Hear me also, mystic Daughter of Zeus.  
Go with me now even as you went  
With my noble father Tydeus to Thebes  
When he went as envoy of the Achaeans.  
Leaving them by the river Asopus,  
He bore to the Cadmeians peaceful words  
But on his return did violent deeds  
With you, divine one, standing beside him.

Be thou willing to stand by me now,  
And I will sacrifice upon my return  
A sleek heifer, broad-browed, unbroken,  
That man has not yet put under the yoke,  
And I will goldleaf her horns."

Thus the heroes, and Athena heard them.  
Their prayers said, the two moved forward  
Like two lions at midnight, picking their way  
Through corpses, weapons, and crusted black blood.

310

**H**ector did not allow the Trojans  
To sleep either. He called together all their great,  
All of the Trojan leaders and chieftains,  
And laid before them this stratagem:

"Who will volunteer for special duty  
And a hefty reward? I will guarantee  
A chariot and two high-maned horses,  
The best in the Achaean beachhead camp,  
To the man who will dare to win himself glory  
By going close to the ships and spying out  
Whether they are still guarded as they used to be,  
Or whether our enemies, having suffered defeat  
At our hands, are planning their escape  
And are too fatigued to watch through the night."

320

He finished, and they were all hushed in silence.  
Among the Trojans was a certain Dolon,

Son of Eumedes, the godly herald, a man rich  
In gold and bronze, ill-favored, but fast.  
He was the only brother among five sisters,  
And the only Trojan to respond to Hector:

330

"Hector, my pride as a man urges me  
To go close to the ships and scout around.  
But lift your staff and swear me an oath  
That you really will give me the horses  
And chariot, tricked in bronze, that carry  
The peerless Achilles. And I will not be  
A disappointment to you as a scout  
But will go straight through their camp until I reach  
Agamemnon's ship, where their leaders will be  
Deciding in council whether to fight or flee."

340

So Hector took his staff and swore:

"Zeus be my witness, Hera's thundering lord,  
That no other Trojan will drive these horses,  
But you alone will enjoy them forever."

He swore an empty oath. Dolon, excited,  
Slung his curved bow around his shoulders,  
Cloaked himself in a grey wolf skin  
And put on a weasel cap. Taking a javelin  
He left for the ships, but he never returned  
To bring any information to Hector.  
He had passed the crowd of horses and men  
And was moving eagerly along when Odysseus

350

Saw him coming and said to Diomedes:

"There's someone coming from their camp,  
 I don't know whether to spy on our ships  
 Or to strip one of the corpses. Let him get past  
 And down the plain a little. Then we can take him.  
 If he starts to outrun us, hem him in  
 Toward the ships and away from his camp.  
 We don't want him to escape toward the city."

360

So the two of them lay down among the dead  
 Just off the path. Dolon ran by unaware  
 And had gone about the length of a furrow  
 A mule plows—they are better than oxen  
 At pulling the plow in deep fallow land—  
 When the two Greeks ran after him.  
 He stopped when he heard the sound, assuming  
 They were friends sent from the Trojan camp  
 To call him back, and that Hector had called a retreat.  
 They were within a spearcast before he realized  
 They were hostile. He started to run.  
 Diomedes and Odysseus picked up their speed

370

*Like a pair of hounds on a hare or a doe  
 That goes bleating before it out in the woods.*

They had him cut off and were hard in pursuit.  
 When Dolon was coming up to the sentinels  
 Athena put a burst of strength into Diomedes  
 So that no other Achaean would be able to score

380

The first blow and Tydeus' son arrive too late.  
Diomedes closed the gap and called out:  
"Hold it. You're in spear range, and as good as dead."  
And he threw as he spoke, but purposely missed,  
The point of the polished spear sailing  
Over the Trojan's right shoulder and into the ground.  
Dolon stopped in his tracks, terrified, stammering,  
His teeth chattering, and pale with fear.

His two pursuers came up, panting for breath,  
And seized his hands. Bursting into tears he said:

390

"Take me alive. I'm good for the ransom. At home  
We have bronze and gold and well-wrought iron,  
And my father would give you unlimited ransom  
If he heard I was alive at the Achaean ships."

And Odysseus, as wily as they come:

"Get a grip, man. No one's going to kill you.  
But tell me this, and give me a straight answer:  
What are you doing out here by the ships  
Alone at night when everyone's sleeping?  
Do you have a mind to strip a corpse or two?  
Did Hector send you out on espionage  
Or are you acting on your own volition?"

400

Dolon's knees were shaking as he answered:

"Hector lured me into this, filling my mind



With foolish hopes. He promised to give me  
Achilles' horses and his chariot,  
And he sent me out into the dead of night  
To sneak up close to the enemy's ships  
To find out whether they are guarded still,  
Or whether the Greeks, having suffered defeat  
At our hands, are planning their escape  
And are too fatigued to watch through the night."

410

Odysseus smiled at him wisely and said:

"Your heart was set on a truly great reward,  
Achilles' horses. But they are difficult  
For mortal men to control. Only Achilles,  
Born of a goddess, can master them.  
But tell me this, and give it to me straight:  
Where did you leave Hector when you left?  
Where is his battle gear and where are his horses?  
How are the Trojans encamped and guarded?  
And what is their plan? Will they stay put  
Out here by the ships, or withdraw to the city  
Now that they have beaten the Achaeans back?"

420

And Dolon, Eumedes' only son:

"I'll tell you everything straight. Hector  
Is holding council at the tomb of Ilus,  
Away from the turmoil. As for sentinels,  
None have been posted to guard the camp.  
The Trojans keep watch around their fires,

430

Urging one and another to stay awake,  
But the allies, coming from many lands,  
Are all asleep, leaving it to the Trojans  
To keep watch, since their own children  
Are nowhere near, nor their women."

Odysseus, full of cunning, continued:

"Then are the allies camped with the Trojans  
Or apart by themselves? I want the details."

Dolon, son of Eumedes, responded:

"I'll tell you everything straight. Toward the sea  
Are the Carians and Paeonians, archers,  
Along with the Leleges, Cauconians,  
And the Pelasgi. Over toward Thymbre  
Is the Lycian sector. The Mysians are there too,  
Along with the charioteers from Phrygia  
And Maeonia. But why all these details?  
If you want to infiltrate the Trojan camp,  
The Thracians are here at this edge, just arrived  
With their king Rhesus, son of Eioneus.  
He has the finest horses I ever saw, the greatest,  
Whiter than snow and as fast as the wind.  
His chariot is done in silver and gold,  
And he came with this massive gold armor,  
Amazing to see, not what mortal men wear,  
But what you'd expect on the deathless gods.  
But look, take me to the ships now

Or leave me tied up here, so you two can go  
And see for yourselves if I'm telling the truth."

Diomedes looked at him darkly and said:

"Don't even think about getting off, Dolon—  
Although you've been a fine messenger.  
You've fallen into our hands. If we let you go  
You'll come to the Greeks' ships another time,  
Either to spy on us or to fight in combat.  
If I take care of you now and make sure you're dead,  
You'll never worry the Greeks again."

460

Dolon was reaching up to Diomedes  
In supplication—had almost touched his chin—  
When Diomedes sprang and with his sword  
Severed the tendons at the nape of his neck.  
He was still shrieking when his mouth caught the sand.  
They stripped the ferret-skin cap from his head  
And took the wolf's hide, the recurved bow,  
And the long spear. Odysseus held these up  
And prayed to Athena the Despoiler:

470

"Rejoice in these, Goddess, first of Olympians  
To receive our offerings. Guide us once more,  
Now to where the Thracians and their horses sleep."

With that, he hoisted the gear into a tamarisk  
And stashed it there, leaving as a marker  
A bundle of branches that they couldn't miss

480

On their way back through the black rush of night.  
Then they went forward through the carnage and weapons  
Until they came to their goal: the Thracian camp.  
The exhausted soldiers were sound asleep, their gear  
In three neat rows on the ground around them,  
And by each man stood his chariot team.  
Rhesus slept in the middle, his thoroughbreds  
Tethered by the reins to the chariot's deck.  
Odysseus pointed him out to Diomedes:

"There he is, Diomedes, with his horses,  
The man that Dolon told us about.  
Well? Don't just stand there  
Slouching in your armor. Untie his horses.  
Or you kill the men and leave the horses to me."

The Grey-Eyed One breathed into Diomedes,  
And he went up and down the row of Thracians  
Killing them one by one. Their groans were ugly  
When the sword struck. The ground turned to red mud.

*A lion comes to an unguarded pen  
Of sheep or goats and leaps in with malice.*

So Tydeus' son went through the Thracians  
Until he had killed twelve. Odysseus, always thinking,  
Pulled each body out of the way by the feet  
As soon as Diomedes did his work with the sword,  
So that the combed horses would have an easy path  
And not be spooked by having to step over

Dead bodies, which they were as yet unused to.  
The thirteenth was Rhesus. As Tydeus' son  
Separated him from the sweetness of life,  
He gasped for breath. Diomedes stood over him  
That night, in a bad dream sent by Athena.

510

By now Odysseus had the horses free  
And roped together with the reins.  
He drove them out of the Trojan camp  
With his bow, not having noticed  
The gleaming whip in the chariot.  
He whistled over to Diomedes,  
Who was pondering his next reckless move.  
Should he pull the chariot out by its pole,  
Or dump the gear piled in it and carry it out?  
Or should he just kill more Thracians?  
While he was weighing his options, Athena  
Stood near to him and said to the hero:

520

"Time to get back, son of great Tydeus,  
To the hollow ships, before some other god  
Rouses the Trojans and you are chased back."

He knew it was the voice of the goddess  
And quickly mounted the horses. Odysseus  
Smacked them with his bow, and they made for the ships.

530

**A**pollo was out that night too,  
And when he saw Athena helping Diomedes

He made his silver presence felt in the camp  
And awakened Hippocoön, a Thracian lord,  
One of Rhesus' high-born kinsmen.

He started from his sleep, and when he saw  
The place empty where the horses had stood  
And the men gasping in pools of blood,  
He groaned and called his old friend by name.  
Then everything was confusion and noise,  
The Trojans running up from all over the camp  
To view the havoc wreaked by the warriors  
Who by now were halfway back to the ships.

540

When they reached the spot where they had killed  
Hector's spy, Odysseus reined in the horses.  
Diomedes jumped down and handed up to him  
The bloody spoils, then mounted again  
And lashed the horses, who flew on to the ships.

Nestor heard the sound first and said:

"Friends, Argive commanders and counsellors,  
I may be mistaken but still I must speak.  
The sound of horses' hooves strikes my ears.  
Let us hope that Odysseus and strong Diomedes  
Have rustled some horses away from the Trojans.  
But I fear in my heart that the best of the Argives  
Have come to harm in the enemy camp."

550

He was hardly finished when they arrived.  
They got down and were welcomed warmly  
With handclasps and gentle words.

Gerenian Nestor was first with his questions:

560

"Praise be, Odysseus, glory of the Greeks,  
Where did you two come by these horses?  
In the Trojan camp? Or did you meet some god  
Who gave them to you? They shine like the sun.  
I'm always among the Trojans. Old I may be  
For a warrior, but I don't stay with the ships.  
But I never saw such horses as these.  
No, I think a god met you and gave them to you.  
Zeus in the clouds loves you both, as does  
His grey-eyed daughter who bears the aegis."

570

And Odysseus, wise in every way:

"Nestor, son of Neleus, glory of the Greeks,  
A god could easily give us, if he wanted,  
Even better horses. Such is heaven's power.  
No, these horses, old sir, have just come  
From Thrace. Diomedes killed their master  
And twelve of his comrades, all their best.  
And we got one more, a scout near the ships,  
Somebody Hector and the Trojan lords  
Sent out to spy on our beachhead camp."

580

And he drove the horses across the trench,  
Roaring with laughter. The others followed  
In high spirits, and when they came to Diomedes'  
Well-built shelter they bound them with thongs  
At the stall where his horses stood champing grain.

And on the stern of his ship Odysseus placed  
The bloody spoils of Dolon, until such time  
As they could prepare a sacrifice for Athena.  
Then they waded into the sea and let the waves  
Wash the thick sweat from their legs and necks  
Until they felt refreshed. Then they went to the tubs.  
After their bath they rubbed on rich oil  
And sat down to eat, drawing off wine  
From the brimming bowl to pour to Athena.