
Homer Through
Other Eyes

PERSPECTIVES ON THE *ILIAD*



Reader's Note

A glossary (accessed via embedded links in the text) is provided at the conclusion of the volume to provide assistance with some of the less well-known mythological figures and Greek terms, but the reader is assumed to be familiar with the plot and principal characters of Homer's poem, and to have a rudimentary knowledge of Greek myth.

Citations from Homer's *Iliad* employ Richmond Lattimore's translation (University of Chicago Press, 1951, 2011).

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Charles Garabedian

Procropolis, Hector and Achilles, 2011

acrylic on paper

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Glossary

Introduction

IN THE FALL of 2014, students in the course Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies 110, at the University of Saskatchewan, were asked to compose a first-person account from the standpoint of one of the characters in Homer's *Iliad*, or a character of their own invention, with a view to eliciting further insights into Homer's poem or developing alternate perspectives into the world of the *Iliad* — its characters, values, social structures, or what-have-you. The model for this exercise was Julian Barnes' revisionist account of Noah and the Flood in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, but the authors were given free rein to adopt any approach they might chose.

What follows is a small sample of the results.

Our first narrative, “Meat,” observes the events of the *Iliad* through the eyes of a carrion crow/raven, playing nicely off the close association of the Homeric gods with particular birds (Zeus and the eagle, Athena and the owl, Aphrodite and the dove, etc.). Particularly noticeable is the manner in which the trajectory taken by its narrator inverts, even as it answers, that of Achilles: as the latter descends into savage, existential rage, the narrator is led to reject the ruthless attitude toward war as a convenient source of bounty (captured brilliantly in the line, “Die on, all” — cf. *Il.* 21.128) and to acknowledge the ghastly brutality from which that bounty originates. As the narration proceeds, the significance of the piece's title itself begins to shift, from a focus on the narrator's appetite to a comment on the soulless individual that Achilles has become. While both the narrator and Achilles fall into a state of ever greater despair, utterly rejecting their former lives and, in the case of the narrator, becoming all the more convinced of the inhuman cruelty

of the gods, redemption appears in the form of Achilles' confrontation with the elderly Priam and, later, the vision of Aeneas setting off from Troy in the hope of a better day.

“A Specter and a Hollow Man” presents the reflections of the dead Patroclus as both he and Achilles ponder their fates at the conclusion of the *Iliad*. The monologue highlights the gap that separates the tragic Achilles from his less complex companion, while also providing an interesting perspective on the hopes that drive Homer's heroes. Perhaps most interesting are the dead Patroclus' reflections on the true nature and value of *kleos* (fame, renown, commemoration), which he perceives to be a much more limited and personal matter than that which the Homeric tradition celebrates, but precious all the same.

Homer's poem focuses on the quest of its aristocratic heroes for honor (*timē*) in this world and renown (*kleos*) after death. In this regard, the *Iliad* presents a distorted and incomplete view of the historical society that it purports to reflect, while telling us next to nothing about the lot of the common soldier in such a society. Notoriously, the one commoner to speak in the poem, Thersites, is presented as a caricature: a thoroughly unheroic demagogue who cloaks his motives in smooth words and attempts to win prestige, not through deeds, but by riling the common troops against their leaders. In the end, his reward is to be publicly thrashed and humiliated. The piece “*Kleos-22*” redresses this bias by recasting the Trojan myth as a bronze-age *Catch-22*, with Thersites in the role of Heller's Yossarian, Odysseus as Milo, Iphigenia as Nately's Whore, Proclus (a non-Homeric figure) as Orr, etc. The results are hilarious but also tremendously provocative, as the skewed prism of Heller's satire leaves little ground for the grand aspirations of Homer's heroes.

A quite different sort of anti-hero is presented in the next monologue, “No Time for *Timē*.” This piece takes us into the mind of the utterly narcissistic and treacherous Paris, allowing us to appreciate just how great the divide is that separates him from the noble and dutiful Hector. In this character study, Paris is aware of the suffering that his actions have occasioned but immune to its force. As in Homer, there is an aura of the divine about him: like the gods, he is untouched, either physically or emotionally, by the horrors that surround him, living instead

amid beauties and pleasures, and, like the gods, he is essentially sterile, knowing nothing of the joys and sorrows, or the personal attachments, that make Homer's other characters so vivid, and so human. This lack of humanity is evident as well in his attitude toward heroic action: concepts such as honor, duty and valor, grounded as they are in a sense of community and connectedness, are alien to our narrator. The piece offers a superb introduction to the character who kills the grandly flawed, but grandly human, Achilles from the safety of Troy's walls, and allows the reader to appreciate the bitter ironies of such an end.

In "Rumor Has It," the reader is allowed to view the events of the *Iliad* through the eyes of a narrator inspired by Vergil's *Fama* (Rumor). A personification of the uninformed voice of the masses, this narrator provides an effective vehicle for highlighting the common troops' inability to comprehend the darkly brooding complexities of Homer's protagonist. The reader is drawn in as the speaker luxuriates in the various claims, judgments and predictions that burgeon among the multitude, leading, in the end, to the celebration of an alternate, multi-voiced *Iliad* that blends together various perspectives as it too celebrates "the anger of Achilles."

"Briseis in Homer's *Iliad*" has a two-fold genesis. It gives voice to a character who in Homer is given notoriously short shrift: Briseis, the war-prize who is taken from Achilles by Agamemnon. But it takes its inspiration as well from the much more fully fleshed-out, but still problematic, portrayal of Briseis in Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy*. The Briseis of the *Iliad* crystalizes the profound bias against women in that poem. Treated as a passive object to be handed from man to man, she herself seems to confirm and validate that status in the one place where she is allowed to speak: her address to the corpse of Patroclus at *Il.* 19.282-300. There she recalls with thanks how Patroclus had promised to arrange a marriage between her and Achilles, the man whom she had watched slaughter her former husband along with her three brothers. (One has only to imagine the reaction of an Achilles or Ajax if placed in such a position (!), to appreciate the gendered division of the sexes here.) The Briseis of *Troy* is much more feisty and independent on the surface, but is betrayed by an equally limiting set of gendered conventions: her angry integrity soon melts away when confronted with the opportunity to heal and reform the deeply troubled bad-boy played by Brad Pitt (leading to the requisite

scene of sweaty half-naked bodies coupling), while, upon the death of Patroclus, this Briseis too is silenced and rendered passive as the more serious, public concerns of men intervene. Our narration reveals a much more consistently hard-edged Briseis who consciously negotiates the gendered expectations and other limitations that constrain her life, and who is guided by an altogether unsentimental awareness of the fact that, for her, happiness must consist of settling for the lesser of several evils. While this Briseis, too, yields to a dream of marriage to Achilles, it is with an altogether realistic sense of the life that lies in store for her. The loss of that dream is all the more devastating, given the narrator's clear-eyed sense of the alternatives.

With "Overdetermination," we return to the comic mode: the lot of a Hades confronted with the task of housing the multitudes being slaughtered in the course of the poem. One ancient tradition held that the Trojan War was indeed occasioned by Zeus in order to weed out the human population: in this piece, we feel the frustration of the god of the underworld as he is compelled to deal with the consequences. Channeling something of the manic exasperation of James Woods' Hades in Disney's *Hercules*, our narrator comes to rue the day that he agreed to accept the netherworld as his realm, leaving Zeus to rule the heavens. The piece includes cameos by (or brief mentions of) Cronus, Sisyphus, Cerberus, Persephone, Leda, Europa and Pandarus, among others.

In our last selection, "Burning Desire," the narrator of R.W. Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee" suddenly finds himself transported to the shores of Troy and cast as one of Achilles' Myrmidons. Having sacrificed so much in the frenzied pursuit of gold, the speaker now finds himself in a pre-monetary society, where the value of such metals, while still significant, is largely symbolic. In the course of engaging with this new society and the conflicts that inform the poem, the narrator finds an eerie similarity between his own former quest and the equally self-destructive quest for honor (*timē*) and renown (*kleos*) that drives Homer's heroes. In the end, both the narrator and Achilles achieve their goals, in a fashion, but at a dreadful cost, while our narrator is left to ponder the sterile and solipsistic nature of his earlier ambitions.

Acknowledgments

The authors and the editor would like to acknowledge the generous support of the University of Saskatchewan's College of Arts and Science — particularly the Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program, under its director Dr. Brent Nelson, and the Humanities and Fine Arts Digital Research Centre, under the direction of Dr. Jon Bath.

Particular thanks are owed to Dr. Jeanette Lynes, coordinator of the University of Saskatchewan's Masters of Fine Arts in Writing program, and students of the MFA Writing program, who workshopped a number of the pieces in this collection, providing excellent feedback and insights as well as some very welcome encouragement!

Finally we would like to thank Charles Garabedian for allowing us to use his work *Procropolis, Hector and Achilles* as our cover-piece, and L.A. Louver, and their archivists Claire Kennedy and Jillian Brenner, for their generous assistance in helping us to obtain the appropriate permissions.

Note on Contributors

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Meat

ALEXANDRA EDMUNDS

THE MUSES are silent; only the bronze sings as spear meets corselet. Corpses stare unseeing; my companions tear the eyes from their sockets. I alight on the necropolis and partake in the feast. My children's ragged voices crack and caw, beaks rending through flesh. I idly wonder whether my dinner was once Dardan or Achaean, but cast the thought aside. It matters not. They all taste the same.

This war is a feast for crows. No more scavenging or competing for food. Bless these humans: their hardships deliver us from the talons of starvation. It is the damnable gods who plague us. Apollo, the spoiler of meat, cursed the Achaeans with plague. Men died as did the flies that fed on their cursed carrion. Achilles, the great provider, lifted the plague for us. Achilles, who now abstains from battle. His withdrawal from the war squanders his magnificent talent, but our hunger will be satiated, nevertheless. "Have no fear, my children," said I. "Hector shall provide."

I wheel above the carnage, observing the war. Ilium's walls stand high and impregnable. Priam's grand palace pierces the sky, commanding a view over the city's entirety. The king sits atop his throne, attended by his wife and the womenfolk. He sweats, though he is in the shade. The Dardan men are below, gathered about their illustrious prince. The harsh sun flashes on Hector's helm.

The Achaean ships are anchored on the sandy shores, as they have been for nine glorious years. The sand is saturated with blood, red mingling with the sea. Victims of the unholy plague are dragged to the pyre. The Achaeans stand at their ranks, all fighting men assembled but Achilles. The once great provider stays at the Achaean encampment, neither warring nor gathering the dead. He plays the lyre and broods.

It is said that the almighty eagle Zeus now favors Ilium. One can only speculate, as Zeus himself does not attend the battle. The king of the gods disdains earthly affairs. He would rather lord over the world from his divine perch on Olympus. He forgets that he, too, eats carrion.

A boy wielding a bow and clad in a leopard pelt leaps from the Dardan host. Paris, prince of Troy. Paris, brother to Hector of the shining helm. Paris, who does not own armor. The Dardan prince shouts a challenge, daring the best of the Achaeans to face him in single combat. My companions call out, laying claim on his royal corpse. The Achaean forces part as warlike Menelaus steps forward. The cuckolded king of the Spartans would battle the boy who stole his wife away. Paris recoils, shrinking into the Dardan horde like a boy frightened by a serpent. The murder cackles.

Two armies stand on the Dardan plains, laid out as pieces of an intricate game. Lots are cast and Paris is thrust from the throng. The combatants are armed. Paris and Menelaus cast their bronze spears, neither hit their mark. Paris fumbles with his sheath while Menelaus' blade arcs, slamming onto Paris' helm. The blade is cleft from the hilt. The Spartan bellows, seizing Paris' helmet and dragging the prince through the sand. The boy, gagging, fumbles with the clasp, fingers raking his exposed neck. Aphrodite hastens to Paris' aid, her talons severing the helm's strap. Menelaus raises his spear as the prince of Ilium lies coughing and laboring to breathe. The spear descends, and Paris is gone, whisked away on the wings of the dove.

Soldiers shift their weight, wary of the temporary truce. Athena remedies their indecisiveness. War erupts, the battle reflected in the owl's eyes. Diomedes is death, slicing through the Dardan host. His strength, already legendary, becomes godlike with Athena's aid. His every strike is met with dying cries. The murder of crows shriek their praises.

Diomedes wounds Aeneas, the son of Aphrodite. The goddess hastens to her son. Mad with blood, Diomedes lashes out against the dove. Aphrodite is cut, spilling ichor. Sweet ichor, the true nectar of the gods. The goddess retreats, and Apollo comes to the aid of blessed Aeneas. Diomedes thrice drives forward to no

avail. Apollo swats Diomedes aside with his great wings, rebuking him for his insufferable pride. Apollo, who burned the ivory raven. I shudder at the memory, feeling the tongues of flame dancing over me. A herculean scream rises in my breast; I fall. Anti-apotheosis. Burning. Burning.

Ares wars in Apollo's stead; the vulture shifts its form to that of a man to fight alongside the Dardan host. The god of war delights in Hector, whose helm flashes valiantly in the melee, denoting his princely status. No, not princely. Paris is a prince. Hector is a hero, revered by my kind. We sing of his exploits, and dine on his fallen foes.

Diomedes, so recently humbled by Apollo, gives way before Ares. The Dardans cut men down like farmers harvesting grain. Ares is their muse, there is no art in it. Achaeans fall to the ground with a sickly thud, their life's blood pouring from them like Dionysian wine.

The gods have had their fill. The war halts. Athena and Apollo name their champions. Telamonian Ajax and Hector duel until nightfall, the quarrel ending with a pact of friendship rather than the tribute of blood. The gods have already been provided worthy sacrifice. I cannot see the earth for the dead. Men lie in heaps, hills upon the flat Dardan plains.

Beaks and talons rive flesh from muscle, muscle from bone, laying bare the depths of man. I can taste their bitterness. Nine years of war, and the walls of Ilium stand strong as the day the Achaeans arrived. Nine years of war, and perhaps nine years more. Despairing, those with breath cast their eyes to the heavens, praying for an answer, and they see us. A murder of crows.

Our wordless reply: "Die on, all."

...

Achilles refuses to fight, but accedes to Patroclus' request to do battle himself. Achilles lends the boy his armor. Armor that Hector dons upon Patroclus' death. Achilles rages, and weeps. He beats his hands upon the ground, gathering dirt in his man-slaughtering fists, and baptizes himself in earth. He emits a terrible cry

that man and bird alike tremble to hear. The murder takes to the skies at the sound.

Achilles is inhuman. Not sleeping or eating, he cares nothing for glory, and thirsts only for blood. He splits the Dardan ranks, driving men to the river, to their slaughter. Corpses bloat the waters, a dam of damned mortals. The river stirs.

Xanthus crests, dark waters seething. “Begone, Achaean!” cries the river, crashing against Achilles’ shield. Achilles is hauled downstream, tumbling, gasping for air. The current draws the Achaean towards my perch upon an elm. The tree leans over the water, admiring its reflection, its thick roots sipping the turbulent waters. Achilles grasps at the roots, struggling against the mighty tide. The river tears at the Achaean, but Achilles holds firm. The tree strains, clods of dirt crumbling into the river. With a mighty heave tree and Achilles both are torn free. I swiftly take wing, crying out indignantly. Achilles regains his footing, choking as he hacks at the swiftly cresting river. I circle the waters at a safe distance. Xanthus’ bloody waters foam as he mutters threats and curses: “Your bones shall be buried deep within these waters, beneath sand and rubble. Your bronze corselet shall rust, your body wither. For all of your fame and beauty, in death you shall be anonymous, reduced to a pale bloated corpse!”

Achilles groans, praying, pleading with the gods. It takes an Olympian to free him from Xanthus’ wrath. Hephaestus boils the river, freeing the wretched human. Achilles rushes to battle, leaving the dead in his wake. The river weeps over the Dardan corpses, his current straining against the fleshy blockade.

I alight upon a carcass. “Do not sorrow so, it is unseemly,” I chastise Xanthus. The waters lash out: “Begone, crow.”

“Mortals die, it is their defining trait. You might as well lament a bird its feathers.”

Xanthus sighs, rippling over the Dardan corpses. “What shall I say to you, carrion-eater? Shall I say that I have nourished generations of Dardans? Shall I say these waters have infused each son of Ilium with life? I love each of these men. I see fathers, brothers, and sons lying slain before me, whereas you see only meat.”

I click my tongue. “Truly, I am touched by such pretty words, but sentiment does not feed me. Hinder me no further; I will not be denied a meal.”

The river embraces the corpses. “My bond with the Dardans is beyond that of mere sentiment,” insists Xanthus. “For the love you bear for your children, leave us be.”

My feathers ruffle at the comparison. “It is embarrassing to see you grovel so. I have not the stomach for your company,” I snap, taking wing. I arc in lazy spirals, coasting on the parched breeze. The soldiers look so small, fighting like children over scraps. I fly on, having lost my appetite.

...

Hector stands alone before the gates of his beloved city. The Dardans plead with their prince to take refuge. What chance will Ilium have without their prince? The answer is soon realized. Achilles kills the prince with the shining helm. Hector is mortal as any man, and dies at the thrust of a bronze spear.

Achilles pierces Hector’s ankles, threading rope through tendon. Bound to Achilles’ chariot, the prince is dragged across the plains of his homeland. Hector’s blood mingles with Dardan soil. Ilium weeps for their prince, and for themselves, for they know their fate. Hector’s death extinguishes the faith that burns in the soldiers’ hearts. There is no glory to be had here, for gods or men. Hector’s helm lies in the sand, its battered surface matte as the plains it lies upon.

The murder of crows is silent, watching as Hector is unceremoniously dragged across the Dardan plains. No voices call out. No one lays claim on the body of the prince. Sobs echo from Ilium. The city mourns as one. Achilles rides on, a grisly parade. Night falls.

Achilles leaves Hector’s corpse for the dogs and birds to feed upon, as he had promised the dying prince. A god intervenes. Apollo stands guard over the fallen hero, protecting Hector’s body from all who would feed on him. None among us would dare, although it is something more than fear of the god that gives us pause.

On charred wings I fly to him, my god and once master Apollo. “Tell me, god of prophesy, what is to come?” I ask, desperate for an answer and hating him all

the while. The god looks upon me, unmoved. “Tell me, crow, why look you so shaken? Surely this war is great occasion for those who feed upon carrion.”

For the first time in my existence, I am offended by what I am. “This war was not waged for crows,” I retort. Nor did it begin for apples, and preening goddesses. Of this I am sure. “Tell me there is a purpose.” The god is silent.

...

The war continues, but I have lost my appetite. My children eat, complaining of the bitterness. Achilles drags the body that once was Hector about Patroclus’ tomb. Twelve days pass this way. The sun rises and falls, the corpse circles the tomb. I watch. I do not sleep. I do not eat.

At night, I stand vigil over Hector with the most hated god. In silence, I watch. Achilles’ anger is far from sated. The abuse of Hector’s corpse cannot quell his fury. What price must the Dardans pay? But I know. We all know. Soft sobs emanate from Ilium.

A figure emerges from the dark, escorted by Hermes. Priam. He wears the trappings of sorrow, as do I, the black bird. The gods delivered Hector to his death, and now Priam shall follow in his wake. All of Ilium’s hopes quelled by a single man. Priam is led to Achilles’ tent. I cry out, my hoarse voice prophesying death.

My ears strain as I watch the tent, anticipating Priam’s dying cry. Priam, the king of Ilium. Priam, the father. My gaze falls to Hector. I would take my leave, fly away and deny how deeply this war troubles me, but I am ever drawn to tragedy. I curse the river as I fly into the tent of dread Achilles.

Priam clasps the hands of the butcher Achilles. “I have kissed the hands that slaughtered my sons,” moans the aged king, tears trembling at his eyes. Achilles gently pushes Priam aside. Behold how mild these hands have become, these hands so recently soaked in Dardan blood. My eyes flit to the washbasin. The blood of Ilium stains the water red.

Priam sinks to the earth and clasps Achilles’ knees. The emperor of Ilium compels Achilles to think of his father, to empathize, if only for a moment. A moment

is all it takes. Achilles is racked by tears, and the two are joined in sorrow. They mourn together, killer and king, for a future that can never be.

...

Hector's body is ransomed and prepared for the journey home. Achilles has steeled himself once more. "This changes nothing," he says. "We shall still be enemies come daybreak." Priam looks upon him, with years of knowledge and terrible endurance glistening in his eyes. "We remain enemies tonight."

Astounded, I return to Apollo who remains standing vigil over Hector. The war washes over me in a single rushing wave. The sights. The sounds. The tastes. I have a vision. Dardans scream as they flee burning Ilium. Flames pop, hurling embers into the sky, sending them skittering across the bloody streets. Achaeans cast ghastly shadows as they ravage the city. Beyond Ilium, a man is silhouetted against the flames. He has an old man upon his back, and leads a young boy by the hand.



A Specter and a Hollow Man

CORIANNE BRACEWELL

THE HEAT of the flames before us is dull in comparison to the fiery madness within his eyes. Shadows play across his face as the sky grows darker above us, and in them I see so many things. The young boy I once knew, one who loved to sing and play the lyre. The strong warrior beside whom I have fought for ten long years and trust more than anyone. The demonic shell of a man who has lost all semblance of his own humanity. I see fear. I see Achilles.

For these ten awful years the two of us have fought together, won together and suffered together. Of all the Greeks, I might boast that I know him the best, yet I hardly seem to know him at all. After all, how could I, a soldier, know anything of the true nature of the greatest of all men, Achilles son of Peleus? He is so much more than anything the earth has ever seen, or will ever see again. I stand here wondering and watching as emotions dance across his face quick as the shadows from the fire pit. What would he say if he knew I stood next to him now? Would he weep for the lost life of a friend, would he celebrate his victories with me, or would he even speak at all? I suppose these are answers the gods will never permit me to know.

The sound of waves on the nearby shores have become mere background noise in our time since landing at Troy, but now they pull me in. I am reminded, though distantly, of the journey which led us to stand here now, a specter and a hollow man.

When we left our homes and people for this foreign land it was clear to me that Achilles knew or understood something that neither I nor the rest of the Achaeans did. Despite the naiveté we both shared, there was something else beyond the

bright glimmer of adventure in his eyes. Something dark and knowing which deepened with every lurch of the ship upon the waves. At the time I passed it off as that same darkness that resided in each one of us, the thrill of war that we each struggled with, and that animalistic desire to spill blood and win glory for our names. Now, as I feel pieces of myself breaking off and disappearing into the darkness that presses upon me, I realize what it was. He knew even then the decision he would make, knew he would never return home to Phthia. I wonder, did he know that I too would die on this alien soil? That we both would be buried in a place where we do not belong? I wish I had spoken to him then.

During our time in Troy, I saw hints of that same darkness but did not allow myself to ask after it. Perhaps I was afraid to lose the bright and promising Achilles to this shadow. Perhaps I knew on some level that it was beyond my control. I am not certain now, as the memories slip from my grasp like mist on the plains. That darkness, that fear and knowledge of the decision he would one day be forced to make was not a burden that should ever have fallen upon the shoulders of a boy. Now I know that Achilles, proud and strong as he is, could not have chosen a life of obscurity over a death accompanied by *kleos* and glory. It was never in his blood to be anonymous. Achilles was born to be the greatest of the Greeks; he was born to be remembered for all of history, a man with bloody hands and a fierce command over his short but glorious life.

The fire crackles quietly, eating away at the wood laid down in its pit. I try to remember its heat, the warm glow upon my living skin as I once breathed in the crisp night air. Now I am nothing but chilled, not warm and not cold. I am never comfortable anymore. My eyes stray to Achilles' stony profile. Beyond the hills and walls I hear the distant sounds of funeral games and processions taking place, a city celebrating the life of a hero while mourning the loss of a son. There is no way for me to tell if Achilles can hear it. I wonder what he is thinking.

This is not a new question to me, wondering what the grand Achilles is thinking, what he is doing. When Agamemnon took his war-bride from him, I did not question his motives for abandoning the fight. In my eyes, the eyes of the men, and in the eyes of the gods, Achilles was in the right. His thoughts to me then were crystal clear; righteous fury at being so dishonored, a stubborn determination to

see to it that amends were made. Yet as time passed and he denied the gifts and offerings of Agamemnon, I admit that my faith in him faltered.

Perhaps that is why he cannot see me now. Perhaps that is why I am a shade and nothing more.

It is a fragile thing, the human ego. Almost as fragile as human life itself. Achilles was so enraged by Agamemnon's slight that he refused to even consider returning to the war. I like to think he nearly returned home to Phthia, and, there, would have avoided this horrible fate set down for him by the gods. Had my own rash behavior not gotten in the way, the both of us might have been on a ship home to Phthia this very evening. I was a fool, and for my actions I can never return to my home, nor can Achilles, and now nor can Hector.

I cannot say for certain why Achilles refused to hold my funeral after Hector ended my life on the battlefield, why for so long he deprived me of my right to pass on to the next world. It might have been grief; it might have been fear. From watching his suffering I know now that there is nothing worse on this earth than to be left behind when those you care for are dead, and I could not help but watch as he clutched my cooling body wailing for my spirit to return. Grief can twist the mind, this much I know. He blames himself for my death, and that is a hurt that I doubt anyone can truly soothe. The only one who must forgive him is himself, and he feels everything entirely too deeply to ever bring himself away from that grief. How I wish I could speak with him again, tell him that he is not to blame, explain to him that I made my choice and that he still must make one for himself. If I could speak to him, I might be able to convince him to return home without me. This, however, is not the will of the gods.

Another Achaean is walking past us now, a man aged beyond his years by the war and looking like little more than a skeleton with his skin still clinging stubbornly to bone. Is this what Achilles looks like to them? A mere boy in comparison to so many Greeks, yet somehow still a walking corpse? I know he is much closer to his own death than this Achaean. Why can I not remember the man's name? I close my eyes. More of my consciousness slips into the void of the night. There is

very little holding me to the earth now, only the misery of Achilles and the knowledge that I have driven him there.

As Achilles refused to relinquish my body to my funeral pyre, I could not move on to the next world, so I wandered the ranks of the men as a shadow for several long nights. Unseen and unheard I have seen the misery of the men remaining on the shores of Troy. Foul creatures they are, grizzled and bitter by fault of this war. Is this what it is to be mortal? To be a mere plaything of the gods, to live your life in cold, short misery before death at the blade of a man whose face blurs with the rest of your enemies? Is this the life I led, the life Achilles will leave behind? These men are hideous, horrid beasts, yet as I watch them scurry about, my own mind slowed, muted by the fog of death, I envy them.

Certainly these creatures that race around, hating one another and fighting for reasons they hardly remember are hideous in many ways. It is because of them that I died, because of them that I came to this god-forsaken land in which I have no business. Yet there is something so moving about their fight and struggle towards happiness and *kleos*, something so horrible that it is beautiful. They have this limited time to experience everything there is to feel on earth, and they never stop fighting to get the most out of that tiny and otherwise inconsequential time-span. Though humanity may be flawed and grotesque, I find myself incapable of denying that it is truly stirring how, in that inconsequence, we continue to fight and strive for something better.

Achilles heaves out a long breath, startling me and bringing me back to the present. He seems inhuman in this moment, something so still and unnatural in his manner of holding himself. Before my death I had never seen him this way, and I have to wonder whether whatever fraction of him might have been human died along with me on the battlefields of Ilium. When Hector killed me and drove his sword into my flesh, he destroyed a piece of Achilles as well. He tore away any restraint there had been on Achilles' raw fury, tore away what was left of his human soul. There was nothing I could do but die, I knew that in the instant I awaited the killing blow. Though I tried for ten years to avoid being caught up in the bloodlust and mad scramble for glory, I was so tangled in my own need for *timē* that I made the fatal mistake of going up against Troy's mightiest hero.

My actions doomed not only myself, but Hector, Achilles and Troy along with me. Had I known that, perhaps I would never have suggested fighting under the guise of Achilles' armor. Perhaps I never would have left the camp that day at all. Achilles has since orchestrated proper funeral games in my honor, yet here I remain. As little more than a memory attached to the suffering of my dearest friend, I am beyond that pettiness and need for glory. Of course I wish to be remembered, to be immortalized by name if not by body, but I know the truth. When Achilles dies – and he will soon, his fate sealed the moment he killed Hector in my name – my memory will fade into obscurity whilst his will live on. My glory, whatever there may have been of it, will be short-lived. Where my name will disappear with passing days, that of Achilles will endure for an eternity and more. Somehow this oblivion does not concern me. If my memory should disappear with Achilles' last living breath, I will be at peace. The great Pelides remembers my name, knows my lineage and honors my memory in these quiet moments. This is enough for me.

In this moment of understanding, I can see the gods and men for what they truly are. We are all petty creatures, yet mankind has the ability to redeem themselves. We can die fighting for what we believe, we can die with honor and dignity. The gods never will. They will live on while humans come and go, never able to attain *kleos*, only ever stirring up more trouble and murdering thousands more mortals in their own immortal power-struggles. This is the allure of humanity. This is what makes us more than playthings to the immortals. We humans are invincible. We may die, we may be killed during wars in distant and foreign lands, but if even one person looks back on our memory, on our life, and remembers, we are greater than gods. Then we are not the ephemeral wretches some would claim. We are a memory, preserved in a moment of recollection of our greatest days even as our souls are led to the gates of Hades.

I look to Achilles. The shadows of his face seem to have lightened as the world grows darker and quieter. I still see fear and hatred. But now there is more than that. There is a certain calm weariness that comes with accepting one's fate. The body of Hector has been returned to his father, a king reduced to kissing the hands of his son's murderer. Not even the inhuman Achilles could deny the som-

ber dignity of a once great man pleading for his son's body. I know that Achilles has come to terms with what he has done, the man he has killed. He will die, as the prophecy foretells. His name will resound through the ages. This is what it means to be Achilles, to be the greatest of the Greeks, to be a hero.

My body is gone now, surrendered to my funeral pyre. Yet I remain, the last vestiges of my conscious presence tied to Achilles' refusal to let me go. I wait on him alone, so much of my existence, both in life and in my passing, balanced on his will. I cannot regret this. I have lived, and I have died. My memory may live on, or it may die with Achilles son of Peleus. I was human and I was fallible, but my thread has been twined with that of the greatest of men. This is enough for me, though I wonder if it is enough for him.

Waves continue to crash against the beach. I hear the sounds of funeral games and celebrations echoing over the battlefields of Troy. Prince Hector has been sent to his eternal home in Hades. Achilles bows his head, trembling before he glances up again, seeming to have found himself.

"Be at peace, my friend," he breathes out quietly, and I know the words are meant for me. Whether Achilles knows I am with him or not, the words carry away what is left of my consciousness. My eyes close and I feel myself fade into nothing, the welcoming black of the Fields of Asphodel beckoning me at last. One final thought echoes through my mind as I lose myself completely.

I have lived and I have died. I fought beside the greatest warrior the world will ever see. I was Patroclus, and now I am a memory.



Kleos-22

BEN KMIECH

IT WAS LOVE at first sight. The first time I saw Chryses I fell madly in love with him. Seeking to get his daughter back through bribery and not fighting: now this is a man worth emulating! You can imagine my dismay when Agamemnon refused his gifts and threw him out of camp. Now Apollo has sent a plague on us and I'm one of the lucky individuals tasked with cleaning up the dead. Yes, all these things have disgusted me, but none have surprised me.

When I signed up for this expedition, it was only supposed to be a one-campaign-season affair. Under the leadership of Menelaus we were going to capture Troy, rescue Helen, get some good plundering done and be finished with the whole business. We've been here for ten years and all we've done is engage in some inconclusive fighting outside of Troy and raid the countryside. Just how can they get away with breaching our contract like that? Every year Calchas, our seer, does some ritual to determine what the gods want us to do. And every year they say it will be just one more year before we sack Troy. I'm no Sophist but something is not right here.

"Thersites! Doing anything right now?" said an all too familiar voice.

"Can't say I am," I replied.

"Really? There are plague victims all over the place! Aren't you going to bring out the dead?"

"None of them are dead: they're just resting."

"Ha ha! That's why I like you! Stick it to the Man all you want: I've got a job for you."

It was Odysseus. Remember how I said we'd spent the better part of ten years raiding the countryside? You'd think the entire army would have full wallets after that but most of it has wound up in the hands of a few important commanders. Though Odysseus is one of these commanders, he is the only one who isn't constantly fighting with the others for a bigger share of the prizes. But why would he? He runs the corporation. What started out as a black market for soldiers who weren't satisfied with their rations has grown into the most powerful organisation in the Mediterranean.

"I've got some supplies I want you to carry."

"What, and where to?"

"Libyan wine to Troy, as usual. I've got a bunch of cases that just came in."

"On my way."

I walked with him to his fleet of triremes. Right by the cases of wine was my best friend Proclus.

"You in need of coins too?" I asked.

"A man is always in need of coins," was his happy reply.

Proclus was an odd fellow. He had signed up for the army around the same time I had. He was one of our scouts. But he would always get lost. And every time he got lost farther than he'd been lost before. He was an idiot, but he was still the best friend I had on this expedition. We both picked up crates and started walking with Odysseus to Troy.

"So how's the war effort going?" I enquired casually.

"Good but stagnant. Should pick up once we get those siege engines," was Odysseus' reply.

"We've been waiting a decade for them to show up," Proclus muttered to me.

He was right: when I signed up, the plan was that the fleet would sail and capture a beachhead close to Troy. We would then send messengers to the siege-engine operators in Mycenae and they would sail over. Before we left Agamemnon

made them swear an oath before the gods that they would not sail before they received word from him. That would have been fine, but when we landed Agamemnon also swore before the gods that not one of his men would return home before we captured Troy. This has left us in a pretty awful predicament: we can't send word to them before we capture Troy, but we're also going to have a hell of a time capturing Troy without them. But it doesn't have to be one of Agamemnon's men, does it? We've got the whole of Greece assembled here and, in between Odysseus' commercial empire and Achilles going gods-know-where, surely we could get a message to Mycenae. Well, the only problem with *that* is this: if someone other than Agamemnon orders his men around, that would undercut his honor.

“So, until the siege engines show up, what's our strategy?” I asked.

“Starve them out,” replied Odysseus.

“And we're accomplishing this by delivering them fine wine and all the food they could want?” asked Proclus innocently.

“When the corporation benefits, we all benefit, even the war effort. Everyone has a share,” said Odysseus unflinchingly.

His comment drove me nuts. This might seem odd given how complicit I am in his business, but I had lost the will to fight this twisted logic a long time ago. I just want to survive. And I'm sure not surviving on what Agamemnon is paying and feeding me. We delivered the wine to Troy and walked back in silence. After being paid by Odysseus, Proclus and I grabbed some wine and sat down.

“So how did you get lost this time?” I asked.

“You know, it happens. All these hills look the same,” he replied.

I would have pressed him harder for answers but had tried many times before and knew it was useless. He would always give me one-word answers and just look at me with that stupid grin. In spite of his being my best friend, sometimes I just wanted to punch him.

Wanting to change the subject I asked him, “So what would you be doing if we weren't fighting this war?”

“I’d go to Themiscyra and live with the Amazons. They’re so pretty,” he replied.

Again, wanting to change the subject and save my few remaining brain cells, I asked him, “So, do you think this will really be the last year of the war?”

“I’m just a scout, who am I to question our great commanders?” was his answer.

I really wanted to punch him now, but ten years on campaign teaches you to control your emotions. Our force is so poorly led it’s a miracle any of us are still alive. Well, it’s a miracle that I’m still alive, at least. When we first set out we were under the command of Menelaus and technically we still are. Menelaus is an idiot; how he managed to marry Helen I have no idea. If I had to speculate, she chose him because she wanted to spite all the suitors for lusting after her by making them feel inferior to this guy. Just how is he such a dunce? He’s always followed the rules yet no one trusts him; maybe it’s just because he has no backbone and no one takes him seriously. That is why from day one his brother Agamemnon has been the de facto commander of the expedition. No one obeys one of Menelaus’ orders before Agamemnon confirms it. Things have not gotten so bad that Menelaus will only issue orders when the troops have not assembled. I’m no fan of Agamemnon, he’s awfully greedy and needlessly cruel, but if Menelaus was actually in charge we’d all be in Hades.

“You should come with me on a scouting mission sometime,” he said.

“Are you insane? I value my life!” I replied incredulously.

“So do I,” he smiled.

“Why are you fighting this war?” I asked Proclus.

“For same reasons you are,” he said to me.

“We both signed up for one season and lots of easy plunder. But we’re not getting any! It all goes to our commanders! Why do they care so much about it? Most of them are kings and have more money than they know what to do with! What makes *this* wealth better than the kind they already have? Someone taking it by

force makes it better, even if we spent more coming here to get to plunder than the stuff we actually plunder? This war is supposed to restore the honor of one man but all I've seen so far is that that man *has* no honor! Forget the plunder! I just want to get out of this alive!"

I would have kept going had I not seen the sword coming at me from the corner of my eye. I noticed it just in time to dodge it. It was Iphigenia. People often comment about how disfigured I am and how I'm the ugliest man in the Greek army: Iphigenia is the reason why. Just how is Iphigenia alive, and why does she want my blood?

It started when our expedition was first setting out for Troy. We stopped at Aulis to corral all of our forces. There Agamemnon managed to anger Artemis by dressing like her at a costume-party: it really wasn't pretty. He asked our seer Calchas, and he said that the only way to placate Artemis was to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. I didn't want to be around for that grisly ceremony and get polluted by *miasma* so I went spearfishing. Turns out that they didn't aspire to *miasma* anymore than I did, so instead of shedding her blood in a traditional sacrifice they just chucked her off a cliff into the sea. Now I may not understand aristocratic honor, but I do have some basic human decency. When I noticed a girl who fell in the water, naturally I helped her to shore. The other commanders, Agamemnon especially, were shocked to see that she had survived. But none of them wanted to lose honor by admitting the sacrifice hadn't worked. So one of them said a few words to the effect that, despite her being dead, he sensed her spirit was with them, and despite her pleas they've been pretending she doesn't exist ever since. Even though they're the ones who attempted to kill her, for some reason she holds me personally responsible for this and has been trying to murder me for the past ten years. My face? One of those attacks.

I'd grown to be on guard enough to be able to fight her off, or the very least run away, but she had really got the jump on me this time. She had me pinned down pretty well. Miraculously, the trumpet suddenly started blaring to sound a general assembly: as thousands of men began to run around to get into parade formation, it created enough of a distraction that I managed to slip away.

The meeting was to resolve the plague that had beset us. Achilles took the main role, promising to protect Calchas for explaining that Agamemnon's treatment of Chryses had really pissed off Apollo. Although Achilles employed the most diplomatic language imaginable, Agamemnon still got really pissy and took away his prize Briseis. Achilles got really pissy in turn and withdrew both himself and all his forces from the fighting.

Though he did bring up some really good points (I wanted to stand up and cheer when he said that he was fighting as a favor, since the Trojans have never done anything to him), I was more than a little nervous about all of our best troops leaving the fight — so nervous, I went to talk to Ajax, director of camp defense, to ask him what he thought our prospects were. His answer was not very inspiring, first giving me the typical, "Achaean men are the best fighting men in the world: the Trojans don't stand a chance!" When I pressed harder he said:

"Thersites, your concerns provide ample food for thought — granted, food that would probably appeal most to Trygaeus' beetle." (I could tell that he was already planning on sharing this one with his buddies.)

I dropped the matter completely after that, but why does it seem like their answer to everything is just to add more bravado? The most valuable thing anyone has is his time on this earth: why would anyone want to risk it so senselessly? All I want to do is preserve my life, or at the very least prolong it as long as possible. All this was fresh in my mind when we were assembled for a second time the next day.

Never in my life have I been so shocked. Agamemnon said that we should just give up and go home. Most of the men, myself included, were ecstatic and began to run for the ships.

But it was not to be: to our great disappointment, the whole thing had simply been a charade, a test of our commitment to the cause. I could bear it no longer and called him out, in front of everyone. It sure felt good, but to question command like that really isn't a bright idea. Odysseus, business relations be damned, immediately grabbed a stick and hit me with it. They probably would have executed me on the spot had Iphigenia not yelled:

"Back off! He's mine!"

As if this wasn't already bad enough, it gave Agamemnon the chance for another zinger at my expense.

“To be killed by a woman! And just when I thought this Cretan couldn't sink any lower!”

Them listening to Iphigenia's cry, yet still ignoring her existence, makes no sense, I know, but that's what happened. After most the army left, a young charioteer named Lycus helped me up. He was one of the few nice guys in the army: no one disliked him. I thanked him and proceeded to slink off from this most ignoble scene (despite not understanding the nobility of war, even I have some standards) and tried to find Proclus. Unfortunately Proclus was missing. Normally I wouldn't be worried since he was always going missing, but he had gone out for his reconnaissance mission a few nights before Agamemnon's “test” and should have been found by now.

I didn't have any time to brood, however: we were soon given the order to march out and attack the Trojans. Since we were missing a large part of our forces, and easily the best part, the attack didn't go well. Our line broke wholesale and began running en masse back towards our camp. It would have turned into a massacre had not Iphigenia caught a glimpse of me and started running at me, sword in hand, while cursing profusely. The charging Trojans stopped and shouted:

“The Amazons have returned! Run!”

Iphigenia would have killed me, but since everyone was ignoring her I got the credit for stopping the Trojans. Before she could get to me, they raised me up on their shields and carried me back to the Greek camp.

When we got back, Proclus was still missing. This destroyed me. Given the ferocity of the Trojan attack, and the fact that no other scouts had reported seeing him, he was pronounced dead. Despite being one of the most irritating people on the planet, he was still my best friend. I didn't feel like partying that night, but since I was now a war hero I had to go fraternize with some people.

I wanted to escape all thoughts of war, so I went to drink with the Myrmidons, the only people in the camp who weren't currently engaged in the fight. I was greeted nonchalantly and sat at the table next to Lycus.

“First time with a place at the table?” he asked.

“Very funny,” I muttered.

“You’ve earned it. Every man in the Greek army looks up to you.”

“Everyone knows I didn’t save anyone: a crazy woman managed to scare the Trojans. And somehow she’s no crazier than anyone else here! Am I the only one who’s bothered by this madness?”

“Not for being a ‘war hero,’ but for standing up to Agamemnon. I doubt our commanders or officers will act any different, but you’ve given hope to the common soldier. I don’t know why we, like the soldiers of all wars, have to go through all this, but you’ve shown that one can go through it with a certain amount of dignity.”

“Me, dignity? Lycus, you’re drunk. But, for what it’s worth, thanks, I guess.”

Despite being on the sidelines the Myrmidons’ boasts were as violent as ever. I drank as much as I could and said much less. Achilles, who was somehow even drunker than I was, looked towards me and said tauntingly,

“Don’t tell me you’re sad, Thersites. Still missing your friend Proclus?”

I replied, drunkenly:

“No more than you miss Penthesilea. However, I only want his body to cremate.”

At this Achilles flew into a rage. He threw his spear but missed and hit Lycus, killing him instantly. Not able to mourn the loss of my friend, I immediately jumped up from my seat and ran! I didn’t look back to see if Achilles was following me but, not wanting to take any chances, hid in Ajax’s tent. This was a serious breach of conduct but it sure beat getting murdered. Thankfully, when Ajax stumbled in that morning he was still extremely intoxicated.

“Thersites my man, we’ve been looking for you!” belched Ajax.

“We?” I asked.

“Myself, Agamemnon — you know, all the commanders, except Menelaus. Ha ha!”

“What do you want from me?”

“We have a proposition for you. Come to the command tent and I’ll explain.”

Feeling conflicted and not sure whether I could trust him, I followed wordlessly. When we got to the tent all the other commanders were there. Agamemnon, Diomedes, Nestor, even Menelaus. Achilles and Odysseus were absent though, Achilles on account of being out of the fight and Odysseus on account of being on a trip to procure Egyptian beer.

“So what is this proposition?” I asked.

“Us sending you back to Greece, with full pay and honors!” said Agamemnon warmly.

“Why?” I asked, shocked.

“Because you have become something of a nuisance. Before, all the men were content to abide by the status quo, but now? They’re starting to question our judgment and even why we’re fighting at all,” said Nestor.

“So, here is the way out you’ve been looking for all these years,” said Diomedes.

“And keep in mind, if you refuse, we’ll kill you, dump the body and say that it was you, not Lycus, that died last night,” added Agamemnon cheerfully.

I stood there stunned. Lycus’ words suddenly came flooding back to me. This is what I was to him? This is what I’ve become to my fellow soldiers? And now that the men have hope, our commanders will undo that by making me a traitor to them. I was shocked at myself: the man who signed up for mere plundering, and never gave a rat’s ass about military honor, was now concerned about his comrades. The man who only wanted to make it out of combat alive was now consider-

ing risking his life for them. But Lycus was dead, like Proclus! Why did Lycus have to die so senselessly? Why did they all have to die so senselessly?

My thoughts were interrupted by a messenger rushing in and saying,

“Does anyone know where Iphigenia is?”

“Who are you, who sent you, and why are you here?” barked Agamemnon.

“A messenger from the Amazons, seeking to make Iphigenia our new queen. Word is, she single-handedly made the Trojans retreat and saved the Greek army. A guy named Proclus showed up a couple of days ago and said that we could find her here. He also said that, if I needed help, I should ask for Thersites.”

When the name “Thersites” was pronounced, Iphigenia jumped out of a barrel and came at me with a knife, screaming:

“DIE!!!”

I was out of the tent and running like a madman! Proclus was alive! I don't have to sell out my fellow soldiers or myself! I am going to run to Themiscyra and join Proclus. I'm even setting things right with Iphigenia: once she's in good company, she'll calm down and give me a place of honor, or at the very least not try to kill me!

As I'm running out of the camp like a madman, Iphigenia and the messenger in tow, the soldiers are chanting, “Thersites!”

Lycus, you did not die in vain! I am free! We are all free!



No Time for *Timē*

JAMES HAWKES

SO APPARENTLY I'm supposed to fight the flaming-haired and spear-famed Menelaus for the hand of my lovely wife Helen today. I don't think it's a particularly bright idea, but when my dear brother Hector gets a bug up his ass about something (please pardon my Greek) then reasoned argument always seems to be pointless, I'm afraid. Was I not just doing battle with some of the best of the Argives? Yes, yes, I was, but then war-like Menelaus starts coming after me and so I chose to make a tactical retreat. But that is apparently unacceptable. Frankly, I think that engaging them directly is just giving them what they want. We have high walls, we should use them! Pick off the Argives one by one with our arrows, then, unable to win any glory, they'll eventually all go back to their homes across the sea. Not that anyone ever listens to me.

I only pay half a mind as Hector berates me, although he does include such endearments as, “evil Paris, beautiful, woman-crazy ... better you had never been born ... Surely now the flowing-haired Achaeans laugh at us, thinking you are our bravest champion, only because your looks are handsome.” Reading between the lines it is actually rather complimentary I think. “Now you would not stand up against warlike Menelaus? The lyre would not help you then, nor the favors of Aphrodite, nor all your beauty. No, but the Trojans are cowards in truth, else long before this you had worn a mantle of flying stones for the wrong you did us.” Well, that is just a little bit harsh I think. Nonetheless, I suppose I ought to try to mollify him. It is no good leaving a brother angry with you, particularly when you have a murderous Menelaus bellowing for your blood. “Hector,” I replied, “seeing you have scolded me rightly, not beyond measure – still, your heart forever is weariless, like an axe-blade.” I continued on in such a vein for a time, finally promising to en-

gage in single combat with the blood-drenched King of Sparta if it would make him happy. It seemed to, which is good. I always strive to make people happy, after all.

Nonetheless, I think sending me out to engage Menelaus in single combat is mere foolishness. I certainly could fight and even beat Menelaus in combat, but what would that achieve? Agamemnon and his lackeys sailed across the sea and have been harassing us for ten years now. Why would they turn back just because one middle-aged cuckold sullenly joins the Shades? They've left their kingdoms for so long that I wouldn't be half surprised if the Dorians have taken over in the meantime! They really don't think they have much of a duty to their subjects, that's for certain! I sometimes think I have a better understanding of the world than those "peers of the realm," having been raised by commoners. Still, I suppose I shall soon be off to be a hero, although matters like this should really be left to the specialists, don't you think? Why must *aretē* so often be interpreted so narrowly as referring only to martial feats? One would think that focusing on your own particular talents, such as, in my case, the noble art of archery, sheep-herding, or fashion, like judging beauty contests ... but no, though I'm a man of so many talents, the only standard the louts around here seem to accept is stabbing some other nincompoop with a spear. Or getting some wench pregnant. Frankly, I fail to see the point. It's not as if the royal house of Troy is in any particular danger of extinction: my old man had enough children to populate a small village, and Helen and I are both fine without children. We shouldn't be defined by ... well, before I left Troy today my brother Deiphobus was talking with Helen, going on about the importance of heirs and so forth. He didn't seem to mention that girl Helen bore for Menelaus though. Probably for the best.

Sometimes I think Deiphobus forgets whose wife she is. I didn't say anything, though, as it doesn't really matter: Aphrodite always pays her debts, and doesn't forget her favorites. Now Deiphobus is back to droning on about how I must leave the walls and join the thick of the battle. Fine, I thought, stepping away from the *krater* of wine as I called on my slaves to ready me for combat. Then, as I stood, they draped my favorite mantle over me, the mottled hide of a fierce leopard which I had slain while protecting the flocks. I was shod with fine hunting boots

and finally a Phrygian cap was placed atop my curls, a crowning symbol of patriotism. I love my country, after all, so much so that I won't go for something as dreadfully common as a helmet. Besides, they wouldn't be able to see my face then: how am I supposed to win glory in some anonymous helmet, I ask?

Deiphobus didn't seem impressed with my war-like attire for some reason, and as I moved to take hold of my curved bow he grew even more irate, asking me what I intended to do with it. I answered laconically that it was to kill the Spartan king with. He seemed to think that would be cheating. What is the point of waging war if we are to be so bound by such infantile concerns as fairness? Menelaus is stronger than me: would that mean *he* is cheating? No. Perhaps the reason why this war has dragged on for ten years is because we keep getting bound up by these archaic concepts. If, instead of simply watching as two "heroes" fight it out, everyone suddenly swarmed the enemy, I think this war would be far more efficient.

I also took hold of a bright bronze sword of the finest Hittite manufacture and two bronze-pointed javelins, which I have used to good effect in hunting the beasts of the field on many occasions — and wasn't this a type of hunting? Then I kissed my faithful wife before heading off. She played the dutiful spouse and wished me well, but there was no feeling in it. I suppose the only thing that will impress her will be my eviscerating a few of her countrymen. Well, in that case I suppose I shall do so. Best to keep her happy, after all.

As I stepped aboard my specially commissioned chariot, I took the time to admire the artwork upon it. It displays in vivid detail and bright colors a very handsome young shepherd judging the beauty of three ladies, although admittedly it does not seem like a very difficult decision in that image, as one is depicted as rather fat and old, while the one carrying a spear appears to have something of a mustache. Not entirely accurate, perhaps, but I fail to see any reason to venerate my enemies. What have they ever given in return for all those sacrifices? The goddess receiving the apple is as beautiful as the artist could make her, as is only just. Continuing on to the other side of the chariot, there you'll find a scene of feasting and music, with a very handsome man, if I do say so myself, strumming a lyre. The next scene shows him seducing a lovely queen beneath the nose of her

flaming-haired old husband, concluding with them eloping across the sea. I find it wonderfully deep and evocative. My driver didn't say anything.

It seems I should concentrate on the present! Hector certainly seems to have gained the attention of Menelaus at least. Actually, everyone seems really excited about this concept of Menelaus and me deciding this whole war by a duel. I think they're merely expecting a good show. After this much bloodshed, I really can't see the Achaeans just packing up and returning home. But Hector and the rest wouldn't mind seeing me finished off: when I was just born – no, I need to concentrate; Menelaus is coming at me.

The fight was, in retrospect, much as I would have expected it. I acquitted myself well, although Menelaus is better at this sort of close combat. Now, if I could only have used my bow ... the sweetly-laughing Aphrodite came to rescue. *She* is faithful at least. That is more than I can say of *some* people, but Aphrodite smartened her up as well. Really, this whole episode could have been avoided if people were only practical. We could have tried luring Menelaus to his death, which could have worked. Some say that the gods would punish such a “betrayal”; I don't think so. The gods have their favorites and Menelaus clearly does not belong to that elect group. But none of this was really even worth bringing up with Hector.

I was recovering in my home — a wonderful home that I built myself, with the aid of some of the finest craftsmen of the Troad — preparing my armor for battle as Helen bossed about her handmaidens. Then Hector showed up. He promptly started criticizing me. I was moderately annoyed, but only moderately. Therefore I said, “Hector, seeing you have scolded me rightly, and not beyond measure, therefore I will tell, and you in turn understand and listen.” I'm not certain that he could understand, but at least he was listening. “It was not so much in coldness and bitter will toward the Trojans that I sat in my room, but I wished to give myself over to sorrow. But just now with soft words my wife was winning me over and urging me into the fight, and that way seems to me also the better one.” I was not being entirely honest there: Helen can have a viperish tongue. “Come then, wait for me now while I put on my armor of battle, or go, and I will follow, and I think

I can overtake you.” Hector just kept staring at me stonily. But when Helen started talking, she said just the right things to get rid of him. Excellent.

Seeing Hector die was unfortunate. His pathetic flight was embarrassing really. There is safety in numbers after all. Achilles is just one man: he could have been defeated if Hector had planned more carefully. Oh, Hector, always so convinced of your own prowess. I am sharpening my bronze-tipped arrows. Soon they shall taste Achilles, while I am safe, looking down on him from these city walls.



Rumor Has It

KAITLYN GORSALITZ

I COULD HEAR the trill of gossip from leagues away and enjoyed nothing more than following it — listening and spreading, my mouths and tongues buzzing with it, and this was an age ripe with stories to spread, juicy and heavy and tempting as a pomegranate weighing down a branch. The Trojan War grew heroes, and with their craving for fame and honor they would sprout great tales, tales I could spread on my wings with my many lips.

With each of my small, soft steps a young son would spread boasts about the trophies his father would bring home from war, or a lamenting wife would claim that she had seen the Achaean host defeated in a dream. I, Rumor, with my great stride that could topple cities — but now a great city was already near its fall without my work, so instead I tread delicately throughout the realm, listening and scarcely speaking, and even then only in a murmur. Listening, as whispers of a plague spread throughout the Danaän camps, as the leaders argued about their due *timē*, as the proud Achilles withdrew. As I stepped here and there among the beached ships, word of these new developments followed, and the Greeks lamented the absence of Peleus' son and his men the Myrmidons.

When the sky turned black and dark, I left to seek gossip elsewhere, but the thought of the war for Troy remained in my mind. I returned every once in a while to step amongst them, to hear the latest news and add my own. I ran with the men back to the ships when Agamemnon made his foolish proclamation, whispering to them of sweet, sweet home, and when Odysseus rebuked the commoner Thersites, my tongues rang with laughter at the ugly man, laughter that was taken up throughout the crowd. Other places beckoned, however, so I sometimes left to

check in on Penelope's suitors, or Clytemnestra's lover, or whatever other salacious drama summoned me.

When I next checked in on the war, the chime of gossip immediately greeted my ears. Agamemnon had sent a delegation to Achilles' camp and this had added to the store of topics to be chewed over by his troops. When Helios' chariot had almost left the sky, I sat with a group of Myrmidons around a fire while Achilles stewed with Patroclus in his tent. An older man, his wiry beard peppered with grey and stern wrinkles around his eyes, tended to a spit of ox-meat on the fire while his compatriots chatted around him.

"To refuse those gifts is a great folly," one soldier told his friends. He was young, still beardless, his skin a dark bronze from the sun. "Achilles is out of his mind."

"I agree, it was more than enough *timē*," a friend of his returned, looking into the fire. He was the shorter of them, but well-muscled, and his dark hair curled handsomely around his face.

"Achilles is a proud man," added the one caring for the spit, turning it gently in the flames as I felt my feathers stir in the wind. "He has never wanted to stoop to Agamemnon's command."

In the distance the day's funeral pyres had begun to light, and the men were silent for a moment as the glow began to dot the horizon like the sparks popping out of the fire. This was the norm for them, war and death, but the actions of their leader went entirely against the grain. I could see how it disturbed them, and the men paused for a moment, leaving the night in silence, though my many ears could still hear the distant murmur of voices joined with the swell of waves upon the shore. In their world a man's honor and position meant everything; in this hush the warriors around their fire struggled to understand the actions of Achilles, which went against everything their society held dear.

"That many prizes should have been more than enough for his pride," the first finally said, unsettled and shifting his long legs where he sat. "If we don't return to battle, we won't win any honor for ourselves."

The other two nodded, and I took my leave, drifting through the other Greek encampments to hear what more others would speak of. As I left the camp of the Myrmidons, I could see more and more men streaked with grit from the battle, cleaning their bloodied armor and shields, a far cry from Achilles' men who hadn't seen battle for weeks. There was talk of Achilles everywhere, as the news of Agamemnon's embassy spread like fire and warriors fought to understand Peleus' son, expressions of confusion sliding across their faces more often than not. Others spoke of the Trojans, who had stayed behind their walls for so long but now had forced the Greeks behind theirs, like turtles hiding in their shells.

On a whim I left the Achaeans and flew over the tall gates and into the city of Ilium, and where my feathers brushed, the Trojan people would speak of the war outside their walls. "We'll win soon," some would say with the dream of victory heavy in their voices. "They've almost made it to the ships." Others would speak, with fear plain in their voices, of the godlike warrior Diomedes who cut down so many noble Trojans as if they were stalks of wheat. I walked farther until, out of curiosity, I passed through the house of Alexander and came upon him and Helen, the legend of whose beauty my hundred mouths had spread so many years ago. They lay together, untouched by the war around them, and I left knowing that any rumor they would hear would affect them little.

There were times again I would step away from Troy and its war, but I would always fly back. The potential for tales, accounts that would echo through the centuries, was too great a temptation for one known as Rumor. The stories already being told of these men's struggles for stature and acclaim were enough to make my hundred mouths water in anticipation: there was no keeping away.

When I next returned, it was to chaos; the battering of the Greek defenses, clashes and skirmishes breaking out as the Trojans slipped through them, some close enough to touch the hull of an Achaean's vessel.

"They'll burn the ships!" The call rang out, a terrible clamor rising up as the Danaäns scattered, and I ran with it throughout their encampment. It reached Patroclus, who took it inside the tent of his friend. As Hector fought Ajax, as the first flames sprung upon a hollow ship, Patroclus emerged in the armor of Achilles,

bronze and glittering and elaborately wrought, with Achilles himself following to stir the passions of the Myrmidons. Patroclus rushed to the battle with the Myrmidons alongside him, eager to fight and gain the *kleos* they had spoken of. They fell upon the Trojans, spears and swords clashing terribly among the hollow ships as I watched. The Myrmidons, delighting in battle, were finally in their place again, fighting for glory and prizes, which was all they knew. The skirmish went by quickly, in flashes of spear-throws and blood spattering across bronze shields and Patroclus advancing; and then dark death suddenly entered the eyes of Patroclus from a spear-cast. News of his death at the hands of Hector spread like wildfire, and Antilochus carried it back to Achilles by the steep-horned ships. I stayed to watch the frantic battle over his armor, until fiery Achilles' war-cry turned the tide for the Greeks and the Trojans were beaten back.

Later, after Achilles was given armor so great it inspired fear in all who looked upon it, after Achilles rejoined the war and bloated the river with corpses, after Achilles dragged Hector's body behind his chariot to his tent, the Myrmidons sat in their camp again. They sat with food and wine, this time with faces streaked in dirt and blood, once again speaking of their leader Achilles, and I sat with them with my feet tucked under me.

"He doesn't eat or drink or lie with a woman," the youngest said, cleaning the grit off his shield as he spoke. "He only drags around Hector's corpse. It's unnatural!"

"We all mourn Patroclus, but he spends every hour at the corpse's side. It's past time for a funeral," his friend responded, his long limbs stretching out in the sand.

They paused for a moment, and their heads followed Achilles in the distance, dragging Hector's battered corpse around the tomb of Patroclus as he had already done several times. I watched with them, his sad ritual, my feathers fluttering in a small breeze.

"It's as if he died with him," the third added as they watched, dark-eyed, and the three all looked away, disturbed at the thought.

I sat up, untucking my feet and shaking out my soft feathers, and left to hear what the other men were saying. The sun was making its voyage downward, cast-

ing the sky in pink and orange as it did, and men throughout the camps were stripping off their armor, stained with the day's battles. I wound my way among them, and as I stepped through the Achaean host my mouths sang of the anger of Achilles.



Briseis in Homer's *Iliad*

JAYDEN REMPEL

One day I pray that the Muses will sing of the might of Achilles and the tragedy of Briseis.

Though it was a particularly ugly day on the beach of Troy, I awoke with what had to be the first ounce of pleasure I had felt in years. I had finally done it, ensnared the heart of valiant Achilles and in turn secured my place in his home. It would be a bittersweet victory to marry the murderer of my family and the man who ruined my life and future. I know that it has to be done: what other options exist for me? To be a slave-girl, continually raped and abused for the remainder of my days? Never. I decided long ago never to resign to a fate like that. I am a woman of good birth and I will marry and live wealthily all of my days, the way I know my family would have wanted.

When I was first captured and brought to the beaches it was in a blind rage. I would have killed Achilles had I seen him. It was kind Patroclus who saved me: assigned to gather me from the ship, he took pity on me. He was wise beyond his years and seemed to understand the damage that anger could do. He cautioned me to put aside my fury and think about what would really benefit my future. It went against tradition. I knew I should avenge my family, but Patroclus' logic made too much sense. My family was already with Hades, across the river Styx. There was no way that I, who had never so much as held a knife, could kill Achilles who had so easily murdered my brothers and husband, who were disciplined warriors. It would only end in my death and would accomplish nothing. I knew that if I could marry him I could protect myself from a life of suffering, and I vowed that someday I would avenge my family — after I had gained the trust of

brave Achilles. Then my vengeance would be all the more sweet, like that which Medea took against Jason.

I knew Patroclus must have had his own reasons for helping me in this way, for I was nothing more to him than an anonymous slave girl. I had the feeling that there was something that he was trying to achieve as well. I knew he cared deeply for his cousin, and perhaps he felt Achilles would benefit from having me in his life. How wrong poor Patroclus was.

After getting off the ship I was brought before this mighty Achilles. In the dividing of *timē* it was I who was distributed to him: whether or not this was also the doing of Patroclus I shall never know. The first time I laid eyes on this warrior I knew who he was. I was struck by his majesty; he was unlike any man I had ever seen. He was a truly unique individual and, regardless of my burning hatred of him, I could not help but be entranced by his manner: the way he walked, talked and thought was not like that of other men. He was utterly human but there was something underneath the surface, and it was clear to anyone who looked upon him that his was a mighty destiny.

The distance I initially kept was not because I did not trust Patroclus' words but because I could not overcome my intense desire for revenge. And it was due to this distance that Achilles became interested in me. He began to try to get me to talk, which of course I did: no one dares to deny Achilles anything. But also the physical nature of our relationship began to grow sweeter, something I never expected to happen after the first terrible night I experienced in his camp. I had been married once before to a man of my parents' choosing, but Achilles had cut him down in battle, and, as a woman, what choice did I have but to marry again in haste and protect my future? And so it was not long before Achilles declared his love for me and set wise Patroclus to make the wedding arrangements.

I had thought that no one could deny Achilles anything but the greedy king Agamemnon did just that, not two days after Achilles' declaration to me. What god was it that had convinced Agamemnon to do such a thing? I suppose we will never know, but when Achilles came back to the tent that night I knew that something was amiss. He came and wept in my lap the way I imagine he must have

done with his mother Thetis, and I felt immediate sympathy towards him. I jolted with the sudden realization that I had grown attached to him in a way I never thought possible, and that night, after he had fallen into an exhausted sleep, I wrestled for a long while with my loyalties to my family and to this man to whom I had pledged myself.

Patroclus was instructed to take me from Achilles' compound, the same way he had brought me there short weeks before, in a symmetry that only the gods understand. When I arrived at the tent of Agamemnon, he was there to greet me like a dog eager for its bone, and I knew that this was not a man like Achilles. This was a man with many prizes but no honor. This was not right — even I could see that. There was something base and crass in how he obtained his prizes. This was clear among the men — particularly Thersites, a commoner who was the most vocal of the men when it was only the soldiers and slaves around, at which times he spoke the words that the rest did not dare say. This unrest among the common men spoke to Agamemnon's success as a leader.

I was also struck by how ordinary Agamemnon appeared next to Achilles. This was no warrior. Without his kingly garb he could have been mistaken for any peasant in Greece. This seemed to be something that he was keenly aware of and, as I learned, he made a point of asserting his prestige in most everything he did.

The long weeks that followed were like being in Hades and I was left to wonder what resentment I had incurred from the gods. What god was it whom I had angered, who set this plague upon me and my house? It is the plight of mortals to attempt to avoid such wrath, and yet something I had done must have incurred this anger. Only the gods in their wisdom could understand, the mighty overlords of this world. Their logic is outside of human understanding; this has been clear since the dawn of time when Chaos first came into being.

I had never expected to be an equal in any relationship with a man: this was the will of the gods and the way of the world. As a woman I had expected to honor and obey my husband always. In return I would receive the respect to which I was entitled given my position as a noble woman of Troy. Once a slave, I did not expect even that. Achilles may not have been kind or loving but he was in-

deed an honorable man and I would have trusted him to behave so in our marriage, however short that might have been. Agamemnon of course would never see me as a prospective wife, but I was not even accorded the respect that the concubines received. I was not some peasant girl to be abused at whim, however. I deserved the respect that my father or brothers would have demanded: had they been alive to see my dishonor they would surely have shunned me. They would cry to Zeus to smite Agamemnon for his shameless deeds the way Chryses did when his own daughter was abused. Agamemnon refused the old priest's honorable offer of ransom, and when he finally did accept, it meant bad things for me and my future as well as his own.

I do not know much of war: it was a topic never spoken about among the women. I knew that I would never be able to comprehend the complexities of war, but I did understand that it was unwise of Agamemnon to anger brave Achilles in this way: he was going down the path of *atē*. There must have been a quarrel among the gods to cause this sort of rift among these two powerful men, for it was clear to everyone: even the women and slaves knew that the Greeks could not win without Achilles.

I would never escape Agamemnon in the way that Chryseis had: there was no family to offer ransom on my behalf or care for my well-being; none would cry for justice in my name now. My family line had been erased by the mighty Achilles and once again I was filled with rage over the injustice of the gods in allowing these deaths to happen. Achilles was now the only chance that I had for escape. I could not blame him for the actions of war. This was the will of Ares and the other gods. Achilles acted of his own will, and yet it was not his alone. The gods always have a hand in human affairs; that is the way of the world.

After many long nights with Agamemnon I was finally released to return to Achilles. The war had been going badly for the Greeks for too long and it was Agamemnon's hope that, once I was returned to my betrothed, loyalties would resume as they once were. I realized once again how torn I was between my loyalty to my family and to my promised husband. The Greeks had set up makeshift altars to the gods, to offer sacrifice for their safe return home; I had used them instead to

pray to be restored to the man who could protect me. I had prayed that, had I ever pleased the gods with my acts, they would in turn aid me in this difficult time.

Somehow the gods must have heard my prayers, and when I was finally allowed to return to Achilles I was filled with excitement. I might yet be redeemed through a marriage in a way that would make my family proud. The wife of the mighty warrior Achilles, a man who would surely have lasting *kleos* for his part in this war — this was something that might help to comfort them in the depths of Hades. My family would not be vindicated through his death: they would be better avenged by my continuing their line. For my father to know that his grandsons might grow to be even mightier warriors than he had been, would fill him with pride. To see a daughter well married once again was all he could hope for now: this was the way of war and the will of the gods. I could see this clearly now, and when the heralds came to retrieve me once more I prayed to mighty Aphrodite, who was surely on the side of the Trojans and who would only benefit by having an Achilles in love with a new wife. Perhaps he would even push to return to his home in Greece: if so, I would go happily. There was nothing left for me in Troy and I would be a dutiful wife, following my husband anywhere.

It was not until I arrived at the tent of Achilles that I discovered the true circumstances that had occasioned my return: Patroclus dead, and Achilles ... not dead — not physically, at least — but lost all the same. I had been so certain that all would be well if only I could return to him. But nothing would ever be well with Achilles now that his companion had perished, killed in the fighting without his friend at his side. This great hero, whom I had in turn hated, feared, and — in the end — loved, was now as lost as I once had been. But in his case there were no compromises to be made, no alternate means to find honor for himself and his family, no escape. He was utterly alone, with no connection to anyone or anything, a living corpse, torn from me as irrevocably as Orpheus' love had been torn from him.

This was my fate. I knew the death of Hector would follow, with that of Achilles not far behind, and, when the Greeks returned home with their blood-stained spoil, that I would be no more than a common slave. Any hope of redeeming my family name through a prosperous marriage had been lost. A woman is always at

the mercy of the men in her life, and I had chosen Achilles. Our futures were tied irrevocably together and soon his end would lead to my own. This was the will of the gods.



Overdetermination:

A Story About the Fall of Troy, Family Dysfunction and
Why You Should Always Read the Fine Print

EMILY HUEL

THE FIRST THING that I would like all of you to realize is that Zeus is a lying swine who is not fit to care for one mortal, let alone thousands. “Seriously,” he had said to me, polishing his beloved thunderbolt until even the blindest of men would notice its divine shine. “I truly wish that I was in your toga. Ruling the underworld has some truly incredible perks: a morbid band of malicious and somewhat unbalanced followers, the jurisdiction to punish pestilent imbeciles for all eternity, and control of anything underground — you know, gold, precious gems, prenatal crops, you name it. I am jealous of you. Really, I am. I mean, sure, I’m your boss and all that jazz, but look at it this way. While you’re relaxing in your own peaceful, secluded realm, I have to deal with ... them.” Zeus placed his treasured polishing cloth on the small table beside him and pointed the bolt at Ares, who was busy scratching his behind with a spear. Pausing momentarily, the dolt softly belched, then serenely continued on, unaware of Zeus’ disdainful glances. Zeus shook his head and returned to me. “So, we have a deal, right?” He grinned and stuck out his hand. I honestly don’t know what had come over me. Perhaps I was hungry, or exhausted after crawling out of my father’s gullet. Perhaps Lyssa, who had always been a miserable wretch towards me, hit me with a dose of dementia, causing me to abandon better judgment and my inherent mistrust of the rest of my family. For whatever reason, I blithely smiled at that egotistical sack of manure and gave him my hand.

“Yes. We have a deal.”

There has never been a day in my life that I haven’t regretted those ghastly words.

The unfortunate thing about dead people is that they more or less remain dead forever. Consider this: Zeus has problems with a particular unpleasant mortal. So, in a fit of divine rage, he sends a quartet of rabid bears to his doorstep. The bears devour the man. His horrid wife will weep at his side and beat her chest before firing his pubescent mistress and setting his hairy, flatulent body aflame. His beastly sons will pursue the bears with spears and arrows before inheriting his property and enjoying long, fruitful lives without fear of beatings. Everyone wins.

Well, everyone except me, who has to deal with the sniveling bastard forevermore. And thousands of aptly named sniveling bastards over the eons tend to accumulate and leave little space in my “private realm,” as Zeus so quaintly put it.

I should have told Brother Dear to shove it from the get-go. I could be relaxing on a secluded island in the Americas, sipping nectar out of a coconut and sleeping in a hammock. Perhaps then my wretched family wouldn’t take mortality’s inclination for self-destruction for granted and would solve their own problems for a change.

The straw that broke the donkey’s back was that ill-fated war between the Greeks and the Trojans. It doesn’t take a Socrates to understand that a common side-effect of battle is an unfortunate buildup of corpses, so it is understandable that periods of civil unrest tend to take a toll on my emotional and mental well-being, what with the unholy influx of souls, the endless and tedious paperwork and the constant reshuffling of the dead to make room for newly slain soldiers and civilians. While I can tolerate an occasional scuffle between men, and periodic wars spread out throughout the years are manageable, ten years of constant battle is unreasonable and rude, in my opinion. I mean, to think that I had to tear down my luxury sauna because some spoiled prat couldn’t control his unimpressive diddly-doo.

You see, I had indeed noticed that the normally steady and constant import of terminated lives was grossly higher than the annual mean, and I did what any bitter corporate drone in a management position would do.

I complained to my superiors.

“Oh that,” Zeus said absent-mindedly, swinging his prized thunderbolt at a small, white ball resting on the floor. The ball sharply lurched forward and glided into a golden goblet tipped on its side. Pleased with his prowess, he gleefully jigged and cheered before turning towards me. “You remember that wedding a few years ago.”

“Peleus and that water-goddess you were afraid of knocking up?”

“You mean Thetis? Yeah, that’s the one. Well, anyway, we decided that nothing could go wrong, you know, because of that prophecy, right?” I nodded. Zeus hated being shown up by anything, including his spawn. “Well. Everything had to go according to plan. Hera couldn’t dress in white, Hermes had to follow Dionysus to make sure he didn’t pass out in a cloud somewhere, and never under any circumstances could Eris ever know that something had to go according to plan.”

“Uh-huh.”

“So we didn’t invite her.”

“That was stupid of you.”

“In hindsight, yes. But how was I supposed to know that Dionysus would get hammered and run his dumb mouth off about it?”

“I don’t know ... because he’s Dionysus?”

“Hindsight, brother dear. So, peeved off, she crashed the party with an apple that was inscribed, ‘For the Fairest.’ Naturally, one would assume that it was for Thetis, being the bride and all. But Hera, Aphrodite and Athena all got their sights on this apple, and started auditioning for the judges.”

“Oh boy.”

“Yeah, like anyone was going to touch THAT one with a ten-foot pole.”

“Including you?”

“Of course including me! Remember that time they tied me up? So do I! I’m planning on avoiding a sequel, thank you very much.”

“That’s a fascinating story, but that doesn’t explain why there are 300 sweaty men in my sauna.”

“I’m getting to that. Vain and desperate, the girls go down to the nearest hot-blooded, unfortunate male that they could find: Paris.”

“The prince of Troy?”

“That’s the guy. He was out tending to a flock of sheep. Don’t look at me like that, I don’t get it either. Anyway, being the jealous, sore-losers that they are, the girls try to bribe him. Athena and Hera offer him military prowess and control over Eurasia, but Aphrodite ... that Aphrodite ... she knows what men like ... ”

“Isn’t she your daughter?”

“And Hera’s my sister. What’s your point? To continue, Aphrodite offers him Helen.”

“Wait, wait ... Isn’t she married? To that Menelaus guy?”

“Yes. That’s the problem. Paris ... kind of ... kidnapped her, so to speak.”

“ ... Kidnapped her?”

“Exactly. Now you’re caught up. The Greeks are camped outside of Troy. The happy couple is getting married. We were all aware that this would happen one way or another, you know, Troy falling and all that jazz.”

“But isn’t there a different way? I mean, we could sacrifice Helen and Paris for the greater good. You could strike them down with a pox or something and leave the rest to die, let’s say, twenty years from now?”

“It’s just a sauna.”

“Just a ... just a ... It’s not just a sauna, Zeus. It’s about principles. Principles, Zeus. Can’t you tell your wife to stop being a jealous harpy and deal with the fact that some people just don’t find her attractive?”

Needless to say, Zeus, fearing the wrath of his omnipresent wife, threw me out of Olympus, where I would not be invited back for a very long time.

Miffed at my abrupt expulsion, I returned to my crowded palace and began to draw up blueprints for a new and improved underworld, planning for several years of battle and taking into account the fact that Peleus and Thetis' famed son was currently old enough to partake in combat — and rumor had it that he was very adept with a spear.

While I did have to build over my precious sauna, I was able to preserve the next best thing: my hot-tub. Over the years, I gradually forgot my delightful steam-room and began to rely solely on the toasty, blissful heaven that it offered, as a means of keeping me calm and relatively benevolent. That is, until the tenth year, when my depraved sibling ruined that for me too.

It was a particularly stressful day: Sisyphus had been abnormally whiny, my father had shouted abuse whenever I had passed by his cage, and Cerberus had puked on the Turkish rug, which Persephone had left for me to clean up. Exhausted and strained, I had retreated to my tub of dreams for refuge, only to find a group of rashy, oozy Greeks polluting the pristine waters.

“What ... what are you doing here?” I sputtered angrily, anxiously clawing at my towel.

“There was no room, so we were sent here,” one said nonchalantly, nose dripping into the tub.

“But ... but ... ”

“These are some wicked jets. Hey, man. Are you okay?” I nervously went through the blueprints in my mind. Was there a possibility that I had made a mistake? I shook my head. It was very unlikely.

“No. I am not okay. And don't you ‘man’ me. I am the ruler of the dead and an all-powerful god. I did not get eaten for this, so I'll only say this once: **GET OUT OF MY BLOODY HOT TUB!**” The Greek raised his hands in submission.

“Hey. It's cool, man. Look, I know how you feel. I'm pretty stressed too. I mean, I've been in Troy for ten years, and a plague knocked me out. A plague, man. That's not something that brings you honor. So, we are, like, going to take some deep, soothing breaths and ...”

“Wait. Did you say ‘plague?’”

“Yeah, man. Like, our ruler, Agamemnon, kidnapped this priest’s kid as a concubine or whatever, so Apollo sent a plague or something. Last I heard, though, was that he gave the chick back and took Achilles’ girl instead, which, like cheesed Achilles off big time and now he won’t fight. But who cares now? I’m dead.” I sighed in relief. With Achilles out, the number of dead would decrease in the long run, leaving this temporary increase irrelevant and my hot tub safe. As a reward for the information, I allowed the youth and a few of his tidier friends to remain overnight while I returned to my bedchambers.

I awoke the next morning content and well rested. I peacefully rolled out of my bed and picked up my discarded towel from the night before. I returned to the hot-tub, cheerful, serene and anxious to resume control, only to find several new men awaiting me.

“Alexander! We had a deal!”

“Chill, man. These guys are with me.” Alexander turned to his neighbor and they bumped fists.

“You said that once the girl was returned, the plague would stop.”

“Oh no, I survived the plague,” the neighbor said. Noticing my confused look, he explained. “Okay. So after the plague, our leader, Agamemnon, gets this dream from the gods saying that they will take Troy the next day. So, obviously, he shoves us out of our tent doors to ... you know ... take Troy and stuff.”

“Great. Fine. Whatever. So why are you here?”

“It was a trap or something. We got caught up in a bloodbath.”

“Are ... you ... you ... are ... saying that the gods tricked you?”

“Looks like it ... Say, is that vein on your forehead supposed to do that?”

Exile or otherwise, I left for Olympus that very morning, only to be greeted by the wicked wench herself.

“Hades, what a pleasant surprise.”

“Bite me, Hera. Where is that miserable husband of yours?”

“Oh. You mean Backstabber McLiarpants? He’s probably in the back, polishing that garish thunderbolt of his.” She scowled and sniffed.

“Hades?” I turned around and angrily marched towards my brother.

“What is the meaning of this? I dealt with the aftermath of your wife’s petty war, and you send a plague. A plague! Why the plague?”

“Yeah, Zeus. Why the plague?”

“Shut up, Hera!” Zeus and I shout in unison. Scowling at his wife, Zeus ushers me into the next room.

“Okay. So you heard that Achilles is a little annoyed with the rest of the Greeks, right?”

“Yes.”

“Well, he wants them dead. So Thetis comes up to me and asks me to send a plague to the Greeks. So I sent a plague to the Greeks.”

“Why?”

Zeus grinned crookedly. “Because she’s hot.”

“You’re disgusting. This is why your wife hates you.”

“I’m not that bad.”

“You got a girl pregnant. Disguised as a swan.”

“Okay. That was one time.”

“Don’t forget the bull incident.”

“Enough already! I get your point. But what is done is done. You’ve just got to ... make do or something.”

“ ... make do or something?”

“Yeah, you’re married, you get this. I can’t admit that I’m wrong, because that is a sign of weakness, and Hera will use that against me.”

I sighed.

“Just ... can you try to stop interfering? It’s getting pretty cramped down there and it would mean a lot to me.” Zeus smiled and stood up straight.

“I promise.”

When I returned to my home that night, I calmly drew up another set of blueprints, then enjoyed one last soak in the hot-tub. Although I was sad to see the end of my jet-filled days, I had honestly believed what my brother said, and was ready to cut my loses and move to the game-room.

Once I had accepted the existence of the war, my desire for information was purely for the sake of entertainment. The game-room had quickly lost its sheen, mostly because it was easily accessible to Persephone and no longer a retreat, so I spent my free time wondering the depths of Hell, chatting up the recently expired and wringing out all the information that I could.

“So ... Why are you down here?” I asked one of the more recent veterans.

“I shot Menelaus,” he said nervously, shuddering at the memory. I took in his appearance. He was extremely young and lanky: hardly a worthy opponent to anyone, much less a king. I chuckled. Boys will be boys.

“And why would you do that?” The boy shivered and stared at me with panicked, wide eyes.

“The gods made me do it.” I groaned and rolled my eyes.

“What do you mean, ‘the gods made me do it?’”

“Well ... Hades, sir ... There was going to be a truce. Menelaus and Paris were going to duel, and whoever won would get Helen. Menelaus was just about to win, when Paris ... just ... disappeared. And when we were trying to find him ... I ... I ... Look, I don’t know why I did that. We were going to go home. I just wanted to go home.” The boy looked down at his feet mournfully. Not knowing what to say, I left.

This time, I didn’t complain. What good would it do? My family had proven themselves completely unwilling to put any end to this war until one or both sides

were completely decimated. While I did discover long after the fall of Troy that my brother had forbidden the others from interfering with the outcome (this didn't stop him from interfering himself, of course, and helping the Trojans), at this time I was done trying to reason with Olympus and consoled myself with the knowledge that it could be worse. I mean, Achilles could've actually been doing something.

That was my next mistake: assuming that it couldn't get worse.

The day that Patroclus died was relatively average, to start out with. I had streamlined storage and evicted Alexander from the game-room. Immortal life was finally beginning to seem normal again. I had even found enough time to teach the dog how to breathe fire. That afternoon, I had been handing out complementary pomegranate baskets to the newly departed, when the ever-clingy Alexander, who cannot take a hint, loudly gasped in my ear.

“Oh, damn.”

“What now?”

“That's it. There is no way we can lose now.” Alexander stuck out his tongue at a Trojan, who scowled in response. “Hey, Patroclus,” he shouted. “Who did you in?”

“Hector,” a man responded, grinning at Alexander.

“No, way! You went after Hector?”

“Sort of. But he kind of thought I was Achilles.” The surrounding crowds hooted.

“So, is Achilles in now?”

“I don't know. Probably.” I quickly considered the facts. With Achilles back in the game, it could go either one of two ways: Achilles quickly kills Hector, and the war comes to a hasty conclusion, or Hector happens to be an especially excellent hider, leaving Achilles angry and savage. And everyone from Egypt to China knew that an angry Achilles is extremely stabby indeed.

All I could do was wait.

While the war didn't end immediately, I was right about a few things. Achilles did go on a murderous rampage. Eventually, I had to build over my bathroom, which was replaced by an old urn beside my bed. At this point, I was beyond caring. I had given away too much, and all that was left to do was anxiously await the imminent death of the doomed Trojan.

It was a few days before Hector was finally done in, who was then followed by Achilles himself, and then the city of Troy. To tell you the truth, it was rather anticlimactic in my opinion, as most deaths are. Hector was once alive, and then he wasn't. The world still turned, the sun still shone and those who had no connection to Troy continued to live as if nothing ever happened at all. Life, for all intents and purposes, still dragged on for a vast majority of souls. While that may seem callous to you, I was in no way above feeling sorry for the poor man. Compared to the average life, he had lived his quite nobly. It was a consolation, however sad it may be, that he was quickly reunited with his son, who would run around and laugh with the other small children struck down by famine or sickness. And compared to eternity, it would only be a short time before Andromache would rejoin her family. It may not be a happy ending; one could even say that the entire war was a complete waste of time and lives, which it most certainly was. But they really shouldn't take it personally, for despite common belief, we gods are only human.

If you are looking for me, I'll be in my new hot-tub.



Burning Desire

MATTHEW HILL

IN A WORLD full of names like Achilles and Agamemnon, no one is likely to remember the guy named Jim. That's just fine with me. Wanna know why? Because I've seen what it can do to a guy. Oh yeah, I've seen it. It happened to yours truly as a matter of fact. Of course for me it was gold but for them, it was honor. They had the stuff too, those brutes, but it wasn't actually worth anything! Imagine that: gold, not worth anything! They used to give it to someone who had killed enough other guys as a token of honor, which was all they seemed to care about, but they didn't buy anything with it! They traded in honor; no greenbacks, no nothing.

It's gold that drove us mad, me and Sam, bless his soft Tennessee soul — well maybe it just killed him while I got all the madness. I'm still not sure which of us really bought it that night on Lake Lebarge. I'd like to think that this is just a pleasant dream, but it feels more like a nightmare, and not the good kind.

It happened so fast: one second Sam was talking to me from the middle of a roaring fire — I know, I know: it sounds crazy. I thought I'd gone mad too. But you wait to judge my madness 'till you hear the second part. So, I'm sitting there talking to a dead man ...

WHAM! All of a sudden I'm standing on a beach holding a spear and surrounded by a bunch of other guys doing the same thing. Now I was never much of a church-going type, but I am pretty sure the Bible didn't say anything about angels having hairy chests or wearing leather skirts. Maybe I died in the snow that night after all. While that last thought is still bouncing around my skull, I turn about to see what the ruckus is for, only to find a whole other bunch of screaming yahoos with pointy sticks running right at me! My heart rises in my throat and I

start to back away, but before I can make it ten feet they run right into the front of my bunch with a huge crash, and in that crimson moment it becomes very clear that I am in Hell.

Blood. Everywhere. On everyone. On me. Dripping from our hair, hanging from our arms, caught in my teeth. The sand turned to red mud that dried rock hard, freezing the steps of our mad dance of death. I can't stop my hands from shaking or my legs from trembling. My eyes dart back and forth as I grip my spear tight, waiting for the next attempt on my life. Even the thought of my favorite rot-gut whiskey won't calm my nerves. Flitting around, my eyes catch on the corpse-fires. Hell-fires. In every one of them I can see Sam's face staring back out at me, grinning.

A soldier I recognize from the battle earlier walks up next to me and hands me a pitcher with something in it. Without a second thought I take a gulp. It tasted like vinegar, but burnt nicely going down. The burning helped. It gave me something to fix on.

"You fought well today; you must be hungry for your portion." I didn't have a clue what he was talking about so I just grunted and took another swallow of the vile brew. "I've not seen you before, you must be one of the fresh soldiers that came in yesterday. Come to my camp. I will find you a place to sleep." Now that sounded about right to me.

The drink had done some good and my legs weren't shaking as bad as a moment before, so I staggered to my feet and followed the man through the camp dragging my spear in tow. The man came to a small campfire, thankfully not fueled by the morning's slaughter, where a few men were sitting and preparing a mid-day meal.

As we came closer to the fire one of the men spoke to my guide: "Perion, it looks as though you've been out fighting. Achilles will have your head if he finds out." Perion turned to the man with a frown, "But you're not going to tell him, are you, Ophontes, because then he'd quickly find out that all of us have been sneaking off to stake our claim." Glowering, Ophontes dropped his eyes. "If only he'd relent. But it's right that he withdraws us from battle: what Agamemnon did was

unthinkable! Insulting his honor like that! And only because our king spoke sense to him.”

My host sighed deeply and answered, “All true, but I do not think it is right to deny us our portion of honor so long, even if it is to shield his own. Even now we Myrmidons, fiercest in battle, might not be able to turn the black Trojan tide away from our ships. We may all have lost our chance to be remembered, the battle goes so poorly.” Perion shook his head as he spoke, despairing at his own prediction.

Unable to stand any longer I took a seat in the sand. I looked around at the men circling the fire; they all seemed to be thinking dark thoughts. “It’s as though a fever has gripped him,” grumbled Ophontes. “They’ve started burning the ships. Saw one go up in flames earlier, pretty soon we’ll not only be prize-less but we won’t be able to get home either. Nothing for our troubles here, honorless!”

Another round of grumbling followed his brooding words. Perion, who had turned to enter a tent on our left a moment before, now returned carrying something in his hand. “Speaking of which ...,” he said, as he threw the small object for me to catch. “For your show of courage today. You’ll have plenty more to add if we storm the city of Troy.”

I caught the little thing and held it up to get a better look. As I opened my fingers my heart stopped. Gold. As the realization washed over me my heart started up again so fast I could feel it throbbing painfully in my toes. More gold than I had ever seen in my lifetime of searching. Perion had just tossed it to me like a ribbon I had won at a county fair. For your bravery, he said. Mad, completely mad! Hell, a nugget like that could’ve bought me all of the honor I would ever want back in Dawson.

In the background I could hear conversation starting up. “So, Perion, what are you going to do if we even make it out of this hole?” He had just been in the tent for a second; there must be loads of the stuff in there. “With or without my loot? If my family catches me crawling back empty-handed, they’ll sell me as a slave!”

Their voices buzz along the outside of my thoughts. They sound good and distracted: I think I could slip backwards without their notice. “Your boy would never let ’em. He’d be big enough by now to have a say in things. How old is he any-

way?” More noise: perfect. “He’ll be just about sixteen now,” says Perion. “He’ll be hard at work training to follow in his dad’s footsteps. By Zeus I miss him. The vineyards, too, especially the way they smell after a spring rain.” “And the wine too, no doubt!” someone cracks.

They’re all laughing now and looking away at each other. “You’ll see him again, we’ll be bound for home soon. I heard lord Achilles speaking of it the other day.” Now if I can just slip back a little further ...

Just as I’m about to roll off behind Perion’s tent, the most intimidating man I’ve ever seen steps up to the fire. Armor covered his shins and torso, glittering with bronze and gilt. On his head he wore a helmet that covered everything but his eyes and sprouted a blood-red plume of horse-hair running down the crest. Armed with spear and shield he stood there and spoke. “Come, Myrmidons. Achilles bids us to beat back the black tide: we fight for his honor.”

His words cut through the men’s laughter as every man turned to his voice. Perion, a bewildered look in his eyes, opened his mouth in question: “Patroclus, beloved of Achilles, why do you wear his armor? Where is our king?”

The man named Patroclus turned to meet his words with a hard gaze: “You know well, brother Perion, that our lord cannot take part in the battle, he cannot bow before the wishes of that dog king. He sends me in his place to lead you, to force the Trojans from our walls.”

Perion’s features harden as he answers, worry in his voice: “Patroclus, you are an able fighter but there will be no hope unless he leads us in this fight! Has he gone mad? Will he not see that his quarrel with Agamemnon will kill us ...?”

Dead center in Perion’s chest a flaming arrow blossoms in a mist of blood, protruding half its length out his back. He falls to the ground, the last words of his accusation frozen on his lips. All around us arrows fall out of the sky like brimstone. Tents and ships roar into flames, the screams of women and the battle-cries of men rise into the air.

“We must turn them back!” yells Patroclus. “You,” he commands, pointing his spear at my chest, “Put out these fires.” The remaining men scramble to their feet,

grabbing their spears, and run off towards the clamor of battle. Patroclus turns and runs after them, leaving me surrounded by the burning camp and Perion's still warm body.

I caught sight of an arrow and jumped to the side as it zipped past my head. It missed me and pierced the canvas of Perion's tent, setting the door-flap on fire. Panting, I stared at the flames licking up the side of the tent. I judged there was enough time for me to jump inside before it was completely consumed. I rolled through the opening as another hail of arrows came down, and came to my feet surrounded by pillows and rugs. A woman lay nearby gasping as she clawed at the arrow in her neck. Frenzied, my eyes swept the inside of the tent looking for anything shiny. I spotted what I wanted against the far wall where an arrow had already set the furniture on fire. Right in the middle of the burning bedding was a pile of my deepest desire. Gold so hot that it looked to be melting.

Not thinking twice I leapt for it and seized a double armful of burning hot trinkets. The flames scorched my arms and the treasure felt like white-hot coals but I would not let go of my prize. I jumped up and ran out of the burning tent, as inky black smoke chased me across the sky.

The next thing I felt was the sting of salt on my blackened arms. I open my eyes painfully to see the sun setting over the water; I'd managed to make it to the shoreline before I lost consciousness. I smile to myself as I move to hug my precious gold tighter, but a searing pain races through my side as I try to move. I manage to raise my head enough to look over my shoulder, only to see the broken shaft of an arrow jutting from my ribs. I let my head back down gently to ease the pain. A calm sort of numbness sets in as I look down at the gold nestled safely in my arms.

Guess it didn't really matter if I died: as far as I was concerned I was dead already. This was just some weird dream, but at least there had been gold in it. I can hear voices nearby so I shift my leaden head a bit to see what is going on, just curious. Twenty or so feet away stand a knot of people watching two men. One of the men was lying on the wet sand and the other was crouched over him sobbing with

all his might. I recognized the shining armor of the motionless man. It was that fellow from the night before: Patroclus, I think Perion had called him.

The thought of Perion sent a stab of pain through my numbness: he hadn't deserved that arrow. Looks as though he was dead too. He just couldn't wait to get out into that fight: honor, he said! Ha! What good was that honor when you were dead? I hoped that Achilles fellow was ashamed of himself for getting his friend killed.

I turned my head and looked back out to sea as the clouds turned purple with the dying rays of the sun. My vision narrowed and my breathing became shallow. My last breath came and went quietly as I lay contented in the surf, watching the final drop of sunlight dip below the turquoise water to the ache of my arms backed by the sobs of the stricken man.

Groggily, I opened my eyes to the uncomfortable but familiar bite of a cold wind. Instantly I'm awake. I sit upright on the wooden floor of my charnel house half covered in snow. I realize I'm freezing, so I move to close my winter cloak and cry out at the burning pain in my arms. I look down to see the arms of my coat and shirt burnt away, and coals stuck to my skin as though I'd been digging in a fire. Slowly I move my arms to better inspect the damage and realize I've got something gripped tightly in my right hand. As I open my hand, I freeze solid as ice when I see the gold nugget stuck to my palm. The memories of some sand-filled Hell come crashing down on me as I stare at that nugget. "No one," I say to myself, "is ever going to believe this."

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Achaean

= Greek

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Argive, Danaän

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Aeneas

son of Aphrodite and the mortal Anchises; ally of the Trojans; at the end of the war, he leads the Trojan survivors to Italy, to found what will be the Roman race

Related Glossary Terms

Aphrodite

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Agamemnon

king of Mycenae; leader of the Greek forces at Troy; brother of Menelaus

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Aulis, Chryseis, Chryses, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Menelaus, Mycenae

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Alexander

common Greek name — used of a common Greek in Huel's piece; alternate name for Paris

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Paris

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Andromache

wife of Hector

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Hector

Antilochus

noble young son of Nestor

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Nestor

Aphrodite

daughter of Zeus; goddess of sexual passion. Defeats Hera and Athena at the Judgment of Paris by offering the Trojan prince the hand of Helen. Her birth is from the dove.

Related Glossary Terms

Aeneas, Eris, Menelaus, Paris

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Aretē

valor, excellence; more generally, the quality that makes any person (o
cel

Related Glossary Terms

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Argive

= Greek

Related Glossary Terms

Achaean, Danaän

Atē

delusion; a ruinous folly that leads someone to bring about their own

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Athena

daughter of Zeus; a warrior goddess, defender of the citadel. Also goddess of wisdom and of crafts. Her bird is the owl.

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Eris

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Aulis

harbor in Boeotia where the Greek fleet gathered prior to sailing to T

Related Glossary Terms

Agamemnon, Calchas, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia

Binding of Zeus

Homer, *Iliad* 1.397ff. — Hera, Athena and Poseidon attempt to overthrow Zeus by binding him

Related Glossary Terms

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Briseis

young woman given to Achilles as a war-prize; in *Il.* 19 she tells of with her former husband and her brothers being cut down by Achilles.

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Patroclus

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Calchas

Greek seer

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Aulis

Cerberus

three-headed watchdog of Hades

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Chaos

“gap”; primordial void in the midst of which the world was first created

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Chryseis

daughter of Chryses; awarded to Agamemnon as a war-prize

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Agamemnon, Chryses

Chryses

elderly priest of Apollo whose daughter Chryseis is awarded to Agamemnon as a war-prize

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Agamemnon, Chryseis

Clytemnestra

wife of Agamemnon who murders her husband upon his return from
ter of Helen

Related Glossary Terms

Agamemnon, Aulis, Iphigenia, Leda

Coronis

lover of Apollo who cheated on him with a mortal man; the raven — before this time had been white — betrayed her infidelity to the god, who, about her death; in his subsequent remorse, Apollo cursed the raven, its feathers black

Related Glossary Terms

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Cronus

king of the Titans (race of gods who ruled the universe prior to the rise of the Olympian gods); father of Zeus, Hades and the other Olympians; attempted to prevent the rise of the Olympians by swallowing each one of them as they were born; upon being overthrown, he was imprisoned by Zeus in the underworld

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Danaän

= Greek

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Achaean, Argive

Dardan

= Trojan

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Deiphobus

son of Priam; brother of Hector and Paris; awarded Helen as his bride
Paris' death

Related Glossary Terms

Hector, Paris, Priam

Diomedes

son of Tydeus; Greek hero who in effect fills in for Achilles when the latter withdraws from the fighting

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Chapter 5 - Rumor Has It

Dorians

invading peoples who, tradition holds, overthrew the bronze-age citadals of central Greece and the Peloponnese

Related Glossary Terms

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Eris

goddess of discord/strife. Excluded from the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, Eris placed a golden apple at the wedding feast inscribed with the words, “fairest”; the resulting strife between Hera, Athena and Aphrodite led to the judgment of Paris and, subsequently, the Trojan War.

Related Glossary Terms

Aphrodite, Athena, Paris

Europa

a Phoenician princess; kidnapped by Zeus, who assumed the form of a bull; carried her off to Crete; mother of Minos

Related Glossary Terms

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Fields of Asphodel

“Lily-fields”; place in Hades where the dead are said to dwell (Homer, *Iliad* 11.539 and 573; *Odyssey* 24.13)

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Helius

the sun-god

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Hephaestus

smithy-god. In *Il.* 21, Hephaestus employs fire to rescue Achilles from
of the river Scamander

Related Glossary Terms

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Hermes

son of Zeus and Maia; messenger of the gods. Also the god of travel and thieves. In his role as Psychopompos, escorts the souls of the dead down to Hades

Related Glossary Terms

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Hittites

rulers of a powerful bronze-age empire in Anatolia

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Ichor

blood of the gods

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Ilium

= Troy

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Troad

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Iphigenia

daughter of Agamemnon; sacrificed at Aulis to appease Artemis and
Greek fleet to sail to Troy

Related Glossary Terms

Agamemnon, Aulis, Clytemnestra

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Jason

son of Aeson, who was king of Iolcus. When his father is unjustly ousted from his throne, Jason is compelled to lead the Argonauts' expedition to retrieve the Golden Fleece from the kingdom of the powerful ruler Aeëtes. He is aided in his quest by Aeëtes' daughter, the witch Medea, who runs off with him back to Greece. Once home, Jason abandons Medea in a bid to marry into the royal family of Corinth — despite the fact that he already has two sons by Medea. In a fit of rage, Medea not only kills Jason's prospective bride and father-in-law, but also the sons that she had borne to Jason.

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Medea

Kleos

renown: the celebration of a hero's glory (in verse) by later generation

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Krater

mixing-bowl (for wine)

Related Glossary Terms

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Leda

wife of the Spartan king Tyndareus; seduced by Zeus, who took the form of a swan; as a result she became the mother of Castor, Pollux, Helen and Clytemnestra

Related Glossary Terms

Clytemnestra

Lyssa

goddess of madness

Related Glossary Terms

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Medea

daughter of King Aeëtes; a powerful witch. Medea aids Jason in his quest to retrieve the Golden Fleece and runs off with him, only to then be abandoned by him. To get revenge, she murders their two sons.

Related Glossary Terms

Jason

Menelaus

king of Sparta; husband of Helen; brother of Agamemnon

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Agamemnon, Aphrodite, Sparta

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Miasma

religious pollution

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Murder

a group or flock of crows

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Mycenae

home of Agamemnon

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Agamemnon

Myrmidons

Achilles' troops

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Nectar

drink of the gods

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Nestor

elderly king and senior advisor to the Greeks

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Antilochus

Odysseus

the cleverest of the Greek leaders at Troy, known for his cunning; con
the wooden horse

Related Glossary Terms

Penelope

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Orpheus

mythical singer who employed his enchanting music to convince Hades to restore his wife Eurydice to life, only to lose her once again

Related Glossary Terms

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Overdetermination

the tendency to assign two simultaneous yet independent lines of causality, both human and divine — to actions or events that carry a particular importance

Related Glossary Terms

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Pandarus

Trojan archer who, at the urging of Athena, attempts to assassinate Menelaus in Book 4 of the *Iliad*, thereby breaking the truce between the Greeks and Trojans

Related Glossary Terms

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Paris

Trojan prince who ran off with Menelaus' wife, Helen; son of Priam and brother of Hector

Related Glossary Terms

Alexander, Aphrodite, Deiphobus, Eris, Hector, Priam

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Patroclus

beloved companion (and cousin) of Achilles. It is his death in *Il.* 16 that provides the turning point in Homer's poem

Related Glossary Terms

Briseis, Myrmidons

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Peleus

father of Achilles by the minor sea-goddess Thetis

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Thetis

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Pelides

son of Peleus (= Achilles)

Related Glossary Terms

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Penelope

wife of Odysseus; renowned for her fidelity

Related Glossary Terms

Odysseus

Penthesilea

queen of the Amazons

Related Glossary Terms

Themiscyra

Persephone

wife of Hades

Related Glossary Terms

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Phrygia

region in northwest Anatolia, associated in classical antiquity with Troas. In classical sources the term “Phrygian” is often associated with notions of effeminate effeminacy, employed metonymically to conjure up images of the servile “Easterner”

Related Glossary Terms

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Phthia

home of Achilles

Related Glossary Terms

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Priam

elderly king of Troy

Related Glossary Terms

Deiphobus, Hector, Paris

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Scamander

one of the two rivers of Troy; also referred to as Xanthus

Related Glossary Terms

Xanthus

Sisyphus

famous trickster condemned to roll a boulder uphill in the underworld
eternity

Related Glossary Terms

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Sophists

philosophers who argued that all human values were subjective and w
on the role of rhetoric in swaying others' opinions

Related Glossary Terms

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Sparta

home of Menelaus

Related Glossary Terms

Menelaus

Telamonian Ajax

Ajax, son of Telamon (the “greater” Ajax); most powerful of the Greeks after Achilles, although his abilities lie more toward defense than offense. Ajax is to be distinguished from the “lesser” Ajax, son of Oileus, who has a prominent role in Homer’s poem.)

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Themiscyra

legendary home of the Amazons, often located in the distant east

Related Glossary Terms

Penthesilea

Thersites

the one commoner to be accorded a speaking part in the *Iliad*; challenges Memnon's authority in Book 2, only to be beaten down and universally

Related Glossary Terms

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Thetis

a minor sea-goddess; mother of Achilles by the mortal Peleus. For background on their wedding, see <http://www.theoi.com/Pontios/NereisThetis.htm>

Related Glossary Terms

Peleus

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Timē

honor: tangible symbols of a hero's status in the form of prizes awarded
victory or spoils acquired in battle

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Troad

the territory ruled by Troy

Related Glossary Terms

Ilium

Trygaeus

hero of Aristophanes' comic play, *Peace* (421 BC); force-feeds a dung-bird
employs it to fly up to Olympus and challenge the gods regarding their
bring an end to the Peloponnesian War

Related Glossary Terms

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Xanthus

one of the two rivers of Troy; also referred to as Scamander

Related Glossary Terms

Scamander

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