

TROY

by

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EXT. THESSALIAN VALLEY - DAY

A mangy, bone-thin DOG lopes across the broad valley floor, sniffing at the ground. At first the scene appears bucolic: tall grass, patches of wildflowers, blue sky above.

But as the dog keeps running we see signs of conflict. A spear, half imbedded in the earth, rises at an angle. A bronze helmet, cracked and bloodied, lies on its side.

The dog stops for a moment to sniff the helmet, then continues his search. Finally the dog halts, the hackles on his back stiffening, his ears pricked up.

He growls, and we see what the dog sees.

Dozens of CROWS have descended into a shallow ravine. They squabble and peck, clustered around something on the ground.

The dog growls louder and charges at the crows. The black birds flap away to safety, shrieking in protest, retreating from their treasure.

A dead SOLDIER lies facedown in the ravine. Whatever armor he was wearing has been stripped away, leaving his cold white body to the elements.

The dog walks slowly to the dead man, sniffing at the corpse's hands. The dog whines and licks the man's fingers.

Something in the air disturbs the dog, who looks up. And now we hear it, faintly, in the distance. Hoofbeats and chariot wheels, marching men, the clank of bronze armor and weaponry.

The dog runs, abandoning his dead master.

The MYCENEAN ARMY, five thousand strong, storms into the valley from the south. Armored with bronze breastplates, helmets and shields, the soldiers glitter in the morning sun.

Riding alongside the infantry are dozens of horse-drawn CHARIOTS, each holding a DRIVER, a SPEARMAN and an OFFICER.

On the opposite side of the valley, three thousand THESSALONIAN SOLDIERS march into view. The Thessalonians are less disciplined, their armor and weaponry less impressive.

When each army reaches the battlefield they stop and stare one another down, two hundred yards distant.

A MYCENEAN CHARIOT and a THESSALONIAN CHARIOT emerge from their respective sides and meet at the center of the field.

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CONTINUED:

AGAMEMNON, king of the Myceneans, rides in his chariot with a DRIVER and a SPEARMAN. At forty-five, Agamemnon is short and muscular, with a full black beard and an authoritative presence. He holds a gold SCEPTER, the symbol of command. An Alpha is engraved on his bronze shield.

His counterpart in the Thessalonian cart, TRIOPAS (60), does not project equal confidence. He eyes the size of the Mycenean army with evident unease. He holds his own SCEPTER.

Both kings step down from their chariots and approach each other. They stare at one another for several seconds. Agamemnon smiles and looks into the sky.

The crows are wheeling about overhead, cawing.

AGAMEMNON

It's a good day for the crows.

TRIOPAS

I told you yesterday and I'll tell you again today. Remove your army from my land.

Agamemnon smiles again and turns to examine the valley.

AGAMEMNON

I like your land. I think we'll stay.

(beat)

I like your soldiers, too. They fought bravely yesterday. Not well, but bravely.

TRIOPAS

They'll never fight for you.

AGAMEMNON

That's what the Messenians said, too. And the Arcadians. And the Epeians. They're all fighting for me, now.

TRIOPAS

You can't rule the whole world, Agamemnon. It's too big. Even for you.

Agamemnon surveys Triopas's army.

AGAMEMNON

I don't want to watch another massacre. Why should we help the crows?

(beat)

Let's end this war in the old manner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRIOPAS

You know I'm too old to fight you.

AGAMEMNON

Not us, old king. Your best fighter
against my best.

For the first time, Triopas looks hopeful.

TRIOPAS

And if my man wins?

AGAMEMNON

We'll leave Thessaly for good.
(beat)

I'm a generous man. If mine wins, you
keep your throne. But you give me your
scepter and swear to Zeus and all the
gods-- Thessaly falls under my command,
to fight with me whenever I call.

Triopas considers before nodding. He shouts to his army.

TRIOPAS

Boagrius!

The Thessalonians murmur and step aside. A giant emerges from
their midst, BOAGRIUS, a foot taller than the other men, his
face gouged with old knife scars. He marches out to his king.

TRIOPAS (CONT'D)

Here is my champion.

Agamemnon raises his eyebrows as the giant comes closer.

AGAMEMNON

He must be half Titan.

TRIOPAS

So they say. And all Thessalonian.

AGAMEMNON

(shouting to his army)
Achilles!

The Myceneans murmur amongst themselves, looking for
Achilles. Nobody emerges. Agamemnon frowns.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

Achilles!

TRIOPAS

Boagrius has this effect on many heroes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AGAMEMNON

Be careful whom you insult, old king.

An OFFICER on horseback gallops from the Mycenaean ranks to the center of the field. He bows his head to Agamemnon.

OFFICER

Achilles is not with the army.

Triopas laughs and looks up at Boagrius, who chuckles.

AGAMEMNON

(furious)

Where is he?

OFFICER

I sent a boy to look for him.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A BOY (12) on a roan HORSE gallops through the woods.

EXT. MYCENEAN CAMP - DAY

The boy rides into the camp. Scores of tents stand on the banks of a river. The only men around are COOKS tending fires and ARMORERS, mending armor and weapons.

The boy dismounts at one large tent in the corner of the camp. He pulls open the tent flap and steps inside.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - CONTINUOUS

The boy pauses for a moment inside the tent, eyes adjusting to the dim light. Evidently last night was a wild party. Jugs of wine are everywhere, and the remains of a large feast.

Sleeping on a fur rug are two NAKED WOMEN and one NAKED MAN, tanned arms and legs entwined. The boy sidesteps shards of a broken jug. He bends to tap the sleeping man's shoulder.

Before his fingers make contact, a hand shoots out, grabs his wrist, and pulls him to the rug. The boy finds himself flat on his back with a dagger to his throat.

ACHILLES

Shh.

The boy stares into the eyes of ACHILLES (30), who seems to have barely moved. Somehow he managed to seize the boy and put a knife to his throat without waking the women.

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CONTINUED:

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I was having a good dream.

The boy nods, dumb with fear. Achilles has the lean, efficient physique of a boxer. His face and body are dark from a summer spent in the sun.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

A very good dream.

BOY

I was sent by King Agamemnon. He needs--

ACHILLES

I'll speak with your king in the morning.

BOY

But sir-- it is morning.

Achilles frowns. He stands and walks naked to the tent flap, holds it open and stares at the empty encampment.

ACHILLES

They let me sleep through the battle?

BOY

It hasn't started yet. They're waiting for you.

EXT. MYCENEAN CAMP

Achilles prepares for battle, strapping on his breastplate. The boy assists him, fixing the bronze greaves to his legs.

BOY

Are the stories about you true?

ACHILLES

Which stories?

BOY

They say your mother is an immortal goddess.

Achilles lifts up his shield. He slips his left forearm into the leather straps on the inside of the shield.

BOY (CONT'D)

They say you're the greatest warrior who ever lived, that you can't be killed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACHILLES

I wouldn't be bothering with the shield then, would I?

BOY

The Thessalonian you're fighting-- he's the biggest man I've ever seen.

ACHILLES

Is he?

He ties two spears to the boy's horse's saddle and mounts.

BOY

I wouldn't want to fight him.

ACHILLES

That's why no one will remember your name.

Achilles gallops away, leaving the boy standing alone.

EXT. THESSALIAN VALLEY

Agamemnon confers with his OFFICERS on the battlefield, including NESTOR (65), his trusted advisor.

One man-- tall, bearded, and wearing the cloak of a shepherd-- stands slightly apart from the others. This is ODYSSEUS (40). He observes the proceedings with amused detachment.

When Achilles rides into view the Mycenaean soldiers CHEER. Some cry out his name. Agamemnon and his officers turn and watch Achilles dismount and approach them.

AGAMEMNON

Perhaps we should have our war tomorrow, when you're better rested?

Achilles, stretching his neck, ignores the king.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

I should have you whipped for impudence.

Achilles stares at him, neither man willing to look away.

ACHILLES

Who's going to do the whipping?

The standoff continues until Odysseus breaks the silence.

ODYSSEUS

Achilles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Achilles turns and looks at him.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

Look around you. Look at the men's faces.

Achilles surveys the faces of the Mycenaean soldiers. They all stare at him with awe.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

What do you see?

(beat)

It's love, Achilles. Most of these men have never said a word to you in their lives, but they love you. Do you know why? You're going to save hundreds of them. You're going to end this war with a swing of your sword.

(beat)

Think how many songs they'll sing in your honor.

Achilles stares at the silent men watching him.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

Let them go home to their wives.

ACHILLES

Who am I fighting?

Odysseus points across the battlefield. Boagrius has already started walking back to the center of the field.

ODYSSEUS

The big one.

Achilles squints at Boagrius and whistles.

ACHILLES

(to Agamemnon)

Wouldn't the men be impressed if you fought him yourself? Wouldn't that be a sight, a king who fought his own battles?

AGAMEMNON

Do you question my courage?

ACHILLES

Do I have to?

Without a backward glance, Achilles begins walking toward the center of the field, where Boagrius stands waiting for him. Achilles looks into the blue sky. The crows still circle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AGAMEMNON

(to Odysseus)

Of all the warlords loved by the gods, I
hate him most.

The men on both sides of the field stand silent.

When Achilles is forty yards from the giant, Boagrius turns to his army and shakes his spear over his head. They cheer, slamming their bronze swords against their bronze shields.

Achilles keeps coming.

Boagrius turns and throws his spear. The bronze spearhead glitters in the sun, blazing straight for Achilles.

Without breaking stride, Achilles raises the shield strapped to his left arm. The spearhead blasts through the bronze skin of the shield, through the thick leather on the underside of the shield, stopping inches from Achilles' face.

Achilles keeps coming.

Boagrius hoists a second spear and hurls it, grunting with the effort. Again Achilles raises his shield, again the spear is on target, again the spearhead tears through the shield but does not harm Achilles.

Achilles casts aside the shield and keeps coming.

Boagrius looks a little nervous now. He unsheathes his tremendous bronze sword. He opens his mouth, lets loose a battle cry, and charges at Achilles.

When Boagrius gets close he raises his sword. Instead of dodging, Achilles lunges forward with terrifying speed.

It does not seem possible that he could have closed the gap between them so quickly, but he does, thrusting his sword straight through Boagrius' breastplate.

Achilles pulls his sword from the giant's chest and continues walking toward the Thessalonian line, never looking back.

Boagrius stares down at the hole in his breastplate. Blood pumps out, pouring down the polished bronze. He topples over.

The Mycenaean Army ERUPTS with exultant victory cries.

Achilles now stands in front of the massed Thessalonian troops. He searches from face to face. None of the soldiers are willing to make eye contact with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Finally Triopas steps out of the ranks.

TRIOPAS

Who are you, soldier?

ACHILLES

Achilles, son of Peleus.

TRIOPAS

Achilles. I won't forget the name.

Triopas offers Achilles the heavy gold SCEPTER.

TRIOPAS (CONT'D)

The ruler of Thessaly carries this scepter. Give it to your king.

ACHILLES

He's not my king.

Achilles walks west, away from both the Thessalonians and the Myceneans. The men in both armies watch him go in silence.

EXT. IONIAN SEA - DUSK

We're high above the wine-dark sea. From up here the whitecaps look like jagged cursive, endless lines scribbled on deep blue parchment.

Below us a colony of YELLOW-LEGGED GULLS flies west. We glide north. Soon the Peloponnesian coast comes into view, rocky and forbidding. The only break in this stretch of shoreline is the inlet of Laconia, and we follow it inland.

The inlet ends in a large natural harbor where several tall-masted warships are beached, sails unfurled, oars locked and rowing benches empty. Dozens of smaller fishing boats are scattered about the harbor.

A few grizzled FISHERMEN, faces roughened from years of sun and wind, sit on the edge of a dock, drinking wine from goatskin gourds and repairing their fishing nets.

Behind them, the whitewashed houses dot the steep Laconian hills. Outside many of the houses, pit fires are burning and SPARTAN MOTHERS grill fish over the open flames.

On top of the highest hill, overlooking all Sparta, stands a thick-walled PALACE. Torch-bearing SENTRYES, wearing plumed helmets and carrying long spears, man their posts.

MENELAUS (V.O.)

Welcome to Sparta, my new friends.

INT. PALACE OF SPARTA - RECEPTION HALL - CONTINUOUS

MENELAUS (40), king of Sparta, stands at the head of a massive table that spans the length of a hall lit by torches. A battle-scarred warrior, Menelaus is already halfway drunk, bits of meat flecking his thick red beard.

The festive guests are a mix of ELDER STATESMEN, SOLDIERS, LOCAL NOBILITY, and lovely YOUNG WOMEN handpicked to entertain the preceding three groups.

The table is laden with platters of roasted game birds, whole fish, octopi, two suckling pigs, bowls of fruits and nuts.

Menelaus holds his gold wine goblet in the air, toasting his honored guests, HECTOR (35) and PARIS (25).

Hector is not the best-looking man in the room, nor the largest, but the intensity of his expression, the regality of his bearing, confirms that he is a born leader.

Paris is the best-looking man in the room, by a long shot. He might be a little too good-looking: his preoccupation with his long hair could be viewed as preening, though his natural charm makes his vanity more palatable.

MENELAUS

We've had our conflicts before, it's true. We've fought many battles, the Spartans and the Trojans. And fought well!

Menelaus's soldiers cheer drunkenly.

Beside Menelaus sits his wife, HELEN (25), head bowed, half listening to her husband. Her beauty is so extreme she seems to exist in a separate realm.

POLYDORA (20), one of Helen's handmaidens, sits beside the queen. In almost any other room, Polydora would be the center of attention. Here, she's merely the queen's shadow.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

But I've always respected your father. Priam is a good man, a good king. I respected him as an adversary, and I respect him now as my ally.

More cheering, this time from the entire assembly.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

Hector, Paris, young princes, come, stand, drink with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hector stands. Paris does not. He's staring at Helen. Hector discreetly nudges his brother's shoulder. Paris stands.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

Let us drink to peace.

Hector nods to Menelaus and raises his cup.

HECTOR

Peace between Troy and Sparta.

The king and the princes drink deeply and slam their empty cups to the table.

MENELAUS

May the gods keep the wolves in the hills
and the women in our beds.

All the men in the hall cheer and rise to their feet.

GUESTS

To Sparta! To Troy!

A band of MUSICIANS strike up their instruments; SERVANTS roam the hall filling goblets with wine; the warriors and women grow friskier in their flirtations.

Menelaus grabs Hector in a bear hug. Hector gamely accepts the embrace. When the king releases him, both men spill a few drops of wine from their cups onto the floor.

MENELAUS

For the gods.

HECTOR

For the gods.

They drink the rest of their wine. Menelaus grips Hector's upper arm. SERVANTS refill the cups.

MENELAUS

A strong arm. Thank the gods we made
peace-- I've seen too many of my men
struck down with this arm.

HECTOR

Never again, I hope.

MENELAUS

Only one man works a sword better than
you. The son of Peleus the Argonaut.

HECTOR

Achilles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MENELAUS

That madman would throw a spear at Zeus himself if the god insulted him.

Menelaus indicates Polydora, who stares at Hector openly.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

You see that one over there? I picked her just for you. She's a little lioness.

Menelaus grins at the girl, who lowers her eyes and smiles coquettishly. Helen notices this silent exchange but ignores it, conversing instead with another HANDMAIDEN beside her.

HECTOR

Thank you. My wife waits for me in Troy.

MENELAUS

(nodding toward Helen)
My wife waits for me right there.

He leans forward to whisper conspiratorially in Hector's ear.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

Wives are for breeding. You understand?
For making little princes. Come, enjoy yourself tonight.

Hector raises his cup.

HECTOR

You make excellent wine in Sparta.

Menelaus laughs and drinks with Hector.

MENELAUS

You'll be a good king, Hector.

Helen stands and walks out of the reception hall. Hector watches her go.

HECTOR

Not for many years, I pray.

Paris excuses himself from the Spartan generals he's been speaking with and heads outside-- in the same direction as Helen. Hector watches with mounting agitation.

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT

Helen stands on a terrace overlooking Sparta. A heavy moon hangs above the harbor. She stares down at the warships.

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CONTINUED:

PARIS (O.S.)

If the weather is good, we sail tomorrow.

He walks over to her side and rests his elbows on the balustrade edging the terrace. Helen doesn't look at him. She looks at the sky, instead, and then at his ships.

HELEN

The weather will be good.

Paris smiles. He has the easy smile of a man who has always been loved by women.

PARIS

You haven't looked me in the eye since last night.

Helen turns toward the palace, worried that someone might hear. No one is near.

HELEN

Last night was a mistake. I was a fool.

Paris steps closer to her. She can't help but look at him now. Helen is a queen, with a queen's cool demeanor, but something in her face softens when she looks at Paris.

PARIS

You were happy last night.

Helen starts to speak but Paris holds a finger to her lips.

PARIS (CONT'D)

For two weeks I've been in Sparta, watching you, and I never saw you smile before last night.

Helen laughs despite herself.

HELEN

You're a confident one, aren't you?

PARIS

I'm a prince of Troy.

HELEN

And I am Queen of Sparta. You see the problem?

PARIS

Are you happy, Queen of Sparta?

Helen furrows her brow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELEN

Happy?

Paris reaches inside his tunic and pulls out a necklace of baby pearls threaded with silver. He moves behind Helen.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Don't...

PARIS

(speaking softly in her ear)
Pearls from the sea of Propontis.

HELEN

Menelaus will kill us both.

PARIS

Let him try.

He fastens the clasp of the necklace. He leans forward to kiss her neck. Helen closes her eyes.

PARIS (CONT'D)

Come with me tomorrow.

HELEN

No.

PARIS

Come with me.

Helen opens her eyes. She pushes Paris's head away.

HELEN

Who do you think I am? A fisherman's wife? Have you lost your mind?

PARIS

You'd rather stay here, slave to that old brute? Trapped here in Sparta for the rest of your life, waiting to die?

Helen stares at him angrily but has no answer. Paris reaches out to caress the pearls strung round her neck.

PARIS (CONT'D)

If you come with me we'll never be safe again. Men will hunt us and the gods will curse us. But I'll love you. Until the day they burn my body I will love you.

HELEN

Good night, prince.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PARIS
(bowing)
Good night, my queen.

He walks into the palace and Helen watches him go, touching her new pearls.

INT. PALACE - COURTYARD - LATER

A group of TROJAN SOLDIERS lie on goatskins and furs around a bonfire built in the middle of the courtyard. Some sleep; some continue to drink and sing old Trojan songs.

Hector stands by the fire, conferring with TECTON (30), a bull-necked captain of the elite Apollonian Brigade.

HECTOR
Make the proper offerings to Poseidon
before we sail. We don't need any more
widows in Troy.

Tecton bows and exits the courtyard. Hector sees Paris slinking past the bonfire, sneaking toward his quarters.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Paris!

Paris turns, smiles and waves, acting as if he hadn't seen Hector before. He ambles over to join his brother.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
You should get to bed. We won't sleep on
land again for weeks.

PARIS
I have no trouble sleeping on the seas.
The sea nymphs sing lullabies to me.

HECTOR
And who sang lullabies to you last night?

Paris freezes for a moment but quickly regains his poise. They're playing their accustomed roles now: responsible older brother checking on trouble-making younger brother.

PARIS
Last night? Hard to remember... last
night... Ah, last night was the
fisherman's wife. A lovely creature.

HECTOR
I hope you didn't let the fisherman catch
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PARIS

He was more concerned with the fish.

HECTOR

And Helen? What do you think of her?

PARIS

Helen?

HECTOR

Yes, Helen. The queen.

PARIS

She's very beautiful, of course. Some say the most beautiful in the world.

(beat)

Do you agree?

HECTOR

I'm married.

PARIS

Yes, I know, I attended the wedding. What does that mean?

HECTOR

It means my wife is the most beautiful woman in the world.

Paris smiles for a moment, sees the look on Hector's face, abruptly stops smiling.

PARIS

Very true.

HECTOR

You do understand, of course, why we're in Sparta?

PARIS

For peace.

HECTOR

And you do understand that Menelaus, King of Sparta, is a powerful man?

PARIS

A great warrior.

HECTOR

And that his brother, Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, commands all the Greek forces?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PARIS

What does this have to do with the fisherman's wife?

Hector seizes Paris's face between the palms of his hand. Not a violent gesture, exactly, but not gentle, either.

HECTOR

Paris. You're my brother, and I love you. But if you do anything to endanger Troy I'll rip your pretty face from your pretty skull.

He kisses Paris on the forehead.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Get some sleep. We sail at noon.

Paris, a bit shocked by the encounter, stumbles away.

INT. PALACE - ROYAL BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Helen lies awake in bed next to a sleeping Menelaus, who snores loudly, one thick arm thrown over his wife.

Helen turns and looks at a small CERAMIC BOX resting on the bedside table. She reaches for the box, trying not to disturb her husband.

Menelaus groans in his sleep and turns away from Helen. She looks at him for a moment to make sure he won't wake and opens the box. By the light of the moon we see the baby pearls glitter on their silver chain.

Helen lets the pearls sift through her fingers.

EXT. TROJAN SHIP - DAY

The ship sails over the waves. The winds are strong. Nobody needs to row. SAILORS tend the sails or play dice.

Hector stands in the bow, leaning against the rail, whittling a WOODEN LION with a sharp knife.

Paris joins him. A school of DOLPHINS escort the ship, leaping from the waves.

PARIS

They say dolphins are a good omen, a sign of Poseidon's blessing.

Hector turns his head and watches the dolphins frolic.

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CONTINUED:

HECTOR
I've heard.

He returns his attention to the wood lion.

PARIS
You don't place much faith in these things, do you?

HECTOR
Sometimes the gods bless you in the morning and curse you in the afternoon.

For a while both men are quiet, and Paris watches his brother work the wood. When Paris speaks again his tone is more sober than we've heard it before.

PARIS
Do you love me, brother?

Hector smiles.

HECTOR
Here comes trouble.

PARIS
Would you protect me against any enemy?

HECTOR
The last time you spoke to me like this you were ten years old, after you stole father's horse. What have you done now?

PARIS
But you'll protect me?

HECTOR
I'll fight your enemies, brother. Whether I can protect you is another question.

PARIS
I need to show you something.

Paris walks away from the railing, toward the staircase leading inside the ship. Hector watches him for a few seconds and then follows.

INT. TROJAN SHIP

Paris pauses in front of his cabin door.

PARIS
Before you get angry with me--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

Open the door.

Paris opens the door. Helen, wearing a hooded robe, sits on the edge of a hammock, swinging slightly. She stands.

Hector stares at her for a moment in disbelief. He turns and glares at Paris.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

If you weren't my brother I'd kill you where you stand.

PARIS

Hector--

But Hector is already moving, climbing the stairs. Paris looks at Helen.

HELEN

We'll never have peace again.

He pulls down her hood. She's wearing the pearl necklace.

PARIS

I don't want peace. I want you.

He kisses her-- a desperate, hungry kiss, the two of them against the world-- then turns and follows his brother, leaving Helen alone in the cabin.

INT. PALACE OF SPARTA - DAY

Menelaus, followed by a dozen SOLDIERS, storms through the palace. He opens the door of each room he passes, looking inside before moving on. He opens the door to Helen's room.

INT. HELEN'S BEDCHAMBER

Menelaus finds Polydora polishing the queen's jewelry. Menelaus grabs her arm roughly. She's terrified.

MENELAUS

Where is she?

POLYDORA

Who, my king?

Menelaus draws his sword.

MENELAUS

I swear by the father of the gods I'll gut you here if you don't tell me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The handmaiden tries to speak but no words come out. Fortunately for her, HIPPASUS, (50), a royal advisor, enters the room at that moment followed by an old FISHERMAN (65).

HIPPASUS

She left with the Trojans, my king.

Menelaus stares at Hippasus, who swallows and gestures at the fisherman. The fisherman looks as if he'd rather be fishing.

HIPPASUS (CONT'D)

The old man saw her board their ship before sunrise.

Menelaus releases the handmaiden and stares at the fisherman.

MENELAUS

The Trojans?

FISHERMAN

With the young prince. Paris. She--

Menelaus holds up his hand. The fisherman shuts up. Everyone watches the king, waiting for an explosion, but the news-- strangely-- seems to focus him.

MENELAUS

Get my ship ready.

HIPPASUS

They're half a day ahead of us, my king. We'll never catch them.

Menelaus sheathes his sword and walks out of the room.

MENELAUS

Patience, old friend. We're going to war.

EXT. TROJAN SHIP

Hector walks toward the stern, where the PILOT mans the rudder. Paris chases after his brother.

HECTOR

Turn us around. Back to Sparta.

PARIS

Wait, wait.

Hector spins on his brother.

HECTOR

You fool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PARIS

Listen to me--

Hector shoves his brother backwards. The older brother's physical power is obvious. SAILORS watch in awed silence.

HECTOR

Do you know what you've done? Do you know how many years our father worked for peace? How many brothers and cousins he lost on the battlefield?

PARIS

I love her.

The muscles in Hector's jaw bulge against his cheeks.

HECTOR

Say another word and I'll break your arm. This is all a game for you, isn't it? You roam from town to town, bedding merchants' wives and temple maids-- you think you know something about love? What about your father's love? You spat on him when you brought her on this ship. What about love of your country? You'd let Troy burn for this woman.

Paris starts to speak but Hector raises a warning finger.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I won't let you start a war for her.

PARIS

May I speak?

(beat)

What you say is true. I've wronged you. I've wronged our father. If you want to bring Helen back to Sparta, so be it. I won't try to stop you. But I go with her.

HECTOR

With her? To Sparta? They'll kill you.

PARIS

Then I'll die fighting.

Hector laughs bitterly. He grabs the collar of Paris's tunic.

HECTOR

That sounds heroic to you, doesn't it? To die fighting. Tell me, little brother, have you ever killed a man?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PARIS

No.

HECTOR

No? Have you ever even seen a man die in combat?

PARIS

No.

Hector's face is flushed now with anger. Paris tries to look away but Hector won't let him.

HECTOR

I've killed men, brother. I've watched them dying, I've heard them dying, I've smelled them dying.

(beat)

There's nothing glorious about it, nothing poetic. You think you want to die for love, but you know nothing about dying. You know nothing about love.

PARIS

All the same, I go with her.

Hector releases his brother. He stares at the sea.

PARIS (CONT'D)

I won't ask you to fight my war.

Hector shakes his head, still staring into the waves.

HECTOR

You already have.

For a long time Hector is silent. Finally he turns to the pilot, who awaits the prince's command.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

To Troy.

Hector walks away from his brother. All the soldiers and sailors are still watching Paris. He looks from face to face, then heads back to his cabin.

EXT. MYCENAE HARBOR - DAY

Three WARSHIPS are anchored in the harbor.

Menelaus, followed by Hippasus and a retinue of SOLDIERS, climbs the long stone staircase that leads to the walled city of Mycenae, a citadel hewn from the hilltop rock.

INT. MYCENAE CITADEL

Menelaus and his followers enter the throne room. Treasures from various conquests fill the room: statuary and urns and intricate gold work. Armed GUARDS stand at their posts.

Only Agamemnon is seated, on a beautiful throne carved from solid oak. Two robed NOBLES are addressing him when Menelaus enters-- they move away as the Spartans approach.

Agamemnon stands. The two kings embrace.

AGAMEMNON

Your messenger came two days ago.

Menelaus's face darkens, his fury barely submerged.

MENELAUS

The Trojans stole my wife. I want her back.

AGAMEMNON

Of course you do. She's a beautiful woman.

MENELAUS

I want her back so I can kill her with my own two hands. I won't rest until I've burned Troy to the ground.

AGAMEMNON

(smiling)

I thought you wanted peace with Troy.

MENELAUS

I should have listened to you.

AGAMEMNON

Peace is for the women and the weak. Empires are forged by war.

MENELAUS

Right now they're sitting behind the high walls of Troy, laughing at me. 'That old fool Menelaus! We snatched his pretty bride from under his nose.'

(beat)

An insult to me is an insult to you.

AGAMEMNON

And an insult to me is an insult to all Greeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agamemnon smiles again.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

Nothing unifies a people like a common enemy.

MENELAUS

Will you go to war with me, brother?

Menelaus reaches out his hand. Agamemnon looks into his eyes. Finally he nods and clasps hands with his brother.

INT. MYCENAE CITADEL - AGAMEMNON'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Agamemnon and Nestor sit at a wooden table. Spread out on the table before them is a rough (and not entirely accurate) map of Greece and environs, painted on a tanned goat skin.

AGAMEMNON

I always thought my brother's wife was a foolish woman. But she's proven to be very useful.

NESTOR

The Trojans have never been conquered. Some say they can't be conquered.

AGAMEMNON

I haven't tried yet.

Agamemnon points to Troy on the map.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

If Troy falls, I control the Aegean.

NESTOR

Hector commands the finest army in the east. And Troy is built to withstand a ten-year siege.

AGAMEMNON

There won't be a ten-year siege.

Agamemnon stands and paces around the room.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

I'll attack them with the greatest force the world has ever seen. I want every king of Greece:

(pointing at islands on map)

Odysseus of Ithaca; Ajax of Salamis; Diomedes of Argos. All the kings and all their armies.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Send emissaries in the morning.

Nestor stands and prepares to leave.

NESTOR

One last thing.

(beat)

We need Achilles.

Agamemnon shakes his head.

AGAMEMNON

The man can't be controlled. He's just as likely to fight us as the Trojans.

NESTOR

He's the best fighter alive. Where he goes, others follow.

Agamemnon thinks about it.

AGAMEMNON

I only know one man he'll listen to.

Nestor nods.

NESTOR

I'll send the first ship to Ithaca.

Nestor starts to roll the goatskin map.

AGAMEMNON

Leave the map.

Nestor bows and departs. Agamemnon stares at the map, running his fingers over the painted nations and seas.

EXT. ITHACA - DAY

We're behind a SHEPHERD, who sits on a hillside near his grazing goats, gazing at the Ionian sea. We can't see his face. Beside him sits his faithful hunting dog, ARGOS.

Man and dog watch a troop of EMISSARIES climb the hill. The emissaries are panting by the time they reach the hilltop.

EMISSARY #1

Greetings, brother. Have you seen Odysseus?

SHEPHERD

Odysseus, King of Ithaca? That old bastard drinks my wine and never pays.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMISSARY #2

You ought to respect your king, friend.

SHEPHERD

Respect him? I'd like to punch him in the nose, that jackal. He's always pawing at my wife, trying to tear her clothes off.

The emissaries, embarrassed, begin walking away. The shepherd turns to look at them. We now see that it's Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS

(to Argos the dog)

I hope Agamemnon's generals are smarter than his emissaries.

EMISSARY #1

What did you say?

Odysseus scratches behind Argos's ear. The dog wags his tail.

ODYSSEUS

You want me to help you fight the Trojans.

EMISSARY #1

You're--

Emissary #1 exchanges glances with his compatriots. They're confused. Odysseus stands and looks down at his dog. Argos looks up at him.

ODYSSEUS

Well, I'm going to miss my dog.

EMISSARY #2

King Agamemnon has a special favor to ask of you.

Odysseus smiles and rubs his dog's head.

ODYSSEUS

Of course he does.

EXT. SALAMIS ARENA - DAY

A different delegation of EMISSARIES enters the arena of Salamis and find seats on the carved stone.

Hundreds of SPECTATORS are chanting a loud count.

SPECTATORS

Thirteen... fourteen... fifteen...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Emissary #3 nudges the spectator sitting next to him, a rotund MERCHANT chewing figs from a basket.

EMISSARY #3

Do you know where King Ajax is?

The merchant spits out a seed and points. On the hard dirt pit in the center of the arena, two men compete in a pankration match.

AJAX (30)-- brutally muscled, head shaved, face and body scarred from countless fights-- circles his foe.

SPECTATORS

Twenty-one... twenty-two... twenty-three...

If pankration involves rules, they're not evident. Punching, kicking, wrestling, choke holds-- everything's fair game. The men wear nothing but loin clothes.

The merchant points at the opponent.

MERCHANT

(to Emissary #3)

The champion from Megara.

LAMPUS (30), the opponent, looks like a heavyweight wrestler: the bull neck, the crushed nose, the cauliflower ears. He still has a couple of teeth.

After exchanging a few low kicks and punches, the fighters collide, grappling for leverage. Lampus goes for a knee to the groin, but Ajax is able to turn from the strike at the last moment.

SPECTATORS

Thirty-eight... thirty-nine... forty...

The two men are locked up now, their faces inches apart. Ajax grins at Lampus.

He spits in Lampus's eyes. The Megaran champion reacts instinctively, bringing a hand to his eyes, freeing one of Ajax's arms.

Ajax delivers a thunderous right uppercut to Lampus's chin. A spray of blood and teeth goes flying.

Lampus sags to the ground unconscious.

SPECTATORS (CONT'D)

Forty-six! Forty-six! Forty-six!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The MEGARAN FANS cheer wildly.

EMISSARY #3
(to merchant)
Why are they so happy?

MERCHANT
He did it. He won.

The emissary stares at Lampus, still out cold on the ground.

EMISSARY #3
Isn't that the Megaran on the ground?

MERCHANT
He lasted to forty-six. The old record
was forty-four, by Heclus, son of Agenor.

Ajax hoists the woozy fighter to his feet and raises the
man's hand in his own. The crowd erupts in cheers.

EXT. SALAMIS BATHS - DAY

Ajax sits in a large natural hot spring bath. A jug of wine
and a basket of grapes lie within easy reach. His eyes are
closed as he relaxes in the warm water.

An attractive young slave woman, HECAMEDE, rubs Ajax's
massive shoulders. She can be identified as a slave by the
large BRAND on her right arm.

The emissaries approach nervously.

EMISSARY #3
Ajax, son of Telamon, King Agamemnon
requests your services for a great war--

AJAX
(not opening his eyes)
Who are we fighting?

EMISSARY #3
The Trojans.

AJAX
(to the slave woman)
You were born in Troy, weren't you?

HECAMEDE
Yes, master.

AJAX
And the men are good fighters?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECAMEDE

Very good.

Ajax lifts her right hand to his mouth and kisses it. He stands and looks down at the emissaries. Up close he's even more massive to behold.

AJAX

When do we go?

EXT. PHTHIA - LATE AFTERNOON

Achilles, naked above the waist, stands atop a grassy hill practicing his swordplay. His skill is inhuman, his sword whirling in the air like a thing alive. Achilles and his long shadow never stop moving, a graceful but deadly dance.

His cousin PATROCLUS (16) sits nearby, watching Achilles practice, polishing Achilles' armor. With his wild tangles of hair and slender frame, Patroclus looks younger than sixteen.

Achilles' armor is stunning, the craftsmanship far superior to any we've seen (or will see). Intricate battle scenes are carved on his breastplate.

Achilles pauses. He rolls his head to loosen his neck.

PATROCLUS

Are you winning?

ACHILLES

(smiling)

This was how my father practiced. One time I asked him who he was fighting. He said imagine the greatest warrior in the world, the toughest enemy. And kill him everyday.

PATROCLUS

So who are you fighting?

ACHILLES

Myself.

Achilles resumes his shadow fighting. When Patroclus sees that Achilles isn't paying attention to him, he tilts Achilles' helmet in his hands, staring at his reflection in the polished bronze. He puts the helmet on his head. It fits well.

Patroclus picks up one of the spears and stands. He hefts the spear, testing its weight. He conjures an imaginary enemy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATROCLUS
(whispering to himself)
Three of you, eh? Is that all?

He shakes the spear above his head.

PATROCLUS (CONT'D)
It'll take more than three men to stop
Patroclus! Go on, get your brothers! Get
your friends!

ACHILLES (O.S.)
Both hands.

Startled, Patroclus wheels around. Achilles walks over and
adjusts the boy's grip.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Hold it up here. Always thrust with both
hands on the spear. You won't pierce a
breastplate with one arm.

Patroclus practices spearing an imaginary foe. Achilles nods
and ruffles the boy's hair affectionately.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Watch.

He takes the spear from Patroclus.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
When you're throwing, keep your eye on
your target. Wait until the shot opens
up. Patience... patience...

Patroclus scans the woods ahead where Achilles is looking,
trying to spot the target. The woods appear empty.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Now.

Achilles hurls the spear. We follow the bronze warhead's
flight as it blazes through narrow openings in the tightly-
spaced trees and finally drives into the trunk of an old fir.

Only now do we see Odysseus, riding a black horse, sitting
motionless-- inches from the quivering shaft of the spear
blocking his path. He stares at the spear for a moment before
ducking his head under the shaft and riding forward.

When he's close Odysseus dismounts and walks over, smiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ODYSSEUS

Your reputation for hospitality is fast becoming legend.

ACHILLES

I don't like that smile.

ODYSSEUS

No?

ACHILLES

It's the smile you smile when you want me to fight in another war.

(beat)

Patroclus, my cousin-- Odysseus, king of Ithaca.

Odysseus grips Patroclus's shoulder.

ODYSSEUS

Patroclus, son of Menoetius?

The boy nods.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

I knew your parents well. I miss them.

Patroclus nods again, looking at his feet.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

Now you have this one watching over you, eh? Learning to use a spear from Achilles himself-- kings would kill for the honor.

(to Achilles)

We need to talk.

ACHILLES

Not much to say. I won't fight for Agamemnon.

ODYSSEUS

I'm not asking you to fight for him. I'm asking you to fight for the Greeks.

ACHILLES

Why? Are the Greeks tired of fighting each other?

ODYSSEUS

For now.

ACHILLES

The Trojans never did anything to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ODYSSEUS

They insulted all Greeks.

ACHILLES

They insulted one Greek, a man who couldn't hold on to his wife. What business is that of mine?

ODYSSEUS

Your business is war, my friend.

ACHILLES

The King of Kings doesn't care about his brother's wife, his brother's honor. Honor means nothing to him. He wants another pretty country for his empire.

ODYSSEUS

Let Achilles fight for honor and let Agamemnon fight for power-- and let the gods decide which man to glorify.

ACHILLES

Fight for power? The man doesn't fight. Whenever the enemy's champion takes the field, who does the savage work? Who leads the men into battle? When was the last time Agamemnon soiled his sword with man's blood?

ODYSSEUS

Forget Agamemnon. Fight for me. My wife will feel much better if she knows you're by my side. I'll feel much better.

(beat)

We're sending the largest fleet that ever sailed-- a thousand ships.

PATROCLUS

A thousand ships! Prince Hector, is he as good a warrior as they say?

ODYSSEUS

The best of all the Trojans. Some say he's better than all the Greeks, too.

ACHILLES

The only fools saying that are the ones who never saw me fight.

ODYSSEUS

Yes. And there are many of those fools, aren't there?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

(to Patroclus)

Even if your cousin doesn't come,
Patroclus, I hope you'll join us. We
could use a strong arm like yours.

Patroclus smiles with pride and looks up at his cousin.
Achilles, eyes narrowed, glares at Odysseus.

ACHILLES

Play your tricks on me, if you'd like.
But leave my cousin out of it.

ODYSSEUS

You have your sword, I have my tricks. We
play with the toys the gods give us.

Odysseus goes back to his horse and mounts.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

We sail for Troy in three days.

(beat)

This war will never be forgotten. Nor
will the heroes who fight in it.

He leaves. Patroclus watches him go.

EXT. SEASHORE - SUNSET

Achilles finds his mother, THETIS (45), standing in the surf.
Her long black hair is streaked with gray. She sees a shell
that she likes and stoops down to pick it up.

ACHILLES

Mother.

Thetis turns and smiles at Achilles.

THETIS

I thought I'd make you another seashell
necklace.

ACHILLES

I haven't worn a seashell necklace since
I was a boy.

Thetis looks at Achilles' bare neck.

THETIS

Don't you like them anymore?

Achilles spots a good shell. He hands it to his mother.

THETIS (CONT'D)

Oh, that's a pretty one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She surveys the beach for more pretty shells.

ACHILLES

They want me for another war.

Thetis bends down and scoops up a silvery shell.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Are you listening?

THETIS

Yes, darling. Another war.

Thetis examines the small shells in the palm of her hand. Finally she stands and looks at her son.

THETIS (CONT'D)

If you stay here, with me, with your family, you'll have a long, peaceful life. You'll marry, you'll have children, and your children will have children. They'll love you, and when you're gone they'll remember you. But when your children are dead, and their children after them, your name will be lost.

Thetis's eyes are clear, her voice steady. She speaks these lines with no hesitation, no doubt.

THETIS (CONT'D)

If you go to Troy, no one will earn more glory than you. Men will tell stories of your victories for thousands of years. The world will remember your name.

Achilles stares at her. These are words he's wanted to hear since the day he was born.

THETIS (CONT'D)

But if you go to Troy, you'll never come home. You'll die there.

Achilles stares at her, his eyes burning.

ACHILLES

And you know this, mother?

THETIS

I know it.

Achilles looks out over the wine-dark sea. In the distance he sees a white sail, and he fixates on that lonely spot of white on the endless expanse of dark water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Thetis, tears in her eyes, smiles bravely.

THETIS (CONT'D)

Whenever your father came home from war,
he'd stare at the sea, just like that.

(beat)

He never stayed for long.

EXT. TROY - DAY

Hector, Paris, Helen, and an entourage of SOLDIERS walk through the gates of Troy. The city is magnificent, a wonder of white-washed walls, lush gardens, and towering STATUES of the gods. ZEUS, APOLLO, APHRODITE, and POSEIDON stand eighty feet high in the four corners of the main square.

The princes' return is a holiday for the Trojans. Thousands of ONLOOKERS line the road, cheering. Other well-wishers, standing on the roofs of houses, throw flower petals.

Paris holds Helen's hand and occasionally whispers in her ear, pointing out various sights, but Helen looks nervous.

People in the crowd, mystified by her appearance, point at her and whisper amongst themselves.

Helen holds her head high and pretends to ignore the murmurs and stares. Hector looks at her. She carries herself like a queen-- but she's gripping Paris's hand with white knuckles.

EXT. PALACE OF TROY

At the bottom of a long staircase leading into the palace, Hector reunites with his wife, ANDROMACHE (30), pale skinned and dark eyed. He holds her to his chest; she closes her eyes, and they stand like that for a long time.

A NURSE standing nearby holds Hector's ten-month-old son, SCAMANDRIUS. Now Andromache takes the baby from the nurse. Hector stares into the boy's wondering eyes and puts his finger in the boy's hand.

HECTOR

He has a good grip.

ANDROMACHE

He's just like his father. He even hates peas.

While this reunion is going on, Paris embraces his father, PRIAM (70), king of Troy. Priam is a regal-looking man with a shock of white hair and sharp blue eyes. He clearly adores Paris. He looks at Helen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PARIS

Um, father, this-- is Helen.

Helen bows her head, paying respect.

PRIAM

Helen? Helen of Sparta?

Both Helen and Priam now look at Paris.

PARIS

Helen of Troy.

PRIAM

Ah.

If Priam is disturbed by this revelation, his face doesn't betray it. He leans forward and kisses the former queen on both cheeks. Helen didn't know what to expect-- she's flustered and gratified at the same time.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

I've heard rumors of your beauty. For once, the gossips were right. Welcome.

HELEN

Thank you, good king.

PRIAM

Come, you must be tired.

He leads them up the stairs and into the palace. Helen and Paris exchange looks and follow the king. Hector and Andromache are a few paces behind.

BRISEIS, a seventeen-year-old girl with an aristocratic demeanor, wearing the white robes of a temple acolyte, approaches the royal family. Paris smiles when he sees her.

PARIS

Briseis! Darling cousin, you've become a woman.

HELEN

A beautiful woman.

Briseis, cheeks flushing, dips her knees in deference. Hector approaches her now, smiling broadly, arms open. Briseis's face lights up like a little girl's. She hugs the eldest prince, eyes closed. Hector kisses the top of her head.

HECTOR

Did you miss me, little swan?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Briseis nods. Hector pinches the sleeve of her robe.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
A servant of Apollo now?

PRIAM
The young men of Troy were devastated
when she chose the virgin robes.

Briseis' cheeks turn bright red.

BRISEIS
Uncle.

Priam laughs and kisses the girl's forehead. He takes three goblets of wine from a SERVANT holding a silver platter and hands them to Hector and Paris, keeping one for himself.

PRIAM
I thank the gods for your safe return.

The king and the princes spill a few drops of wine.

PRIAM, HECTOR AND PARIS
For the gods!

They drain their goblets.

INT. PALACE OF TROY - LATER

Unlike the brute simplicity of Menelaus' palace, Priam's home is wondrous: palm trees grow in the courtyard; flowered vines climb the walls; Aeolian harps chime in the breeze.

INT. PRIAM'S MEETING HALL - LATER

Priam stands by an open archway that looks out over the city. Hector sits at a long table that could seat fifty men.

PRIAM
It's the will of the gods. Everything is
in their hands.
(beat)
But I'm surprised you let him bring her.

HECTOR
If I'd let him fight Menelaus for her,
you'd be burning a son's body instead of
welcoming a daughter.

Priam closes his eyes at these words. Even the thought of losing Paris makes him pale.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRIAM

We could send peace envoys to Menelaus.

HECTOR

You know Menelaus. He'd spear your envoys' heads on his gate.

PRIAM

He's a fierce man.

(beat)

What would you have me do?

HECTOR

Put her on a ship and send her home.

Priam thinks for a moment, staring out at his city.

PRIAM

Women have always loved Paris, ever since he was a boy. And he's loved them back.

(beat)

But this is different-- this is real. He looks at her the way I used to look at your mother. If we send her back to Menelaus, he'll follow.

HECTOR

How? Will he swim to Sparta? He can't sail a ship alone.

Hector stands and joins his father in the archway. He gestures outside, past the palace grounds. The city of Troy teems with life, the CITIZENS going about their business.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

This is my country. These are my countrymen. I don't want to see them suffer so my brother can have his prize.

Priam nods, watching his distant subjects.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

It's not just the Spartans coming after her. Menelaus will go to Agamemnon, and Agamemnon's wanted to destroy us for years. Once we're out of the way he controls the seas.

PRIAM

Enemies have been attacking us for centuries. Our walls still stand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HECTOR

Father.
 (beat)
 We can't win this war.

PRIAM

Where's your faith, child? Apollo watches
 over us. Even Agamemnon is no match for
 the gods.

Hector takes a deep breath but says nothing. He knows his
 father's mind is made up.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

For thirty years I've worked for peace.
 Thirty years.
 (beat)
 Paris is a fool sometimes. I know that.
 But I'll fight a thousand wars before
 letting him die.

Hector looks past the city to the wine-dark sea. The waters
 are empty now, but he knows what's coming.

HECTOR

Forgive me, father. But you won't be the
 one fighting.

He bows and leaves the old king alone in the great hall.

EXT. TEMPLE OF APHRODITE - DAY

The small shrine, tangled with exotic flowers and plants, is
 hidden in the back of a lush palace garden.

Helen approaches the statue of Aphrodite. Unlike the
 grandiose statues in Troy's main square, this Aphrodite is
 lifesize, a sublime woman frozen in marble.

Helen kneels and places a basket of flowers in front of the
 statue, closes her eyes, and prays.

HECTOR (O.S.)

She's already answered your prayers.

Helen turns and sees Hector sitting on a stone bench in the
 shade of a tree. His baby boy sits on his knee, wrapped in a
 yellow blanket, quietly sucking his thumb.

Hector nods to the statue.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

The goddess of beauty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN

She's also the goddess of love.

HECTOR

You have that, too. Don't you?

Helen stands, bows to kiss the statue's hand, and walks away. Hector stands and follows her, hoisting Scamandrius onto his shoulders for a ride. The boy chortles with pleasure.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to-- to interrupt.

HELEN

I don't blame you for hating me.

Hector puts his hand on her shoulder and stops her.

HECTOR

I don't hate you.

HELEN

If I were Trojan, I'd hate me.

Helen stares into the baby boy's eyes. He smiles and she smiles back, reaching out a hand to tickle his belly. He screams with laughter.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Hello, Scamandrius. You look very handsome in yellow.

HECTOR

None of us hate you. None of the Trojans.

HELEN

They will.

Helen bows to Hector and continues walking. Hector watches her go, calling out before she rounds a bend in the path.

HECTOR

Helen.

She turns and waits for Hector to catch up.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Do you love my brother?

Helen doesn't answer for a moment. When she does her voice is quiet but steady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELEN

You're a good man. I see how much you care for your family, for your countrymen.

(beat)

But don't ever question my love for your brother.

She tickles the baby's foot one last time and walks away. Scamandrius cries out and reaches for her, but she's gone.

INT. PARIS'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The room is lit by forty candles. Paris and Helen lie naked on a bear fur blanket, her head resting on his bare chest.

HELEN

They're coming for me.

PARIS

Shh.

HELEN

They're getting closer. I know they are.

PARIS

We've been attacked before. We know how to defend ourselves.

HELEN

You've never had all of Greece united against you.

(beat)

What if we left?

PARIS

What?

HELEN

Tonight. Right now-- what if we went down to the stables, took two of your horses and left. Ride east, keep riding--

PARIS

Darling--

HELEN

Why not? No more queens, no more princes, just us. You could hunt deer and I could--

PARIS

I can't leave Troy. If the Greeks are coming, I need to defend my country.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN

The Greeks are coming because I'm here.

PARIS

I won't let anyone hurt you.

Helen laughs-- not sarcastic but genuine and loving. She strokes Paris's jaw.

HELEN

You're very young, my love.

PARIS

We're the same age!

HELEN

You're younger than I ever was.

She leans closer and kisses him. They begin making love.

EXT. TROY - DAWN

The sun rises above Troy and the Trojan countryside.

MERCHANTS in the marketplace set up their stalls and display their goods: wine, olive oil, dates, figs, nuts and spices.

The BRONZESMITH hammers a bronze sword into shape.

A SHEPHERD watches over his herd of SHEEP.

A FARMER and his SON lead a team of yoked OXEN to the fields.

At the Temple of Apollo, near the beach, two PRIESTS carve strips of fat from a roasted PIG and lay them on the god's altar, muttering chants as they perform the ritual.

Briseis, the temple acolyte, stands beside the priests, pouring ceremonial wine on the stone floor.

Four FISHERMEN in a small boat, a mile from shore, spread their nets in the water.

Two SENTRIES stand in a guard tower on a corner of Troy's city walls, sipping hot broth from bowls.

EXT. GUARD TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Sentry #1 blows steam off his soup. He raises his eyes, blinks and squints into the distance.

He bolts upright. His bowl of soup falls to the floor, shattering into hundreds of pieces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sentry #2 stares at Sentry #1 for a moment, then stands and follows his partner's gaze out to the sea. Both of them stand slack-jawed for a moment, stunned by what they see.

A thousand GREEK WARSHIPS clog the horizon, sailing straight for Troy.

Sentry #2 grabs a gong tapper and begins hammering the brass gong hanging from the tower's lintel. Sentry #1 still stares at the swarm of ships. No Trojan has ever seen such a force.

Sentries in other guard towers hammer their warning gongs.

INT. HECTOR'S CHAMBER

Hector sits on a rug by his bed, beside his wife Andromache, watching his son. The boy plays with the WOOD LION Hector carved on the journey back from Sparta.

The bells begin to ring.

Hector looks at his wife for a moment, stands, and walks to the balcony, where he can see over the city walls, past the farm fields, past the beach, all the way to the Aegean.

He sees a thousand enemy sails.

For a moment he stares at the armada, as if trying to count the ships, but he quickly abandons this effort and hurries back into the palace.

INT. PRIAM'S CHAMBER

Priam kneels before a small shrine to Zeus in the anteroom of his bedchamber.

A life-size statue of the Thunder God, his stone face a mask of rage, lightning bolts clutched in his stone hands, stares down at the old king.

Listening to the bells, Priam takes a deep breath and looks up into Zeus's eyes. The father of the gods stares back.

INT. PARIS'S BEDCHAMBER

The bells are ringing. Paris rushes to the window. Helen, sitting up in bed, closes her eyes.

EXT. TROJAN COUNTRYSIDE

A mad rush to get inside the safety of the city walls.

The farmer and his son hastily load provisions onto a wagon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The shepherd desperately tries to hurry his herd toward the Trojan gates. He's joined by hundreds of other COUNTRY DWELLERS racing for sanctuary.

The fishermen row desperately for shore.

INT. TROJAN ARMORY - DAY

The cavernous building is crowded with armaments: racks and racks of spears, swords, breastplates, and shields.

Hector watches as hundreds of male CITIZENS rush into the armory and are issued weapons by TROJAN SOLDIERS. The faces of the men reflect fear, excitement, and resolve.

Standing beside the prince is Tecton, the captain of the elite Apollonian Brigade.

Hector and Tecton hold their helmets in their hands. The helmets are plumed with horse hair, a mark of distinction for all members of the Apollonian Brigade.

HECTOR
The Apollonian Brigade?

TECTON
Waiting at the city gates.

HECTOR
Good.

EXT. AEGEAN SEA - DAY

A thousand white-sailed warships plunge through the waves. The sails are painted with the signs and emblems of the various nationalities represented in this alliance.

EXT. GATES OF TROY - DAY

Hector and Tecton look over the elite APOLLONIAN BRIGADE. All two hundred men ride well-groomed, snorting HORSES. All wear their horsehair-plumed helmets.

HECTOR
Are you ready?

The men roar and thrust their spears into the air.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Then follow me.

They charge through the gate.

EXT. AEGEAN SEA - DAY

The armada draws closer to shore. One ship sails far ahead of the rest. Alone among the fleet, its sail is painted black.

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP

The warships are powered by both wind and man. Achilles' OARSMEN holler encouragement to their shipmates and check to see that their boat is safely in the lead. The sail is black.

Achilles stands in the prow, scanning the Trojan shore. Patroclus stands beside him, wearing a new SHELL NECKLACE. EUDORUS (40), a Myrmidon captain, approaches Achilles.

EUDORUS

Should we wait for the others?

Achilles marks the progress of the other ships. The nearest is a quarter-mile back.

Those MYRMIDONS (Achilles' countrymen and comrades) not rowing are suiting up for battle, putting on their armor and testing their blades one last time.

ACHILLES

They brought us here for a war, didn't they?

EUDORUS

Yes, my lord. But Agamemnon--

Achilles stares at his officer until the man bows his head.

ACHILLES

Do you fight for me, Eudorus? Or Agamemnon?

EUDORUS

For you, my lord.

ACHILLES

Then fight for me. And let the servants of Agamemnon fight for him.

EXT. AGAMEMNON'S WARSHIP

Agamemnon, Nestor and Menelaus stand in the ship's prow, consulting a goatskin map. Nestor points at the map and then at the small islands they're passing. Agamemnon nods.

Menelaus stands a few feet from the other two, staring into the distance where Troy waits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MENELAUS

Whose ship is that?

Nestor shields his eyes from the sun and looks.

NESTOR

Black sail. It must be Achilles.

They watch Achilles' black-sailed ship approach the beach.

AGAMEMNON

What is that fool doing? How many men does he have with him?

NESTOR

Fifty.

AGAMEMNON

He's going to take the beach of Troy with fifty men?

EXT. TROJAN BEACH - DAY

Hector paces the tall dunes that overlook the beach, Tecton at his side. Behind them is the temple to Apollo (where the priests made their sacrifice). He checks the progress of the Trojan fortifications and the progress of the Greek armada.

Hundreds of ARCHERS checks their catgut strings one last time. Some of them kneel beside a low stone wall that surrounds the temple. Others stand on the dunes. They have a perfect vantage from which to loose their arrows at invaders.

Soldiers carrying torches ignite giant pumice urns filled with burning pitch. Other soldiers hammer long spikes deep into the sand to hinder enemies rushing up from the beach.

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP

Though the oarsmen continue to pull, everyone is now armored. Achilles sees Patroclus, armed and ready to fight.

ACHILLES

Where are you going?

PATROCLUS

To fight the Trojans.

Achilles shakes his head and removes the spear from his cousin's hand.

ACHILLES

You're not ready.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Patroclus, crestfallen, looks as if he's about to cry.

PATROCLUS

I am ready. You taught me how to fight.

Achilles removes the boy's helmet, tosses it aside, and rests his hand on the back of the boy's head.

ACHILLES

And you're a good student. But you're not ready yet. Guard the ship.

Patroclus looks about the deck. The only unarmored man aboard is an old, ONE-LEGGED COOK, fixing bronze spearheads onto shafts to replace whatever's lost in combat.

Patroclus angrily strips off his breastplate and drops it to the deck.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH - DAY

An officer from the regular army gallops toward Hector on a snorting horse. The officer, LYSANDER, salutes his prince.

HECTOR

How long before the army is ready?

LSYANDER

Half our men are still coming in from the countryside. We have to arm them, we have to match them with the right officers--

HECTOR

How long?

LSYANDER

(taking a deep breath)

Noon?

HECTOR

The beach will be Greek by noon. I need them now.

Lysander opens his mouth to protest, but Hector simply stares at Lysander. We've never seen the prince in martial mode before. His eyes are harder, his mouth set and unsmiling.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Have patrols scour the countryside. Check every home, every pasture. I want every Trojan brought inside the walls. If they can't walk, carry them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lysander bows his head and gallops off. Hector walks swiftly away, followed by Tecton. The other soldiers watch their prince with silent respect. Hector makes eye contact with each man he passes and clasps hands with several.

He looks back to the sea. The black-sailed ship draws closer. He turns to his men and speaks loudly so all can hear.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

All my life I've lived by a code, and the code is simple.

(beat)

Honor the gods.

(beat)

Love your woman.

(beat)

And defend your country.

The men roar.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Troy is mother to us all. Fight for her!

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP

Achilles stands in the prow of his ship, scanning the Trojan dunes. He points his sword toward Troy.

ACHILLES

Do you know what's waiting beyond that beach?

His Myrmidons stare up at their commander.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Immortality.

The Myrmidons raises their swords and cry out with one voice.

The oarsmen give one last mighty pull on their oars and beach the tar-caulked keel of the warship on Trojan sand. They drop their oars and grab their spears.

Achilles walks over to the railing, grabs a coiled rope anchored to a bronze cleats, and rappels down to the beach. The Myrmidons follow him, tossing the ropes off the deck and shimmying down to the beach.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH

The Trojan archers watch the Myrmidons climb down from their ship. Many of the archers have dipped their arrows into the flaming pitch. Hector holds up his hand: wait... wait... now!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hundreds of arrows whistle through the air.

Four of the Myrmidons climbing down cry out as arrows hit them; they tumble into the sea. Other arrows rip into the packed sand or zip harmlessly into the water.

Dozens of flaming arrows hit the hull of the warship and continues to burn.

The Myrmidons, clustered together and holding their shields above their heads, look to Achilles. Achilles points to the dunes. The men nod. More arrows rain down on them, catching in their shields.

Achilles begins sprinting toward the temple, his Myrmidons behind him howling like wolves. The archers let off another volley. More Myrmidons fall.

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP

Patroclus huddles under the railing beside the cook as arrow after arrow screams by. A flaming arrow hits one of the sails, and then another. The sails begin to burn.

ONE-LEGGED COOK

Help me get the sails down!

The cook limps over to the sails, ignoring the arrows that rain around him. He turns back and sees Patroclus still cowering by the railing.

ONE-LEGGED COOK (CONT'D)

Come on, boy!

Patroclus takes a deep breath and runs in a crouch to the cook. Together they begin lowering the burning sails.

EXT. AGAMEMNON'S SHIP

Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Nestor watch the battle from the prow of their ship. They're still half a mile away.

AGAMEMNON

(in awe despite himself)

The man wants to die.

The soldiers on board, suiting up for combat, never take their eyes off the shore. We hear SHOUTS of "Achilles!" from the other ships, a great clamor as men bash the flats of their swords against their shields and cheer their hero on.

SOLDIER 3

He fears nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLDIER 4

Thank the gods he's a Greek.

Agamemnon hears this commentary. He grits his teeth and glares at the distant Achilles.

Nestor notices Agamemnon's barely concealed fury. He speaks quietly, so no one else can hear.

NESTOR

Give him his battle. You'll take the war.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH

Achilles, three arrows in his shield, sprints across the sands toward the temple of Apollo. Arrows tear through the air about him.

No man alive can run with Achilles. His Myrmidons follow behind. Every few yards another falls. Several of the Myrmidons are wounded, but if they're not dead they keep moving forward.

Hector stands on a dune on the opposite side of the beach from the temple. He sees where Achilles is heading.

HECTOR

They're trying to take the temple.

TECTON

He doesn't have enough men.

Hector, increasingly uneasy, watches Achilles dodge arrows.

HECTOR

Get the horses. We need to stop him.

EXT. AJAX'S SHIP

Ajax's ship is closest to shore now, only a hundred yards away. Ajax stands in the prow, watching Achilles run.

AJAX

Look at him, hogging all the glory.

He walks over to his rowers, grabs an oarsman on the front bench under the armpits, and tosses him away. Ajax sits, grabs the oar handle, and begins rowing maniacally, the veins in his massive arms bulging through the skin.

AJAX (CONT'D)

Row, you lazy whores, row! Greeks are dying!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The oarsmen redouble their efforts and the ship leaps over the waves toward the shore.

EXT. TEMPLE OF APOLLO

Achilles, his shield now quilled with arrows, is the first to crest the dune fronting the temple.

He hurls his spear and it catches the closest archer just above his breastplate, tearing through the man's throat almost to the foot of the shaft.

The archers near by throw down their bows and take up the spears racked behind them.

But Achilles is already upon them, cutting them down with ruthless precision. Every time his bronze sword flashes through the air another Trojan falls, and Achilles keeps sweeping through them, his face painted with Trojan blood.

The other Myrmidons are fighting beside their leader now, and the Trojan archers are no match for the Myrmidons in hand to hand combat. Soon the temple area belongs to the Greeks.

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP

Patroclus pours a jug of water over the railing, dousing a flame in the hull of the ship. An arrow screams past his ear. Patroclus crouches, dropping the water jug over the side. He closes his eyes for a moment and takes a deep breath.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH

Twenty Trojans on horseback ride up to Hector and Tecton, bringing two extra horses. Hector and Tecton mount. Hector sees Ajax's ship plowing into the beach. Hundreds of other ships are close behind.

The Trojan archers rain arrows down on Ajax's ship. Several flaming arrows catch in the hull and begin to burn.

TECTON

How many ships do they have?

HECTOR

Too many. We can't hold the beach.

(to the Captain of the Archers)

Hold them off as long as you can, then bring the men back to the city.

(to the cavalry)

Follow me.

He gallops toward the temple, Tecton and his men behind him.

EXT. AJAX'S SHIP

Ajax and his men rappel down the ship's hull while arrows rip into wood and flesh. Ajax carries a giant battle-axe and a shield twice the size of most men's.

When he reaches the surf he doesn't wait for his men; he roars and charges at the archers in the dunes.

EXT. TEMPLE OF APOLLO

Achilles, not even breathing hard after the slaughter, stares at the bodies around him. The surviving Myrmidons search the temple grounds, dispatching any lingering Trojans.

Eudorus hurries over to Achilles side.

EUDORUS
The temple is secure.

ACHILLES
This is Apollo's temple?

EUDORUS
Yes, my lord.

ACHILLES
And Apollo is patron god of Troy?

Eudorus nods.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Then the Sun God is our enemy. Take whatever treasure you can find.

The Myrmidons cheer and rush the temple.

EUDORUS
With your permission, my lord--

ACHILLES
Speak.

Eudorus gestures with his head to the sun above them.

EUDORUS
Apollo sees everything. Perhaps it's not wise to offend him.

Achilles nods and walks over to the towering statue of Apollo in front of the temple. The marble Sun God sits in his chariot, led by four rearing horses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eudorus watches in disbelief as Achilles climbs aboard the marble chariot and beheads Apollo with a swing of his sword.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH

Hector and Tecton watch this beheading in disbelief.

TECTON

He dares attack Apollo?

Hector spurs his horse and races toward the invaders.

EXT. TEMPLE OF APOLLO

Achilles looks into the sky as if waiting for the sun to blast him for blasphemy. Nothing happens.

Hearing hoofbeats, Achilles turns and spots Hector and his men, two hundred yards away.

ACHILLES

(to Eudorus)

Get inside the temple, warn the men.

(gesturing to the Trojans)

Their horses won't help them in there.

Eudorus hurries to warn his comrades.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Eudorus: Wait, wait a moment.

The Myrmidon captain stops and awaits further command. Achilles hefts a spear, waits a second longer, judges the distance, and hurls it.

The spear whistles through the air. One hundred yards from Achilles, the spearhead finds its mark: Tecton's breastplate. Tecton is knocked from his horse and skewered to the ground. He clutches at the wooden shaft, not comprehending his fate.

Hector reins in his horse and stares at his fallen captain. The man is finished. Hector turns to look at Achilles.

Eudorus's eyes are wide. It's safe to say that no other man alive could have thrown a spear that far or that accurately.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Now you can go.

Eudorus runs inside the temple.

Hector kicks his horse and gallops toward Achilles. His men cry out and follow him. Hector raises his own spear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Achilles waits. When he is fifty yards away, Hector throws.

At the very last moment, Achilles bends his head to one side, an almost lackadaisical movement. The spear rips through the air occupied by Achilles' head half a moment before.

Achilles smiles.

Hector draws his sword and charges, his men right behind him. Achilles walks, with insulting insouciance, into the temple.

A series of high steps leads inside the temple, a difficult obstacle for a horse. Hector and the Trojans dismount and proceed cautiously toward the temple.

As Hector passes the statue of Apollo he sees the Sun God's marble head lying on the ground. The desecration angers him. Sword at the ready, Hector enters the temple.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH

Ajax sprints up a steep dune. An arrow sticks out of his leg but he doesn't seem to notice it. He bulls forward, giant shield held in front, and slams into the Trojan ranks.

Where Achilles is all grace and speed, Ajax is brute force. Parrying his blows is useless: his battle axe splits bronze shields, bronze swords, bronze helmets.

The sound of his axe carving through a breastplate and the man beneath the breastplate is like nothing else on earth.

As Ajax drops another Trojan, he lifts his ax to the heavens.

AJAX

I am Ajax, breaker of stones, widow-maker
of Salamis! Look upon me, Trojans, and
despair!

The Trojan defenses begin to crumble. More and more ships hit the beach, meeting less and less resistance.

INT. TEMPLE OF APOLLO

Eyes adjusting to the gloomy light within the temple, Hector and his men gingerly advance. All is quiet.

Evidence of looting is everywhere. In only a few minutes the Myrmidons were able to ransack the place.

At the back of the temple, stairs lead up to the altar room. Hector walks toward the stairs. Blood trickles down the steps, puddling by Hector's feet. Hector raises his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Achilles stands atop the staircase, both hands wrapped around the hilt of his sword, the sword point resting on the top step. He stares down at Hector. Hector stares back.

WAR CRIES explode through the temple, echoing off the marble walls. The Myrmidons burst from their hiding places and rush the Trojans, screaming at the top of their lungs.

Hector, the clear leader of the Trojans, is an obvious target. Two Myrmidons charge him, their spears leveled.

If Achilles is the apotheosis of martial grace, and Ajax is the embodiment of brute strength, Hector is something altogether different-- a man of ordinary gifts who has become an extraordinary warrior by dint of experience, endless training, and powerful intelligence.

As the Myrmidons charge he waits. At the last moment he swings his sword, slicing both spearheads from their shafts. The Myrmidons stare at their decapitated spears.

Hector doesn't give them a chance to recover. He pounces, sword flashing, and both men fall to the temple floor.

Achilles watches from the top step. Hector turns and sees him waiting. Hector begins running up the stairs. Achilles disappears inside the altar room.

Another Myrmidon bounds up the stairs after Hector. The prince wheels about and kicks the Myrmidon in the breastplate. The soldier tumbles down the stairs. Hector continues up the stairs and into the altar room.

INT. ALTAR ROOM

Hector finds the bodies of two PRIESTS. They lie on the stone floor, limbs splayed, throats slit.

Sitting atop the altar, half-hidden by the shadows, is Achilles. He's a terrible sight to behold, splattered with blood, his bronze sword still dripping.

ACHILLES

You must be very brave or very stupid, to come after me alone.

(beat)

You must be Hector.

Hector, sword at the ready, does not respond.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

A private audience with the prince of Troy. I'm honored. Do you know who I am?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

These priests weren't armed.

Achilles jumps down from the altar and looks at the bodies.

ACHILLES

I didn't kill them. Cutting old men's
throats-- there's no honor in that.

Hector, finished talking, advances on him.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

You want to fight me without knowing my
name?

HECTOR

I know who you are.

Hector presses forward but Achilles dances back, staying just
out of reach. While Hector is grim-faced and determined,
Achilles looks relaxed, almost playful.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Fight me.

ACHILLES

Why kill you, prince of Troy, with no one
here to see you fall?

Achilles backs out of an archway opening onto the bright day
outside. Hector follows.

EXT. TEMPLE OF APOLLO - CONTINUOUS

Down at the beach, the Greeks have landed. The Trojan
defenders are in full retreat. Scores of Greek ships are
already on the sand. Achilles smiles at Hector.

ACHILLES

Go home, prince. Drink some wine. Make
love to your wife.

(beat)

Tomorrow we'll have our war.

A band of bloodied Myrmidons, led by Eudorus, emerges from
the temple. Hector warily backs off a step.

EUDORUS

(to Achilles)

The Trojans are dead.

ACHILLES

Go, prince Hector. No one will touch you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hector stares at Achilles and the Myrmidons for another moment before walking to his horse and mounting. Achilles and the Myrmidons watch him ride away.

EUDORUS

Why did you let him go?

ACHILLES

It's too early in the day for killing princes.

Achilles climbs up the high dune and looks down at the beach. Hundreds of GREEK SOLDIERS are on the sand, pitching tents and opening crates.

When they see Achilles they quit their projects. The awed soldiers stare at him in silence for a moment.

Achilles raises his bloodied bronze sword toward the sun.

The CLAMOR that erupts from the beach is deafening. Fifty thousand men cheering and yelling his name: *Achilles!* *Achilles!* *Achilles!*

Achilles strolls down to the beach as the soldiers roar.

EXT. AGAMEMNON'S SHIP - CONTINUOUS

Agamemnon, still aboard his ship, waits for the gangplank to be lowered. He hears the soldiers calling Achilles' name. He looks toward the beach and sees the men crowding around Achilles, all eager to be in the great man's presence.

Agamemnon's dark eyes are cold and hateful as he watches the victorious hero strut across the sands.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ajax, shirtless, strides over to Achilles.

AJAX

Achilles!

Achilles halts. For a moment there seems to be tension in the air. Everyone around them watches.

Ajax gives Achilles a bear hug.

AJAX (CONT'D)

You fight like a god.

ACHILLES

I've never seen the gods fight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ajax laughs and releases Achilles.

AJAX

No, but we hear their thunder. I'm honored to go to war with you.

Achilles nods and grips the big man's thick arm.

ACHILLES

I don't have to worry about my back with you behind me.

Achilles continues walking and arrives at the Myrmidon's base. Patroclus, Eudorus, and the other surviving Myrmidons greet Achilles.

PATROCLUS

The ship was on fire and I put it out.

A few of the Myrmidons chuckle at this.

PATROCLUS (CONT'D)

I did. Ask old Ucalegon.

Achilles ruffles the boy's curly hair.

ACHILLES

I trust you.

EUDORUS

We have something to show you.

Achilles follows Eudorus and the grinning Myrmidons to a large tent twenty yards inland from their beached ship. A few Myrmidons hammer the last tent pegs deep into the sand.

Eudorus holds open the tent flap. Achilles looks at his captain for a moment before entering the tent.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - CONTINUOUS

No rugs have been laid down yet, so loot from the temple has been stacked on the sand: gold candlesticks and chalices, beautiful black amphorae, intricately woven tapestries, goatskins filled with sacred wine.

But Achilles does not look at this plunder. Bound by the wrists to the center pole of the tent is Briseis, dressed in her white robes.

Terrified but trying to retain her composure, she returns Achilles' stare. Her robes are torn, her hair is disheveled, and she's bleeding from the lip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EUDORUS

The men found her hiding in the temple.
They thought she'd... please you.

ACHILLES

Leave us.

Eudorus bows and exits.

Achilles pulls a small, sharp knife from his belt. Briseis stares at the blade.

Achilles walks over to her and cuts the ropes that bind her. She sits back, rubbing the chafed skin of her wrists, still watching Achilles. He sheathes his knife.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

What's your name?

Briseis stares at him but doesn't answer. Achilles becomes aware, for the first time, that he's covered in blood. He wipes a hand across his face, doing little to clean himself. Briseis looks about the tent, as if searching for a way out.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

You're safer in this tent than out there.
Believe me.

BRISEIS

You killed Apollo's priests.

ACHILLES

I've killed men in five countries. But
never a priest.

BRISEIS

Then your men did.

(beat)

The Sun God will have his vengeance.

Achilles sits in the sand and removes his bronze grieves.

ACHILLES

What's he waiting for?

Briseis is stunned by such blunt blasphemy but she can't take her eyes off him, because Achilles, after all, is Achilles.

BRISEIS

The right time to strike.

Achilles removes his breastplate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ACHILLES

His priests are dead and his acolyte's a captive.

(beat)

I think your god is afraid of me.

Briseis laughs bitterly.

BRISEIS

Afraid? Apollo is master of the sun. He fears nothing.

Achilles nods and looks around the dark tent.

ACHILLES

Then where is he?

Briseis has no answer. Achilles smiles at her and she looks away. He's relaxed now, sitting in the sand with his arms stretched out behind him, all armor removed, skin slick with sweat and blood.

BRISEIS

You're nothing but a killer. I wouldn't expect you to know anything about the gods.

ACHILLES

The gods are killers too, little girl.

For a moment they stare at each other.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

You're royalty, aren't you?

Briseis says nothing. Achilles smiles.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

You've spent years talking down to men, you must be royalty. What's your name?

(beat)

Even the servants of Apollo have names.

BRISEIS

Briseis.

ACHILLES

Briseis.

EUDORUS (O.S.)

(calling from outside the tent)

My lord--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ACHILLES

What is it?

Eudorus sticks his head inside the tent.

EUDORUS

King Agamemnon... requests your presence.

ACHILLES

Why would I want to look at him when I
can look at her?

EUDORUS

All the kings are there. Planning
tomorrow's battle, I believe.

Achilles stands.

ACHILLES

I've never seen a battle follow a plan.
All right, give me a moment.

Eudorus withdraws.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

You don't need to fear me, girl. You're
the only Trojan who can say that.

Achilles leaves the tent and Briseis watches him go.

EXT. AGAMEMNON'S TENT - DAY

Two muscular GUARDS stand by the opening to Agamemnon's tent.
Achilles doesn't bother waiting for their permission to
enter; he brushes past them and through the tent flap.

INT. AGAMEMNON'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

The largest tent on the beach, Agamemnon's command quarters
are a lush affair, decorated with the spoils of a dozen wars.
Several AIDES-DE-CAMP bustle in and out on various errands.

Agamemnon sits on a heavy wood throne, garishly inlaid with
gold, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

Triopas, king of Thessaly, kneels before Agamemnon.

TRIOPAS

You've won a great victory, King of
Kings. No one thought the Trojan beach
could be captured so easily.

He hands Agamemnon a ceremonial dagger with a gold hilt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRIOPAS (CONT'D)

In Thessaly, the high priest sacrifices rams to Zeus with this dagger. Please accept it in honor of your victory.

AGAMEMNON

Thank you, Triopas. A beautiful gift. You will be amongst the first to walk through the streets of Troy tomorrow.

Triopas stands, bows, and leaves the tent. Achilles has watched this entire exchange with disbelief. Now Nestor, king of the Pylians, kneels before Agamemnon.

NESTOR

My congratulations, King of Kings. A brilliantly planned invasion.

Nestor hands Agamemnon an urn decorated with warriors.

NESTOR (CONT'D)

My father Neleus had this urn made to commemorate his victory at Cyparisseis. I present it to you in honor of an even more memorable victory.

AGAMEMNON

Thank you, old friend. Tomorrow we'll eat supper in the gardens of Troy.

Nestor stands, bows, and leaves the tent. Agamemnon places the dagger and urn beside a pile of other luxurious gifts. Agamemnon deigns to notice Achilles waiting for him.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

(to his aides)

Leave us.

The aides exit, leaving Achilles and Agamemnon alone. Achilles eyes the pile of gifts.

ACHILLES

Look at all your pretty things.

AGAMEMNON

Yes. I have quite a collection.

ACHILLES

Apparently you've won some great victory.

AGAMEMNON

Ah, perhaps you didn't notice. Here we are, on the sands of Troy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

The Trojan beach belonged to Priam in the morning. It belongs to Agamemnon in the afternoon.

ACHILLES

You didn't capture a single grain of sand. You sat on your ship and watched men fight, and when the blood dried you stepped ashore.

AGAMEMNON

For such a famous warrior, you have a dim understanding of war. I declared war on Troy and a thousand ships set sail, fifty thousand men. I ordered the beach taken, and the beach is mine.

ACHILLES

You can have the beach. I didn't come here for sand.

AGAMEMNON

What did you come here for?

ACHILLES

You would never understand.

AGAMEMNON

No? I think I would. I think you came for glory, immortal glory. Am I wrong?

Achilles says nothing.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

I think you came here because you want your name to last through the ages.

(beat)

A great victory was won today-- but the victory is not yours. Kings did not kneel to Achilles. Kings did not bring homage to Achilles.

ACHILLES

The battle was won by soldiers. The soldiers know who fought.

AGAMEMNON

History remembers the kings, not the soldiers.

(beat)

Tomorrow we'll batter down the gates of Troy. I'll build monuments to victory on every island of Greece, and carve Agamemnon in the stone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

My name will last forever. Your name is written in the sand, for the waves to wash away.

ACHILLES

First you need the victory.

AGAMEMNON

Yes. But I don't need you. I have fifty thousand soldiers. If I lose a few here or there, it really doesn't matter.

ACHILLES

It matters to the soldiers.

He turns to leave.

AGAMEMNON

One more thing, son of Peleus.

Achilles stops.

ACHILLES

I don't want to hear my father's name from your mouth.

AGAMEMNON

The first pick of the battle's spoils always goes to the commander. Your men sacked the temple of Apollo, yes?

ACHILLES

Gold? You think I care about gold? Take it, it's my gift, to honor your great courage. Take what you want.

AGAMEMNON

I already have. Aphareus! Haemon!

Two battle-scarred soldiers, APHAREUS and HAEMON, drag Briseis into the tent. Her face is bruised-- clearly she's been slapped around.

ACHILLES

What is this?

AGAMEMNON

The spoils of war. Tonight I'll have her give me a bath. And then-- who knows?

Achilles draws his sword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ACHILLES

(to the soldiers)

I have no quarrel with you, brothers. But you'll die in this tent if you don't let her go.

The soldiers hesitate, then draw their own swords. Achilles advances on them.

AGAMEMNON

Guards!

The two sentries rush into the tent, swords drawn. Achilles is surrounded. He raises his sword.

BRISEIS

Stop!

Everyone stops and looks at the girl. Despite her torn robes, bloodied lip and youth, her noble bearing and authoritative tone command respect.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

Too many people have died today.

She looks at the various men in the room-- Agamemnon, the soldiers-- and finally addresses Achilles.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

If killing is your only talent, that's your curse. But I don't want anyone dying for me.

The soldiers take her arms and guide her from the tent. For the first time that we've seen, Achilles looks confused. Agamemnon laughs.

AGAMEMNON

Mighty Achilles, silenced by a slave girl.

ACHILLES

She's not a slave.

AGAMEMNON

She is now.

Achilles' eyes are flat and merciless.

ACHILLES

Before my time is done, King of Kings, I will look down on your corpse and smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Achilles turns and leaves the tent.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - DUSK

Hundreds of GREEK SOLDIERS dig a long trench in the sand, fifty yards from the water. Pikes and spears are set in the sand and other fortifications constructed to protect the tents and ships from attack.

EXT. CITY OF TROY - DUSK

In the dying light, the Trojans prepare their city for siege.

Gray-bearded OFFICERS oversee the reinforcement of the main gates. SOLDIERS haul thousands of arrows and spears atop the city walls.

CHARIOTEERS work on their chariots, hammering bronze cladding and sanding down the wooden wheels.

A massive CONGREGATION at the Temple of Zeus kneels before the Thunder God's statue while PRIESTS burn the BODIES of the fallen Trojan soldiers on tall PYRES.

INT. PRIAM'S MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Priam stands by the room's open archway. Beyond the city he sees his beach, lit by thousands of torches, occupied by the tremendous Greek force. In half a day the Greeks have transformed the serene beach into a well-fortified camp.

Hector, Paris, and several of Troy's leading GENERALS, ARISTOCRATS and PRIESTS sit around the long table. One of the generals, GLAUCUS (60), pounds the table with his fist:

GLAUCUS

If they want a war, we'll give them a war. I'd match the best of Troy against the best of Greece any day.

VELIOR (40), a big-bellied nobleman, shakes his head.

VELIOR

The best of Greece outnumber the best of Troy, two to one.

GLAUCUS

So what do you suggest, we surrender the city, let the Greeks slaughter our men and rape our wives?

Velior looks at Paris until the prince returns his gaze.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VELIOR

I suggest diplomacy. The Greeks came here for one thing. Let's be honest, my friends. Trojans are burning on the pyre right now because of one youthful indiscretion.

Paris looks away from Velior.

PRIAM

Glaucus, you've fought with me for fifty years. Can we win this war?

GLAUCUS

We know the land. Our archers are the best in the world. And we have Hector. His men would fight the shades of Tartarus if he commanded. We can win.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS (65), High Priest of Troy, wearing a long white robe embroidered with gold thread, now raises his voice.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

I spoke with some farmers today. They saw an eagle flying with a serpent clutched in its talons. Before the eagle returned to its nest, it dropped the serpent.

Hector becomes more and more impatient with the man's talk.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS (CONT'D)

The eagle never fed his nestlings.
(beat)

For a priest skilled in reading signs, the meaning is obvious. We will win a great victory tomorrow. Troy is the eagle. The Greeks--

HECTOR

Bird signs! You want to plan our strategy based on bird signs?

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

This is an omen from the gods.

HECTOR

Fight for your country, that's the only omen.

PRIAM

Hector. Show respect. Archeptolemus is a servant of the gods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HECTOR

And I'm a servant of Troy.

(beat)

I do respect the gods, father. You know that. But today I fought with a Greek who desecrated the statue of Apollo. Apollo didn't strike the man down.

(beat)

The gods won't fight this war for us.

PARIS

There won't be a war.

Everyone hushes and stares at the young prince.

PARIS (CONT'D)

This is not a war between nations. It's a dispute between two men. And I don't want to see another Trojan die because of me.

Paris stands.

PRIAM

Paris--

PARIS

Tomorrow morning I will challenge Menelaus for the right to Helen. The winner will take her home. The loser will burn before nightfall.

Paris leaves the room. The others sit in stunned silence.

GLAUCUS

Does he have a chance?

Everyone looks at Hector, who does not answer.

INT. HECTOR'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Hector sits on the bed beside Andromache, who nurses their baby boy. Hector looks exhausted. He stares at his son.

HECTOR

He has no idea what's happening.

ANDROMACHE

Thank the gods.

HECTOR

The man who killed Tecton-- I've never seen a spear thrown like that. An impossible throw.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hector runs his hand through Andromache's long hair.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I need to see my brother.

ANDROMACHE

Don't go.

HECTOR

I need to speak with him.

ANDROMACHE

I mean tomorrow. Don't go. You've fought enough. Let other men go out there.

HECTOR

You think I want to fight, my love? I want to see my son grow tall. I want to see the girls chasing after him.

ANDROMACHE

Just like they chased his father?

HECTOR

He's much more handsome than I ever was.

He kisses his wife and everything is in this kiss, their passion and desperation. Andromache finally lets him go and Hector walks out the door.

INT. PALACE HALL - LATER

As Hector walks to Paris's room, he spies someone in a dark cloak sneaking down the candle-lit hallway-- an assassin or spy?

HECTOR

Wait!

The cloaked figure looks back and then runs. Hector chases. The fugitive runs through the archway at the end of the corridor and into the garden.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Hector runs into the garden. He's far faster. He makes a diving tackle and straddles his quarry. He pulls aside the fugitive's cowl. It's Helen.

HECTOR

Helen?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

By the light of the moon he examines her face. The stress of recent weeks has taken its toll, but the shadows beneath her eyes make her face more compelling than ever.

Embarrassed by the awkwardness of their position, Hector stands and helps Helen to her feet.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

What are you doing out--

Helen runs. This time Hector catches her after a few strides, snagging the back of her cowl and tugging her close.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

HELEN

Let me go.

HECTOR

Where?

Helen struggles against Hector's grip, but it's useless.

HELEN

Let me go!

Helen, still struggling, begins to cry. Hector pulls her to his chest. She cries for real now, violently sobbing, her mouth muffled against Hector's body.

HECTOR

Shh. Shh.

HELEN

I saw them burn.

HECTOR

Who?

HELEN

All those men. I saw them burning on the pyres.

(beat)

It's my fault.

HECTOR

No.

HELEN

It is. You know it is. All those widows screaming. I still hear them screaming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HECTOR

Let the men who took their husbands take the blame. You didn't kill anyone.

Helen takes a deep breath. She manages to control herself.

HELEN

They died because I'm here.

Hector can't deny this. Helen pushes herself out of his grip.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I'm going down to the ships.

HECTOR

No. You're not.

HELEN

I'll give myself back to Menelaus. He can do what he wants-- kill me, make me his slave. Anything's better than this.

HECTOR

It's too late for that. You think Agamemnon cares about his brother's marriage? This is about power. Not love.

HELEN

Paris is going to fight in the morning.

HECTOR

Yes.

HELEN

Menelaus will kill him.

Hector looks away, the words hurting him.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I won't let that happen.

HECTOR

It's his decision.

HELEN

No. No. I can't ask anyone to fight for me. I'm no longer queen of Sparta.

Hector bows to Helen and kisses her hand.

HECTOR

You're a princess of Troy. And my brother needs you tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Helen stares at Hector in wonder. The words seem to bolster her spirit, and she smiles though her eyes are still wet.

Helen nods. She touches his arm and goes back to the palace.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - LATER

Priam and Paris sit on a bench in the moonlit gardens, facing the statue of Aphrodite. The king holds a cloth-wrapped bundle in his lap.

PARIS

Father, I... I'm sorry for the pain I've caused you. I--

PRIAM

Do you love her?

Paris looks up at the statue of Aphrodite.

PARIS

You're a great king because you love your country so much. Every blade of grass, every grain of sand, every rock in the river-- you love all of Troy.

(beat)

That's the way I love Helen.

Priam nods and contemplates the goddess of beauty.

PRIAM

I've fought many wars in my time. Some were fought for land, some for power, some for glory.

(beat)

I suppose fighting for love makes more sense than all the rest.

Paris says nothing, but his father's words seem to relieve a great burden from his shoulders.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

But I won't be the one fighting.

He hands Paris the bundle. Paris, curious, begins unwrapping the cloth. Finally the object is uncovered: a shining sword, expertly forged, inscribed with the seal of Troy.

PARIS

(in wonder)

The Sword of Troy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRIAM

My father carried this sword, and his father before him, all the way back to the founding of Troy. The history of our people was written with this sword.

(beat)

Carry it with you tomorrow.

Paris holds the sword up and it glows in the moonlight.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

The spirit of Troy is in that sword. As long as a Trojan carries it, our people have a future.

INT. PARIS'S BEDCHAMBER - LATER

Paris and Helen lie in bed. Paris's face looks wan and spectral by moonlight. His breathing seems ragged. Helen gathers him in her arms, pressing her chest against his back.

HELEN

You need to sleep, my love.

Paris, staring at the wall, says nothing.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I've prayed to the gods to give you strength.

PARIS

Do the gods love me more than Menelaus?

(beat)

If he kills me, he'll kill you too.

HELEN

Shh.

PARIS

He will.

She runs her fingers over his lips.

HELEN

Before you came to Sparta I was a ghost. I walked and I ate and I swam in the sea, but I was a ghost.

(beat)

I'm not afraid of dying. I'm only afraid of losing you.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

Up and down the beach thousands of GREEK WARRIORS prepare for battle. Despite their vast numbers, the men are oddly quiet, each absorbed with his own thoughts.

CLOSE on several faces-- these are men we haven't seen before and probably won't see again, not kings or heroes but ordinary men preparing for battle.

One warrior prays with eyes closed, mumbling the words, kneeling in the sand. A second man inspects each arrowhead in his quiver. A third sits in the sand, snapping seashells.

EXT. ACHILLES' TENT

Eudorus and Patroclus stand outside Achilles' tent. Both are already suited for battle.

Patroclus gives Eudorus a questioning look. Eudorus nods. Patroclus takes a deep breath and opens the tent flap.

PATROCLUS

Cousin?

Hearing no reply, Patroclus ventures into the tent.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT

Achilles sits cross-legged, arms held straight out in front of him, palms up. His bronze sword is balanced on his palms.

PATROCLUS

The army is preparing to march.

Achilles does not look away from the blade. Though the sword must be heavy, his arms do not tremble.

ACHILLES

When I was very small I saw my father
kill a man with his bare hands.

Patroclus doesn't know how to respond to this.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

There's so much blood in a human body.

PATROCLUS

Should I ready your horse?

Achilles flips the sword in the air and catches it by the hilt. He examines the edge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACHILLES

You're ready to fight, Patroclus?

PATROCLUS

I am.

ACHILLES

You're not a killer.

Patroclus colors at the comment.

PATROCLUS

I can fight.

ACHILLES

You think I insult you? Cousin, you're not like me. I was born to end lives.

PATROCLUS

How can I be like you when you won't even let me fight?

ACHILLES

Listen to me.

PATROCLUS

I'm not a baby anymore--

ACHILLES

Listen. The world is crowded with men I don't love. If they live, they live, if they die, they die. They don't matter to me.

(beat)

The day you were born my father took me in to see you. Your mother was already dead.

(beat)

The nurses were still washing the blood from your body. You were the smallest thing I'd ever seen. My father put you in my arms and said, "He's your brother now. Watch over him."

(beat)

I gave him my word. Do you understand?

Patroclus doesn't seem to hear his cousin's words.

PATROCLUS

From the first day I walked I've followed you. I've followed you all the way to Troy. Let me fight by your side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Eudorus sticks his head inside the tent.

EUDORUS
My lord? The army is marching.

ACHILLES
Let them march. We stay.

Patroclus and Eudorus exchange bewildered glances.

EUDORUS
But the men--

Achilles turns to glare at him and Eudorus falters.

EUDORUS (CONT'D)
--the men are ready.

ACHILLES
Agamemnon spat on my honor yesterday. I
won't fight for him again.
(beat)
Tell the men to take down the tents.
We're going home.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY - DAY

One thousand ARCHERS stand in various positions on the broad city walls, quivers of arrows by their sides.

TROJAN CITIZENS also crowd atop the walls, quiet and sober, waiting for the battle to begin.

Priam sits in a grandstand beneath a blue canopy. Seated by him are CITY LEADERS, including Velius and Archeptolemus.

Helen stands apart from everyone else. No one is overtly hostile to her, but behind her back people stare and whisper.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Below the walls, on the broad field that stretches down from the city gates, the TROJAN ARMY has amassed. In the front, Hector and General Glaucus sit astride their horses.

The soldiers are disciplined and well-outfitted, arranged in tight formation.

Paris rides out to join his brother. The crowd on the walls cheers. Paris is an impressive sight, with a leopard skin slung over his shoulders and his sword at his hip.

Hector examines Paris's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

Are you sure you want to do this?

PARIS

I started this war.

Paris searches the faces atop the city wall. He finds Helen.

CLOSE on Helen. The wind is blowing hard, ruffling her cloak, her hair. There is love in her eyes, and fear and exhaustion. Paris stares up at her for a long time before turning away.

A low, ominous RUMBLE grows steadily louder. Hector hears it first, looking down the vast sloping field toward the sea.

Now the other soldiers hear it, and then the citizens atop the walls. All speech ceases. The Trojans quietly wait.

The rumbling resolves into the steady beat of WAR DRUMS.

And now we see them, fifty thousand GREEKS. The reflection of sunlight off fifty thousand bronze shields, fifty thousand bronze helmets and chest plates, is spectacular-- the army looks like a river of lava, flowing uphill.

The Trojan soldiers don't quiver or waver, but the expressions on their faces betray their anxiety. The Greek army is more than twice the size of the Trojan army.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY - CONTINUOUS

The citizens shield their eyes from the brightness. They exhibit their nervousness more openly than the soldiers. One OLD WOMAN moans softly, her hand over her mouth.

EXT. BLUFF - DAY

Patroclus, Eudorus, and the rest of the Myrmidons climb to the top of a tall bluff near the beach. From here they can see the broad battlefield a mile away.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The Greek army halts just beyond arrow range. A delegation of kings-- Agamemnon, Nestor, Menelaus, Odysseus, and Ajax-- on CHARIOTS proceeds to the center of the battlefield.

Odysseus looks over his shoulder and then yells to Ajax.

ODYSSEUS

Where's Achilles?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ajax looks around and shrugs. Agamemnon also heard this shouted question-- he turns, sees that Achilles is nowhere in sight, and smiles.

Hector and Paris spur their horses and canter out to meet the Greeks. The brothers speak without looking at each other.

HECTOR

Menelaus is a bull. He'll charge you.

Paris nods.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

He's stronger than you, so try not to fight him up close. Keep your distance. Use your quickness.

Paris leans to the side and tries to spit, but his mouth is too dry.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Brother?

Paris, his face ashen, looks at Hector.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

You don't have to do this.

Paris shakes his head and continues riding toward Menelaus.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Helen, alone, views the battlefield. An old, spotted hand takes her elbow. She turns and looks into Priam's eyes.

PRIAM

Sit with me.

Helen follows the king to his grandstand and sits beside him. She's aware of people staring at them but he seems oblivious.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

All my life I've prayed against this day.

HELEN

Yes, my king.

PRIAM

Call me father, dear child.

Startled by this affection, she hesitates before responding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN

Forgive me, father. For...

She pauses, staring out at the vast Greek army.

HELEN (CONT'D)

...bringing this.

Priam shakes his head and smiles sadly.

PRIAM

I blame you for nothing. Everything is in the hands of the gods.

(beat)

Besides, how could I blame anyone for falling in love with Paris? The birds in the trees sing love songs to him.

Helen looks out at the battlefield, fixing on Paris, at this distance a tiny figure on horseback. Priam takes her hand.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Hector and Paris ride up to the Greek kings. Menelaus stares at Paris, his black eyes murderous, his fingers tapping the hilt of his sword. Paris does not make eye contact.

The kings step down from their chariots and the Trojan princes dismount from their horses. Both armies are lined up several hundred yards apart.

Hector addresses the kings.

HECTOR

You come here uninvited. Go back to your ships. Go home.

AGAMEMNON

We've come too far, prince Hector.

MENELAUS

Prince? These are not princes. What son of a king would accept a man's hospitality, eat his food, drink his wine, and then steal his wife in the middle of the night?

PARIS

The sun was shining when your wife left you.

Menelaus draws his sword. He points it at the city walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MENELAUS

She's up there watching, isn't she? Good.
I want her to watch you die.

Agamemnon places a hand on his brother's arm.

AGAMEMNON

Not yet, brother.

(to Hector)

You make demands of me? Very well. I
reject your demands.

Agamemnon makes a sweeping gesture with his hand, indicating
his entire army.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

Look around you, Hector. I've brought all
the warriors of Greece to your shores.

NESTOR

You can still save Troy, young prince.

AGAMEMNON

I have two wishes. If you grant them, no
more of your people need to die. First,
give Helen back to my brother.

Menelaus glowers at Paris, ready to lunge at the younger man.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

Second, Troy must submit to my command,
to fight for me whenever I call.

Hector looks over his shoulder for a moment at the white
walls of Troy. He turns back to the kings.

HECTOR

All of you kings are legend. And all of
you brave men stand before me now as
servants of Agamemnon?

Odysseus and Ajax exchange glances.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

What did he promise you, Odysseus? All
the gold in our vaults?

ODYSSEUS

You know the old saying, prince. My
brother against me, my brother and I
against our cousins, and all Greeks
against the enemy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HECTOR

And you, Ajax, breaker of stones? How
have the Trojans offended your honor?

AJAX

I didn't come here to talk.

Hector and the big man lock eyes.

HECTOR

If violence is the only language you
know, perhaps we'll speak later.

(to Agamemnon)

You want me to look upon your army and
tremble. Well, I see them. I see fifty
thousand men brought here to fight for
one man's greed.

AGAMEMNON

Be careful, boy. My mercy has limits.

HECTOR

I've seen the limits of your mercy. I've
heard your offer, and I tell you now that
no son of Troy will ever submit to a
foreign ruler.

AGAMEMNON

Then every son of Troy shall die.

Paris steps forward. He's frightened-- when he speaks, his
voice catches in places, on the verge of breaking.

PARIS

There is another way.

Everyone watches Paris now.

PARIS (CONT'D)

(to Menelaus)

I love Helen. I won't give her up.

Menelaus grips the hilt of his sword.

PARIS (CONT'D)

And neither will you. So let's fight our
own battle.

Menelaus, thrilled by the offer, leers at Paris.

MENELAUS

You could have saved us all some trouble
and challenged me from the beginning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PARIS

Let the winner take Helen home, and that will be the end of it.

AGAMEMNON

A brave offer. But not enough.

Menelaus pulls Agamemnon aside and speaks to him out of the others' earshot.

MENELAUS

Let me kill this little peacock.

AGAMEMNON

I didn't come here for your pretty wife. I came for Troy.

MENELAUS

Let me kill him. When the young prince of Troy is lying in the dust, struck down in front of all his people, give the signal to attack.

(beat)

I'll have my revenge, and you'll have your city.

Agamemnon smiles and nods. They rejoin the others.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

(to Paris)

We stand here chattering like old maids. Enough.

He walks over to his chariot, grabs his shield and slips his left arm inside the leather bands.

While Hector helps Paris into his helmet he continues to give his younger brother advice, out of earshot of the others.

HECTOR

He doesn't have the stamina he once did. Make him move. Make him swing and miss. He'll tire.

Paris nods. He turns toward Menelaus, standing twenty feet away, but quickly turns back and grabs Hector's arm.

PARIS

Hector!

Hector waits. Paris opens his mouth but no words come out. He tries again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PARIS (CONT'D)

If-- if I fall? Don't let him take my body.

HECTOR

No.

PARIS

Don't let him-- I don't want him to mutilate me.

HECTOR

I promise you.

PARIS

And Helen. Tell her--

HECTOR

Think about your sword and his sword. Nothing else.

Paris nods. He turns from his brother and walks toward the center of the field, where Menelaus waits.

PARIS'S POV

It's difficult to see from inside your bronze helmet. Your peripheral vision is severely restricted, and the nose guard bisects your vision.

Your breathing sounds amplified, impossibly loud and half-panicked. But there's no turning back. Menelaus stands in the center of the vast battlefield, patient and menacing, carving the air with lazy strokes of his sword.

You look back and see Hector. Hector nods, trying to encourage you, but he looks worried. Behind Hector is the Trojan army, twenty-five thousand silent men.

Behind the army is the city of Troy. Atop those walls, beneath that blue canopy, your father is watching, and the woman you love.

You turn back to Menelaus. He's smiling at you.

BACK TO SCENE

Menelaus charges at Paris and swings mightily, trying to knock the prince's head from his shoulders. Paris manages to duck beneath the flashing blade.

Menelaus fights with little art and great savagery, exploiting his superior strength. Paris is quicker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

He nearly surprises the bigger man with a fast sword thrust, but Menelaus dominates the fight, hammering Paris's shield with a furious barrage of blows.

Paris steps away and tries another thrust, but this time Menelaus sidesteps and smashes Paris in the jaw with the hilt of his sword, knocking the prince's helmet off.

Paris falls, blood leaking from his nose and mouth.

Hector, frustrated and powerless to help, tries to will his brother to victory.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Get up. Get up.

Ajax and Odysseus, standing together, watch the bloodied prince. Ajax looks disgusted, Odysseus amused.

AJAX

This is the prince of Troy? In Salamis, the women fight better.

ODYSSEUS

But they're not as pretty.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Helen, unable to sit, now stands at the wall, watching her lover battle her husband. Priam stands beside her.

EXT. BLUFF

Patroclus and the other Myrmidons watch the battle.

EUDORUS

Menelaus still knows how to fight.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Menelaus swings at the fallen prince but Paris is able to block the blow with his shield and scramble to his feet. Menelaus points to the sky.

MENELAUS

You see the crows, prince?

Three CROWS are circling above.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

They're waiting. When they've finished pecking your dead face, you won't be so handsome.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paris sees the crows. The Spartan's mind games are working-- Paris wears the face of a man who doesn't want to fight.

Menelaus swings and the bronze blade bites into Paris's thigh. Paris staggers backward, blood flowing down his leg. He swings desperately but Menelaus parries, knocking the sword from Paris's hand.

Paris stares at his fallen sword, five feet away. Menelaus grins at the bleeding prince.

Paris runs. Menelaus snarls and chases after him.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

The citizens seem shocked that their prince and hero would flee before a Greek assailant. They look at each other and whisper, glancing at Priam, curious to see his reaction.

PRIAM
(to himself)
Fight him, son. Fight him.

Helen stares at the battlefield, her face unreadable.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Paris runs to Hector, gasping for breath, the blood pouring down his face and leg.

PARIS
I can't... I can't...

Hector stares at his brother and then at Menelaus, who has stopped seven feet from the princes.

MENELAUS
Fight me, you coward! Fight me!

Paris falls to his knees before Hector.

PARIS
Please... I tried to fight him. I tried...

Hector, completely at a loss, lays his hand on his baby brother's head.

MENELAUS
We have a pact. Fight!

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AGAMEMNON signals for the DRIVER of his chariot.

AGAMEMNON

The Trojans have violated the agreement.
We march.

The driver nods. Agamemnon hops onto the chariot and they ride toward the army to deliver the orders.

CUT TO:

HECTOR looks from his brother to the enraged Menelaus.

MENELAUS

This is not honor. This is not worthy of
royalty.

Hector looks at his brother but Paris is not looking at anybody. He gasps for breath and clutches his wounded leg. Hector glances at the Greek army, then back to Paris.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

If he doesn't fight your countrymen are
doomed.

HECTOR

Paris.

Paris shakes his head, blood dripping from his nose.

PARIS

No. No.

HECTOR

(to Menelaus)

The fight is over.

MENELAUS

The fight is *not* over. Stand back, Prince
Hector.

Hector stares at the king, judging his intentions.

MENELAUS (CONT'D)

I'll kill him at your feet. I don't care.

HECTOR

He's my brother.

Menelaus charges, sword raised overhead. In one motion Hector draws his own sword and plunges the point through Menelaus's breastplate. Menelaus's momentum carries him forward, until his breastplate touches the hilt of Hector's sword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Menelaus, eyes wide open, stares down at the blood which now begins rushing down his armor. He looks up at Hector.

Hector pulls his blade out. Menelaus falls to the ground.

CUT TO:

AGAMEMNON, standing on his chariot in front of his army, sees his brother fall. For a moment the vast field is silent.

Agamemnon SHOUTS. A wordless cry of rage, echoing from the Greek lines to the walls of Troy. He points toward Hector.

The entire Greek army surges forward. Hollering with a collective violence powerful enough to make the ground tremble, fifty thousand soldiers charge at Hector.

CUT TO:

HECTOR sees them coming. The ground he stands on trembles with the concussive force of Greek feet and horses' hooves.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Paris.

Paris still seems to be in a state of shock.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Get up. Get up!

Hector yanks Paris to his feet. Half dragging, half shoving, Hector gets his brother to their horses.

The avalanche of Greek infantry is getting closer.

Hector mounts his horse. But Paris has frozen. He stares at the Greeks with wonder and awe.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Paris!

Paris still seems catatonic. Hector jumps down from his horse and forces Paris onto Paris's horse.

The Greeks are almost upon them. Brandishing their spears and screaming their war cries, all of them vie for the glory of felling the Trojan princes.

Hector leaps onto his own horse. He grabs the reins of Paris's horse and turns them toward the city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The closest Greeks now launch their spears. One whistles by Hector's ear. He spurs his horse and they begin to gallop.

CUT TO:

ODYSSEUS watches this chase with trepidation.

ODYSSEUS
Our men are too close to the walls.

CUT TO:

GLAUCUS, the Trojan general, sees that the princes have gained some distance from their pursuers. He calls to an OFFICER standing on the city wall.

GLAUCUS
(shouting)
Archers!

OFFICER
(shouting)
Archers!

EXT. BLUFF

Patroclus turns and sees Achilles, standing on a high rock behind the other Myrmidons. We don't know how long Achilles has been watching the battle.

ACHILLES
(under his breath)
Pull back, you fool.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

The Greek army continues to charge at full speed.

One thousand TROJAN ARCHERS notch their arrows and pull back their catgut strings.

GLAUCUS
Fire!

OFFICER
Fire!

One thousand bronze-tipped arrows soar into the air, a deadly swarm of hornets that rises toward the clouds before descending on the charging Greeks.

Hundreds of Greeks fall. The Trojan archers let loose another swarm of arrows. The arrows fall with a great HISS. Many find their mark, biting into the throats and faces of the Greeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Greek army, so overwhelming seconds ago, is now struck with chaos. The men in the front turn back, realizing they've become targets, while the men in back still push forward.

In this confusion of foot traffic the arrows continue to fall, a rainstorm of bronze.

Agamemnon, standing on his chariot in the middle of his frenzied troops, tries to maintain order, but his shouts go unheard above the general roar.

The driver of his chariot falls, an arrow through his eye.

Agamemnon grabs the reins and tries to steer the chariot, but so many men are running about, so many bodies litter the ground, that maneuvering is extremely difficult.

CUT TO:

HECTOR and Paris have reached the city walls, where Glaucus and the army wait for them. Hector grabs Paris's arm.

HECTOR

Get inside the city.

He slaps Paris's horse. Paris, head bowed, rides away. Hector turns to his army. He shouts to them at the top of his lungs.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

The commander of the Greeks wants the Trojan army to fight for him!

The Trojan soldiers mutter and shake their heads.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Would any man here like to fight for Agamemnon?

TROJANS

NO!

The Trojan mood is becoming more and more bellicose.

HECTOR

Today we defend our wives! Today we defend our children! Today we fight for Troy!

The Trojans roar. Hector raises his sword and points it at the Greeks, who retreat from the arrow fusillade in disarray.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

For Troy!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TROJANS

TROY!

The Trojans charge. Hector, on horseback, is the first to reach the Greeks. His sword cuts down everyone within reach.

The Trojan infantry attacks the Greeks. Though the Greeks have the numbers, their line has been broken by the rain of arrows. The Trojans take advantage of their enemies' panic.

EXT. BLUFF

Achilles is unable to stand still. His fingers twitch as he watches the battle; he paces back and forth and curses.

ACHILLES

(under his breath)

Get them in line... get them in line...

Patroclus and the others avoid looking at their leader.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Odysseus, meanwhile, works to reorganize the troops.

ODYSSEUS

Selepius! Bring your men back into line!

Ajax, standing nearby, sees Hector chopping his way through the Greeks. Ajax runs at Hector.

Two TROJAN SOLDIERS try to intercept Ajax. The mighty Greek swings his huge battle axe. The blade cuts clean through the first soldier's arm and halfway through his torso.

The second soldier hacks at Ajax but the big man blocks the sword with his shield and then uses the shield to ram the soldier's face. Blood sprays from the Trojan's crushed skull. Both soldiers fall dead to the ground.

Hector, battling a Greek INFANTRYMAN, doesn't see Ajax coming. Ajax grabs Hector's horse's bridle and tugs hard, the veins in his arms bulging beneath the skin.

The horse tries to buck but Ajax's phenomenal strength allows him to twist the horse's head until it falls to the ground. Hector falls with the horse, tumbling down into the dirt. The Greek infantryman he had been fighting stabs at him.

Hector rolls away and manages-- while flat on his back-- to swing his sword, chopping off the infantryman's feet just above the ankles. The infantryman screams and falls, clutching at his mutilated legs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ajax releases the horse, raises his sword, and swings at the fallen Hector. The prince gets his shield up just in time. Ajax's sword cleaves through the shield, splitting the bronze into two even halves.

Hector stares at the halved shield, discards it, and jumps to his feet. The two fighters circle each other.

AJAX

So you're the best of the Trojans?

Hector, looking for an opening in the brute's defenses, says nothing. Ajax charges, swinging his battle axe.

Hector ducks below the axe and lunges forward with his sword, but Ajax-- quick despite his size-- sidesteps. Too close now to swing his axe, Ajax simply grabs the smaller man in a bear hug and begins to apply the pressure.

Hector, arms and torso caught in the hold, begins to turn red. He struggles to free himself but doesn't have the strength.

The sword falls from Hector's hand. Ajax grins.

Hector slams his helmeted head forward, butting Ajax in the face. Ajax loosens his hold and staggers back, blood spraying from his nose, his axe falling to the ground.

Hector struggles to regain his equilibrium. Ajax wipes the blood from his face, growls, and launches himself back at the prince.

Hector sees a dead Greek's spear lying on the ground. He snatches it up and positions it just as Ajax dives at him. The spear pierces the Salamisian's armor, driving through his abdomen and out his back.

Hector holds the spear shaft steady while Ajax stares down at his wound. He seems more irritated than anything else.

Ajax places his two big hands on the spear shaft, right where the spear enters his body. He breaks the spear in two, snapping the solid wood like a twig.

Ajax grins, blood dribbling down his lips. With half a spear still sticking out his back, Ajax swings the shaft, clobbering Hector in the side of the head, sending the horsehair-plumed helmet flying.

Hector, dazed, falls to one knee. Ajax whacks him again on the back of his neck. Hector crawls forward blindly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

His hands brush over the blade of his dropped sword. He grabs the hilt just as Ajax cracks him again in the back of the head.

With a great effort Hector springs up, driving his sword into Ajax's gut, just below the big man's breast plate.

Hector withdraws his sword and both men see the ground drenched with Ajax's blood.

Ajax backhands Hector with the broken spear shaft, cracking the prince in the jaw and dropping him again. Hector, woozy, can only watch as Ajax towers above him.

Ajax grabs Hector and hoists him upright. Hands wrapped around the prince's throat, he begins throttling Hector. Ajax spits a great wad of blood and smiles, teeth washed red.

Hector tries to kick at Ajax, but the big man doesn't even notice. Ajax's thumbs dig deeper and deeper into Hector's throat. Hector's eyelids begin to flutter as he chokes.

But the Salamisian king has lost too much blood. He sinks slowly to his knees, the color draining from his face. Hector is forced to his knees as well.

Finally Ajax's eyes roll back and he topples forward, on top of Hector, hands still locked on the prince's throat. Hector manages to unlock the death grip. He squirms out from under Ajax's corpse and stands.

EXT. BLUFF

Patroclus and the Myrmidons watch Ajax fall with disbelief. Achilles cannot bear to watch any longer. He stalks away. None of his men dare look at him.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

The Trojans are routing the Greeks. With two of their kings already fallen, the Greek force is in disarray.

Odysseus sees Agamemnon speeding by on his chariot. Odysseus runs and manages to leap onto the chariot. The two kings shout at each other above the commotion of battle.

ODYSSEUS
We need to retreat!

Agamemnon surveys the battlefield, his battered forces.

AGAMEMNON
My army has never lost a battle.

{CONTINUED}

CONTINUED:

ODYSSEUS

If we don't fall back you won't have an
army.

Agamemnon seems dazed by the turn of events. Finally Odysseus
hollers to whichever CAPTAINS can hear his voice.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

Back to the ships! Back to the ships!

The captains take up this cry, shouting orders to their men.

CAPTAINS

Back to the ships! Back to the ships!

The Greeks retreat. The Trojan soldiers give a mighty shout
as they pursue their enemies.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

The people cry out triumphantly. Nobles and commoners embrace
as brothers.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Hector, still on foot, leads his men as they chase down the
fleeing Greeks. Several thousand Greeks have fallen.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT

The Greeks get back to their trenches, the bulk of the force
still intact. ARCHERS in the Greek rear guard, manning the
trenches, now raise their bows and prepare to fire.

Hector, eager to avoid the mistakes his Greek counterparts
made earlier, holds up his hands and BELLOWS to the troops.

HECTOR

Halt!

The Trojan army stops just outside the Greek archers' range.
Lysander, the Trojan captain, stands beside Hector.

LYSANDER

We have them on the run, my prince. If we
burn their ships--

HECTOR

They won't be able to leave.

LYSANDER

But--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

They still outnumber us by thousands.

(beat)

Have the men gather our fallen. When they're done, send an emissary to the Greeks. They can collect their dead without fear of assault.

LYSANDER

My prince--

HECTOR

Good men died today. On both sides. They deserve proper funerals.

Hector turns and heads back to the white city.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Thousands of BODIES litter the broad field. We see them first from high above, their bronze armor gleaming in the failing sunlight. CLOSE on several of the dead men's faces.

The living haul the dead from the battlefield. HORSES are used to pull wagonloads of bodies.

Each side builds a hill of bronze helmets and breastplates, bronze shields covered with ox hide, bronze swords, wood spears with bronze heads.

Fathers or sons or brothers or friends say their goodbyes. Each dead man is cleaned off by a living man with a washcloth and a bucket of water.

The sun sinks into the ocean. Both sides build funeral pyres for their fallen. When a body is loaded onto the pyre, a relative or friend places two COINS on the deadman's eyes.

Dozens of SALAMISIANS view Ajax's body. They weep as they pass by, each man kneeling to kiss their fallen king's hand.

Agamemnon stands before the body of Menelaus. He places two coins on Menelaus's eyes. He steps down from the pyre, accepts a torch from a CAPTAIN, and sets the pyre on fire.

AGAMEMNON

(under his breath)

I will burn their city before I leave, brother. I promise you that.

As the sky grows dark, the dead burn on the beach and inside the walls of Troy.

INT. PARIS'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Paris lies on a divan as Helen, using needle and thread, stitches his leg wound. His face is bruised, his eyes red.

PARIS

You think I'm a coward.

He flinches as the needle pierces his skin.

PARIS (CONT'D)

I am a coward.

(beat)

I was face to face with Menelaus, and I knew he would kill me. I knew it. You were watching, and my father, my brother, all of Troy-- it didn't matter. The shame didn't matter.

Helen inspects her work. The black stitches seem secure.

HELEN

You challenged a great warrior. That took courage.

Paris shakes his head.

PARIS

I wanted to fight for the woman I loved. I wanted to show that love was more important than life or death.

(beat)

I wanted to be a hero. I wanted it so badly. And I tried. I tried.

Helen stands and walks over to a mosaic-topped table, where a decanter filled with wine rests. She pours out a goblet of wine and brings it to Paris.

HELEN

Drink.

Paris waves it away. Helen looks at the wine for a moment and then drinks it herself.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Menelaus was a brave man. He lived for fighting. He was good at it. And I hated him from the day of our marriage until the day he died.

(beat)

There is more than one kind of courage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Helen leans forward until her lips are inches from Paris.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You're not a warrior. I knew that the moment I first saw you. It's one of the things I love about you, sweet prince. And I never loved you more than today, when I came so close to losing you.

A knock on the door. Helen looks up. Another knock.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Come in.

Hector enters the room. He examines Paris's leg.

HECTOR

(to Helen)

Well stitched.

(to Paris)

You have a talented woman.

PARIS

I don't deserve her.

HECTOR

Thousands of men died today. They didn't deserve to, but they did.

Paris lowers his head. Hector stares at him.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I thank the gods you're alive, little brother.

Paris looks up at his brother.

PARIS

I wanted to make you proud of me.

HECTOR

You will.

Hector nods to Helen and leaves the lovers behind.

INT. AGAMEMNON'S TENT - NIGHT

The scene tonight is a far cry from what we've seen earlier. The leadership has been nearly halved. Nestor sits at the table, poring over the map of Troy. Odysseus lies in a hammock strung between two of the tent poles, eating olives and spitting out the pits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agamemnon paces the rugs that floor the tent. His usual air of supreme confidence is gone, replaced by agitation.

AGAMEMNON

They're laughing at me in Troy. Old Priam and the others, drunk on victory, laughing at me. They think they have me beat. They think I'll quit these shores, sail home at first light.

ODYSSEUS

Maybe we should.

Agamemnon spins and glares at Odysseus.

AGAMEMNON

Flee like a whipped dog, our tails between our legs?

ODYSSEUS

The men believe we came here for Menelaus's wife. He won't be needing his wife anymore.

AGAMEMNON

Careful how you speak of my brother.

ODYSSEUS

He was my friend. I fought with him in three wars. But it's no insult to say that a dead man is dead.

NESTOR

If we leave now we lose all credibility. The other nations will see that they can abuse us with impunity. If the Trojans can beat us so easily, how long before the Persians invade?

ODYSSEUS

As usual, old friend, you're right. But if we stay, we stay for the right reasons.

(to Agamemnon)

We stay to protect Greece, not your pride.

AGAMEMNON

What does that mean?

ODYSSEUS

It means your private battle with Achilles is destroying us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AGAMEMNON

Achilles is one man. What good could he--

ODYSSEUS

Hector is one man. Look what he did to us today.

AGAMEMNON

Hector fights for his country. Achilles fights only for himself.

ODYSSEUS

I don't care about the man's patriotism. I care about his ability to win battles.

NESTOR

(to Agamemnon)

He's right. The men's morale is weak.

ODYSSEUS

Weak? They're ready to swim home. They saw Menelaus go down, they saw Ajax-- Ajax, crusher of stones!-- go down in the dust. They saw thousands of their brothers fall.

AGAMEMNON

Even if I wanted to make peace with Achilles, the man won't listen. He's just as likely to spear me as speak with me.

NESTOR

Let Odysseus go to him. There's no bad blood between them.

Agamemnon thinks about it and then nods.

AGAMEMNON

Very well.

NESTOR

He'll want the girl back.

AGAMEMNON

He can take the damned girl.

ODYSSEUS

Where is she?

AGAMEMNON

I gave her to the men. They needed some amusement after today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Odysseus and Nestor exchange worried looks.

EXT. GREEK CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

A group of battle-weary, drunken SOLDIERS, including Aphareus and Haemon, stand around a campfire. They look exhausted, caked with dirt and their comrades' blood.

They shove Briseis back and forth between them. Each man she bounces into tears off a strip of her robes, which are now filthy rags barely covering her body.

Her face seems to have shut down. She has a bruise below one eye and her hair is wet with wine. The soldiers stare at her with a mix of hostility and lust.

APHAREUS

You Trojan whore.

ECHEPOLUS

We should kill her now, keep her from breeding any more Trojan bastards.

APHAEREUS

No, she's Agamemnon's property.

(tearing off a sleeve)

What's this? A virgin's robe?

HAEMON

You won't be needing that much longer.

APHAREUS

She's never been with any man but Apollo.

HAEMON

(pointing to the dark sky)

The Sun God is sleeping.

Haemon squats by the fire, holding an iron in the flames. He pulls out a branding iron in the shape of Agamemnon's seal: a white-hot ALPHA. He carries it toward Briseis.

HAEMON (CONT'D)

Hold her down.

Briseis sees the hot iron and begins to struggle, screaming and kicking at the men. Four of the soldiers pin her down.

HAEMON (CONT'D)

Why are you kicking, girl? Better to be a Spartan slave than a Trojan priestess.

Briseis claws Haemon in the face. He growls and punches her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAEMON (CONT'D)

Come on, come on, hold her down.

The soldiers hold her in the sand. Haemon steadies the hot brand and searches for the best place to mark her.

When the brand is inches from her arm someone grabs the iron, pulls it out of Haemon's hands and then slams it down on the man's head. Haemon collapses.

Achilles stands alone, unarmed save for the branding iron. By firelight he looks even more ferocious than usual. Echeplus stumbles backward.

ECHEPOLUS

Achilles.

Hearing this name most of the men sober up quickly, backing away. Aphareus spits in the sand. He draws his sword.

APHAREUS

So what if it is? There's one of him and ten of us.

Achilles swings the iron, almost too fast for the eye to follow. Aphareus's face collapses. He falls to the beach.

ACHILLES

Nine.

The other soldiers run. Achilles lifts Briseis to her feet.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Can you walk?

Briseis nods. Achilles, arm around her shoulder, leads her away from the campfire.

EXT. ACHILLES' TENT - NIGHT

Eudorus is waiting when Achilles and Briseis get to the tent.

ACHILLES

Get me food and water. And a new robe.

Eudorus bows.

EUDORUS

We've loaded everything but your tent back onto the ship.

ACHILLES

Good. We leave in the morning.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - LATER

Achilles sits near Briseis, watching her. She's clean now, dressed in a new robe-- a man's robe, far too big for her. Platters of fruit and roasted meats sit near her, along with pitchers of wine and water. Briseis doesn't touch any of it.

ACHILLES

You should eat.

Briseis says nothing.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Did they hurt you?

BRISEIS

What do you think?

ACHILLES

I saw you fight them. You have courage.

BRISEIS

To fight back when people attack me? A dog has that kind of courage.

ACHILLES

I like dogs more than people.

Briseis stares into Achilles' eyes. He's not used to people meeting his gaze. He stares back at the girl, intrigued.

BRISEIS

I've known men like you since I was a little girl.

ACHILLES

No, you haven't.

BRISEIS

Of course I have. Maybe they weren't as strong, but they were the same. They love war more than anything.

ACHILLES

They must be very happy right now.

BRISEIS

I'm sure they are. The smell of men burning on the pyres must make them drunk with happiness.

ACHILLES

And you hate these men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRISEIS

I pity them.

ACHILLES

But you love the gods.

BRISEIS

I've dedicated my life to serving them.

ACHILLES

Zeus, God of Thunder. Athena, Goddess of Wisdom. You serve them?

BRISEIS

Of course.

ACHILLES

And Aries, God of War? What about him?

Briseis hesitates for a second.

BRISEIS

All the gods are to be feared and respected.

ACHILLES

So you respect Aries, the Lord of Battle, who blankets his bed with the skins of men he's killed?

Briseis lowers her eyes.

BRISEIS

He is a god and I give him the homage due to him.

ACHILLES

Don't they call Apollo the Archer? Isn't his skill with the bow legend?

Briseis is quiet for a moment. She rubs the ripe purple grapes on the platter beside her.

BRISEIS

I thought you were a dumb brute.

She looks into Achilles' eyes.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

I could have forgiven a dumb brute.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

It's quiet now. Only a few campfires burn under a full moon.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - LATER

Achilles lies on his back on a deer skin, sleeping. Briseis kneels beside him. In the candlelight we see the glint of a bronze blade. She holds the knife near his throat.

Achilles open his eyes.

ACHILLES

Go on.

Briseis holds the blade against his skin.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Nothing is easier.

BRISEIS

Aren't you afraid?

ACHILLES

Every mortal dies. Today or fifty years from now, what does it matter in the face of eternity?

BRISEIS

You'll kill more men if I don't kill you.

ACHILLES

Many of them.

For several seconds she holds the knife to his throat. Finally she puts it down.

BRISEIS

May Apollo forgive me.

He pulls her to him and they kiss. Their hunger for each other is stronger than gods and nations.

EXT. BAY - DAWN

Rosy-fingered dawn appears, illuminating the white sails of the thousand Greek ships.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - MORNING

Achilles watches Briseis sleep. She looks very young and fragile, her face bruised, her eyelids fluttering as she dreams. Achilles watches her with great tenderness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eudorus opens the tent flap. Sunlight streams in. Achilles puts a finger over his mouth. Eudorus sees the sleeping girl and nods. Achilles gently pulls the blanket over her naked shoulders. He stands and exits.

EXT. ACHILLES' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Odysseus waits for Achilles outside the tent. Eudorus leaves.

ODYSSEUS

You found the girl?

ACHILLES

I found her.

ODYSSEUS

Is she hurt?

ACHILLES

Not as badly as those who hurt her.

Achilles stares at the sea. Seagulls patrol the skies.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Do you miss your wife, Odysseus?

Odysseus, surprised by the question, looks to the sea.

ODYSSEUS

Always.

ACHILLES

I've never missed anyone in my life. I used to think it was a weakness, needing someone else.

ODYSSEUS

We all need someone else. Right now, the Greeks need you.

ACHILLES

The Greeks need a new leader.

ODYSSEUS

Agamemnon... is a proud man. But he knows when he's made a mistake.

ACHILLES

Is this an apology?

ODYSSEUS

If he offended your honor--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACHILLES

The man sends you to make his apologies?
He doesn't understand the concept of
honor.

ODYSSEUS

No, he doesn't.

ACHILLES

And you, ruler of Ithaca, what are you
doing in thrall to that pig of a king?

ODYSSEUS

The world seems simple to you, my friend.
But when you're a king, when thousands of
lives depend on your decisions, very few
choices are simple. If Ithaca did not
join this alliance, Ithaca would be
viewed as the enemy. And Ithaca cannot
afford an enemy like Agamemnon.

ACHILLES

Am I supposed to fear him?

ODYSSEUS

You don't fear anyone, that's your
problem. Fear is useful.

(beat)

We need you back.

ACHILLES

I won't fight for that man again.

ODYSSEUS

Don't fight for him. Fight for Greece.

ACHILLES

Greece got along fine before I was born
and Greece will be Greece long after I'm
dead.

ODYSSEUS

I'm not talking about the land. The
valleys, the mountains-- they don't care
what we do. The men need you. You should
have seen the slaughter yesterday.

ACHILLES

I saw it. And I saw who led the men to
slaughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ODYSSEUS

Don't blame it all on Agamemnon. I've never seen a better fighter than Hector.

Achilles narrows his eyes.

ODYSSEUS (CONT'D)

He gutted Menelaus like he was an old sow. And Ajax-- I never thought I'd see Ajax fall.

ACHILLES

There's more to fighting than muscles. You know that.

ODYSSEUS

And so does Hector. He led his men to a great victory. But who's left to lead our men? What Greek could possibly stand against Hector?

ACHILLES

(smiling)

I don't know, Odysseus, tell me.

ODYSSEUS

Think what songs the Trojan bards must be composing for their prince. Beating Menelaus and Ajax in one day! And think what immortal fame will fall on the man who slays Hector!

ACHILLES

You're a subtle one.

ODYSSEUS

Do I need to be?

ACHILLES

Which would you rather have-- immortal fame or your mortal wife?

Odysseus hesitates.

ODYSSEUS

We're different men. My wife, my son-- they're my life. But you--

ACHILLES

My life is war. Is that what you think?

ODYSSEUS

Am I wrong?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ACHILLES

A wife, a son... why are they forbidden to me? My father was a great warrior, a great killer of men. And where did it get him? Are the dead pleased with their glory?

ODYSSEUS

I'm worried about the living, not the dead. We can't defeat Troy without you.

Achilles clasps Odysseus's hand.

ACHILLES

Of all the kings of Greece, I respect you most. But in this war you're a servant. And I refuse to be a servant any longer.

ODYSSEUS

Sometimes you need to serve in order to lead. I hope you understand that one day.

Odysseus releases Achilles' hand and walks away.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - CONTINUOUS

Odysseus sees Patroclus. He claps the boy's shoulder.

ODYSSEUS

Patroclus, my boy. I hear you're sailing home. I'll be sorry to see you leave.

PATROCLUS

Some of us don't want to leave. Some of us want to stay and fight.

ODYSSEUS

Yes. Sadly, the best of us does not.

Odysseus squeezes the boy's arm and walks away. Patroclus stares after him, his eyes burning with frustration.

INT. PRIAM'S MEETING HALL - MORNING

The notables we've seen in this room before-- Priam, Hector, Glaucus, Velior, Archeptolemus-- are gathered again. Paris is conspicuously absent.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

A man walking by the Simois river found a two-headed frog eating a spider.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

A two-headed frog eating a spider! We should surrender the city immediately.

An uncomfortable silence ensues.

PRIAM

Don't joke about such things, Hector.

HECTOR

I saw a fly in the garden today. Perhaps the fly represents you, good priest, flying from one pile of dung to the next, buzzing the whole time.

PRIAM

Hector! I will not have the gods disrespected!

HECTOR

I'm not disrespecting the gods. I'm disrespecting the man who claims to know their whims.

PRIAM

I will not allow the Sun God's chosen to be insulted.

(to Archeptolemus)

What course of action do you recommend, based on these signs?

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

Symbols are rarely so clear. The spider's many legs represent the many armies of Greece. The frog devoured the spider. Now is our chance to destroy the Greek army.

PRIAM

Glaucus?

GLAUCUS

Their morale is battered. Hit them now, hit them hard, and they will run.

VELIOR

They lack discipline. One more battle like yesterday's and they'll beg us to let them go home.

Hector lowers his head into his hands on the table.

PRIAM

Hector? You disagree?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

For a few seconds Hector maintains this posture. Finally he lifts his head and looks at each man around the table.

HECTOR

If we attack them on the beach, we give up the protection of our walls. We give up our position atop the hill.

(beat)

Achilles and his Myrmidons did not fight yesterday. There must be dissension among the Greeks. But if we attack their ships, we'll unify them. And we don't want that.

(beat)

If they decide to attack, let them. We'll beat them back again and they'll lose thousands.

(beat; to Priam)

Yesterday the Greeks underestimated us. We should not return the favor today.

Priam meditates on this conflicting advice. He stands and paces about the room. He turns to Archeptolemus.

PRIAM

You're confident about the meaning of this sign?

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

Apollo is furious at the desecration of his temple. The gods have blessed our army.

Priam continues pacing, hands clasped behind his back.

PRIAM

Prepare the army. We attack at noon.

HECTOR

Father--

Father and son face each other across the long table.

PRIAM

Prepare the army.

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP

Eudorus descends the gangplank. Three Myrmidons follow him down, while others pass them on the way up, carrying gear onto the ship's deck. Still others hoist the sails.

INT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP - DAY

Achilles and Briseis sit in the cramped cabin of his ship. She weaves a shawl with expert fingers. He watches.

Something has changed between them. He seems more relaxed around her than with anyone save Patroclus. She looks at him with undisguised tenderness.

BRISEIS

Am I still your captive?

Achilles doesn't answer.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

My family must think I'm dead.

ACHILLES

You're safer here with me.

BRISEIS

Weren't you watching yesterday? Troy can defend herself.

ACHILLES

Come with me to Larissa.

BRISEIS

Are you asking?

A hint of a smile crosses her lips. Achilles, unstoppable in combat and undaunted by the greatest kings, does not frighten the girl.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

Larissa. Is that where you're from?

Achilles nods.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

It's a pretty name.

They have one last peaceful moment together before the sounds of WAR CRIES, HORNS, and BATTLE DRUMS fill the air.

EXT. AGAMEMNON'S TENT

Agamemnon, Nestor, and Odysseus exit the tent. The beach is a frenzy of activity as thousands of men rush to their positions, hastily arming themselves.

The TROJAN ARMY has begun its assault.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT

The GREEKS, plainly nervous, swarm to the long trench they've dug. The Trojans crushed them yesterday. Now they're back.

The Trojans are a few hundred yards away, led by Hector (on horseback) and his elite Apollonian Brigade. Hector gives a signal. The force halts.

The Trojan ARCHERS pull their bows off their shoulders, draw arrows from their quivers, and notch the arrows.

The Greek archers notch their arrows.

Odysseus stands with his ITHACANS, waiting to battle.

A cry starts up on the far end of the Greek line and grows steadily louder. Odysseus looks in that direction.

A glittering figure has stepped forth from the Myrmidon camp, clad in the beautiful and distinctive armor that every man in the Greek army recognizes.

ODYSSEUS

(whispering)

Achilles.

All down the Greek line we hear the name repeated: Achilles! Achilles! Achilles!

Eudorus, standing near his ship with several other Myrmidons, stares in awe.

EUDORUS

Arm yourselves, men.

The Myrmidons quickly and excitedly arm themselves.

The Trojans are not aware of this energy. Hector raises his sword and points at the Greeks. The Trojan army charges. When they are within range the Trojan archers fire, sending a volley of arrows over the heads of their comrades. The Greek archers fire at the same time.

Two flocks of arrows cross in the sky and swoop down on the men below. Dozens of Greeks and Trojans fall to the sand.

But now the glorious bronzed figure of Achilles leaps over the trench, sunlight reflecting off his polished armor.

He raises his sword to the sky. A great, violent ROAR rises up from the Greek army. When he runs toward the Trojans the Greeks jump from their positions and follow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The two armies collide. Unlike the grassy field the men fought on yesterday, today's battle takes place on the sand, and sand is everywhere.

Horse hooves kick up clouds of sand. Men struggle for footing in the loose sand. Red blood puddles on the yellow sand.

But much more is different than the terrain. Now the Greeks have a leader. The Myrmidons are at the forefront, battling with a ferocity most Trojans have never seen before.

A Trojan OFFICER on horseback, spear raised, gallops toward the figure of Achilles, who raises his own spear.

Before the Trojan can throw, Eudorus hurls his spear, catching the officer in the neck. He topples from his horse.

Odysseus, immersed in combat, sees this. He hesitates for a moment and in his distraction is nearly cut down by an axe-wielding Trojan. They fight.

After Odysseus dispatches the man, he looks back toward the glittering figure of Achilles. Something's making him uneasy.

The Myrmidons surge forward, hacking their way through the Trojans. The Greek army steadily pushes the Trojans back, picking up more and more momentum.

Now it is the Trojans who seem frightened. unsure where the Greeks found this intense spirit.

Glaucus, the Trojan general, on horseback, shouts to Hector.

GLAUCUS

The gods are with them today! We should fall back!

Hector, fighting, does not answer.

The Myrmidons are getting closer and closer to the elite Apollonians. Hector notices them now. He notices the beautiful armor of their leader.

HECTOR

(to himself)
Achilles.

Hector grips the reins and guides his horse toward the Myrmidons. His Apollonians, clustered about him protectively, move in that direction as well.

The two elite forces clash. These men are experts, wielding their spears and swords with superior skill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Hector's horse seems unsteady in the sand, dangerously stumbling several times. Finally Hector abandons his mount, leaping down to the beach.

He battles a Myrmidon. The man struggles bravely but Hector finally kills him with a sword thrust.

Now he is face to face (or helmet to helmet) with the figure of glorious Achilles. The two men, breathing heavily from the combat, stand still for a moment.

The intricately-worked bronze of Achilles' helmet, breastplate, and shield all shine bright. He's a difficult man to stare at for long. Now he charges, sword raised.

They fight. And though the battle continues all around them, everyone seems to be aware of the duel taking place.

The sword of Achilles whistles over Hector's head, swung so hard that the man wielding it cannot protect himself. Hector takes full advantage, swinging quickly, his blade carving the soft flesh just beneath Achilles' helmet.

A long question mark of blood whips out of the cut throat. The man falls.

Everything seems to stop. Though the battle is still underway and thousands of individuals are still fighting for their lives, a collective gasp of despair comes from the Greeks.

Odysseus, stunned, stares at the body on the ground.

Hector stands next to the fallen man. He wedges the tip of his sword inside the bronze helmet and lifts it off.

Patroclus is dying, trying to breathe as his throat floods with blood. His eyes are panicked.

Though he wears Achilles' armor, Hector knows immediately this boy is not Achilles. Hector stares down at the dying boy, at the blood-soaked SEASHELL NECKLACE.

For a moment they stare at each other, the victorious prince of Troy and the dying boy in the sand. The sounds of Patroclus' gurgling breaths visibly upset the prince.

With an anguished cry he raises his sword and brings it down. We don't see the blade hit, but the boy's suffering ends.

Hector sees Odysseus standing nearby, staring at the dead boy. The Greeks have pushed the Trojans back from the beach, onto the grassy inland plains, but now combat has halted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Enough for one day?

Odysseus nods. Hector calls out to Glaucus.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Arms down! Back to the city!

Glaucus relays the call. Odysseus calls to his CAPTAINS.

ODYSSEUS

Arms down! Arms down! To the beach!

Hector finds his horse, mounts, and leads his men home.

The two sides retreat. Odysseus walks over to Patroclus's body. Eudorus is already there, crouched beside the dead boy. Eudorus looks up at Odysseus.

EUDORUS

We were going to sail home today.

ODYSSEUS

I don't think anyone's sailing home now.

EXT. ACHILLES' WARSHIP - LATER

Achilles stands in the stern of his beached ship, staring out to sea-- away from the battle that just took place. Briseis walks up behind him.

BRISEIS

Is it over?

Achilles turns to look at her. It's clear from his expression that he's unaware of what's happened on the battlefield.

ACHILLES

I didn't watch. I've seen enough blood spilt in this fool war.

EUDORUS (O.S.)

Achilles!

Achilles hears his captain calling and walks to the ship's bow. Eudorus stands on the shore, staring up at him despondently. Achilles descends the gangplank to the beach. Briseis follows.

Eudorus bows. Achilles examines his captain. Eudorus is sweaty and dirty, his hands caked with dried blood. His helmet is off but he still wears his armor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACHILLES
You've been fighting.

EUDORUS
My lord--

ACHILLES
You violated my command.

EUDORUS
No, my lord. There was a mistake.

ACHILLES
A mistake? I ordered the Myrmidons to stand down. You led them into combat? You followed that pig Agamemnon?

EUDORUS
I didn't lead them.

Eudorus cannot meet his commander's gaze.

ACHILLES
Who did?

EUDORUS
We thought you did.

Achilles raises his eyebrows and glances at Briseis. She lowers her eyes. Achilles turns back to Eudorus.

ACHILLES
I've been in the ship since morning.

Now Achilles can tell, staring at his captain's face, that something is very wrong. He looks around the encampment. All the men returning from combat avoid looking at Achilles.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Where's Patroclus?

EUDORUS
We thought it was you, my lord. We-- he wore your armor. Your shield, your grieves, your helmet.
(long beat)
He's dead, my lord.

ACHILLES
You're lying to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EUDORUS

Never, my lord. Never.

(beat)

He looked like you. He even moved like you. We all followed--

ACHILLES

Lies.

EUDORUS

He fought well, my lord. With great courage. But Hector came after him.

Achilles' nostrils are flared, his eyes narrowed.

EUDORUS (CONT'D)

If I could have saved him--

Achilles hits Eudorus hard in the mouth. The captain falls to the sand. Achilles looms above him, fists clenched. Eudorus holds his mouth. Blood is already beginning to stream out.

ACHILLES

Liar!

EUDORUS

My lord, I saw him fall.

Achilles grabs Eudorus by the hair and hauls him to his knees. He seizes Eudorus's sword and raises it.

Briseis grabs Achilles by the shoulder.

BRISEIS

Don't!

With his free hand Achilles grabs her throat. She claws at his wrist. Her feet spasm and kick inches off the ground. Eyes bulging, she stares at him. Whatever kindness she'd seen in his eyes before, whatever tenderness, it's gone now.

Achilles drops her. She sags to the ground, gasping for breath, beginning to sob. Achilles releases Eudorus. The captain remains on his knees, watching his lord.

ACHILLES

Dead?

EUDORUS

Hector cut his throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Achilles walks to a dead campfire where the Myrmidons cook their dinner. He drops Eudorus's sword and kneels in the ashes, grabs handfuls of the soot, and blackens his face.

Achilles stands, grabs the sword, and walks toward the sea. Everyone stares at him. He keeps walking as the waters lap at his ankles, his knees, his waist.

The waves are high, crashing down on him, but Achilles does not turn from them. He swings the sword, chopping through the surf, slicing the crests off the waves, groaning as he fights. The soldiers on the beach stare at him.

Achilles battles the sea.

INT. PALACE OF TROY - NIGHT

Hector leads Andromache through the palace halls, in the recesses of the building where no one wanders. Tapers hanging from the walls light their passage.

ANDROMACHE

Where are you taking me?

Hector keeps leading her until they finally reach an oaken door. Hector grabs a taper from its sconce on the wall.

ANDROMACHE (CONT'D)

I've never been here before.

HECTOR

I know.

He opens the door. A stone staircase descends into the dark.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

You remember how to get here?

ANDROMACHE

Yes.

HECTOR

These stairs lead to a tunnel. Follow the tunnel. There's nowhere to turn, so you can't get lost. Keep walking.

ANDROMACHE

Hector--

HECTOR

After a while you'll think it never ends, but it does. On the far side is another set of stairs, and a door.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR (CONT'D)

When you get outside you'll be on the south side of the Scamander River.

ANDROMACHE

Why are you telling me this?

HECTOR

Follow the river till you see Mount Ida. Keep Ida to your west, keep walking south, and you'll get to Lyrnessus.

(beat)

We have family in Lyrnessus. And the Greeks won't go that far inland.

ANDROMACHE

You're frightening me.

Hector stares into the darkness of the tunnel.

HECTOR

There may be a few rats, but they won't go near the fire.

ANDROMACHE

Hector.

Hector doesn't seem to be listening.

ANDROMACHE (CONT'D)

Hector.

He finally turns to look at her.

ANDROMACHE (CONT'D)

Why are you telling me this?

HECTOR

If I die--

ANDROMACHE

No--

HECTOR

If I die, I don't know how long the city will stand.

ANDROMACHE

Don't say that.

HECTOR

If the Greeks get inside the walls, it's over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ANDROMACHE

Then we must not let them inside the walls.

HECTOR

They'll kill all the men. Doesn't matter how old, they'll pull grandfathers from their beds and carve their lungs out.

ANDROMACHE

Please--

HECTOR

Doesn't matter how young. They'll throw the babies from the city walls.

Andromache closes her eyes.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

The women they'll take for slaves. And that will be worse for you than dying.

ANDROMACHE

Why are you doing this? Why are you saying these things?

HECTOR

Because if it happens, I want you to be ready. I want you to run.

(beat)

If the Greeks get inside the walls, get our boy, get him, and come here. Save as many others as you can, but you get here, you go down these stairs, and you run.

(beat)

Do you understand?

She nods. For several seconds they are silent. The flickering flame of the taper throws giant shadows on the stone walls.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I killed a boy today.

(beat)

He was too young. Much too young.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Patroclus's body lies atop a massive funeral pyre, dressed in a simple white frock.

Achilles, clean now, all the soot washed away by the sea, scrubs Patroclus' face with a damp cloth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As fastidious as a mother, Achilles scrubs away the dried blood on the boy's lips, the dirt on his chin, the crusted blood on his cut throat. He removes the SHELL NECKLACE.

When the boy is clean Achilles pulls two COINS from a leather pouch. He places one coin over each of the dead boy's eyes. He kisses the boy's forehead and descends from atop the pyre. Eudorus hands him a torch and Achilles sets the pyre on fire.

MONTAGE

We visit all our characters tonight. First Achilles, standing by the burning pyre, watching his cousin burn.

Briseis sits nearby, watching Achilles watch the fire.

Odysseus sits by the ocean, watching the waves by moonlight.

Agamemnon sits in his tent, carving Xs on the map table.

Priam stands on a palace balcony, staring over his city.

Helen and Paris hold each other in bed.

Hector stands by his son's crib, watching the boy sleep.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

Achilles, still standing in the same place, watches the remaining wood of the pyre collapse. He walks to his tent.

On the way he passes Briseis. She has fallen asleep on the sand. He crouches beside her.

He sees the bruises on her throat where his hand throttled her. As usual, the expression on his face is unreadable.

He stares at her for another moment and walks away.

EXT. ACHILLES' TENT

Achilles finds Eudorus sleeping outside his tent.

ACHILLES

Eudorus.

Eudorus blinks, unsure where he is, then rouses himself as he recognizes his master's voice. He struggles to his feet.

EUDORUS

My lord.

ACHILLES

I need my armor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eudorus nods and rushes off.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT

Eudorus helps Achilles prepare, clasping on his grieves.

INT. HECTOR'S CHAMBER - DAWN

While his wife and child sleep, Hector clasps on his grieves.

INTERCUT between Achilles and Hector, clamping on their breastplates, arm guards, helmets, etc.

EXT. SHRINE OF APOLLO - DAWN

The small shrine on the palace grounds is designed so that the summer sun rises above the sculpted Apollo's head.

Hector kneels in front of Apollo's statue, head bowed. When he raises his face he's almost looking into the sun.

EXT. ACHILLES' TENT - DAWN

Achilles exits his tent, fully armed. Eudorus is behind him. The SOLDIERS are beginning to stir and they stop in their activity now and stare at him.

Two MYRMIDONS tether a CHARIOT to a large black HORSE. The work finished, they step back as Achilles steps into the chariot. Eudorus attempts to hop on behind him.

ACHILLES

No.

Eudorus looks at his commander for a second and backs away.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
(to the Myrmidons)

Rope.

A Myrmidon hands him a coil of braided ROPE. Achilles tugs on the reins and the horse begins trotting toward Troy.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY - DAY

The CROWDS start to fill the viewing areas above the city walls. Priam and his COUNSELORS sit below the blue canopy.

Paris sits near them, but not with them. He doesn't look at anybody and people are careful to avoid looking at him.

Hector stands alone at one of the wall's turreted corners, staring toward the sea.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Achilles rides his chariot across the vast grassy field.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Hector watches the lone chariot approach.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Achilles reins in the horse two hundred yards from the walls. He steps out of the chariot and begins walking toward Troy.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

An ARCHER standing beside Hector notches an arrow.

HECTOR

No.

Hector looks for Glaucus, standing farther down the wall. He gives the old general a hand signal. No attacks.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Achilles stands alone in the vast field, one hundred feet from the walls. He looks up at the Trojan CITIZENS staring down at him.

ACHILLES

Hector!

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Hector takes a deep breath.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

ACHILLES

Hector!

Louder and louder, his voice echoing above the silent city.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

HECTOR!
(beat)

HECTOR!
(beat)

HECTOR!

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Hector walks over to his father. Achilles keeps bellowing his name. Hector kneels before his father and kisses his hand.

HECTOR

Father. Forgive me for any offenses. I've served you as best I could.

Priam stands, beckons for Hector to rise, and kisses his son's forehead.

PRIAM

No father ever had a better son.
(beat)
The gods are with you, my boy.

Hector hesitates for a moment, then bows and walks away. He passes by Glaucus, who bows to the prince.

GLAUCUS

Apollo guard you, my prince.

Hector claps the general's shoulder and keeps walking. He stops beside Paris. They embrace.

PARIS

You're the best man I know.

HECTOR

You are a prince of Troy.

Hector grips Paris's arm tighter and stares into his eyes.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Make me proud.

Hector kisses Paris's forehead and continues on his way.

Andromache waits for him above the stairs leading to the city gates. She holds their baby boy Scamandrius.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

You remember what I told you?

ANDROMACHE

You don't have to go. You don't--

HECTOR

You remember what I told you.

Andromache hasn't slept. Her hair is a wild tangle; her eyes are rimmed red. She nods. She holds her son up to his father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The boy doesn't see his father, he sees something terrifying, a man with a bronze face and a plume of horsehair.

Scamandrius begins to CRY. Hector removes his helmet. Now the boy sees his father. He giggles and reaches out. Hector takes the boy in his arms and holds him. He kisses the boy's fuzzed head and closes his eyes for a moment.

Finally he hands the baby back to Andromache. He smiles at his wife. She grabs him by the back of the head and presses his face to hers. Her mouth is open, her eyes closed, her body slack against his.

Finally he disengages himself. He walks away from her. She and Scamandrius stare after him, but he never looks back.

He walks down the long staircase descending from the walls. He stops at the massive city gates. The GATEMEN begin pulling the long chains that open the gates.

He senses someone behind him. He turns. Helen stands ten feet away, her unearthly beauty greater than ever. As the heavy gates rise, Helen and Hector stare at each other, never blinking, never looking away.

Finally the gate is lifted. Hector bows to Helen and fits his helmet on his head. He leaves the city. Helen watches him go.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Hector walks toward Achilles. Everything is very quiet. The people on the walls are hushed. Even the birds seem reverent.

Achilles stands motionless. The two men are alone on the great field. Hector stops twenty feet away from Achilles.

HECTOR

I've seen this moment in my dreams.

Achilles, expressionless, stares at the prince.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I'll make a pact with you, with the gods as our witnesses. Let us pledge that the winner will allow the loser all the proper funeral rituals.

ACHILLES

There are no pacts between lions and men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HECTOR

I thought it was you I was fighting yesterday. I wish it had been you. But I gave the dead boy the honor he--

ACHILLES

You gave him the honor of your sword.

(beat)

You won't have eyes tonight. You won't have ears, or a tongue. You'll wander the underworld, blind, deaf, and dumb. And all the dead will know: this is Hector, the fool who thought he killed Achilles.

Achilles draws his sword. Hector draws his. They charge.

We've seen extraordinary fighting before, but we've never seen this-- a prowess so extreme as to be hypnotic. Two better swordsmen have never clashed. All their lives, all their training and past battles, have led to this moment.

Nothing is wasted. No flourishes or balletic leaps or spins. Every swing is a death blow countered. The rapidity of the exchange is breathless.

The bronze blades hiss as they split the air. One of Achilles' swings hits the edge of Hector's shield with so much power sparks fly.

Hector lunges forward and from our angle it appears that he has skewered Achilles. Hector's face is inches from Achilles. Achilles appears unperturbed. Hector looks down.

Achilles has trapped him, allowing Hector's sword to miss his side by inches and then clamping down on Hector's sword arm. Hector tries to yank his sword free but cannot.

Achilles stabs at Hector's face and Hector ducks at the last possible moment, the sword point puncturing the air above his head. Achilles releases Hector and takes another mighty swing. His sword severs the horsehair plume on Hector's helmet; the helmet tumbles to the ground.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Andromache sits with Scamandrius, her back against the wall. She cannot watch. Her boy, blissfully unaware, coos happily and plays with his mother's long hair.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Achilles, sensing the advantage, moves in a step too close. Hector sees an opening and slashes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Achilles jumps back at the last possible moment, but Hector's blade gouges out a long strip of bronze from Achilles' breastplate.

Both men swing. Their swords lock and for a moment everything is still. Achilles' face is inches from Hector's. Hector is sweating and breathing heavily. Achilles is not.

Achilles shoves Hector and relaunches his attack. While Hector still fights ably, he's clearly tiring. As Achilles' blows force Hector back, the prince steps on a rock, trips, and falls. Achilles stands above him.

ACHILLES

Get up, prince of Troy. I won't let a stone take my glory.

Hector stands. He knows his energy is fading fast. So he spends everything on one last try. He charges, swinging with explosive fury, putting all his might into each blow.

When the barrage is finished and Hector pauses for a breath, he sees that Achilles, unhurt, has parried everything. Now Achilles bores in, swinging. Hector blocks and blocks, but doesn't have the stamina for a new assault.

Achilles lunges. Hector raises his shield. The sword plunges through the seven layers of oxhide, plunges through the hammered bronze of the shield, the bronze of the breastplate, all the way into Hector's heart.

Hector looks down at the blade. He looks at Achilles. There is no mercy or remorse on the man's face.

Hector falls.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Priam reacts as if he were the one receiving the blow, clutching at his chest and reeling backward.

Andromache hears the GROANS of the crowd. She covers her ears and clamps her eyes shut. Scamandrius stares at her, baffled.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Hector lies on his back. Achilles pulls out his bloody sword and walks to his chariot. Hector blinks. The sun, now high in the sky, is blinding. Hector stares into the sun and dies.

Achilles returns in the chariot. He jumps out with the coil of rope. He ties Hector's ankles together, then ties the other end of the rope to the back of the chariot.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

Priam and the other citizens watch in horror.

PRIAM

My boy... my baby boy...

Andromache sits against the wall, knees tucked against her chest, face against her knees. Scamandrius begins to cry. Helen kneels by Andromache. She picks up the baby and soothes him. Helen takes Andromache's hand. Andromache looks up.

HELEN

Come.

Andromache's eyes are a terrible thing to see.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Let's go inside.

Andromache allows Helen to pull her to her feet. Helen, holding the baby in one arm, guides Andromache away.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Achilles whips his horse and the chariot takes off, dragging Hector behind it, dragging Hector through the grass.

EXT. WALLS OF TROY

The Trojans watch Achilles' chariot dragging their dead hero. Priam's legs give out. Glaucus and Paris catch him before he falls and carry him toward the shade beneath the blue canopy.

EXT. SAND DUNES

Achilles rides his chariot over the crest of the dune. Tens of thousands of Greeks on the beach watch in solemn silence.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT

Achilles rides into camp. The Greek soldiers gather round to stare at Hector's body.

Achilles doesn't look at anyone. He unties the rope and hauls Hector by hand across the sands.

Odysseus stands nearby, amongst the men. A few of the soldiers laugh, seeing the Trojan prince laid low.

SOLDIER 1

He doesn't look so glorious now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Odysseus turns and glares at the soldier, who shuts his mouth. Odysseus walks away.

Achilles drags Hector's body to his tent, dumps him there, and walks inside.

EXT. ACHILLES' TENT - NIGHT

The Myrmidons sit around their campfires, roasting meat and drinking wine, telling stories and laughing.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - NIGHT

Achilles sits in the center of the tent, sharpening his sword. Briseis sits in a far corner. She's been crying for hours, her eyes red and swollen.

BRISEIS

He was my cousin.

Achilles stares at her, not understanding.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

Hector. You see? You lost your cousin and you took mine.

Achilles resumes his sharpening.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

When does it end?

ACHILLES

It never ends.

EXT. AEGEAN SEA - DAWN

A lone SEAGULL flies above the waves as the sun rises.

EXT. TROJAN BEACH - DAWN

Briseis sits on the beach, staring at the wine-dark sea.

INT. ACHILLES' TENT - DAWN

Achilles sits alone, his eyes empty. He hears a rustling at the tent flap. An old man wearing a hooded robe steps inside. The old man pulls his hood down. It's Priam.

ACHILLES

Who are you?

Priam seems physically hurt by the sight of Achilles. For a moment it seems he will collapse again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But he wills himself onward, walking to Achilles' chair. He sinks to his knees, takes Achilles' hands, and kisses them. Achilles observes all this with curiosity.

PRIAM

I have endured what no one on earth has endured before. I kissed the hands of the man who killed my son.

Achilles is stunned by this revelation, unsure how to react-- an unusual position for Achilles.

ACHILLES

Priam?

Priam nods. Achilles stands, helping the old man to his feet.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

How did you get in here, old king? The sentries--

PRIAM

I know my own country better than the Greeks, I think.

ACHILLES

You're a brave man. If Agamemnon knew you were here, he'd have your head on a spit.

PRIAM

Do you really think death frightens me now, brave Achilles? I watched my eldest son die. I watched you drag his body behind your chariot.

Priam stares at Achilles, and for the first time since we've known him, Achilles looks away.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

Give him back to me.

(beat)

He deserves the honor of a proper burial. You know that. Give him to me.

ACHILLES

He killed my cousin.

PRIAM

He defended his country. How many cousins have you killed? How many sons and fathers and brothers and husbands? How many, brave Achilles?

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRIAM (CONT'D)

I knew your father. He died before his time. But he was lucky not to live long enough to see his son fall.

Achilles does not respond. We cannot read his expression.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

You've taken everything from me. My eldest son, heir to my throne, defender of my kingdom.

(beat)

I can't change what happened. It's the will of the gods. But give me this small mercy.

Achilles looks into the old man's eyes.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

Let me wash his body. Let me say the prayers. Let me place two coins on his eyes for the boatman.

ACHILLES

If I let you walk out of here, if I let you take him, it doesn't change anything. You're still my enemy in the morning.

PRIAM

You're still my enemy tonight. But even enemies can show respect.

Achilles nods.

ACHILLES

I admire your courage, old man. You're a better king than the one leading this army. Meet me outside in a moment.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

Achilles gently loads Hector's body, now wrapped in a shroud, onto the chariot. Priam stands beside the chariot.

ACHILLES

Your son was the best I've fought. I want you to know that.

(beat)

In my country the funeral games last twelve days.

PRIAM

It's the same in my country.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACHILLES

Then no Greek will attack Troy for twelve days. The prince deserves that honor.

(beat)

I have something else of yours.

Briseis emerges from the shadows and walks to the chariot.

PRIAM

Briseis?

BRISEIS

Uncle.

Priam wraps his arms around her.

PRIAM

We thought you were dead.

After a moment Briseis turns and looks at Achilles. He's been watching her the whole time. Again, Achilles doesn't seem to know what to do-- a rare awkwardness for the great warrior.

Finally he reaches into his tunic and pulls out the SHELL NECKLACE that Patroclus had worn. He fastens it around her delicate neck, where the purple bruises are still visible. He speaks quietly to her, too softly for Priam to hear.

ACHILLES

If I hurt you-- it's not what I wanted.

She stares up at him, her young face mapped with conflicting emotions.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Your cousin was a good man. Give him the funeral he deserves.

BRISEIS

And after?

ACHILLES

You're free. Go.

They stare at each other. Perhaps there is something else he wants to say, but he's unable to say it. Finally, Achilles turns and addresses Priam.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Go. No one will stop you, you have my word.

Priam gets into the chariot. Briseis still looks at Achilles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRIAM

Come, my girl.

She reluctantly gets into the chariot. Priam seizes the reins and they're off, Briseis staring back the whole time.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Odysseus sits with his ITHACANS by the fire. Most of the men are eating and drinking. The soldier sitting beside Odysseus whittles with a sharp knife.

Odysseus watches the man work. The soldier notices his king's attention. He smiles and holds up a small WOOD HORSE.

SOLDIER

For my boy back home.

Odysseus nods, never taking his eyes off the toy horse.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE OF TROY - NIGHT

A giant pyre has been built in the city square. Thousands of CITIZENS are gathered around to watch.

Hector ^{is} atop the pyre, ^{is} dressed in a woven robe of white and gold, his hair washed and oiled, his skin gleaming and clean. His face is undamaged. Two coins rest above his eyes.

Standing at the base of the pyre, Priam touches his lit torch to the kindling. He hands the torch to Paris, who carries it to the other side of the pyre and lights the kindling there.

Helen, Andromache, and baby Scamandrius sit nearby. Andromache's face is completely blank. She stares dully at the quickening fire. Helen holds Scamandrius in her lap. The boy plays with the WOOD LION his father made for him.

EXT. GUARD TOWER - DAWN

SUPERIMPOSE: TWELVE DAYS LATER

The SENTRIES we met earlier are back at their posts, warming their hands over a brazier. The sky is beginning to lighten.

Sentry 1 stares down to the sea. He hurries to the edge of the tower and squints into the morning fog. Sentry 2 looks at him and then joins him.

SENTRY 1

They're gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's true. All the Greek ships are gone from the beach. All the tents have been struck, all the chariots taken away, every last man-- gone.

Nothing's left on the beach but a massive WOOD HORSE.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The horse stands forty feet high, its carved hooves set on a wheeled platform.

Priam, Paris, Glaucus, Archeptolemus, and Velior lead the Trojan army onto the beach. The soldiers-- still wary of an ambush-- surround their leaders, protecting them from attack.

The beach is deserted save for a few stray arrows, the remnants of the camp fires, and corpses-- dozens of Greek bodies scattered in the sands.

Each of the cadavers is covered with large black sores. The Trojans inspect the bodies, keeping a wary distance.

PRIAM

Plague.

GLAUCUS

Don't get too close, my king.

VELIOR

How could this happen?

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

It's the will of the gods.

Everyone turns to look at the high priest.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS (CONT'D)

They desecrated the temple of Apollo and Apollo desecrated their flesh. The Greeks could fight our swords and arrows, but they can't fight the god's plague.

Glaucus shakes his head and laughs.

GLAUCUS

They thought they'd come here and sack our city in a day. And look at them now, fleeing across the Aegean.

VELIOR

They won't be coming back anytime soon.

Priam stares up at the great horse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRIAM

What is this?

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

An offering.

PRIAM

To whom?

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

To Poseidon. The Greeks are praying for a safe return home.

GLAUCUS

I hope the Sea God spits on their offering and lets them all drown at the bottom of the sea.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

This is a gift. We should bring it to the temple of Poseidon.

All the men stare at the towering horse.

PARIS

I think we should burn it.

VELIOR

Burn it? My prince-- it's a gift to the gods.

GLAUCUS

The prince is right. I don't want anything Greek in our city.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

I warn you, good men. Be careful what you insult. Our beloved prince Hector had sharp words for the gods and a day later Achilles' sword cut him down.

Priam turns to look at his high priest.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS (CONT'D)

Forgive me, my king. But I don't want to see any more cherished men of Troy incur the gods' wrath.

PRIAM

And how do we please the gods?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

A gift for Poseidon belongs in the house
of Poseidon.

Priam nods. Paris taps on one of the horse's huge legs with
his knuckles. It's solid wood.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Dozens of Trojan soldiers tugging long ropes pull the massive
horse across the grassy plain.

EXT. GATES OF TROY - DAY

The soldiers drag the horse through the gates. The citizens
of Troy watch from atop the walls and inside the city proper.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE OF TROY - DAY

The horse now stands near the statue of Poseidon wielding his
trident, beside his temple on one corner of the city square.

The square is crowded and jubilant. Soldiers and citizens
celebrate their great victory, drinking wine in the streets,
waving torches and Trojan flags, singing songs.

Paris and Helen sit on the palace stairs, watching the crowd.

PARIS

Look at them. You'd think their prince
had never died.

Helen takes his hand.

HELEN

You're their prince.

PARIS

They'll never look at me the way they
looked at Hector.

HELEN

You have to lead them now. Make your
brother proud.

Paris looks at her. Her comment echoes the words Hector spoke
to him before his death. Paris nods solemnly.

Helen rests her head on Paris's shoulder and they sit there,
alone and quiet, as the crowds sing in the street.

EXT. BEACH ENCAMPMENT - DAY

An abandoned DOG lopes along the beach, stopping to sniff each Greek corpse. Finding one dead man he seems to recognize, the dog licks the cadaver's face.

The "sore" on the dead face is licked clean. The sores are masterful forgeries, applied with molasses, squid ink, and dried blood.

EXT. GUARD TOWER - NIGHT

Now that the Greeks have gone, the guards have relaxed their vigilance. Both SENTRIES sleep in their chairs, wine gourds in their laps.

EXT. GATES OF TROY - NIGHT

Of the four SENTRIES here, two are asleep and two play a sluggish game of dice.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE OF TROY - NIGHT

The square is empty now, all the revelers gone home. The wood horse waits in the moonlight.

A trap door in the horse's belly slides open. Five rope ladders, anchored inside the horse, fall to the ground.

Soldiers emerge from the horse's belly and climb silently down the rope ladders: Achilles, Odysseus, Eudorus, ten other Greek soldiers. None of them wear the bright, clanking bronze armor. Their swords and spears are wrapped in lambskins.

Odysseus leads one team of men across the square. Quiet as shadows, they creep up on the sentries guarding the main gate. Eudorus leads another team toward the guard towers.

Achilles stands alone in the dark square, watching his compatriots set off on their deadly missions. Finally he turns and moves in the opposite direction, toward the palace.

Odysseus and another Ithacan cut the dice players' throats. Other Greeks kill the sleeping sentries. The soldiers begin pulling the chains to raise the city gates.

A LONE RIDER gallops up the road to Troy. The Greeks see him coming and look to Odysseus for guidance. The rider, still at some distance, shouts to the men at the gates.

LONE RIDER

They're still here! The Greeks are still here! They sailed up the Hellespont!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he gets closer, the rider sees that the men at the gates do not wear Trojan armor. Startled, he reins in his horse.

Odysseus hurls his spear. It flies through the bars of the gate and into the rider's throat, knocking him from his horse. The horse, panicked, gallops away.

EXT. GUARD TOWER

One of the sentries, hearing the commotion, wakes up. Groggy, he looks over the edge of the tower-- into Eudorus's face. Eudorus, one hand on the ladder, stabs the sentry. Another Myrmidon crawls into the tower and kills the second sentry.

EXT. GATES OF TROY

The Greeks pull the gates open. They wave their torches, a signal for someone down the road. Looking into the distance, down the unlit road, we see something shifting in the darkness, coming closer and closer.

The Greek army, armor blackened with soot, charges toward the city at a sprint, howling out for war. The collective cry of thousands upon thousands of warriors.

Like water bursting through a dam, the Greeks blast through the gates, swords and spears raised.

EXT. TROY - NIGHT

All over the city, the Greeks carry out their raids, killing sentries at their posts, setting buildings on fire with torches, opening the stable doors and shooing all the frightened horses into the streets.

Soon the city is in chaos. Fires burn out of control. Screams begin to echo down the alleyways, first just a few, then more and more, until it seems the entire city is screaming.

Achilles runs through the burning city, keeping to the shadows. He's not looking for a fight-- he's looking for someone.

INT. PRIAM'S CHAMBER

Priam, hearing the clamor, walks to the balcony overlooking the city. He sees Troy burning.

INT. PARIS'S BEDCHAMBER

Helen and Paris hear the screaming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN

They're inside the walls.

EXT. TROJAN ARMORY

Glaucus stands in front of his men. Trojan soldiers are beginning to straggle in, but they're not prepared for this. Many are unarmed and all look terrified.

GLAUCUS

Arm yourselves, men! Arm yourselves!

Several Trojan captains run to the doors of the armory and throw them open.

They dive back as a BLAST of heat rushes out the door. The armory is aflame, fires eating at the wood-beamed ceiling, devouring thousands of spears on their racks.

EXT. TROJAN STREETS

FAMILIES of terrified civilians stagger through the streets in their bedclothes. MOTHERS clutch their CHILDREN's hands. OLD WOMEN flee their burning buildings.

The women scream when they see Achilles running toward them, sword drawn. But pillaging is the last thing on his mind.

ACHILLES

Briseis! Briseis!

He searches the cowering Trojans for her face.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE OF TROY

Agamemnon stands in the very center of Troy, head tilted back, glorying in the destruction, watching with delight as the beautiful city burns.

AGAMEMNON

(to himself)

I promised you, brother.

(yelling to his troops)

Burn it all!

INT. PARIS'S BEDCHAMBER

Paris suits up for battle with unsteady hands. He grabs his bow and quiver of arrows. Helen watches him.

Andromache enters the room, Scamandrius in her arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDROMACHE

We have to run.

HELEN

Where?

ANDROMACHE

I'll show you.

Paris looks at Helen.

HELEN

Come, my love. Come with us.

EXT. STREETS OF TROY

Odysseus battles his way down the street, leading Eudorus and other Greeks against a contingent of half-armored Trojans. The Trojans are too dazed to offer much resistance.

EXT. TROJAN SQUARE

Greek soldiers in the bowels of the city have rounded up hundreds of TROJAN WOMEN and CHILDREN. The soldiers roam through the crowd, yanking gold chains from the women's necks, grabbing sacks of household items from their hands.

Achilles hurries through the throngs of sobbing Trojans, staring at the women's faces. He sees one YOUNG WOMAN with her back to him, her hair cut in the same style as Briseis's.

Achilles rushes to her, grabs her shoulders, and spins her around. It's not Briseis. The young woman stares at him, her face frozen with terror, expecting the worst.

Achilles moves on.

INT. PALACE OF TROY

Andromache, carrying her baby, leads Helen, Paris, and several other WOMEN and CHILDREN through the back corridors Hector showed her before. They arrive at the oaken door. Andromache pulls it open. Everyone stares into the darkness.

ANDROMACHE

Everyone take a torch. It's a long walk.

Helen and the others grab lit torches from their sconces in the walls. Paris does not. He's listening to the sounds of violence, audible even here, deep within the palace walls.

HELEN

Paris.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PARIS

I have to stay.

HELEN

No--

PARIS

My brother died defending the city. I can't run now.

HELEN

The city is dead! It's dead! Don't you hear? They're burning it to the ground.

PARIS

I can't leave.

HELEN

We need you. We need you to protect us. I need you.

ANDROMACHE

We have to go.

PARIS

Go.

HELEN

No!

Paris looks at the huddled refugees. They're a timid lot, terrified and weak. One BOY (14) looks stronger and braver than the rest. He's supporting his ELDERLY FATHER.

PARIS

What's your name?

AENEAS

Aeneas.

PARIS

Aeneas. Do you know how to use a sword?

Aeneas nods. Paris pulls out the sword of Troy. Even here, in torchlight, the sword glows with luminous authority.

PARIS (CONT'D)

The sword of Troy. I wasn't so good with it, but it's a fine sword.

(beat)

As long as this sword is in a Trojan's hand, our people have a future.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He hands it to Aeneas.

PARIS (CONT'D)

Protect them, Aeneas. Find them a new home.

AENEAS

I will.

Paris smiles at the boy and then nods to Andromache.

PARIS

Go.

Andromache kisses Paris on the cheek. She turns from him and leads the way down the stone staircase. Everyone follows her. Aeneas, purposeful and determined, nods to Paris and helps his father down the stairs.

Only Helen is left.

HELEN

I'll stay with you.

PARIS

No, you won't.

HELEN

I already told you--

PARIS

You told me that you were dead before. Now you're alive. You're alive. And I want you to live.

HELEN

Please--

He kisses her hard and pushes her gently toward the door.

PARIS

Go.

He pushes her through the door and closes it. For a moment he rests his head against the door. Finally he kisses the wood, turns and runs toward the battle.

EXT. PALACE OF TROY

Achilles scales the high wall surrounding the palace and deftly jumps to the other side. He's spotted by two Apollonian Guards.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Guards charge. Achilles is not in the mood. He chops down the first Guard with a blow so brutal the blood splatters the second Guard's face. The second guard stops in his tracks.

The second Guard runs. Achilles catches him after three strides and hauls him to the ground, sword at his throat.

ACHILLES

Briseis-- where is she?

APOLLONIAN #2

Please--

ACHILLES

Where is she?

APOLLONIAN #2

Please, my lord-- I have a son.

Achilles yanks the man upright and shoves him away.

ACHILLES

Get him out of Troy.

The Guard, stunned to find himself alive, finally runs. Achilles turns and stares up at the palace.

EXT. PALACE STAIRS

Odysseus and his men fight their way up the palace stairs. The Trojans resist heroically. They die heroically.

INT. PRIAM'S CHAMBER

Priam has armed himself with a sword. He hurries out.

INT. PALACE HALL

Priam, rushing through the hall, sees two Myrmidons grabbing small GOLD FIGURINES of the gods from their wall sconces.

PRIAM

You!

The Myrmidons look up at him. Priam raises his sword.

PRIAM (CONT'D)

Those are images of the gods you violate!

Before Priam can move forward he is speared from behind, the bronze spearhead tearing through his back and out his chest. He stares down at the spearhead and falls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Agamemnon stands above him. He yanks his spear free.

AGAMEMNON

I wanted you alive, old king. I wanted
you to watch your city burn.

PRIAM

(gasping)

Please... the children... spare the
innocent...

AGAMEMNON

Nobody's innocent.

He walks away, leaving the old man to die alone on the floor.

INT. TEMPLE OF ZEUS

Archeptolemus kneels beneath a statue of Zeus. He stands when
a band of Greek soldiers rushes into the temple.

ARCHEPTOLEMUS

Beware, my friends. I am a servant of the
gods.

A YOUNG SOLDIER chops him down. Archeptolemus, lying on his
back, stares up at Zeus's stone face. The god stares down,
marble eyes unblinking.

INT. PALACE - RECEPTION HALL

Outside we hear the screams and battle cries. Glaucus stands
with fifty of his men, the last line of defense. He walks
through their ranks, clasping hands with each man.

GLAUCUS

You men are soldiers. Leading you has
been an honor.

Paris runs into the hall, holding his bow. Glaucus and the
other men look at him. Glaucus smiles and clasps hands with
the prince. Glaucus addresses the men.

GLAUCUS (CONT'D)

The boatman is waiting for us. I say, let
him wait a little longer!

The men roar. As Glaucus raises his sword, the Greeks spill
into the reception hall.

EXT. PALACE

Glaucus, Paris and their comrades attack. For a few moments they drive the Greeks back. Paris notches an arrow and fires. A Myrmidon falls, an arrow through his eye.

But there are too many Greeks. More and more pour through the doors. The Trojans fight bravely, especially Paris, who fires quickly and accurately.

Odysseus engages Glaucus and quickly kills the old general. The surviving Trojans retreat farther into the palace.

EXT. SHRINE OF APOLLO

Briseis kneels before the statue of the Sun God in the palace garden, seemingly oblivious to the fighting nearby. She wears a blue robe and the seashell necklace.

AGAMEMNON (O.S.)

Too late for prayer, little priestess.

Briseis does not look up. Agamemnon grabs her long hair and pulls her to her feet. He holds his sword to her throat. Two of his BODYGUARDS stand behind him, leering at the girl.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

Your parents should have taught you to stand for a king.

BRISEIS

They did.

AGAMEMNON

You wore a white robe when I last saw you. No more? Did brave Achilles ruin you for the temple?

Briseis does not look at him or answer.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

You caused many problems for me. I almost lost this war because of you.

He pulls her close, hands on her robe, whispering in her ear.

AGAMEMNON (CONT'D)

You'll be my slave in Mycenae. A Trojan priestess scrubbing my floors. And at night--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He tears her robe. Briseis pulls her hand out of her sleeve. She's holding a ceremonial DAGGER, what the priests use to sacrifice pigs and goats.

She drives the dagger into the side of Agamemnon's neck. His eyes bulge. She rams the dagger deeper. Agamemnon falls to the ground, clutching at his neck.

The bodyguards stare at their dying king in disbelief. They look at Briseis. Briseis runs. The bodyguards pursue her.

INT. PALACE

Achilles, walking over the bodies of dead Trojans in the palace hall, looks out an archway. He sees Briseis, in the moonlight, running.

Achilles dashes outside.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN

Briseis stumbles and falls. She looks behind her. One of the bodyguards has his sword raised over his head, ready to split Briseis in half.

Before he can bring down his sword, his head flies from his shoulders. Before the man has fallen, Achilles whirls around and dispatches the other bodyguard, bronze sword glittering in the moonlight.

INT. PALACE OF TROY - CONTINUOUS

Paris, bow in hand, stealthily paces the hallways. He looks out an archway to the garden and sees his cousin Briseis, kneeling in the grass.

He sees Achilles-- the man who killed his brother-- splattered with blood, sword in hand, standing over Briseis.

Paris runs outside.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Achilles looks down at Agamemnon's corpse, lying in puddled blood a few feet away. He looks back to Briseis.

ACHILLES

Come with me.

Before she can answer her eyes go wide. She sees Paris in an archway of the palace, notching an arrow. Achilles, one of the commandos in the wooden horse, wears no armor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Come. I'll protect you.

Paris pulls back the catgut string. Briseis finds her voice and screams at Paris.

BRISEIS

No!

Paris fires. Briseis's scream distracts him-- the arrow sails off course, hitting Achilles above his heel, tearing through the tendon. Achilles staggers, turns, and sees Paris.

Achilles snarls and heads for him. Paris shoots again. Achilles tries to dodge but the torn tendon in his heel slows him down. The arrow rips through his side.

Achilles keeps limping forward.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

Stop! Paris! Stop!

Paris releases another arrow. Now Achilles doesn't even try to dodge. The arrow sinks deep into his chest.

Achilles keeps coming. Paris notches another arrow. His hands are shaking but he fires again. This one drills deep into Achilles' belly.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

Stop!

Achilles keeps coming. Paris reaches for another arrow. His quiver is empty. Aeneas has his sword.

The palace around them is burning, lighting their faces. Blood pours from Achilles' wounds. The arrow shafts stick out of him. Any other man would have already fallen. But he keeps coming, relentless, his face a mask of grim purpose.

Briseis runs in front of her cousin Paris and shields him with her body. Achilles lifts his bloody sword.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)

No more.

ACHILLES

Move.

Briseis does not move. For several seconds the great warrior and the young girl stare at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRISEIS
No more killing.

Achilles looks at the seashell necklace she wears.

BRISEIS (CONT'D)
No more.

Achilles raises his sword and brings it down hard, burying its bronze blade in the soil of the garden.

ACHILLES
No more.

He reaches out and rubs the shells of her necklace.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
My mother made this necklace.

He sinks to a sitting position on the grass. He pulls the arrows out of his body and tosses them aside. Briseis sits beside him. She cradles his head in her arms.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
You have to get out of here.

BRISEIS
Shh.

ACHILLES
Get out.

She kisses him, running her fingers across his jaw.

BRISEIS
There's no way out.

Achilles stares at Paris.

ACHILLES
There's always a way out for the princes.
(to Paris)
Get her out of here.

Paris touches her shoulder. She shakes her head.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Get out.

Paris lifts Briseis to her feet and pulls her away.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)
Briseis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She turns.

ACHILLES (CONT'D)

Remember my name.

Her face is full of pity and sorrow and love.

BRISEIS

Everyone will remember your name.

(beat)

I'll remember you.

Paris tugs her and she turns, reluctantly, and leaves.

Achilles sits alone in the garden. He shivers, hugging himself for warmth, waiting.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE OF TROY - DAWN

The Greeks are victorious. The beautiful city of Troy is a ruin. Trojan PRISONERS are led off in chains. Greek soldiers carry gold treasures from the lavish temples and palace.

The square is filled with funeral pyres. One pyre, taller than the rest, rises in the center of the square. Odysseus stands atop it, staring down at the body of Achilles.

Odysseus holds the gold SCEPTER of command, formerly held by Agamemnon.

For a long time Odysseus looks at the dead man's face. Finally he reaches inside his tunic, pulls out two coins, and places them over Achilles' eyes.

ODYSSEUS

Find peace, my brother.

Odysseus walks down from the towering pyre. He nods to Eudorus, who holds a torch. Eudorus lights the pyre. The surviving Myrmidons stand in a circle around the pyre, helmets in their hands.

Black smoke rises into the blue sky. The CROWS are circling.

EXT. SCAMANDER RIVER - DAWN

The daylight is almost blinding. It's a perfect morning.

The group of Trojan refugees sits at the river bank, scooping up handfuls of water and drinking. Scamandrius sits in Andromache's lap, playing with his wooden lion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Helen sits alone on a large rock twenty yards from the river. Behind her, halfway up a small hill, a narrow cave opening leads to the tunnel to Troy.

Aeneas marks the sun's progress through the sky.

AENEAS

We need to move. We're not safe yet.

Andromache, shielding her eyes from the sun, looks toward Mount Ida. She stands. Scamandrius sits on her shoulders.

ANDROMACHE

Helen.

Helen looks up. Andromache waits for her down by the river. The others have already begun walking toward the mountain.

Helen stands and begins picking her way through the hillside scree. She hears something behind her. She turns.

Paris and Briseis emerge from the dark cave, blinking in the sunlight. Paris is covered with dried blood. He sees Helen and goes to her.

She stares at him, not believing. Fearfully, she runs her fingers over his face, his body.

HELEN

You're hurt--

PARIS

No.

HELEN

But you're--

He holds her to him. She closes her eyes and exhales.

HELEN (CONT'D)

My prince. My sweet prince.

They hold on to each other and don't let go.

Aeneas and the other refugees are far ahead. The Trojans walk, following the river, east toward the rising sun.