

in words of comfort, whereon Thetis drank and gave her back the cup; and the father of gods and men was the first to speak.

"So, goddess," he said, "for all your sorrow, and the grief that I well know reigns ever in your heart, you have come here to Olympus, and I will tell you why I have sent for you. This nine days past the immortals have been quarrelling about Achilles sacker of cities and the body of Hector. The gods would have Hermes slayer of Argus steal the body, but in furtherance of our peace and amity henceforward, I will concede such honor to your son as I will now tell you. Go, then, to the host and lay these commands upon him; say that the gods are angry with him, and that I am myself more angry than them all, in that he keeps Hector at the ships and will not give him up. He may thus fear me and let the body go. At the same time I will send Iris to great Priam to bid him go to the ships of the Achaeans, and ransom his son, taking with him such gifts for Achilles as may give him satisfaction."

Silver-footed Thetis did as the god had told her, and forthwith down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus. She went to her son's tents where she found him grieving bitterly, while his trusty comrades around him were busy preparing their morning meal, for which they had killed a great woolly sheep. His mother sat down beside him and caressed him with her hand saying, "My son, how long will you keep on thus grieving and moaning? You are gnawing at your own heart, and think neither of food nor of woman's embraces; and yet these too were well, for you have no long time to live, and death with the strong hand of fate are already close beside you. Now, therefore, heed what I say, for I come as a messenger from Zeus; he says that the gods are angry with you, and himself more angry than them all, in that you keep Hector at the ships and will not give him up. Therefore let him go, and accept a ransom for his body."

And Achilles answered, "So be it. If Olympian Zeus of his own motion thus commands me, let him that brings the ransom bear the body away."

Thus did mother and son talk together at the ships in long discourse with one another. Meanwhile the son of Cronus sent Iris to the strong city of Ilium. "Go," he said, "fleet Iris, from the mansions of Olym-

pus, and tell King Priam in Ilium that he is to go to the ships of the Achaeans and free the body of his dear son. He is to take such gifts with him as shall give satisfaction to Achilles, and he is to go alone, with no other Trojan, save only some honored servant who may drive his mules and wagon, and bring back the body of him whom noble Achilles has slain. Let him have no thought or fear of death in his heart, for we will send the slayer of Argus to escort him, and bring him within the tent of Achilles. Achilles will not kill him or let another do so, for he will take heed to his ways and not be imprudent, and he will treat a suppliant with all honorable courtesy."

On this, Iris, fleet as the wind, sped forth to deliver her message. She went to Priam's house, and found weeping and lamentation therein. His sons were seated around their father in the outer courtyard, and their raiment was wet with tears; the old man sat in the midst of them with his mantle wrapped close about his body, and his head and neck all covered with the filth which he had clutched as he lay grovelling in the mire. His daughters and his sons' wives went wailing about the house, as they thought of the many and brave men who lay dead, slain by the Argives. The messenger of Zeus stood by Priam and spoke softly to him, but fear fell upon him as she did so. "Take heart," she said, "Priam, offspring of Dardanus, take heart and do not fear. I bring no evil tidings, but am minded well towards you. I come as a messenger from Zeus, who though he is not near, takes thought for you and pities you. The lord of Olympus bids you go and ransom noble Hector, and take with you such gifts as shall give satisfaction to Achilles. You are to go alone, with no other Trojan, save only some honored servant who may drive your mules and wagon, and bring back to the city the body of him whom noble Achilles has slain. You are to have no thought or fear of death, for Zeus will send the slayer of Argus to escort you. When he has brought you within Achilles's tent, Achilles will not kill you or let another do so, for he will take heed to his ways and not be imprudent, and he will treat a suppliant with all honorable courtesy."

Iris went her way when she had thus spoken, and Priam told his sons to get a mule-wagon ready, and to make the body of the wagon fast upon the top of its bed. Then he went down into his fragrant store-room,

high vaulted, and made of cedar-wood, where his many treasures were kept, and he called Hecuba his wife. "Wife," he said, "a messenger has come to me from Olympus, and has told me to go to the ships of the Achaeans to ransom my dear son, taking with me such gifts as shall give satisfaction to Achilles. What do you think of this matter? For my own part I am greatly moved to pass through the host of the Achaeans and go to their ships."

His wife cried aloud as she heard him, and said, "Alas, what has become of that judgment for which you have been ever famous both among strangers and your own people? How can you venture alone to the ships of the Achaeans, and look into the face of him who has slain so many of your brave sons? You must have iron courage, for if the cruel savage sees you and lays hold of you, he will know neither respect nor pity. Let us then weep for Hector from afar, here in our own house, for when I gave him birth the threads of overruling fate were spun for him that dogs should eat his flesh far from his parents, in the house of that terrible man on whose liver I would fasten and devour. Thus would I avenge my son, who showed no cowardice when Achilles slew him, and thought neither of flight nor of avoiding battle as he stood in defense of Trojan men and Trojan women."

Then Priam said, "I would go; do not therefore stay me or be as a bird of ill omen in my house, for you will not move me. Had it been some mortal man who had sent me—some prophet or priest who divines from sacrifice—I should have deemed him false and have given him no heed; but now I have heard the goddess and seen her face to face, therefore I will go and, her speaking shall not be in vain. If it is my fate to die at the ships of the Achaeans even so would I have it; let Achilles slay me, if I may but first have taken my son in my arms and mourned him to my heart's comforting."

So saying he lifted the lids of his chests, and took out 12 goodly vestments. He took also 12 cloaks of single fold, 12 rugs, 12 fair mantles, and an equal number of shirts. He weighed out 10 talents of gold, and brought moreover 2 burnished tripods, 4 cauldrons, and a very beautiful cup which the Thracians had given him when he had gone to them on an embassy; it was very precious, but he did not grudge even this,

so eager was he to ransom the body of his son. Then he chased all the Trojans from the court and rebuked them with words of anger. "Out," he cried, "shame and disgrace to me that you are. Have you no grief in your own homes that you have come to plague me here? Do you think it is a small thing that the son of Cronus has sent this sorrow upon me, to lose the bravest of my sons? No, you shall prove it in person, for now he is gone the Achaeans will have easier work in killing you. As for me, let me go down within the house of Hades before my eyes behold the sacking and wasting of the city."

He drove the men away with his staff, and they went forth as the old man sped them. Then he called to his sons, upbraiding Helenus, Paris, noble Agathon, Pammon, Antiphonus, Polites of the loud battle-cry, Deiphobus, Hippothous, and Dius. These nine did the old man call near him. "Come to me at once," he cried, "worthless sons who do me shame; would that you had all been killed at the ships rather than Hector. Miserable man that I am, I have had the bravest sons in all Troy—noble Nestor, Troilus the dauntless charioteer, and Hector who was a god among men, so that one would have thought he was son to an immortal—yet there is not one of them left. Ares has slain them and those of whom I am ashamed are alone left me. Liars, and light of foot, heroes of the dance, robbers of lambs and kids from your own people, why do you not get a wagon ready for me at once, and put all these things upon it that I may set out on my way?"

Thus did he speak, and they feared the rebuke of their father. They brought out a strong mule-wagon, newly made, and set the body of the wagon fast on its bed. They took the mule-yoke from the peg on which it hung, a yoke of boxwood with a knob on the top of it and rings for the reins to go through. Then they brought a yoke-band 11 cubits long, to bind the yoke to the pole; they bound it on at the far end of the pole, and put the ring over the upright pin making it fast with three turns of the band on either side the knob, and bending the thong of the yoke beneath it. This done, they brought from the store chamber the rich ransom that was to purchase the body of Hector, and they set it all orderly on the wagon; then they yoked the strong harness-mules which the Mysians had once given as a goodly present to Priam; but for Priam him-

self they yoked horses which the old kir and kept for his own use.

Thus heedfully did Priam and his servants yoking of their cars at the palace. Then Hector to them all sorrowful, with a golden goblet in her right hand, that they might make a drink before they set out. She stood in front of the old man and said, "Take this, make a drink-offering to Zeus, and since you are minded to go to the ships of the Achaeans, pray that you may come safely back from the hands of your enemies. Pray to the son of Cronus, the whirlwind, who sits on Ida and looks over all Troy, pray him to send his swift messenger to your right hand, the bird of omen which is most dear to him of all birds, that you may see it with your own eyes and trust it as you go to the ships of the Danaans. If all seeing Zeus will you this messenger, however set upon it by me, I would not have you go to the ships of the Achaeans."

And Priam answered, "Wife, I will do as you bid me; it is well to lift hands in prayer to Zeus, may he have mercy upon me."

With this the old man bade the servants to pour pure water over his hands, and the women to bear the water in a bowl. He washed his hands and took the cup from his wife; then he made a drink-offering and prayed, standing in the middle of the courtyard and turning his eyes to heaven. "Zeus," he said, "that rules from Ida, most glorious, most great, grant that I may be received kindly and compassionately in the tents of Achilles, and send your swift messenger upon my right hand, the bird of omen which is strongest and most dear to you, that I may see it with my own eyes as I go forth to the ships of the Danaans."

So did he pray, and Zeus the lord of counsel heard his prayer. Forthwith he sent an eagle, the most portentous of all birds that fly, the dusky hunter which men also call the Black Eagle. His wings were abroad on either side as wide as the well-matched well-bolted door of a rich man's chamber. He was seen flying over the city upon their right hand when they saw him they were glad and their

self they yoked horses which the old king had bred, and kept for his own use.

Thus heedfully did Priam and his servant see to the yoking of their cars at the palace. Then Hecuba came to them all sorrowful, with a golden goblet of wine in her right hand, that they might make a drink-offering before they set out. She stood in front of the horses and said, "Take this, make a drink-offering to father Zeus, and since you are minded to go to the ships in spite of me, pray that you may come safely back from the hands of your enemies. Pray to the son of Cronus lord of the whirlwind, who sits on Ida and looks down over all Troy, pray him to send his swift messenger on your right hand, the bird of omen which is strongest and most dear to him of all birds, that you may see it with your own eyes and trust it as you go forth to the ships of the Danaans. If all seeing Zeus will not send you this messenger, however set upon it you may be, I would not have you go to the ships of the Argives."

And Priam answered, "Wife, I will do as you desire me; it is well to lift hands in prayer to Zeus, if so he may have mercy upon me."

With this the old man bade the serving-woman pour pure water over his hands, and the woman came, bearing the water in a bowl. He washed his hands and took the cup from his wife; then he made the drink-offering and prayed, standing in the middle of the courtyard and turning his eyes to heaven. "Father Zeus," he said, "that rules from Ida, most glorious and most great, grant that I may be received kindly and compassionately in the tents of Achilles, and send your swift messenger upon my right hand, the bird of omen which is strongest and most dear to you of all birds, that I may see it with my own eyes and trust it as I go forth to the ships of the Danaans."

So did he pray, and Zeus the lord of counsel heard his prayer. Forthwith he sent an eagle, the most unerring portent of all birds that fly, the dusky hunter that men also call the Black Eagle. His wings were spread abroad on either side as wide as the well-made and well-bolted door of a rich man's chamber. He came to them flying over the city upon their right hands, and when they saw him they were glad and their hearts

took comfort within them. The old man made haste to mount his chariot, and drove out through the inner gateway and under the echoing gatehouse of the outer court. Before him went the mules drawing the four-wheeled wagon, and driven by wise Idæus; behind these were the horses, which the old man lashed with his whip and drove swiftly through the city, while his friends followed after, wailing and lamenting for him as though he were on his road to death. As soon as they had come down from the city and had reached the plain, his sons and sons-in-law who had followed him went back to Ilium.

But Priam and Idæus as they showed out upon the plain did not escape the notice of all-seeing Zeus, who looked down upon the old man and pitied him; then he spoke to his son Hermes and said, "Hermes, for it is you who are the most disposed to escort men on their way, and to hear those whom you will hear, go, and so conduct Priam to the ships of the Achæans that no other of the Danaans shall see him or take note of him until he reaches the son of Peleus."

Thus he spoke, and Hermes, guide and guardian, slayer of Argus, did as he was told. Forthwith he bound on his glittering golden sandals with which he could fly like the wind over land and sea; he took the wand with which he seals men's eyes in sleep, or wakes them just as he pleases, and flew holding it in his hand till he came to Troy and to the Hellespont. To look at, he was like a young man of noble birth in the hey-day of his youth and beauty with the down just coming upon his face.

Now when Priam and Idæus had driven past the great tomb of Ilus,⁴⁹ they stayed their mules and horses that they might drink in the river, for the shades of night were falling; when, therefore, Idæus saw Hermes standing near them he said to Priam, "Take heed, descendant of Dardanus; here is matter which demands consideration. I see a man who I think will presently fall upon us; let us fly with our horses, or at least embrace his knees and implore him to take compassion upon us."

When he heard this the old man's heart failed him, and he was in great fear; he stayed where he was as

⁴⁹ Grandfather of Priam.

one dazed, and the hair stood on end over his whole body; but the bringer of good luck came up to him and took him by the hand, saying, "Where, father, are you thus driving your mules and horses in the dead of night when other men are asleep? Are you not afraid of the fierce Achaeans who are hard by you, so cruel and relentless? Should some one of them see you bearing so much treasure through the darkness of the fleeting night, what would not your state then be? You are no longer young, and he who is with you is too old to protect you from those who would attack you. For myself, I will do you no harm, and I will defend you from anyone else, for you remind me of my own father."

And Priam answered, "It is indeed as you say, my dear son; nevertheless some god has held his hand over me, in that he has sent such a wayfarer as yourself to meet me so opportunely; you are so comely in face and figure, and your judgment is so excellent that you must come of blessed parents."

Then said the slayer of Argus, guide and guardian, "Sir, all that you have said is right; but tell me and tell me true, are you taking this rich treasure to send it to a foreign people where it may be safe, or are you all leaving strong Ilium in dismay now that your son has fallen who was the bravest man among you and was never lacking in battle with the Achaeans?"

And Priam said, "Who are you, my friend, and who are your parents, that you speak so truly about the fate of my unhappy son?"

The slayer of Argus, guide and guardian, answered him, "Sir, you would test me, that you question me about noble Hector. Many a time have I set eyes upon him in battle when he was driving the Argives to their ships and putting them to the sword. We stood still and marvelled, for Achilles in his anger with the son of Atreus did not suffer us to fight. I am his attendant, and came with him in the same ship. I am a Myrmidon, and my father's name is Polyctor; he is a rich man and about as old as you are; he has six sons besides myself, and I am the seventh. We cast lots, and it fell upon me to sail here with Achilles. I have now come from the ships on to the plain, for with daybreak the Achaeans will set battle in array about the city. They chafe at doing nothing, and are so eager that their princes cannot hold them back."

Then Priam answered, "If you are indeed the attendant of Achilles, son of Peleus, tell me now the whole truth. Is my son still at the ships, or has Achilles hewn him limb from limb, and given him to his hounds?"

"Sir," replied the slayer of Argus, guide and guardian, "neither hounds nor vultures have yet devoured him; he is still just lying at the tents by the ship of Achilles, and though it is now 12 days that he has lain there, his flesh is not wasted nor have the worms eaten him although they feed on warriors. At daybreak Achilles drags him cruelly around the sepulcher of his dear comrade, but it does him no harm. You should come yourself and see how he lies fresh as dew, with the blood all washed away, and his wounds every one of them closed though many pierced him with their spears. Such care have the blessed gods taken of your brave son, for he was dear to them beyond all measure."

The old man was comforted as he heard him and said, "My son, see what a good thing it is to have made due offerings to the immortals; for as sure as that he was born, my son never forgot the gods that hold Olympus, and now they requite it to him even in death. Accept therefore at my hands this goodly chalice; guard me and with heaven's help guide me till I come to the tent of the son of Peleus."

Then answered the slayer of Argus, guide and guardian, "Sir, you are tempting me and playing upon my youth, but you shall not move me, for you are offering me presents without the knowledge of Achilles whom I fear and hold it great guiltiness to defraud, lest some evil presently befall me; but as your guide I would go with you even to Argos itself, and would guard you so carefully whether by sea or land that no one should attack you through making light of him who was with you."

The bringer of good luck then sprang onto the chariot, and seizing the whip and reins he breathed fresh spirit into the mules and horses. When they reached the trench and the wall that was before the ships, those who were on guard had just been getting their suppers, and the slayer of Argus threw them all into a deep sleep. Then he drew back the bolts to open the gates, and took Priam inside with the treasure he had upon his wagon. Before long they came to the lofty dwelling of the son of Peleus for which the

Myrmidons had cut pine and which they had their king; when they had built it they thatched coarse sedge grass which they had mown on plain, and all around it they made a large court which was fenced with stakes set close together. The gate was barred with a single bolt of pine and took three men to force into its place, and draw back so as to open the gate, but Achilles drew it by himself. Hermes opened the gate for man, and brought in the treasure that he was with him for the son of Peleus. Then he sprang the chariot onto the ground and said, "Sir, immortal Hermes, that have come with you, father sent me to escort you. I will now leave you will not enter into the presence of Achilles, for anger him that a god should befriend mortal man openly. Go within, and embrace the knees of the Peleus; beseech him by his father, his lovely and his son; thus you may move him."

With these words Hermes went back to high Olympus. Priam sprang from his chariot to the ground, leaving Idæus where he was, in charge of the mules and horses. The old man went straight into the tent where Achilles, loved of the gods, was sitting; he found him with his men seated at a distance; only two, the hero Automedon, and Alcides of the race of Ares, were busy in attendance about the person, for he had but just finished eating and drinking, and the table was still there. King Priam went without their seeing him, and going right up to Achilles he clasped his knees and kissed the murderous hands that had slain so many of his men.

As when some cruel spite has befallen a man should have killed someone in his own count should flee to a great man's protection in a land of strangers, and all marvel who see him, even Achilles marvel as he beheld Priam. The others one to another and marvelled also, but Priam beseeched Achilles saying, "Think of your father, O Achilles the gods, who is such even as I am, on the sad old of old age. It may be that those who dwell near harass him, and there is none to keep war away from him. Yet when he hears of you as being still alive he is glad, and his days are full of hope that he shall see his dear son come home to him from Troy; wretched man that I am, had the bravest in all T