



The Iliad:
The Trojan War Part I

CAST

Zeus *Ruler of the Gods*
Thetis *Sea Nymph, Mother of Achilles*
Achilles *Greatest Warrior for the Greeks*
Agamemnon *Leader of the Greek Army*
Menelaus *Husband of Helen*
Paris *Prince of Troy*
Priam *King of Troy*
Hector *Greatest Prince of Troy*
Hera *Queen of the Gods*
Athena *Goddess of Wisdom*
Helen *Wife of Menelaus*
Aphrodite *Goddess of Love*
Calchas *Greek Prophet*

Narrator: The Trojan War had been raging for nine long years. Many Greeks and Trojans had met their bloody deaths on the plains of Troy. Both sides had reached a stalemate, but something was about to happen—something that would change the course of the war.

Menelaus: Agamemnon, Brother! The Men! They are sick and yellow. Boils cover their faces!

Agamem: What? Are you drunk?

Menelaus: I have seen it with my own eyes. A plague! A plague from the gods!

Agamem: Don't be stupid. They have just had some bad water or meat!

Menelaus: No, Brother. They are being driven mad—and not by any natural way!

Agamem: Summon Calchas. He will tell us what is to be done.

Narrator: And so they summoned Calchas, the Greek prophet that had accompanied them to Troy.

He was old and bent. Most considered him insane. He was draped in tattered robes when he appeared. In his eyes, the men could see that they gazed into another world.

He stepped silently into Agamemnon's tent.

Calchas: (*quietly*) You called?

Agamem: Yes, Prophet, my brother tells me—

Calchas: The men are sick.

Agamem: (*pause*) Yes, but he tells me—

Calchas: It is no ordinary illness.

Agamem: Precisely, I was wondering—

Calchas: If it were a sign from the gods.

Agamem: Could you stop interrupting me, please, I—

Calchas: (*quietly, but with force*) You have angered Apollo. Not a good thing for one so small as yourself.

Agamem: (*surprised*) Apollo? I have done him no wrong.

Calchas: No? What do you keep in your tent, eh? A pretty little prize you captured from the raided Trojan temples? Brown hair—hazel eyes. Yes, I see her there—weeping.

Agamem: Chryseis? A spoil of war—nothing else. Since when do the gods frown on preying on the weak? They are experts in that themselves.

Calchas: Ah, but be careful whom you prey upon, King.

Agamem: What do you mean?

Calchas: You have chosen the wrong daughter of Troy to take as your plaything. Her father is the Trojan priest to Apollo.

Agamem: And what of it?

Calchas: Do you not see? He has prayed to his master. The gods always hear the cries of those they love.

Agamem: I will not give her up if that is what he wants.

Calchas: The God of Light rides above your troops—firing his golden arrows into their midst. They carry this horrible disease. Your pride will kill your men and lose you this war. Give up the girl.

Agamem: Be gone!

Calchas: It was for a beauty that this war was waged, and it will be for a beauty that it is lost.

Agamem: Enough!

Narrator: But the old prophet was already gone. Air stirred in the tent where he had been.

Agamemnon knew he could not contend with the will of a god. He had no choice. There was one consolation though. If he must give up his toy, he would take that of another.

Achilles, the great Greek warrior, had also taken a captive maiden into his own tent, the beautiful Briseis. Her splendor alone matched that of Agamemnon's female.

And so as Achilles battled on the field, Agamemnon had Briseis brought to his chambers to become his new object of lust.

This arrangement made the loss of Chryseis much easier for the Mycenaen king. The daughter of the Trojan priest was taken back to her father.

Upon his return, Achilles learned what had happened and was furious.

Achilles: (*roaring*) AGAMEMNON!
AGAMEMNON!

Menelaus: Brother, Achilles has returned! He has learned what you have done.

Agamem: Let him not forget whom he is dealing with. Allow him to enter.

Narrator: But Achilles—powerful as he was—needed no permission to enter. He tore past Agamemnon's guards and into the King's presence.

Achilles: (*snorting*) WHERE IS SHE?

Agamem: (*loudly*) Remember whom you are talking to, Achilles! I am a king! What are you?

Achilles: Me? I am the one who will cut your throat if you do not tell me where she is!

Agamem: I assume you mean the Trojan girl we have captured. She is here in my tent. What does it matter?

Achilles: (*growling*) She is mine!

Agamem: Possessions, possessions. The spoils of war must always go to the King, Achilles. My prize was taken, and so now, you must give me yours. You would be wise to watch your tone while you are in my presence.

Achilles: You would be wise to not shake that finger at me—unless you wish to lose it.

Agamem: I hope you're prepared to back that up!

Achilles: (*to the others*) I will fight no more for this man. You have my word. He is a thief and a dog. He is not worthy of Greece. (*spits*)

Narrator: And so was Achilles' honor slighted. He stormed back to his tent. His failure infuriated him. He was the greatest warrior of Greece, yet he could not get what he desired.

It was in his tent, where he sat sulking over the lost Briseis, that his mother, the silver-footed sea nymph Thetis came to him.

Thetis: (*softly*) Achilles.

Achilles: Briseis?

Thetis: No, Dear it's your mother. Thank heavens you got rid of that awful girl.

Achilles: Mother! What do you know? She was beautiful—she was—she was—beautiful—

Thetis: Oh, Achilles. You never were good at words, were you? Why couldn't my son have been a poet, I say to myself. Warriors have such dangerous lives. Poets would always be safe and sound at home.

Achilles: Mother, I am strong. I am fierce. This is my destiny.

Thetis: Oh, destiny. If destiny had anything to do with it, dipping you in the River Styx wouldn't have worked the wonders that it has.

Achilles: Mother, that has nothing to do with it. Bravery has made me great.

Thetis: Yes, and bravery will get you killed. Now, listen—I've conveniently overheard you and King What's-His-Name arguing.

Achilles: I declared I would no longer fight for a man like him!

Thetis: No, I should think not.

Achilles: The Greeks will see. Without me, they are nothing. They will come to me and beg me to lead them. Then, we will crush these Trojans.

Thetis: Errr—that's nice, dear. (*excitedly*) I know what would really show him!

Achilles: And what would that be?

Thetis: If you went home—back to Greece—right now. That would certainly give him a taste of his own medicine. He would be red with fury. Why I think—

Achilles: Mother, I will not run away like a coward.

Thetis: Coward is such a strong word. Intelligent—that is what I would say.

Achilles: No! That is my final answer.

Thetis: (*sadly*) I see—but think about it, my son...

Achilles: (*to himself*) I will stay here until Troy has been destroyed.

Thetis: (*to herself, sadly*) And you along with it.

Narrator: But Thetis was not so easily defeated. She had done so much to save the life of her doomed son. She had foreseen his destruction but still had one more card to play.

She flew upward—through the darkness of the night sky—to Olympus. She would go right to the top—to the god in charge.

She appeared to the royal Zeus.

Thetis: Zeus, Lord of the Sky. It is I, lowly Thetis.

Zeus: No need for formalities, Thetis dear. What is it that you want?

Thetis: Great Zeus, it was you who found me such a worthy match in my husband. You said my son would be great, but now his life is in danger!

Zeus: So it goes with mortals.

Thetis: Yes, but here is what I ask. This war has raged for nine long years. Many Greeks and Trojans have died. My son is the greatest warrior for the Greeks.

Zeus: How could he not be with such a cunning mother?

Thetis: Thank you, but I wish for a speedy end to this war. Achilles says that he will no longer fight for Agamemnon. Without Achilles, the Greeks would be lost.

Zeus: They are not stupid enough to attack without their finest warrior.

Thetis: No, not yet. But if you—greatest of gods—appeared to them, telling them to strike.

Zeus: I have sworn not to interfere. My brother, Poseidon, my wife, Hera, and daughter, Athena, all favor the Greeks. My sons, Apollo and Ares, my daughter, Artemis, and my dear sister, Aphrodite, all fight for the Trojans. Someone must stay neutral.

Narrator: At this, Thetis dropped her robe. Underneath she was dressed in a gown made from the shells of the sea. They shimmered in the dim light of the Olympian hall. She knew that time had not paled her beauty.

Thetis: (*seductively*) Zeus, O Zeus. You are such a strong, powerful god. Surely, you could do this one, tiny favor.

Narrator: She leaned in close to the god. Her lips almost touching his.

Thetis: (*seductively*) I would be most grateful.

Zeus: (*resisting*) I—I—I need to think—leave me!

Thetis: Yes, Zeus, make your decision. I shall be waiting.

Narrator: Once Thetis had disappeared, Zeus sat alone in his throne room. Could he get involved in this mortal war? Thetis was definitely alluring, and in his heart, he loved Troy more than any city on the face of the Earth. Every other god and goddess had certainly meddled enough in this affair. Why should he not?

Zeus: I have decided.

Narrator: He descended through the atmosphere into the very mind of Agamemnon where he interrupted a very pleasant dream the Greek commander was having.

Zeus: (*booming*) Agamemnon! Agamemnon!

Agamem: Ah! This can't be! Zeus Almighty!

Zeus: I am speaking to you through a dream, Agamemnon. I come with an important message for you and my Greeks.

Agamem: Yes, Sovereign!

Zeus: You must attack immediately. Troy is weak. Strike tomorrow, and you shall win the war.

Agamem: (*shocked*) Attack without Achilles?

Zeus: (*booming*) Do I lie? Am I not the Lord of the Gods? Do not question me, Mortal, unless you wish to be a smear upon the sand. This is your message. Do with it what you will.

Narrator: And so the glory of Zeus left the mind of Agamemnon. He awoke and ran from his tent, yelling at the troops.

Agamem: To arms! To arms! We attack at dawn!

Menelaus: Brother! Have you gone mad?

Agamem: Zeus has come to me in a dream.

Menelaus: (*sarcastically*) That answers my question.

Agamem: Silence! I command this army. We strike at dawn. Ready the men.

Narrator: With the frenzy of Agamemnon spurring them on, the Greeks made ready to attack at daybreak. The king acted like one possessed. He ran around his troops gleefully shouting and throwing his arms toward Olympus.

Agamem: Glory to Zeus! Glory to Zeus!

Narrator: Meanwhile, the actions of the Greeks did not go unnoticed by Trojan spies. They brought their report back to Ilium, where Priam waited in the throne room with his eldest son, Hector.

Hector: Father, the spies have reported that the Greeks are preparing for an offensive.

Priam: (*feebly*) I see. Many more men will die tomorrow.

Hector: We need to end this war. I love my brother, but I grow tired of defending his vanity with the blood of our countrymen.

Priam: I have wronged your brother enough, Hector. Because of fear, I sent him away. When he returned, I knew that the gods had reunited us for a reason.

Hector: (*angrily*) So that our city could be destroyed?

Priam: Our destiny is not our own to decide. We will continue to fight.

Hector: (*sigh*) All for a woman.

Priam: I would have started such a war for your mother, Son. Men's hearts are mighty things.

Hector: Mine is not. It has grown cold with Death. Father, what if there were some way to end this war *without* any more senseless battles?

Priam: If it were honorable, I would call it a good plan. What is your idea?

Hector: We rest the fate of the war on two men—the two whom it most concerns. Menelaus, the husband of Helen has brought all of Greece to our doorstep. He must face off against...

Priam: (*shocked*) Paris?

Hector: Do not let your love of your son cloud your judgment, Father. What about your love for your people?

Priam: Paris is not a fighter. You do not understand. He is not strong and valiant like you.

Hector: I can teach him what he needs to know. Menelaus is no Achilles.

Priam: I do not like it, but it will be for your brother to decide. Summon him.

Narrator: Paris was sent for, and soon, he entered with his golden bride walking by his side. When the men-at-arms beheld Helen, their mouths went slack. Truly, she was the most beautiful creature in the world. This woman alone was worth a thousand years of war.

Priam: Paris, my son. Helen, beautiful Helen. We must talk business.

Hector: The Greeks are attacking once again tomorrow, Paris.

Paris: I see.

Hector: (*angrily*) Not that you would know. Perhaps you would care to join us on the field of battle, instead of bathing in the

sun with your beauty? We are growing short in number.

Paris: I am not a coward. But I am no warrior. I would only bring shame on my family.

Hector: (*spitefully*) You have done enough of that already.

Priam: Hector! (*softly*) Paris, we have an idea of how to end this conflict, but it would require your permission and cooperation.

Paris: I will do whatever you ask, Father.

Hector: Menelaus has come for Helen—nothing else. I say you two must fight it out. Winner takes the spoils.

Helen: Nobody need die for me.

Hector: Too late. Perhaps you should have thought of that before you so easily left your husband!

Paris: (*angrily*) Don't you talk to her that way!

Priam: My sons! Helen, I beg your forgiveness. Hector feels only for his people. You are our guest, my adopted daughter. Troy has offered you its protection. It was given freely. Feel no guilt.

Helen: Thank you, but—

Paris: I will fight him.

Helen: Paris!

Paris: I can do it! It's my fault anyway—this whole mess.

Hector: I will teach you. You have much to learn.

Paris: I can learn quickly.

Hector: See that you do. You face him tomorrow.

Helen: Tomorrow? (*crying*)

Priam: Paris, you have made me very proud, my son. You have lived up to the name of Prince of Troy. May the gods smile

upon you. You will succeed. I feel it in my heart.

Narrator: Hector quickly took Paris to be trained. There was no time to lose. He must learn how to find the chinks in armor, how to wind a large adversary, how to fend off a heavy blow—all in one night.

Helen was left weeping in the throne room. It was her lot in life to weep. She was made beautiful, yes, but eternally sad.

Night tore on, and the morning broke. At the first sight of the sun, the Greek troops began to march across the Trojan plain to the high walls of Troy.

Achilles watched as they scurried like ants across the dirt. His own men, the Myrmidons, had stayed behind. If their leader did not fight, neither would they.

Achilles: Look at them. Sheep following a fool! Go! Fail without the Great Achilles. I will be here when you return—to hear your begging.

Narrator: Priam and Helen watched from the height of the Trojan walls as the great army came finally to a halt far beneath them.

Agamem: Trojans! Beg for mercy! Zeus has smiled upon his Greeks!

Narrator: As if in response, the Trojan gates opened, and Hector, Paris, and a troop of men issued slowly forth—holding the banner of truce above their head. Agamemnon and Menelaus came forward to meet them.

Agamem: (*boasting*) Ah, so I see you have come to grovel! How pleasing!

Hector: (*sternly*) Hold your tongue, Greek. We have come to suggest a solution to this bloodshed.

Agamem: A solution is at hand. Zeus has promised *us* victory.

Hector: (*sarcastically*) Yes, I'm sure he has. But I do not come to speak to you, but to your brother. Tell me, Menelaus, do you like being the laughing stock of the whole world?

Menelaus: (*angrily*) Why you!

Hector: My brother, Paris, here has made fool of you. He has stolen your pretty wife. Wouldn't you like his insolent head on a platter?

Paris: (*whispering*) I don't think he needs your help.

Menelaus: (*angrily*) Yes! I should have known that was you, you miserable whelp. Hiding behind your walls! We have missed you in the battle! Have you been hiding with the women?

Hector: Enough. I've come to give you a chance to exact your revenge on my dear brother.

Agamem: What do you propose?

Hector: A man-to-man battle.

Menelaus: (*excited*) To the death!

Hector: Exactly. Agamemnon, if your eager brother here wins, we will give you what you have come for—Helen of Troy. Or should I say Sparta?

Paris: Troy.

Hector: And if my lovestruck brother should win, we keep Helen, and you may all go home. We will even give you enough gold for your pains.

Agamem: Brother, may I speak to you a moment aside?

Narrator: Agamemnon and Menelaus withdrew from the others.

Agamem: Zeus has promised victory. It doesn't matter how—great armies or man-to-man. You must fight this boy.

Menelaus: Gladly! He has insulted me! His very face is a mockery to me! I will cut it open.

Agamem: Good. (*loudly*) Trojan princes, we agree to your terms. My brother is ready. Is yours?

Hector: Yes.

Narrator: And so the two crowds parted, making way for the combatants.

High above on the walls of the city, Helen held the hand of the King crying softly.

Higher still, other spectators were watching with even greater interest.

Hera and Athena, who both had been furiously trying to bring about the defeat of the Trojans, sat on the chairs of Olympus peering down on these events.

Hera: Ha! The little wispy prince is going to fight the mighty Greek king. Come, Athena, let us watch him be skewered.

Athena: He looks like a woman in that armor. Pathetic.

Hera: No wonder he was such a terrible judge of beauty. No manliness in him at all.

Narrator: From across the marble hall in which they sat, Aphrodite floated into view. She, too, had come to watch this battle.

Athena: (*disappointedly*) Ugh. Don't look now.

Hera: Aphrodite, how nice. We were just starting to watch your darling Trojan Prince be filleted by a hulking Greek.

Athena: I bet he cries—begging for mercy before the end.

Aphrodite: Paris, no!

Narrator: Below them, the battle was beginning.

Athena had been right. Paris' armor dwarfed him. He held his sword as if he had never done so before. In fact, he almost hadn't. What did he know of fighting? He had been raised as a shepherd.

Menelaus—although a large man—rippled with power. His great frame held his weapon and shield aloft with majesty. All could see that Paris was no match for him.

Agamem: Fight!

Menelaus: Hopefully, you have kissed my wife goodbye. This will be the last time you see her.

Paris: I doubt that.

Narrator: Menelaus swung his sword with all his might against Paris' shield.

(*CLANG*)

The shield clattered to the ground. Menelaus roared with laughter.

Menelaus: Boy, I plan to gouge your eyes out and then send you into Hades blinded.

Paris: We'll see!

Narrator: Menelaus swung again, but Paris was too fast. He swooped beneath it and brought his own sword up against Menelaus' breastplate.

(*CLANG*)

Menelaus: I grow tired of this, Trojan. I had hoped to have your head on the first swing.

Paris: Sorry to keep you waiting.

Narrator: Moving swiftly, Paris brought his sword about. It flashed through the air and met Menelaus' with a crash of sound.

(*CLANG*)

The force of the blow knocked the sword from Paris' hand, and he fell backward into the dirt.

Menelaus: (*laughing*) These weapons are for men. Not for pretty things such as yourself!

Hector: (*shouting*) Get up, Paris! Get up!

Agamem: (*shouting*) Finish him!

Narrator: From her viewpoint in the clouds, Aphrodite saw him fall. In the flash of an eye, she was gone—flying toward the Earth to save her darling Paris.

Athena: (*angrily*) Cheat! How dare she interfere! After her!

Hera: (*calmly*) Patience, Athena. This should be interesting. Let us watch the Trojan Prince be saved by *the Goddess of Love*. (*snotty laugh*)

Athena: (*laughing*) I never thought of that. How embarrassing to be saved by the daintiest of goddesses!

Narrator: Menelaus reached down into the dust and grabbed Paris by the helmet. He began to drag him. The Greeks started to cheer.

Menelaus: Troy! Look at your beautiful *princess*! I drag *her* through the dirt! Have you no *men* to send to fight me?

Narrator: He turned to drive his sword through Paris' throat. But Aphrodite was there—invisible to all. She broke the strap on Paris' helmet, and he was free.

Aphrodite: Run, Paris, Run!

Menelaus: Coward! Have you not shamed your country enough?

Hector: (*disappointed*) Oh, Paris.

Narrator: As Paris ran, Aphrodite shrouded him in a giant cloud. When the smoke cleared, he was gone. He had been taken back safely into the walls of Troy.

Aphrodite's move had been played. Now, it was Hera's turn.

Hera: Athena, let us descend.

Narrator: The Greeks were in an uproar. Never had they seen such a display of cowardice.

Agamem: Trojans, is this the best you can do? You have forfeited your prize. Bring her forward so that we may go home—in Zeus' victory!

Narrator: On the walls of Troy, Priam hung his head in shame. Helen began to sob.

Helen: (*crying*) Is there nothing that can be done?

Priam: I am sorry, my dear. We have agreed to the terms.

Narrator: With an invisible gush of wind, Hera and Athena settled to the Earth quietly behind Agamemnon and Menelaus.

Athena: (*angrily*) This is ridiculous! The war can't be over! Troy is still standing!

Hera: Do not worry. We shall see it burn yet. They will not get off so easily.

Menelaus: My wife! My wife! Bring forward my wife!

Hera: That young Trojan archer—with the brown eyes. Do you see him?

Athena: I do. Do you have a plan?

Hera: Of course. Go to him. Whisper in his ear. Persuade him to fire his weapon and break this truce. If this continues, we will see this war end too soon!

Athena: Lovely. A carefully placed arrow would be the perfect thing to get this battle back to fever pitch. You are full of good ideas.

Hera: Naturally.

Narrator: As the Trojans prepared to re-enter the city and present the Greeks with Helen, Athena moved silently behind Pandarus, a young Trojan archer.

Athena: (*forcefully*) Pandarus, look at that evil man—Menelaus. He has won unjustly today. He has mocked your country—your king. He will not leave Troy so lightly. He will not stop until he has burned it to the ground—killing your children—taking your wife as his own. End his life now, before he ends yours!

Narrator: And Pandarus, barely knowing what he was doing, turned—bow in hand—and fired an arrow into the shoulder of Menelaus.

(*cry of pain*)

Pandemonium ensued. Menelaus was wounded but not killed. The Greeks brandished their swords. The Trojans turned—confused—and rushed to meet them. The battle was thick once again.

On the walls, Priam groaned.

Priam: Well, my dear, it seems that you shall not have to go—but I fear many more Trojans will die.

Helen: (*sadly*) All for me.

Narrator: Though none could see them through the rush of bodies, the clashing of metal, and the dirt of battle, two Olympian forms sauntered as if out for a summer's stroll.

Hera: Not, bad, Dear—not bad.

Narrator: Athena was pulling her bloody spear from the body of a Trojan youth.

Athena: All in all, I say it's not a bad day's work.

Narrator: In the midst of the surrounding chaos, a silvery cloud began to form in front of them.

Hera: Aphrodite, Darling, have you delivered your weaking prince?

Aphrodite: (*seethingly*) Oooh! You two do not play fair!

Athena: What do you call swooping down to save your Trojan pet?

Aphrodite: I am not the only god who will be caught up in this! I have powerful allies! Many gods who are close to me!

Hera: Yes, and we have some idea *how* close.

Athena: We're terrified. Really.

Aphrodite: (*disgusted*) Oooh!

Narrator: Aphrodite's cloud disappeared with a cry of disgust.

Hera: She is rather unattractive when she's angry.

Athena: True.

Hera: I don't know about you, Goddess of War, but I think this conflict has only just begun.

Athena: I as well.

Hera: Soon, we will be dancing over ravaging flames. We shall hear their women wailing—lamenting the dead. Smoke will rise from the walls—billows of smoke from the burning of Troy, Aphrodite's precious city. What a day that will be!

Athena: Amen.