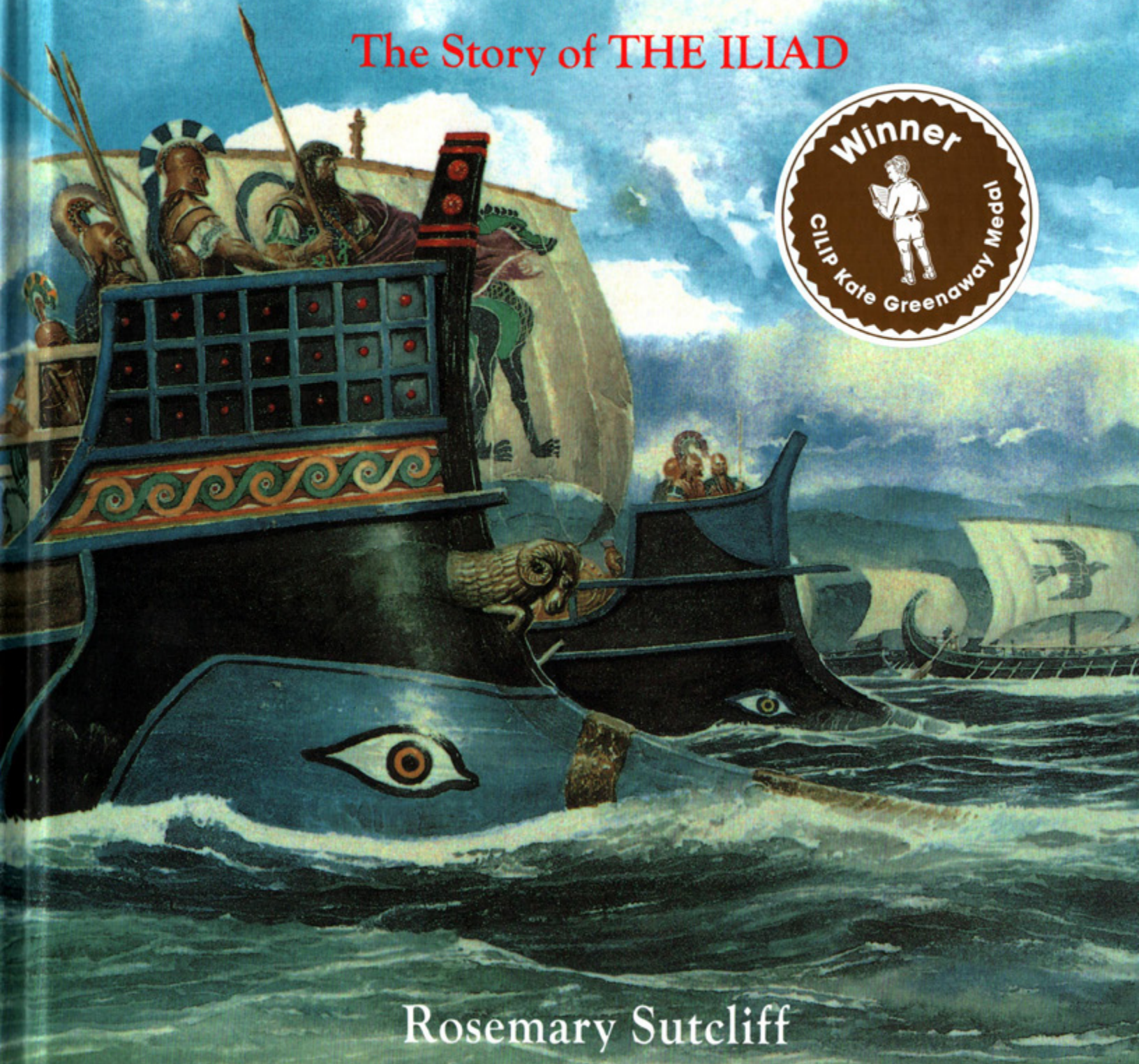


BLACK SHIPS BEFORE TROY

The Story of THE ILLIAD



Rosemary Sutcliff
Illustrated by Alan Lee



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For Murray

ROSEMARY SUTCLIFF

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Frances Lincoln
Children's Books



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THE GOLDEN APPLE

IN THE HIGH and far-off days when men were heroes and walked with the gods, Peleus, king of the Myrmidons, took for his wife a sea nymph called Thetis. Thetis of the Silver Feet. Many guests came to their wedding feast, and among the mortal guests came all the gods of high Olympus.

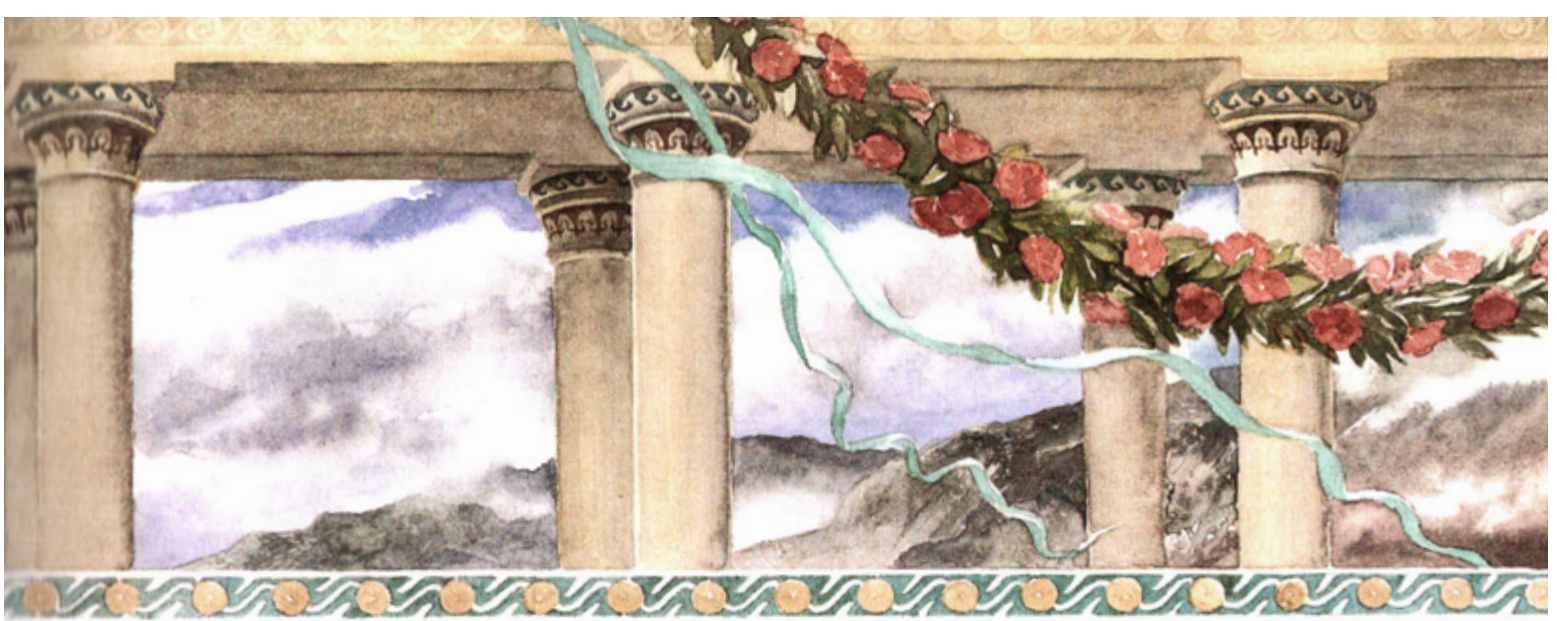
But as they sat feasting, one who had not been invited was suddenly in their midst: Eris, the goddess of discord, had been left out because wherever she went she took trouble with her; yet here she was, all the same, and in her blackest mood, to avenge the insult.

All she did – it seemed a small thing – was to toss down on the table a golden apple. Then she breathed upon the guests once, and vanished away.

The apple lay gleaming among the piled fruits and the brimming wine cups; and bending close to look at it everyone could see the words 'To the fairest' traced on its side.

Then the three greatest of the goddesses each claimed that it was hers. Hera claimed it as wife to Zeus the All-father, and queen of all the gods. Athene claimed that she had the better right, for the beauty of wisdom such as hers surpassed all else. Aphrodite only smiled, and asked who had a better claim to beauty's prize than the goddess of beauty herself.

They fell to arguing among themselves; the argument became a quarrel, and the quarrel grew more and more bitter, and each called upon the assembled guests to judge between them. But the other guests refused, for



they knew well enough that whichever goddess they chose to receive the golden apple, they would make enemies of the other two.

In the end, the three took the quarrel home with them to Olympus. The other gods took sides, some with one and some with another, and the ill will between them dragged on for a long while. More than long enough, in the world of men, for a child born when the quarrel first began to grow to manhood and become a warrior or a herdsman. But the immortal gods do not know time as mortals know it.

Now on the north-east coast of the Aegean Sea, there was a city of men. Troy was its name, a great city surrounded by strong walls, and standing on a hill hard by the shore. It had grown rich on the tolls that its kings demanded from merchant ships passing up the nearby straits to the Black Sea cornlands and down again. Priam, who was now king, was lord of wide realms and long-maned horses, and he had many sons about his hearth. And when the quarrel about the golden apple was still raw and new, a last son was born to him and his wife Queen Hecuba, and they called him Paris.

There should have been great rejoicing, but while Hecuba still carried the babe within her, the soothsayers had foretold that she would give birth to a firebrand that should burn down Troy. And so, when he was born and named, the king bade a servant carry him out into the wilderness and leave him to die. The servant did as he was bid; but a herdsman searching for a missing calf found the babe and brought him up as his own.



The boy grew tall and strong and beautiful, the swiftest runner and the best archer in all the country around. So his boyhood passed among the oak woods and the high hill-pastures that rose towards Mount Ida. And there he met and fell in love with a wood nymph called Oenone, who loved him in return. She had the gift of being able to heal the wounds of mortal men, no matter how sorely they were hurt.

Among the oak woods they lived together and were happy – until one day the three jealous goddesses, still quarrelling about their golden apple, chanced to look down from Olympus, and saw the beautiful young man herding his cattle on the slopes of Mount Ida. They knew, for the gods know all things, that he was the son of Priam, king of Troy, though he himself did not know it yet; but the thought came to them that he would not know who they were, and therefore he would not be afraid to judge between them. They were growing somewhat weary of the argument by then.

So they tossed the apple down to him, and Paris put up his hands and caught it. After it the three came down, landing before him so lightly that their feet did not bend the mountain grasses, and bade him choose between them, which was the fairest and had best right to the prize he held in his hand.

First Athene, in her gleaming armour, fixed him with sword-grey eyes and promised him supreme wisdom if he would name her.

Then Hera, in her royal robes as queen of heaven, promised him vast wealth and power and honour, if he awarded her the prize.



Lastly, Aphrodite drew near, her eyes as blue as deep-sea water, her hair like spun gold wreathed around her head, and, smiling honey-sweet, whispered that she would give him a wife as fair as herself, if he tossed the apple to her.

And Paris forgot the other two with their offers of wisdom and power, forgot also, for that moment, dark-haired Oenone in the shadowed oak woods; and he gave the golden apple to Aphrodite.

Then Athene and Hera were angry with him for refusing them the prize, just as the wedding guests had known that they would be; and both of them were angry with Aphrodite. But Aphrodite was well content, and set about keeping her promise to the herdsman who was a king's son.

She put a certain thought into the heads of some of King Priam's men, so that they came cattle-raiding at the full of the moon and drove off Paris' big beautiful herd-bull who was lord of all his cattle. Then Paris left the hills and came down into Troy, seeking his bull. And there Hecuba his mother chanced to see him, and knew by his likeness to his brothers and by something in her own heart that he was the son she had thought dead and lost to her in his babyhood. She wept for joy, and brought him before the king; and seeing him living and so good to look upon, all men forgot the prophecy, and Priam welcomed him into the family and gave him a house of his own, like each of the other Trojan princes.

There he lived whenever he would, but at other times he would be away back to the oak woods of Mount Ida, to his love Oenone.

And so things went on happily enough for a while.

But meantime, across the Aegean Sea, another wedding had taken place, the marriage of King Menelaus of Sparta to the Princess Helen, whom men called Helen of the Fair Cheeks, the most beautiful of all mortal women. Her beauty was famous throughout the kingdoms of Greece, and many kings and princes had wished to marry her, among them Odysseus whose kingdom was the rocky island of Ithaca.

Her father would have none of them, but gave her to Menelaus. Yet, because he feared trouble between her suitors at a later time, he caused them all to swear that they would stand with her husband for her sake, if ever he had need of them. And between Helen and Odysseus, who married her cousin Penelope and loved her well, there was a lasting friendship that stood her in good stead when she had sore need of a friend, years afterward.

Even beyond the furthest bounds of Greece, the fame of Helen's beauty travelled, until it came at last to Troy, as Aphrodite had known that it would. And Paris no sooner heard of her than he determined to go and

see for himself if she was indeed as fair as men said. Oenone wept and begged him to stay with her; but he paid no heed, and his feet came no more up the track to her woodland cave. If Paris wanted a thing, then he must have it; so he begged a ship from his father, and he and his companions set out.

All the length of the Aegean Sea was before them, and the winds blew them often from their true course. But they came at last to their landfall, and ran the ship up the beach and climbed the long hill tracks that brought them to the fortress-palace of King Menelaus.

Slaves met them as they met all strangers in the outer court, and led them in to wash off the salt and the dust of the long journey. And presently, clad in fresh clothes, they were standing before the king in his great hall, where the fire burned on the raised hearth in the centre and the king's favourite hounds lay sprawled about his feet.

"Welcome to you, strangers," said Menelaus. "Tell me now who you are and where you come from, and what brings you to my hall."

"I am a king's son, Paris by name, from Troy, far across the sea," Paris told him. "And I come because the wish is on me to see distant places, and the fame of Menelaus has reached our shores, as a great king and a generous host to strangers."

"Sit then, and eat, for you must be way-weary with such far travelling," said the king.

And when they were seated, meat and fruit, and wine in golden cups were brought in and set before them. And while they ate and talked with their host, telling the adventures of their journey, Helen the queen came in from the women's quarters, two of her maidens following, one carrying her baby daughter, one carrying her ivory spindle and distaff laden with wool of the deepest violet colour. And she sat down on the far side of the fire, the women's side, and began to spin. And as she span she listened to the stranger's tales of his journeying.

And in little snatched glances their eyes went to each other through the fronding hearth-smoke. And Paris saw that Menelaus' queen was fairer even than the stories told, golden as a corn-stalk and sweet as wild honey. And Helen saw, above all things, that the stranger prince was young.



Menelaus had been her father's choice, not hers, and though their marriage was happy enough, he was much older than she was, with the first grey hairs already in his beard. There was no grey in the gold of Paris' beard, and his eyes were bright and there was laughter at the corners of his mouth. Her heart quickened as she looked at him, and once, still spinning, she snapped the violet thread.

For many days Paris and his companions remained the guests of King Menelaus, and soon it was not enough for Paris to look at the queen. Poor Oenone was quite forgotten, and he did not know how to go away leaving Helen of the Fair Cheeks behind.

So the days went by, and the prince and the queen walked together through the cool olive gardens and under the white-flowered almond trees of the palace; and he sat at her feet while she spun her violet wool, and sang her the songs of his own people.

And then one day the king rode out hunting. Paris made an excuse not to ride with him, and he and his companions remained behind. And when they were alone together, walking in the silvery shade of the olives while his companions and her maidens amused themselves at a little distance, Paris told the queen that it was for sight of her that he had come so far, and that now he had seen her he loved her to his heart's core and could not live without her.

"You should not have told me this," said Helen. "For I am another man's wife. And because you have told me it will be the worse for me when you go away and must leave me behind."

"Honey-sweet," said Paris, "my ship is in the bay; come with me now, while the king your husband is away from home. For we belong together, you and I, like two slips of a vine sprung from the same stock."

And they talked together, on and on through the hot noontide with the crickets churring, he urging and she holding back. But he was Paris, who always got the things he wanted; and deep within her, her heart wanted the same thing.

And in the end she left her lord and her babe and her honour; and followed by his companions, with the maidens wailing and pleading behind them, he led her down the mountain paths and through the passes to his ship waiting on the seashore.

So Paris had the bride that Aphrodite had promised him, and from that came all the sorrows that followed after.





SHIP-GATHERING

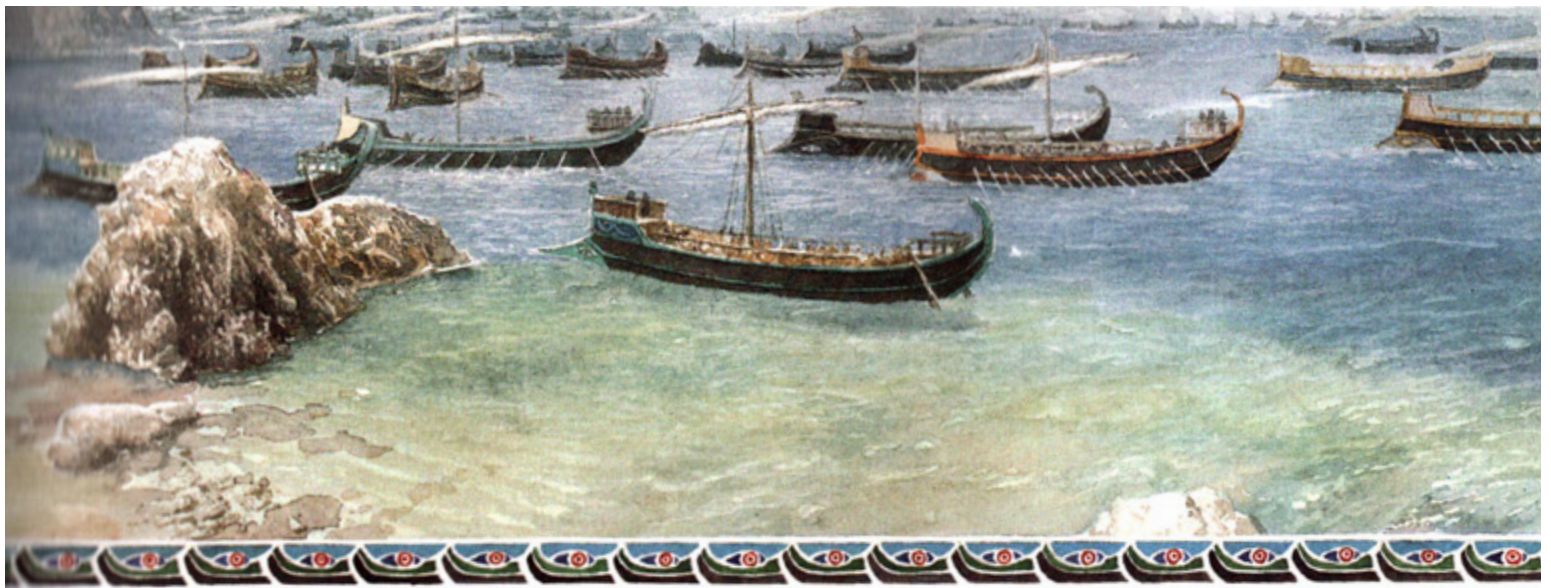
WHEN MENELAUS returned from hunting and found his queen fled with the Trojan prince, the black grief and the red rage came upon him, and he sent word of the wrong done to him and a furious call for aid to his brother, black-bearded Agamemnon who was High King over all the other kings of Greece.

And from golden Mycenae of the Lion Gate where Agamemnon sat in his great hall, the call went out for men and ships. To ancient Nestor of Pylos, to Thisbe where the wild doves croon, to rocky Pytho, to Ajax the mighty, Lord of Salamis, and Diomedes of the Loud War Cry whose land was Argos of the many horses, to the cunning Odysseus among the harsh hills of Ithaca, even far south to Idomeneus of Crete, and many more.

And from Crete and Argos and Ithaca, from the mainland and the islands, the black ships put to sea, as the kings gathered their men from the fields and the fishing and took up bows and spears for the keeping of their oath, to fetch back Helen of the Fair Cheeks and take vengeance upon Troy, whose prince had carried her away.

Agamemnon waited for them with his own ships in the harbour of Aulis; and when they had gathered to him there, the great fleet sailed for Troy.

But one of the war-leaders who should have been with them was lacking, and this was the way of it. Before ever Paris was born, Thetis of the Silver Feet had given a son to King Peleus, and they called him Achilles. The gods had promised that if she dipped the babe in the Styx,



which is one of the rivers of the underworld, the sacred water would proof him against death in battle. So, gladly she did as she was bidden, but dipping him headfirst in the dark and bitter flood, she held on to him by one foot. Thus her fingers, pressed about his heel, kept the waters from reaching that one spot. By the time she understood what she had done it was too late, for the thing could not be done again; so ever after she was afraid for her son, always afraid.

When he was old enough his father sent him to Thessaly, with an older boy, Patroclus, for his companion, to Chiron, the wisest of all the Centaurs. And with the other boy, Chiron taught him to ride (on his own back) and trained him in all the warrior skills of sword and spear and bow, and in making the music of the lyre, until the time came for him to return to his father's court.

But when the High King's summons went out and the black ships were launched for war, his mother sent him secretly to the Isle of Scyros, begging King Lycomedes to have him dressed as a maiden and hidden among his own daughters, so that he might be safe.

How it came about that Achilles agreed to this, no one knows. Maybe she cast some kind of spell on him, for love's sake. But there he remained among the princesses, while the ships gathered in the world outside.

But Thetis' loving plan failed after all, for, following the sea-ways eastward, part of the fleet put in to take on fresh water at Scyros where the whisper was abroad that Prince Achilles was concealed.

King Lycomedes welcomed the warriors but denied all knowledge of

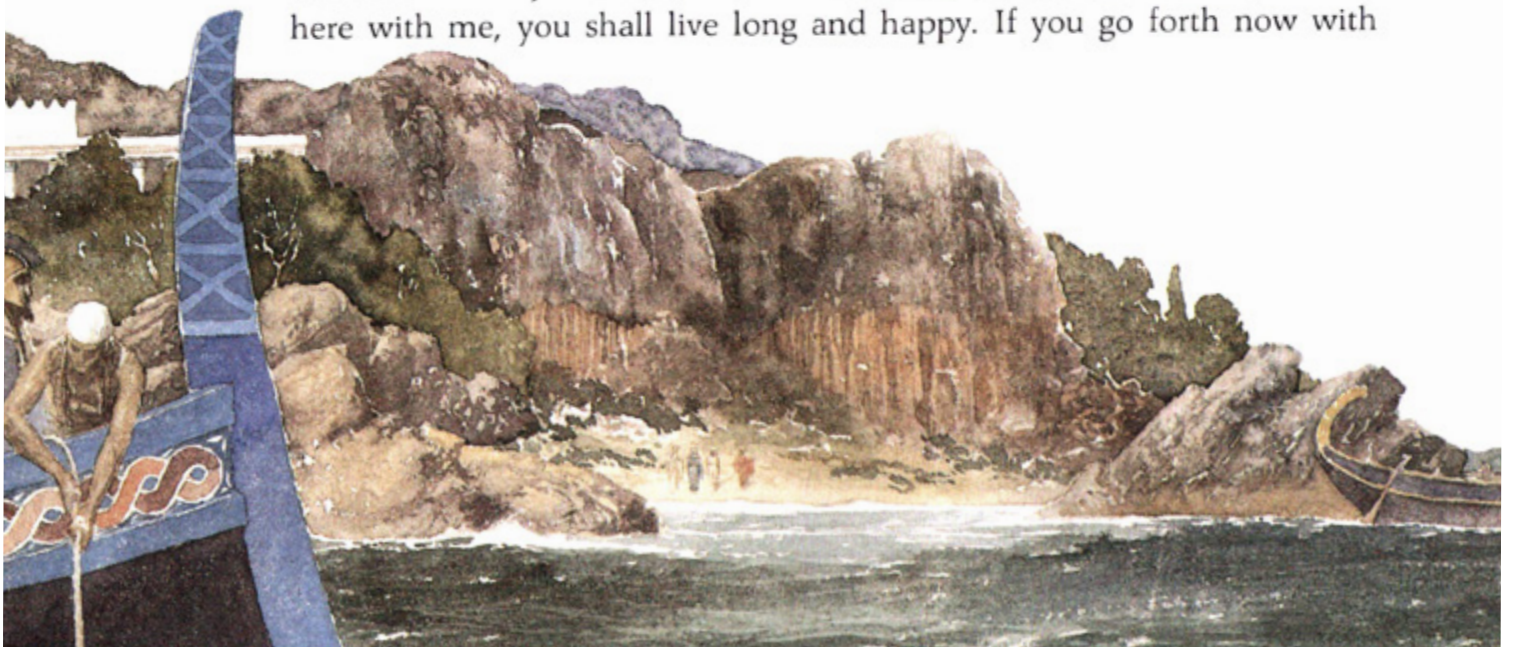
the young prince. The leaders were desperate to find him, for Calchas, chief among the soothsayers who sailed with them, had said that they would not take Troy without him. Then Odysseus, who was not called the Resourceful for nothing, blackened his beard and eyebrows and put on the dress of a trader, turning his hair up under a seaman's red cap, and with a staff in one hand and a huge pack on his back went up to the palace.

When the girls heard that there was a trader in the palace forecourt, out from the women's quarters they all came running, Achilles among them, veiled like the rest, to see him undo his pack. And when he had done so, each of them chose what she liked best: a wreath of gold, a necklace of amber, a pair of turquoise earrings blue as the sky, a skirt of embroidered scarlet silk, until they came to the bottom of the pack. And at the bottom of the pack lay a great sword of bronze, the hilt studded with golden nails. Then the last of the girls, still closely veiled, who had held back as though waiting all the while, swooped forward and caught it up, as one well-used to the handling of such weapons. And at the familiar feel of it, the spell that his mother had set upon him dissolved away.

"This for me!" said Prince Achilles, pulling off his veil.

Then the kings and chieftains of the fleet greeted and rejoiced over him. They stripped off his girl's garments and dressed him in kilt and cloak as befitted a warrior, with his new sword slung at his side; and they sent him back to his father's court to claim the ships and the fighting men that were his by right, that he might add them to the fleet.

His mother wept over him, saying, "I had hoped to keep you safe for the love I bear you. But now it must be for you to choose. If you bide here with me, you shall live long and happy. If you go forth now with



the fighting men, you will make for yourself a name that shall last while men tell stories round the fire, even to the ending of the world. But you will not live to see the first grey hair in your beard, and you will come home no more to your father's hall."

"Short life and long fame for me," said Achilles, fingering his sword.

So his father gave him fifty ships, fully manned, and Patroclus to go with him for his friend and sword-companion. And his mother, weeping still, armed him in his father's armour; glorious war-gear which Hephaestus, the smith of the gods, had made for him.

And he sailed to join the black ships on their way to Troy.





QUARREL WITH THE HIGH KING

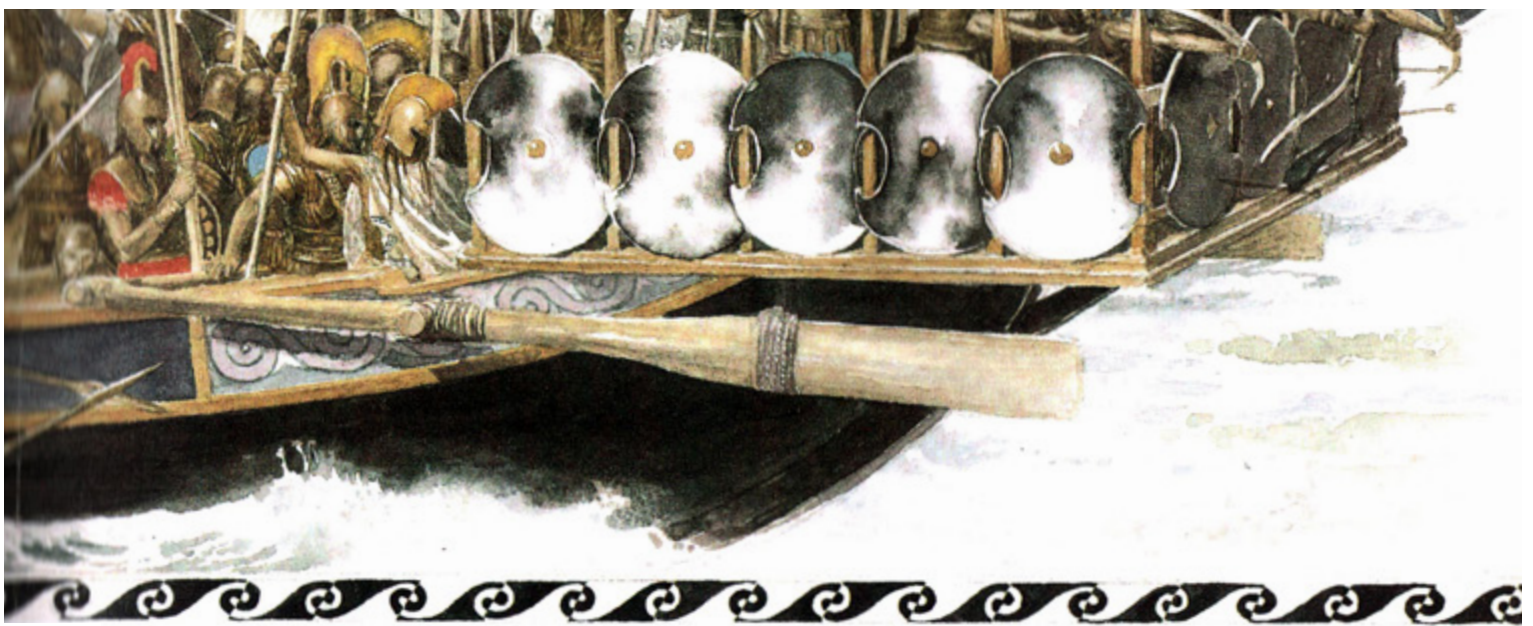
THE GREEKS did not have smooth sailing. Storms beat them this way and that, and more than once they met with enemy fleets and had to fight them off. But at last they came in sight of the coast below Troy city.

Then they made a race of it, the rowers quickening the oar beat, thrusting their ships through the water, each eager to come first to land. The race was won by the ship of Prince Protesilaus, but as the prince sprang ashore an arrow from among the defenders took him in the throat and he dropped just above the tide-line, the first of the Greeks to come ashore, the first man to die in the long war for Troy.

The rest followed after him and quickly drove back the Trojan warriors, who were ill-prepared for so great an enemy war-host. And when that day's sun went down, they were masters of the coastwise dunes and reedbeds and rough grass that fringed the great plain of Troy.

They beached their ships, and built halls and huts in front of them to live in, so that in a while there was something like a seaport town. And in that town of turf and timber they lived while year after year of war went by.

Nine times the wild almonds flowered and fruited on the rocky slopes below the city. Nine times summer dried out the tamarisk scrub among the grave-mounds of long-dead kings. The ships' timbers rotted, and the high fierce hopes that the Greeks had brought with them grew weary and dull-edged.



They knew little of siege warfare. They did not seek to dig trenches round the city, nor to keep watch on the roads by which supplies and fighting men of allied countries might come in; nor did they try to break down the gates or scale the high walls. And the Trojans, ruled by an old king and a council of old men, remained for the most part within their city walls, or came out to skirmish only a little way outside them, though Hector, their war-leader and foremost among the king's sons, would have attacked and stormed the Greek camp if he had had his will.

But there were other, lesser cities along the coast that were easier prey; and the men of the black ships raided these and drove off their cattle for food and their horses for the chariots that they had built, and the fairest of their women for slaves.

On one of these raids far down the coast, when the almond trees were coming into flower for the tenth time, they captured and brought back two beautiful maidens, Chryseis and Briseis, among the spoils of war. Chryseis was given to Agamemnon, who as High King always received the richest of the plunder, while Briseis was awarded to Achilles who had led the raid.

Chryseis' father, who was a priest of Apollo, the Sun God, followed after and came to the Greek camp, begging for his daughter back again, and offering much gold for her ransom. But Agamemnon refused, and bade the old man be gone, with cruel insults. And there it seemed that the thing was ended.

But soon after, fever came upon the Greek camp. Many died, and the smoke of the death-fires hung day and night along the shore, and in despair the Greeks begged the soothsayer Calchas to tell them the cause of the evil. And Calchas watched the flight of birds and made patterns in the sand, and told them that Apollo, angry on behalf of his priest, was shooting arrows of pestilence into the camp from his silver bow; and that his anger would not be cooled until the maiden Chryseis was returned to her father.

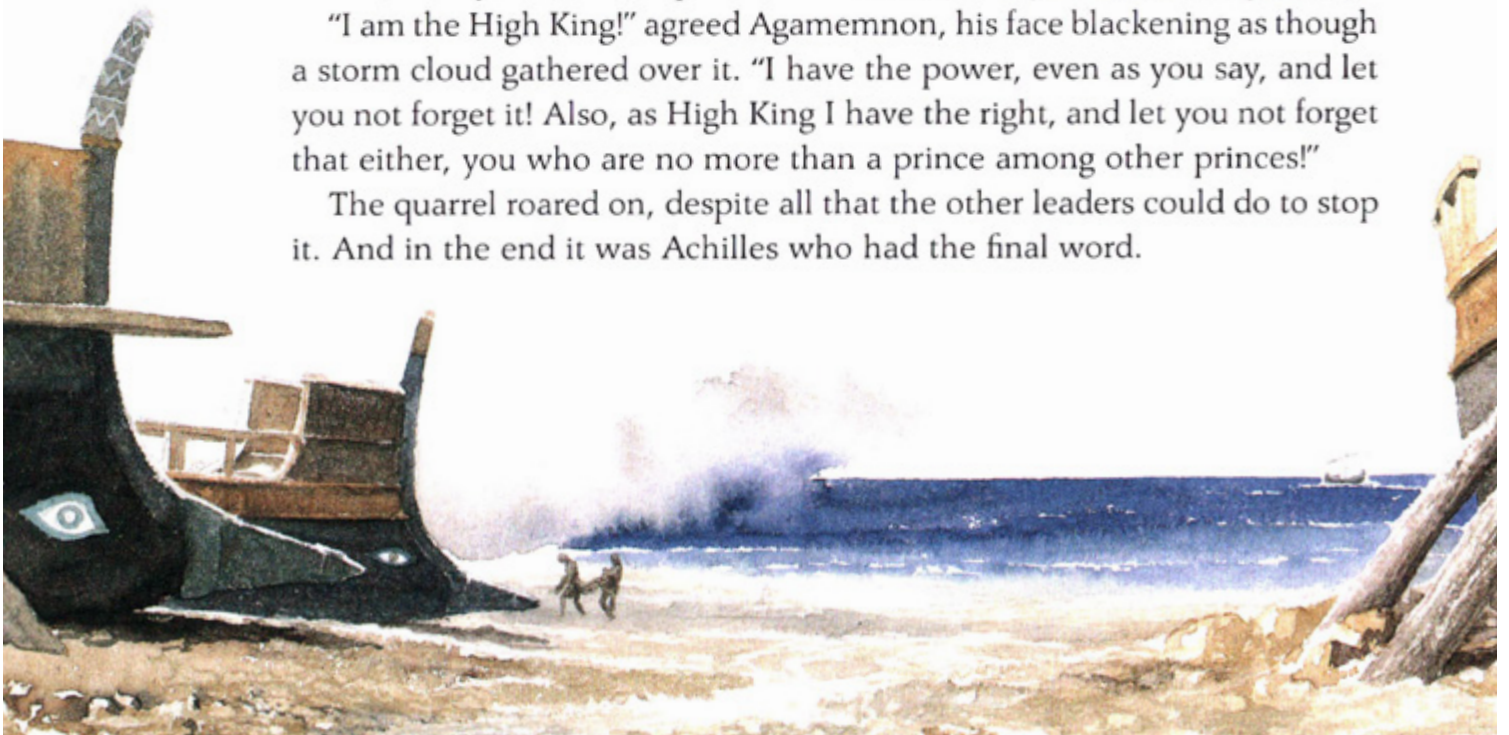
On hearing this, Agamemnon fell into a great rage, and though the other leaders urged him to release the girl, he swore that if he did so, then he would have Briseis out from Achilles' hall in her place.

Then Achilles, who had grown to care for Briseis, would have drawn his sword to fight for her. But grey-eyed Athene, who was for the Greeks because Aphrodite was for Paris and the Trojans, put it into his mind that no man might fight the High King, and that all manner of evils, from defeat in battle to bad harvests, would come of it if he did. Even so, a bitter quarrel flared between them, though wise old Nestor tried to make peace.

Achilles, who despite his youth was the proudest and hottest-hearted of all the Greek leaders, called Agamemnon a greedy coward with the face of a dog and the heart of a deer. "It is small part you play in the fighting, but you take other men's prizes from them when the fighting is over, robbing them of the reward and the honour that is rightfully theirs – for this one reason, that you have the power to do it, because you are the High King!"

"I am the High King!" agreed Agamemnon, his face blackening as though a storm cloud gathered over it. "I have the power, even as you say, and let you not forget it! Also, as High King I have the right, and let you not forget that either, you who are no more than a prince among other princes!"

The quarrel roared on, despite all that the other leaders could do to stop it. And in the end it was Achilles who had the final word.



“Lord Agamemnon, you have dishonoured me; and therefore now I swear on all the gods that I will fight for you no more! Nor will I take any part in this struggle against Troy until my honour is made good to me again!” And he strode out from the council-gathering and went back to his own part of the camp, his own hall and his own black ships; and all the men of his own country with him.

Then Agamemnon, in a black and silent rage, caused Chryseis to be put into one of his ships, and cattle with her for a sacrifice to Apollo, and ordered Odysseus to take command of the ship and return the girl to her father. And as soon as the ship had sailed, he sent his heralds to fetch Briseis from Achilles’ hall and bring her to his own.

Achilles made no more attempt to resist, and stood by as though turned to stone while the girl was led weeping away. But when she was gone, he went down to the cold seashore and flung himself down upon the tide-line and wept his heart away.



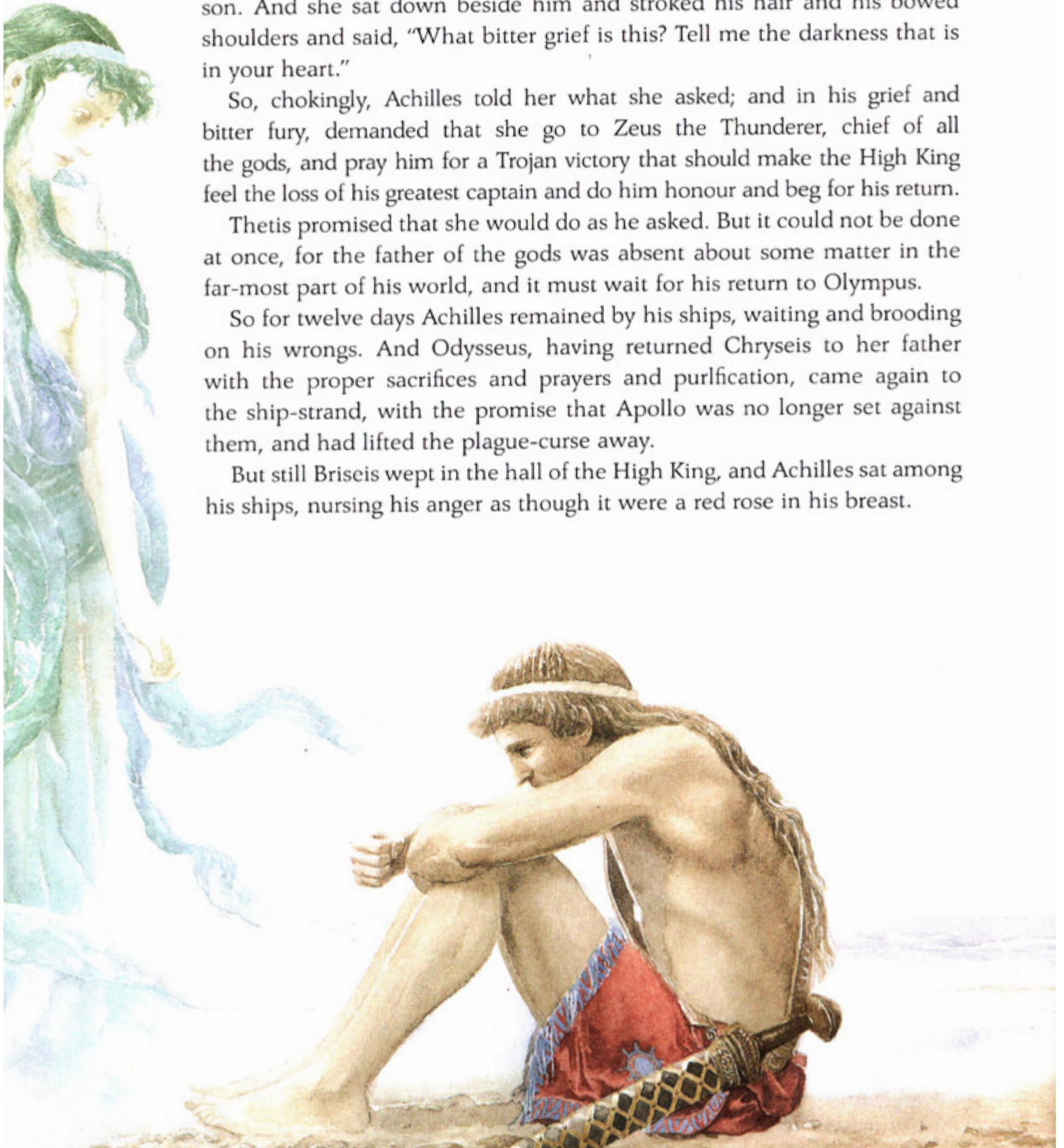
And his mother, Thetis of the Silver Feet, heard the voice of his furious grief from her home in the crystal palaces of the sea, and she came up through the waters like a sea mist rising, no one seeing her except her son. And she sat down beside him and stroked his hair and his bowed shoulders and said, "What bitter grief is this? Tell me the darkness that is in your heart."

So, chokingly, Achilles told her what she asked; and in his grief and bitter fury, demanded that she go to Zeus the Thunderer, chief of all the gods, and pray him for a Trojan victory that should make the High King feel the loss of his greatest captain and do him honour and beg for his return.

Thetis promised that she would do as he asked. But it could not be done at once, for the father of the gods was absent about some matter in the far-most part of his world, and it must wait for his return to Olympus.

So for twelve days Achilles remained by his ships, waiting and brooding on his wrongs. And Odysseus, having returned Chryseis to her father with the proper sacrifices and prayers and purification, came again to the ship-strand, with the promise that Apollo was no longer set against them, and had lifted the plague-curse away.

But still Briseis wept in the hall of the High King, and Achilles sat among his ships, nursing his anger as though it were a red rose in his breast.





SINGLE COMBAT

WHEN THE twelfth day came, Zeus the Thunderer was once again on the high crest of Olympus; and Thetis went to him, begging that he would bring about a victory for the Trojans, that the High King and all the Greek war-host might sorely feel the loss of Achilles her son from among their fighting ranks. And though he did not really wish to, Zeus gave her the promise that she asked.

The father of the gods considered long how the thing should best be done. And that night he sent a false dream to Agamemnon as he lay sleeping in his timber hall. The dream took the shape of wise old Nestor, who stood beside the High King's bed, and told him, "O king and lord of kings, make the war-host ready for battle. For if you attack Troy this coming day Zeus promises to you the victory, and only grief and loss to the Trojan people."

When Agamemnon woke and saw the grey dawn light standing in his doorway, he remembered his dream and was great with hope. But as the light strengthened he remembered that dreams can lie. He was always one whose moods swung him first one way and then the other. And when he rose, instead of donning his war gear and ordering out his heralds with the call to arms, he put on his robe and mantle and took his sceptre of olive-wood bound with gold and summoned the kings and captains to hear his dream and advise him on it. His own doubts spread to the men listening to him, and there was no eager cry for battle, but only men looking doubtfully at each other.

Then the High King suggested a mad thing. He said that he would test the temper of the army. He would summon them all together and tell them that the siege had already dragged on too long, and the time had come when they should run their ships down into the water, and burn the

camp behind them and set sail for Greece. If the warriors took him at his word, however, their leaders were to turn them back before they reached the ships, and he would try some means to put fresh heart into them.

But the siege had indeed dragged on too long. The warriors' hopes had sunk low, and they were weary for their own homes and their wives and children left too long behind. As soon as they heard what Agamemnon had to say, they rose up like a sea before the west wind and, shouting joyfully, made for the ships with the dust rolling up in a cloud behind them. And their captains as eager as all the rest.

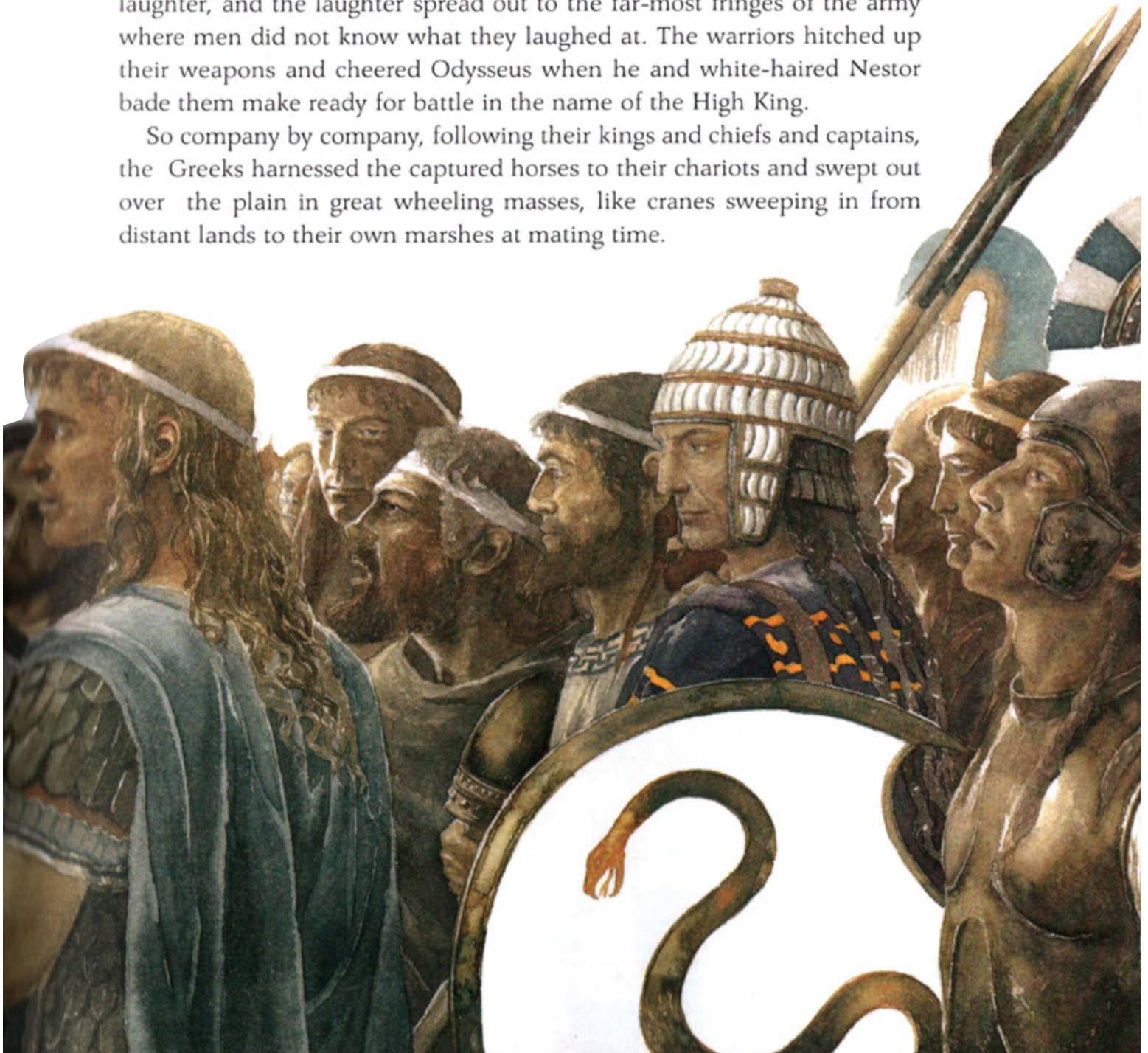
Only Odysseus stood firm, shouting to the chieftains that the High King did but jest, and a shameful thing it would be to leave the siege now when they had spent so long upon it. Taking in his hand the royal sceptre to use as a staff, he turned cattle-dog and herded the warriors back to the gathering place. They returned at last, though in an ugly humour, puzzled and without heart.



But only one of them protested, an ugly bandy-legged fellow called Thersites, who jumped out before the rest and began a jeering speech, insulting the leaders and telling the war-host to run away, for they were not worth following.

Odysseus, knowing that he must be silenced quickly and the mood of the war-host must be changed, took and beat him with the sceptre until the blood came and Thersites cried like a baby. Odysseus flung him down, laughing at the sight he made. Those nearest joined in the laughter, and the laughter spread out to the far-most fringes of the army where men did not know what they laughed at. The warriors hitched up their weapons and cheered Odysseus when he and white-haired Nestor bade them make ready for battle in the name of the High King.

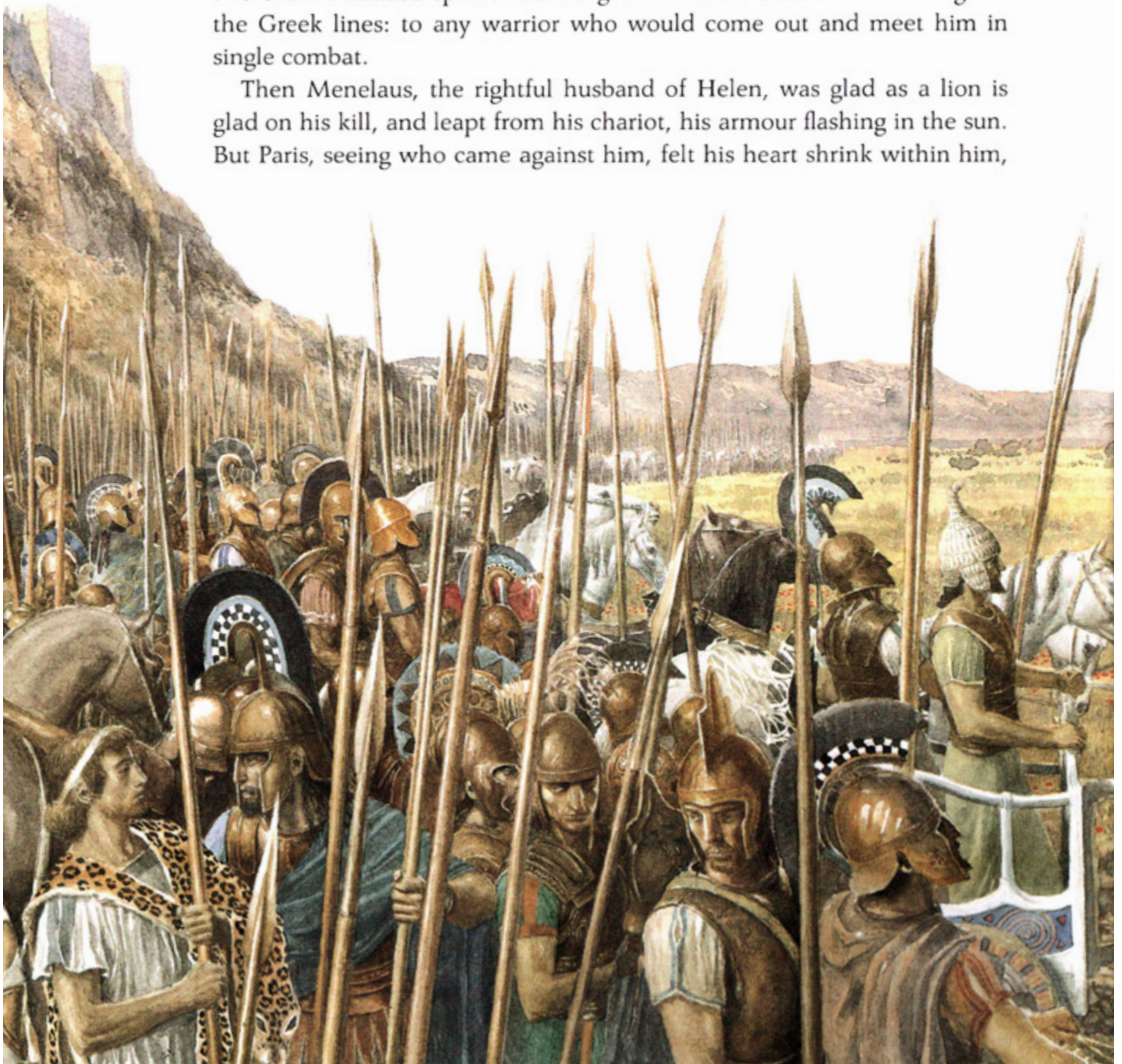
So company by company, following their kings and chiefs and captains, the Greeks harnessed the captured horses to their chariots and swept out over the plain in great wheeling masses, like cranes sweeping in from distant lands to their own marshes at mating time.



And the Trojans, taking heart from the knowledge that Achilles had turned his back on the fighting, came pouring out from their city to meet them. For the first time in all the long years of the siege, the two great war-hosts came face to face.

They checked, fronting each other in two long menacing battle lines; and out from the Trojan mass, into the clear space between, swaggered Paris himself, a spotted panther-skin across his shoulder and in his hands two bronze-headed spears and his great bow. He shouted a challenge to the Greek lines: to any warrior who would come out and meet him in single combat.

Then Menelaus, the rightful husband of Helen, was glad as a lion is glad on his kill, and leapt from his chariot, his armour flashing in the sun. But Paris, seeing who came against him, felt his heart shrink within him,

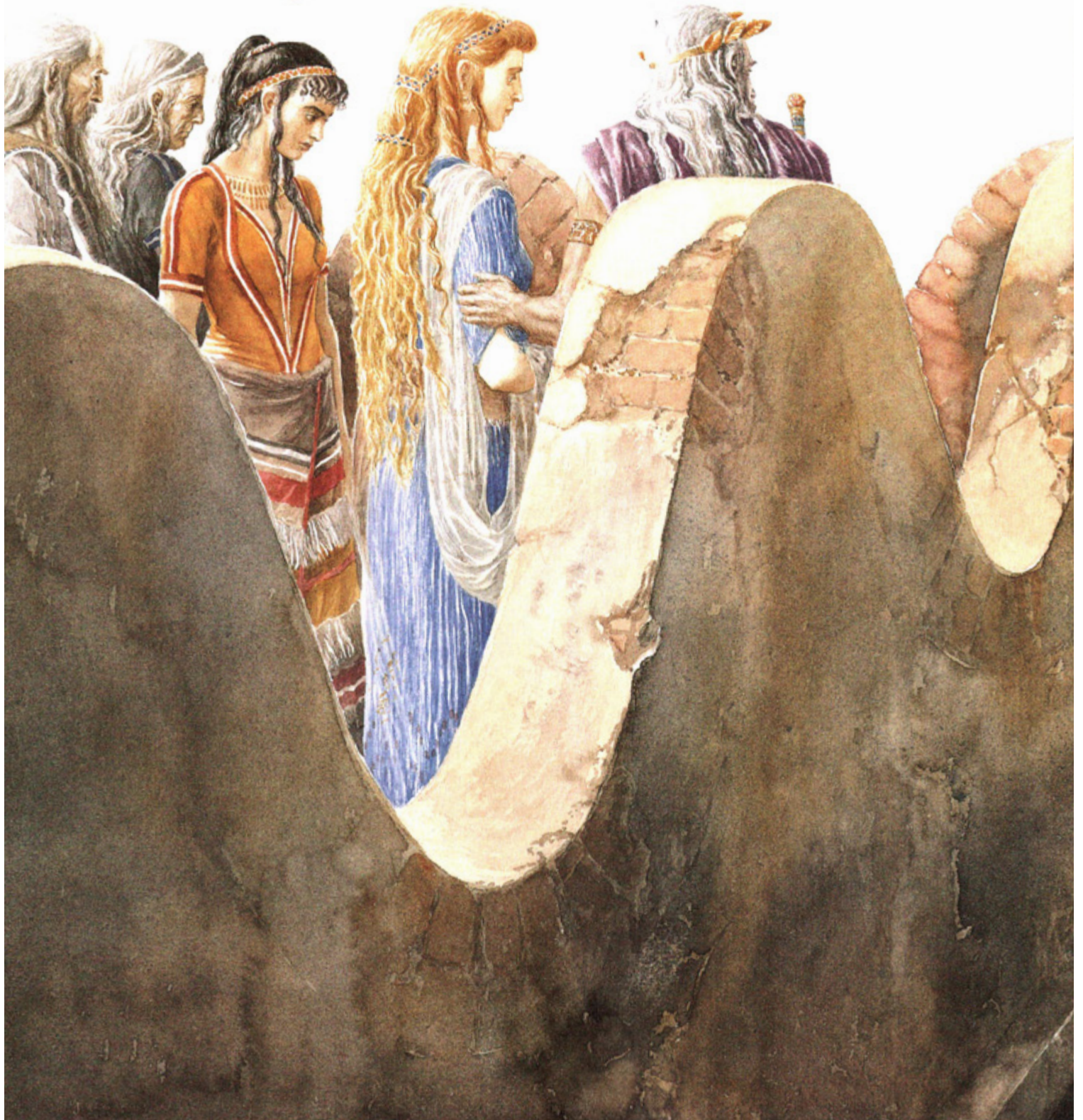


from shame as much as fear, and fell back into the ranks of the Trojan host behind him.

There Hector found him, and tongue-lashed him in scorn for his cowardice, and managed to drive something of courage into him again. And while the courage lasted, he offered a formal bargain to end the war one way or the other by fighting Menelaus. A fight to the death; and Helen, with all her jewels upon her, to be returned to her first husband and her own people, if he himself were killed; while if Menelaus died, she should remain with him and the Trojans, and the Greeks return without her over the sea-ways to the lands from which they came.

The Greeks agreed to this, and so that the thing might be acceptable to the gods, Hector sent back into Troy for two lambs for sacrifice. While they were brought, Paris put on borrowed armour, for he had not come armed for battle; gleaming breastplate and leg-guards, and great helmet with a high nodding horsehair crest. And throughout the mighty warhosts of Greece and Troy every man took off his own armour, for the sun grew hot, and settled down, leaning on his shield, to watch in comfort.





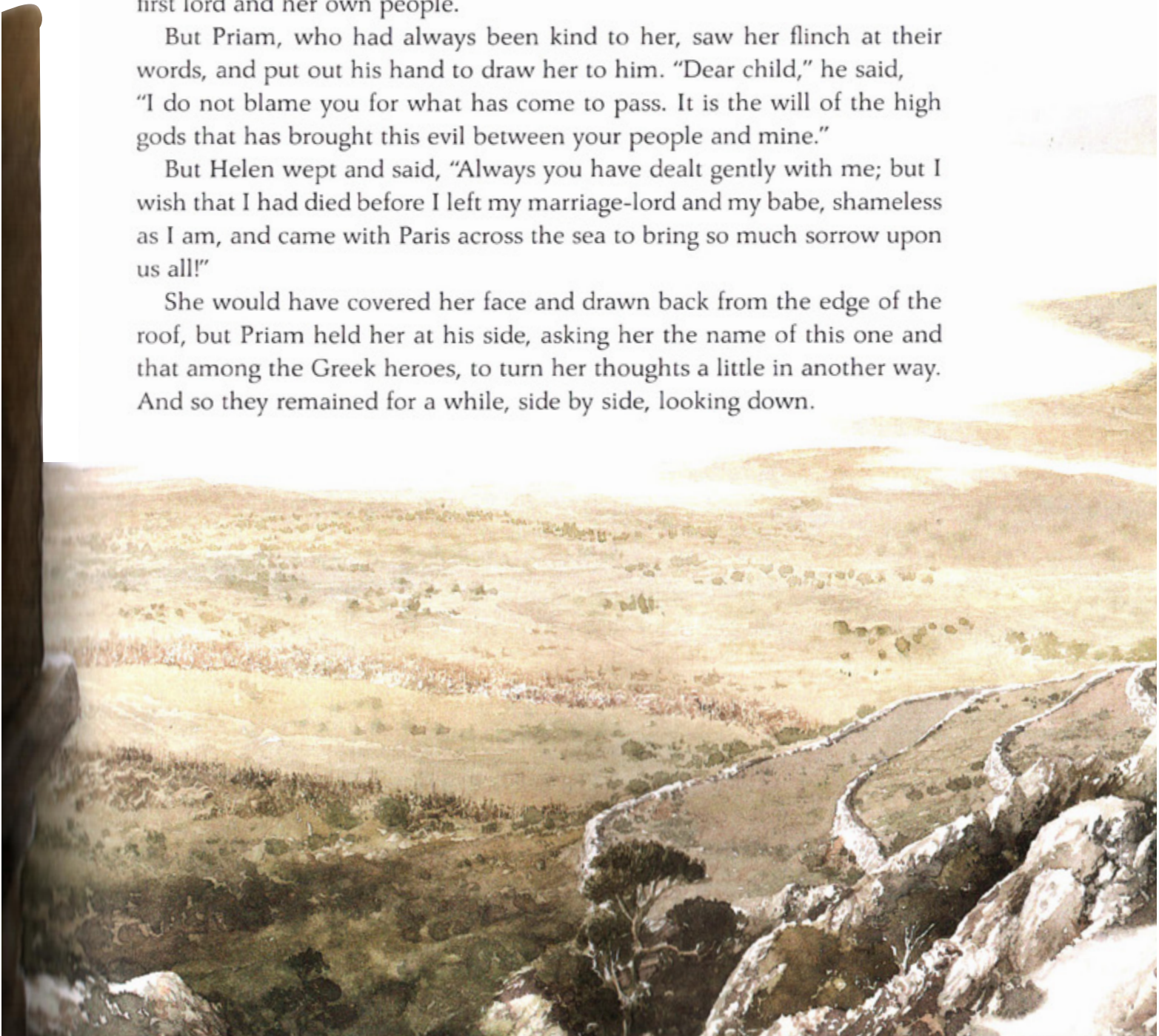
Meanwhile Helen, who was at home among her women and weaving a great purple cloak on her loom, heard of the coming fight between Paris and her marriage-lord. She left her weaving and flung a veil over her head and hurried to the roof of the nearest gate-tower. King Priam was there already, and some of his elders with him, looking out over the plain and the two great armies gathered there.

And seeing her come, the old men murmured among themselves that there had been no shame all this while in fighting to keep so fair a lady, but that now it would be a fine thing for Troy if she were to go back to her first lord and her own people.

But Priam, who had always been kind to her, saw her flinch at their words, and put out his hand to draw her to him. "Dear child," he said, "I do not blame you for what has come to pass. It is the will of the high gods that has brought this evil between your people and mine."

But Helen wept and said, "Always you have dealt gently with me; but I wish that I had died before I left my marriage-lord and my babe, shameless as I am, and came with Paris across the sea to bring so much sorrow upon us all!"

She would have covered her face and drawn back from the edge of the roof, but Priam held her at his side, asking her the name of this one and that among the Greek heroes, to turn her thoughts a little in another way. And so they remained for a while, side by side, looking down.



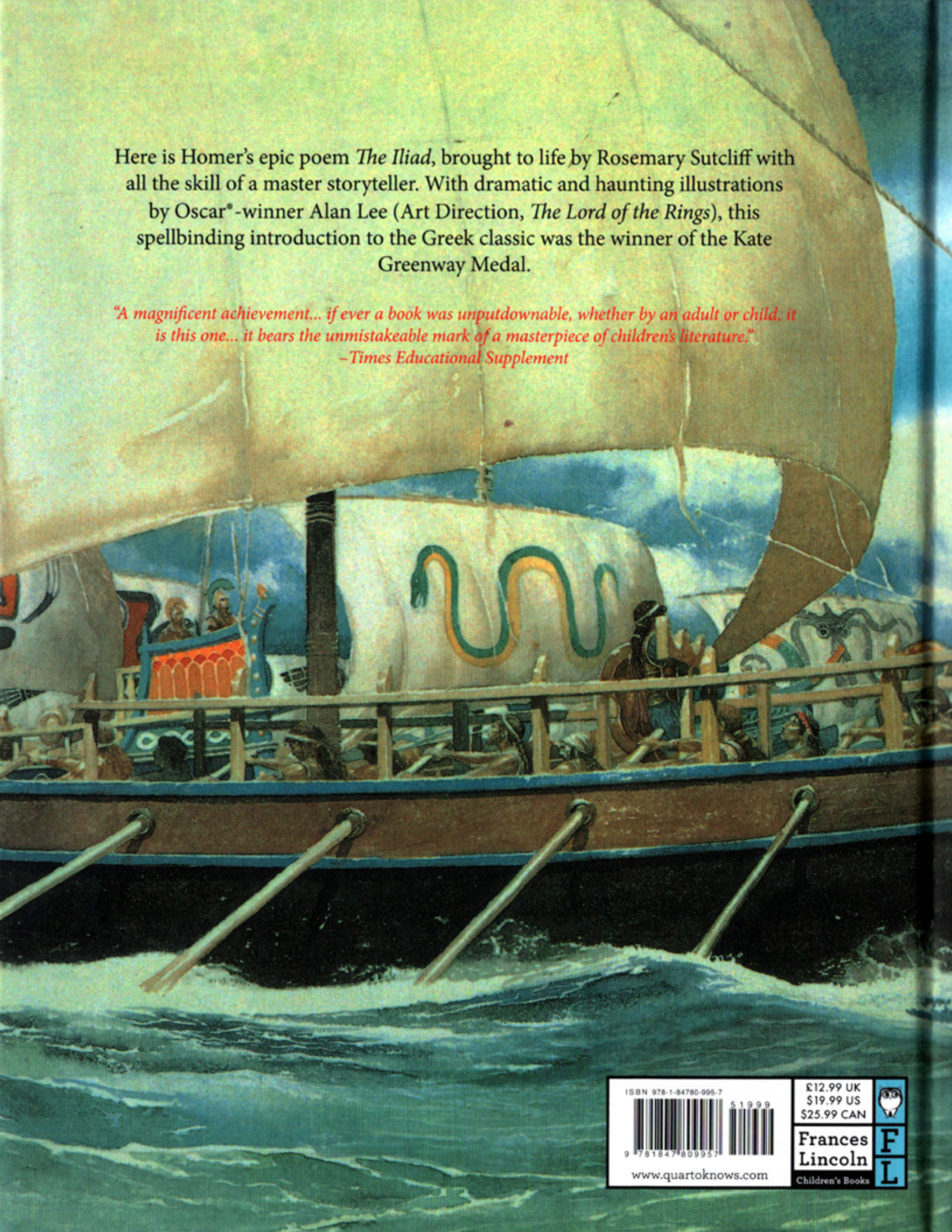
Below, in the open space between the armies, a rough altar had been set up. The two lambs were sacrificed, and a great oath was taken by the leaders of both sides, to abide by the outcome of the combat, whatever it might be. Then a square fighting-ground was marked off and, while the two champions stood facing each other, two wooden tablets, one marked for Paris and one for Menelaus, were put into a helmet and Hector shook them up to decide who should cast the first spear.

Paris' lot flew out on to the trampled ground. There was a deep breath from those near enough to see. "Paris! Paris has first throw!"

Paris drew back his spear and made his cast, but his spear point was blunted on the boss of Menelaus' shield, and fell uselessly away.

Then Menelaus cried out in a mighty voice to the father of the gods, "Great Zeus! Grant me my rightful vengeance on this man who did me foul wrong, even while he ate my salt and slept beneath my roof!" And he in turn made his cast, with all the force of his wrongs behind it.





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