

## EPISODE 9 – The Anger of Achilles

CD 2 tracks 8-10

total running time: 13:04

### *Achilles goes in search of Hector* (Ⓞ 5:33)

When the dead body of Patroclus was brought from the battlefield, Achilles, murmuring to himself, pushed back the hair from the brow. He took a sponge and washed off all the blood and grime, and then he laid the body on a fur and all night he sat beside it, weeping.

Next morning his mother came with glorious armour. She laid it before him, piece by piece. It  
5 was so bright his servants could not look at it. Achilles stood. He strapped on the greaves of pliant tin. He put on the breastplate. He put on the golden helmet with golden tassels and a golden plume. Each piece was shaped to perfection, cool against his skin. He felt lighter with them on, as though he wore invisible wings.

He picked up that wonderful shield that lit up the sky like the moon. He took a sword. He  
10 stepped into the car of his chariot and there, in front of him, the four immortal horses – Lightfoot, Beauty, Dapple and Dancer. And he said, “This time bring your master home!”

“Yes,” said Beauty. “We’ll save your life today. But not for any want of speed or care did Hector strip Patroclus’ back. It was a god. It was a god who killed him and the mighty gods will kill you too.”

15 “What would you have me do?” Achilles said. “Cower in my hut while Hector struts in my father’s armour? If I am meant to die here, far from my father and far from my mother, then so be it. But, before I die, I’ll see the Trojans have their glut of bloody war!”

And he was out of the camp then, among his enemies then, like inhuman fire raging in the mountains, like a mountain lion, like the god of battle, until the ground was sticky with black  
20 blood. Eyes blazing, teeth bared, heart pounding, scorning fear, the headlong runner, too bright to look at, ablaze with fury, cutting a path through flesh towards the city.

And all the Trojan warriors had fled through the city gates. The great bronze Scaean gates had been closed behind them. All the Trojan warriors had returned to the city, except for one. Hector stood outside, dressed in Achilles’ armour, the golden breastplate emblazoned with  
25 silver stars. He was looking this way and that way, watching and waiting.

And high overhead, his father, old Priam, the white-bearded father of Troy, leaned over the parapet of the city walls. He said, “Hector, my son, come inside! Or have the mighty gods condemned me to loiter on the outermost rim of old age, suffering intolerable grief?”

And Hector’s mother, Hecuba, beckoned to him. And his wife, Andromache, with little Astyanax  
30 in her arms, beckoned to him. But Hector turned his back on them all and he stood resolutely outside, compassing in all directions with his eyes.

And then he saw what he was looking for. Among the bronze helmets, with their horsehair plumes, he saw the golden helmet with golden plume and golden tassels. Achilles! And in that moment Achilles saw Hector. He leapt from his chariot. He ran across the battlefield, leaping  
35 over shattered chariots, over disembowelled horses.

And, as he drew closer, Hector could see that his armour was dripping with blood and gore.  
And, as he drew closer still, Hector could see that his mouth was open and from his throat  
came a terrible screaming, screeching, keening cry of grief and fury.

And Hector looked down at the earth between his feet. He looked up at his father and his  
40 mother and his son and his wife. And, in that moment, he knew that he wanted life more than  
any glorious death on the battlefield, and he turned and he ran. He knew every hill and hollow  
of the land. He knew every contour. He turned and he ran like a deer. But Achilles was after  
him, tracking him like a dog, following every twist and turn. Three times Hector ran round the  
city walls of Troy, with Achilles close behind him.

### ***Hector's fate in the balance* (☉ 3:15)**

And up on the rocky crag, on Mount Ida, Zeus lifted the golden scales and into one pan of  
the scales he put the luck of Hector. And into the other pan of the scales he put the luck of  
Achilles. And then he watched as the luck of Hector sank down and down and down towards  
Hades' halls and the luck of Achilles soared up into the skies.

5 And in that moment all the gods and the goddesses deserted Hector. And in that moment  
Athene, owl-eyed Athene, invisible, swooped down out of the sky and stood outside the city  
walls in the shape of Deiphobus, Hector's brother, Deiphobus.

And, as Hector was running round the city walls, Deiphobus said, "Hector! Hector!"

And Hector turned and said, "Deiphobus, my brother, you alone have ventured through the city  
10 gates and I love you for it."

And Deiphobus said, "Hector, why don't we make a stand against Achilles, you and I  
together?"

And Hector nodded and he turned and he faced Achilles. And Achilles curled his lips back from  
his teeth and he screamed and, with all the strength of his arm, he hurled a spear at Hector.

15 But Hector dodged to one side and the spear lodged quivering in the ground behind him. And  
Hector lifted his own spear. And in that moment he didn't see his brother Deiphobus vanish.  
He didn't see Athene, invisible, pulling his spear out of the ground and carrying it through the  
air. Hector threw his spear at Achilles and it struck Achilles' shield. It glanced to one side. And  
Hector turned. He said, "Deiphobus, my brother, give me Achilles' spear!"

20 But Deiphobus was gone. And he saw in that moment that Achilles was holding his own spear  
once again, and he knew that the mighty gods and goddesses had deserted him.

He drew his sword. He raised it above his shoulder. He ran towards Achilles. He could see his  
own reflection in Achilles' breastplate. Behind himself he could see the reflection of the city  
walls of Troy.

25 But already that spear, that spear that could cut through the wind itself, was singing through  
the air. It struck Hector in the throat. It jutted through the nape of his neck. He dropped to his  
knees. The red blood was frothing and bubbling in his mouth. He looked up and Achilles was

standing over him. He said, "Please, I beg you, do not let the Greek dogs tear my flesh by your hollow ships. Return my body to my own people."

30 But Achilles spat in his face. "You killed Patroclus. I won't drive the dogs from your flesh, not for any ransom!" And he put his foot onto Hector's face and he tore out the dripping, barbed spear. And Hector stretched his hands out to the earth and darkness descended on his eyes.

### ***Achilles lays Patroclus to rest (☉ 4:16)***

And Achilles dragged the body of Hector to his chariot. He tore off his armour. He threw it into the car of the chariot. And then, from his belt, he took a knife. He lifted one of Hector's feet and he pierced a hole through the heel, between the tendon and the bone, and the same with the other foot. And then he got a length of ox hide thong and he threaded it through the holes and  
5 he tied it. And he tied the other end of the thong to the back of his chariot.

He leapt into the car of the chariot. He whipped the horses to a gallop and he drove them round and round the city walls of Troy – three times round, screaming and screaming.

And behind the chariot, the body of Hector bouncing, the face of Hector, tearing a furrow into the nourishing earth. And then Achilles drove his chariot across the plain, through the gates of  
10 the palisade, and he was gone.

And the people of Troy, standing on the walls, on the turrets and the towers, they stood and they stared, appalled, mesmerised. And it was only when Achilles was out of sight that their tears came and they gave themselves over to dark despair.

When Achilles and his men returned to the Greek camp, they set to work. No time for rest!  
15 Bone weary from battle, still in armour, they cut down trees. They built a pyre, a hundred feet in width and length. On top of the heap they put Patroclus. They killed dogs, horses, mules, goats. They surrounded the corpse with the dead.

They poured on oil and wine and honey, and then they set it aflame and, as the flames rose up, Achilles said, "Brothers, Patroclus goes across the river. Soon I will join him, the gods  
20 decree. Swear to me that, when I die, you'll burn me too. You'll mingle my ashes with those of Patroclus so we will be together for all time." And his tears splattered onto his bloodstained armour.

Then he and his men rode their chariots around the flaming pyre. Then he and his men had a great feast. They ate and drank and sang in honour of their friend. And all through this  
25 celebration, this mourning of the passing of their friend, Achilles would turn and run into the shadows and kick the battered corpse of Hector, stamp upon his limbs, spit into his face as the dogs gnawed at his flesh.

The corpses of two young men, Hector and Patroclus, both killed in battle: they were so alike in death that one could have been mistaken for the other.