

crazed with fear, and the reins flew from his grip—  
 Patroclus rising beside him stabbed his right jawbone,  
 ramming the spearhead square between his teeth so hard  
 he hooked him by that spearhead over the chariot-rail,  
 hoisted, dragged the Trojan out as an angler perched  
 on a jutting rock ledge drags some fish from the sea,  
 some noble catch, with line and glittering bronze hook.  
 So with the spear Patroclus gaffed him off his car,  
 his mouth gaping round the glittering point  
 and flipped him down facefirst,  
 dead as he fell, his life breath blown away.  
 And next he caught Erylaus closing, lunging in—  
 he flung a rock and it struck between his eyes  
 and the man's whole skull split in his heavy helmet,  
 down the Trojan slammed on the ground, head-down  
 and courage-shattering Death engulfed his corpse.  
 Then in a blur of kills, Amphoterus, Erymas, Epaltes,  
 Tlepolemus son of Damastor, and Echius and Pyris,  
 Ipheus and Euippus and Polymelus the son of Argeas—  
 he crowded corpse on corpse on the earth that rears us all.

But now Sarpedon, watching his comrades drop and die,  
 war-shirts billowing free as Patroclus killed them,  
 dressed his godlike Lycians down with a harsh shout:  
 "Lycians, where's your pride? Where are you running?  
 Now be fast to attack! I'll take him on myself,  
 see who he is who routs us, wreaking havoc against us—  
 cutting the legs from under squads of good brave men."

With that he leapt from his chariot fully armed  
 and hit the ground and Patroclus straight across,  
 as soon as he saw him, leapt from his car too.  
 As a pair of crook-clawed, hook-beaked vultures  
 swoop to fight, screaming above some jagged rock—  
 so with their battle cries they rushed each other there.  
 And Zeus the son of Cronus with Cronus' twisting ways,  
 filling with pity now to see the two great fighters,

\* son of Zeus (and Laodamia, a mortal), on the Trojan side

[403-31]

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[432-61]

BOOK 16: PATROCLUS FIGHTS AND DIES 427

said to Hera, his sister and his wife, "My cruel fate . . .  
 my Sarpedon, the man I love the most, my own son—  
 doomed to die at the hands of Menoetius' son Patroclus.  
 My heart is torn in two as I try to weigh all this.  
 Shall I pluck him up, now, while he's still alive  
 and set him down in the rich green land of Lycia,  
 far from the war at Troy and all its tears?  
 Or beat him down at Patroclus' hands at last?"

But Queen Hera, her eyes wide, protested strongly:  
 "Dread majesty, son of Cronus—what are you saying?  
 A man, a mere mortal, his doom sealed long ago?  
 You'd set him free from all the pains of death?  
 Do as you please, Zeus . . .  
 but none of the deathless gods will ever praise you.  
 And I tell you this—take it to heart, I urge you—  
 if you send Sarpedon home, living still, beware!  
 Then surely some other god will want to sweep  
 his own son clear of the heavy fighting too.  
 Look down. Many who battle round King Priam's  
 mighty walls are sons of the deathless gods—  
 you will inspire lethal anger in them all.

No,

dear as he is to you, and your heart grieves for him,  
 leave Sarpedon there to die in the brutal onslaught,  
 beaten down at the hands of Menoetius' son Patroclus.  
 But once his soul and the life force have left him,  
 send Death to carry him home, send soothing Sleep,  
 all the way till they reach the broad land of Lycia.  
 There his brothers and countrymen will bury the prince  
 with full royal rites, with mounded tomb and pillar.  
 These are the solemn honors owed the dead."

So she pressed

and Zeus the father of men and gods complied at once.  
 But he showered tears of blood that drenched the earth,  
 showers in praise of him, his own dear son,  
 the man Patroclus was just about to kill  
 on Troy's fertile soil, far from his fatherland.

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Now as the two came closing on each other  
 Patroclus suddenly picked off Thrasymelus  
 the famous driver, the aide who flanked Sarpedon—  
 he speared him down the guts and loosed his limbs.  
 But Sarpedon hurled next with a flashing lance  
 and missed his man but he hit the horse Bold Dancer,  
 stabbing his right shoulder and down the stallion went,  
 screaming his life out, shrieking down in the dust  
 as his life breath winged away. And the paired horses  
 reared apart—a raspy creak of the yoke, the reins flying,  
 fouled as the trace horse thrashed the dust in death-throes.  
 But the fine spearman Automedon found a cure for that—  
 drawing his long sharp sword from his sturdy thigh  
 he leapt with a stroke to cut the trace horse free—  
 it worked. The team righted, pulled at the reins  
 and again both fighters closed with savage frenzy,  
 dueling now to the death.

Again Sarpedon missed—  
 over Patroclus' left shoulder his spearhead streaked,  
 it never touched his body. Patroclus hurled next,  
 the bronze launched from his hand—no miss, a mortal hit.  
 He struck him right where the midriff packs the pounding heart  
 and down Sarpedon fell as an oak or white poplar falls  
 or towering pine that shipwrights up on a mountain  
 hew down with whetted axes for sturdy ship timber—  
 so he stretched in front of his team and chariot,  
 sprawled and roaring, clawing the bloody dust.  
 As the bull a marauding lion cuts from the herd,  
 tawny and greathearted among the shambling cattle,  
 dies bellowing under the lion's killing jaws—  
 so now Sarpedon, captain of Lycia's shieldsmen,  
 died at Patroclus' hands and died raging still,  
 crying out his beloved comrade's name: "Glaucus—  
 oh dear friend, dear fighter, soldier's soldier!  
 Now is the time to prove yourself a spearman,  
 a daring man of war—now, if you are brave,  
 make grueling battle your one consuming passion.

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First find Lycia's captains, range the ranks,  
 spur them to fight and shield Sarpedon's body.  
 Then you, Glaucus, you fight for me with bronze!  
 You'll hang your head in shame—every day of your life—  
 if the Argives strip my armor here at the anchored ships  
 where I have gone down fighting. Hold on, full force—  
 spur all our men to battle!"

Death cut him short.

The end closed in around him, swirling down his eyes,  
 choking off his breath. Patroclus planted a heel  
 against his chest, wrenched the spear from his wound  
 and the midriff came out with it—so he dragged out both  
 the man's life breath and the weapon's point together.  
 Close by, the Myrmidons clung to the panting stallions  
 straining to bolt away, free of their masters' chariot.

But grief came over Glaucus, hearing his comrade's call.  
 His heart was racing—what could he do to help him?  
 Wounded himself, he gripped his right arm hard,  
 aching where Teucer's arrow had hit him squarely,  
 assaulting the Argive wall, when Teucer saved his men.  
 Glaucus cried a prayer to the distant deadly Archer:  
 "Hear me, Lord Apollo! Wherever you are now—  
 in Lycia's rich green country or here in Troy,  
 wherever on earth, you can hear a man in pain,  
 you have that power, and pain comes on me now.  
 Look at this ugly wound—  
 my whole arm rings with the stabbing pangs,  
 the blood won't clot, my shoulder's a dead weight.  
 I can't take up my spear, can't hold it steady—  
 no wading into enemy ranks to fight it out . . .  
 and our bravest man is dead, Sarpedon, Zeus's son—  
 did Zeus stand by him? Not even his own son!  
 I beg you, Apollo, heal this throbbing wound,  
 lull the pain now, lend me power in battle—  
 so I can rally our Lycians, drive them into war  
 and fight to save my comrade's corpse myself."

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