

# Heroes

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Extract

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# 1

SILENCE FELL OVER THE ROOM. Everyone was watching the guest, the castaway tossed up by the sea between the rocks and the sand. His hands were still bruised and scratched, his eyes red and his hair as dry as the grass at the end of the summer. But his voice was beautiful, deep and resonant and, as he told his story, his face was transfigured. His eyes shone with a mysterious fever, reflecting the hidden fire within him, burning brighter than the flames licking the hearth.

We understood his language because we lived near the land of the Achaeans and we had once had commercial dealings with them. I myself am a singer of tales among my people and I know wonderful stories, stories so long they take up a whole winter's night, when men lend an ear and linger over their wine, but I had never heard such a beautiful and terrible tale in all my life. It was the story of the end of an era, the story of the decline of the heroes . . .

Sad, it was, especially for a singer like me, because when the heroes disappear, the poets die as well, without a world to sing of.

I am an old man now and I have no desire to live any longer. I have seen flourishing cities devoured by flames and reduced to ashes, I have seen ferocious pirates roam the seas and sack the coasts, I have seen unspoiled maidens raped by bloody barbarians. I have seen all those that I love die, one by one. Yet, from those far away days of my youth, no memory is more vivid in me than the story of that stranger.

He had witnessed the most famous enterprise ever attempted.

The taking of the mightiest city of all Asia! He had fought alongside one of the most powerful men of the earth, an indomitable and generous warrior who had dared to challenge the gods themselves, wounding the hand of Aphrodite and slashing open the belly of Ares, god of war, dark and unforgiving fury who never forsook revenge.

Now you will listen to my story, sitting here on the hay and drinking goat's milk, and perhaps you will not believe my words. I know, you'll think that these are just tales that I've spun to entertain my audience, to gain me food and lodging. You are wrong. Before this uncultured, miserable era, a time existed when men lived in cities of stone, dressed in fine linens, drank inebriating wine in goblets of gold and silver, navigated on agile ships to the ends of the earth, battled on chariots of bronze with shining weapons in their grasp. In those times, poets were welcomed into the palaces of kings and princes. They were honoured as gods.

Everything I am about to tell you is true.

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Our foreign guest stayed at the palace for several months until one day, at the end of the winter, he disappeared without a word and we never heard of him again. But I hadn't missed a word of the tales he would tell in the evening, after dinner, in the assembly room. The echo of the great war fought on the shores of Asia had reached us, but that was the first time we had ever had the opportunity to listen to the words of a man who had taken part in it.

The chief of our people and the nobles would ask him time and again to tell the story of the war, but he always refused. Too bitter a memory, he said. When he finally did begin to tell his story, he began with the night of the fall of Ilium, the city of Priam, which we know as Troy.

And so, I will now tell you the story of what befell the city as I heard it from his lips. You shall learn how such a long and oppressive war was fought for nothing.

Yes, before he disappeared the stranger revealed a secret to me: the true reason why Ilium was razed to the ground and her people destroyed. No . . . it wasn't about a woman. It wasn't over Helen. I should say, instead, that she was one of the combatants, perhaps the most fearsome of them all. Why else would Menelaus have taken her back without making her pay for her betrayal? Some say that the sight of her naked breasts made the sword fall from his hand. No, the reason was another: a reason powerful enough to compel a king to put his queen into the bed of another man . . . for years. Unless what I was told is yet another imperfect truth, concealing an enigma within an enigma.

Anyway, that stranger, cast up by the sea on to our shores, had wanted to reveal it to me, a mere boy. In part he told me what he had seen in person, in part what he had heard and in part, I believe, what the gods themselves had inspired in him.

Perhaps he thought that no one would have believed me, or perhaps he needed to free his heart from a weight he could no longer bear.

Here is what he told me. Muse, inspire my story and sustain my memory. You are about to hear such a story as you have never heard, and you will pass it on to your children and to your children's children.

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For seven days and seven nights burned the city of Ilium. The proud citadel burned and the fifty rooms of the royal palace burned, while her inhabitants, those who had survived the massacre, were massed together in the fields like sheep in a pen. There they waited to be assigned to the victors as spoils of the war. The women lay on the ground with their gowns torn and their hair loosed, their eyes cried dry. Almost all of them were the brides or daughters of Trojan warriors who had fallen during the night of the betrayal. They were destined to serve the wives of the victors or to be called as concubines to their beds, to be possessed and profaned, deprived of everything but the bitterness of their memories.

The children cried, dirty and hungry. They lay on the ground until sleep overcame them and when they awoke they cried again.

The Achaean chiefs assembled in the tent of Agamemnon, their high commander, king of Mycenae. They were discussing whether they should leave immediately or whether the army should remain to offer sacrifice in expiation for all the innocent blood spilled. The victory they had awaited for so many years had not brought them the joy they would have expected. Spoils were scarce because the exhausted city had long consumed all of its riches. The atrocities committed the night the city was taken had left in the heart of each one of them the dark expectation of inevitable punishment. They felt like drunks who had reawakened after a night of revelry, with their clothes soiled and the taste of vomit still in their mouths.

They sat in a circle on seats covered with skins. First came Ulysses, the victor: the inventor of the horse, the machine which had tricked the defenders of Troy. But as the army had poured into the city, he had disappeared, and Eurilocus, his cousin, had taken command of his men, Ithacaeans and Cephallenians from the western islands. He had reappeared at dawn, pale and silent. He, the destroyer of the city, had taken just a small part of the spoils. Strange, really, since he was one of the poorest kings of the coalition, the sovereign of dry and rocky islands. And, what counted the most, the victory had been entirely his doing. No one had argued or sought to know what he had hidden in that meagre booty, so small that it aroused neither the jealousy of the other chiefs nor the envy of his men. And after all, he would be returning to Ithaca with the weapons of Achilles, which alone were worth the price of one hundred bulls.

Ulysses, versatile and cunning! He sat, and listened, keeping his left hand on the hilt of his sword and the right on his sceptre, but he heard nothing of what was said because his labyrinthine mind was following paths hidden to all.

Next to him was the seat, empty, of Ajax Telamon. Great Ajax with his sevenfold shield, his immense size a bulwark on both battlefield and ship. The only one of them who had never received

help from one of the gods in battle. He had died in shame and grief, throwing himself upon his own sword because Ulysses had denied him the inheritance most sought after: the weapons of Achilles. His father, who day after day trained his gaze out over the waves pounding the rocks of his island, would wait for him in vain.

Then came Nestor, king of Pylus, a wise counsellor whose true age no one knew, and after him Idomeneus, king of Crete, the successor of Minos, the lord of the labyrinth. Agamemnon was next, and then his brother Menelaus, exhausted by the night of blood, of death and delirium. It was said that Menelaus had possessed Helen, his wayward queen, that night in the bed of Deiphobus, her last husband, that he had taken her in a pool of blood, alongside the mangled corpse of the Trojan prince. But no truth may come of such a night of trickery and of deceit!

Ajax Oileus, Little Ajax, sat with his brow contracted and his hands tight between his thighs. The night before, he had raped princess Cassandra in the temple of Athena. The goddess herself was struck with such horror that she had closed her eyes so as not to witness the abomination. He had pinned Cassandra to the ground and ripped off her clothes, he had penetrated her like a ram, like a raging bull. For a moment, just a moment, he had met her eye and in that moment he understood that the princess had condemned him to death. To a horrible, certain death.

Agamemnon then took Cassandra for himself. Only she knew the secret hidden in the king's heart. But he, the great Atreid, eyed Ajax with great suspicion, knowing that he had been alone with her first.

Last came Diomedes, son of Tydeus, king of Argos, he who had conquered Thebes of the Seven Gates. No one after the death of Achilles could rival his valour and courage. He had been inside the horse along with Ulysses and had fought the whole night through, searching for the only remaining Trojan adversary worthy of him, Aeneas. He found no trace of the Dardan prince. But he had slipped into the citadel as morning was breaking and had disappeared into one of its secret passages. Diomedes's armour

was now covered with dust and the crest of his helmet was full of cobwebs. And he watched Ulysses of the many deceptions warily, because they two alone, among all the Achaeans, had managed to steal into the city before the night of the wooden horse. They had got in one night long before the city's fall, disguised as dirty, blood-stained Trojan prisoners. Only they had been familiar with the hidden conduits of the citadel.

The chiefs went on with their discussion at great length, but could not reach an agreement. Nestor, Diomedes, Ulysses and Menelaus decided to depart regardless with their fleets; Agamemnon and the others would stay behind to offer a sacrifice of expiation to appease the gods and win their safe return. Or so they claimed, but perhaps there was yet another reason behind their staying. Agamemnon had been seen roaming with Cassandra through the still smoking ruins of Ilium, searching for the only treasure that really interested him; the one for which the war had truly been fought.

The fleets of those who had set sail stopped for the night at the isle of Tenedos. But the very next day, Ulysses changed his mind about leaving. Agamemnon had been right, he said, a hecatomb must be offered to the gods. He turned back, although the others were all against it, and his comrades begged him not to take them back to those cursed shores where so many of them had fallen. Their pleas were useless. The Ithacaeon ships turned sail with the wind against them, forcing their oars through high black waves that the northerly wind churned up and topped with livid froth. Ulysses, standing tall at the stern amidst a shower of sea-spray, had taken the helm of his ship himself. He was never seen again.

It was rumoured that he had returned, in the deep of the night, to the shore where the Achaeans had raised a cairn over the bones of Ajax. Driven by remorse, while the heavens were rent by lightning and the mountains shaken by thunder, he had laid the weapons of Achilles on the votive altar. Too late, even if this were true, because the actions of the living are of no help to the dead. They mourn endlessly their life lost, and wander in

the dark chambers of Hades longing for the light of the sun which they will never see again.

What I think is that Ulysses realized that he had been deceived, and this realization was intolerable. No possible doubt could cloud the mind of the astutest man of the earth. And thus he defied the wind and the waves of the oncoming storm.

I know for certain that the other companions, those who had remained behind with the great Atreid on the shore of Ilium, never saw them arrive, neither Ulysses nor his Cephallenian warriors. When he landed Agamemnon had already set sail, and Ulysses never succeeded in reaching him later. Perhaps he waited too long to return out to sea and was forced to fight the hostile winds of winter. Perhaps a god envious of his glory pushed his ship towards the Ocean without wind and without waves, or was holding him prisoner somewhere.

The first of the Achaean leaders to pay for the excesses committed on that cursed night of the fall of Troy was Ajax Oileus. His ship was taken by a storm, run aground on the Ghrèan cliffs and rent in two. His comrades were immediately engulfed by the waves of the storming sea, but Ajax himself was a formidable swimmer. Clinging to a wooden crate, he fought off the billows and managed to save himself, hoisting himself on to a rock. Sitting on that crate, he berated the gods, claiming that he was invincible and that not even Poseidon could defeat him. The god of the sea heard his words and rose from the depths of the abyss, clutching his trident. With a single blow he shattered the hard rock: Ajax fell between the crumbling splinters and was crushed like wheat under a millstone. For a moment, his screams of pain could be heard over the din of the storm, before they were scattered by the wind.

The others had managed somehow to brave the storm. Having reached Lesbos, they held council to decide whether to sail north of Chios towards the isle of Psiria, on their left, or south of Chios, rounding the Mimantes promontory. In the end they decided to cut through the sea in the direction of Euboea, by the shortest route. But although the sea had calmed and the temperature was



mild, Menelaus disappeared during the voyage, on a moonless night with all of his ships. I will tell you more about him, and what happened to him, later.

Nestor reached sandy Pylus with his men, his ships and his booty after having rounded Cape Malea. He reigned for many more years over his people, honoured by his sons and their wives.

Quite a different fortune befell Diomedes, son of Tydeus.

He berthed his ships on the beach of Temenium while the night was still dark. He had sent no herald to announce the fleet, and no one knew of his homecoming. He had Ulysses's warning in mind: 'Don't trust anyone,' his friend had told him, 'upon your return. Too much time has passed, many things will have changed. Someone may have taken your place and be plotting against you. Above all, no matter how grievous this may seem, do not trust your queen.'

Diomedes set off with Sthenelus, his inseparable friend, and reached his palace in Tiryns under the cover of night. He hadn't seen it for ten years. It seemed changed, although he couldn't say how. He was deeply moved as he contemplated the walls of the citadel, walls which were said to have been built by the cyclops. The gates of his palace were posted with armed guards. He recognized them: mere children when he had left, they were now in the prime of their youth and strength.

He left Sthenelus out of sight with the horses to wait for him, and entered from a passage known only to him. He found the postern on the southern side of the walls, obstructed by the mud brought by the rains and by the roots of the trees which had invaded the passageway over the many years in which no one had used it. It joined the outer fortification to the palace walls and had been used, in times of war, for surprise attacks on the enemy. As Diomedes advanced he felt choked by emotion and by the sense of oppression created by the narrow conduit. He had envisioned his return much differently: his people in celebration, running to greet him along the road, the priestesses of Hera scattering flowers to welcome his chariot. And above all, Aigialeia, his bride, meeting him open-armed and taking him by the hand to

their fragrant bed to make love with him after so many years of longing and of separation.

Aigialeia . . . how many nights he had dreamed of her, lying under his tent on the Ilium plain. No woman, not even the most beautiful of his prisoners, had ever satisfied his passion. The women captured in battle are only full of hate and of despair.

Aigialeia . . . her breasts were white and hard as cut ivory, her womb always burned with desire, her mouth, flushed with fever, could cloud his mind and drive him out of his senses.

Perhaps this was why he was approaching his own home so furtively, stealing into the palace from a hidden subterranean passage. A thousand times in war he had faced death by the light of day. But now an unknown and much greater fear made him crawl through the darkness. The fear of having been forgotten. Nothing is more terrible for a man.

He had reached the point where a narrow tunnel branched off from the postern passage; it ended up directly behind the niche in the throne room which housed an effigy of the goddess Hera, wife of Zeus. This most ancient simulacrum had always adorned the wall opposite the throne. The jewel which embellished the statue's breast was a translucent stone of clearest quartz; it looked black when seen from inside the room but, when looked through from behind the statue, if the throne room was lit, it was as transparent as air. His father Tydeus had had it cut by the artificer Iphicles, who had set it with great expertise. No one could have guessed the trick unless they knew about it. And sounds flowed perfectly through the well-modelled ears of the statue as well.

The throne room was empty but still illuminated although the hour was late, and the hero remained concealed behind the statue, wary that something was about to happen. He was not wrong. An armed man soon appeared and sat down; from another door entered the slim figure of a veiled woman. She uncovered her face only after she had closed the door behind her: Aigialeia!

She was in the full prime of her beauty, more seductive than when he had left her, more desirable. Her shoulders, soft and round, had lost the cold purity of adolescence, her eyes were

deeper, darker and bigger, and her mouth was like a ripe fruit, moist with dew. Two lines creased her forehead between her eyebrows, making her gaze both harsh and sorrowful. Aigialeia . . .

The man said: "They've pulled aground at Temenium in the dark near a pine forest. They evidently don't want to be seen. They're hiding, as if they were afraid."

'And you're sure that it's them?' asked the queen.

'As sure as I'm alive. I recognized the emblems on their ships and on their weapons.'

'And . . . him?'

'He's surely on his ship, the one with the royal emblem and the polished shield at the stern. His best warriors are on armed guard all around the ship. They're on their feet, in the dark, in two rows: the first facing the ship and the second, back-to-back with the others, facing the sea and the countryside.'

Aigialeia's face lit up with joy and Diomedes, from his hiding place, felt his spirit fill with immense happiness. He was on the verge of revealing himself to the woman who seemed so joyous over his return. He hadn't even felt such elation the night Troy had fallen after years of siege.

Aigialeia said: 'No. They're not for him, the guards and the double row of warriors. He never protects himself. No one could ever surprise him in his sleep, not even by stealing up in bare feet on the sand. And no one could hope to save his skin after having roused him and challenged him to combat. If what you say is true, on that ship are the spoils of war. All the treasures that he took from the city of Troy. And, perhaps, something more important still. We must eliminate him before the people find out. We'll say that the ships were full of pirates who had landed to sack the fields and to steal slaves and livestock.'

The man answered: "The army is ready. Nearly all of his men are sleeping, exhausted from the voyage. We'll wipe them out in their sleep and then it will be easy to crush the guards around the king's ship. And when I have seized the treasure I will bring it to you."

'You fool,' said Aigialeia, 'you can't defeat him with weapons!

The din of the battle will infuriate him; he'll leap out of bed with all his armour and mow you down like heads of wheat. Only I can sway him. I shall go to the ship wearing the dress of the ancient queens that bares my breasts. I will paint the tips of my breasts red, and when he has taken me, again and again, only then will he sleep in a slumber so profound that he won't feel the air parting for my dagger as it plunges into his back. You will attack then, and you will not spare a single one of the comrades who fought with him under the walls of Ilium.'

The man trembled and sweat poured down his face. He said: 'And will you wear the dress of the ancient queens for me as well, the dress that bares your breasts? And will you paint the tips of your breasts red for me?'

Aigialeia stared at him with her harsh, haughty gaze. 'Perhaps. But now do as I've commanded.'

Diomedes felt his heart splitting in his chest. For an instant he wanted to break into the room and slay them both, but fear stopped him. He did not know if he could plant his sword between the breasts of the woman he had dreamed of for years as he slept under his tent on the plains of Ilium. He realized that he would never be able to sit on the throne of Argos without her, nor sleep in his empty bed without going mad.

He thought, in those moments of acute pain, that he had to reach his comrades and save them from the attack.

His men were all that were left of his kingdom and of his family. There was no one in Argos who desired his return if his own queen were prepared to kill him. And if his own army was prepared to spill the blood of those who had fought for so long far away from their homeland and who had finally returned to embrace their wives and their children.

He made his way back through the secret passageway at a run, and found Sthenelus silently waiting for him in the shade next to their horses.

'We must return to the ships,' he said. 'The queen is plotting to kill me and to kill all our men by sending the army out against us.'

Sthenelus did not move. He grasped Diomedes by the shoulders and said: 'They'll never win. We will wake our comrades and march against the city. You have conquered Thebes and Troy: no one can challenge you and get away with it. And when we have won you will choose a just punishment for the queen.'

But Diomedes was no longer listening. 'I wounded Aphrodite,' he said. 'I thrust my spear through her delicate hand as she stretched it out to protect Aeneas her son, and now the goddess of love has twisted Aigialeia's feelings; she has filled her with hate for me. The gods never forget. They have their revenge, sooner or later.'

'It's better to die fighting, even against the gods, than to flee,' said Sthenelus. 'Tell me what you saw in the palace.'

Diomedes told him everything, without holding back. 'Do you understand now why I have to go? This is no longer our homeland! I left my queen in the royal palace when I departed for the war. I held her in my arms that morning, and kissed her. And she swore that she would make a statue in my likeness and lay it in our wedding bed and sleep alongside it until I came back. Now I find a monster who only looks like Aigialeia . . .' He bowed his head. 'Yet even more beautiful, if such a thing is possible. Even more desirable.'

They mounted the chariot; Sthenelus grasped the reins and urged on the horses. They galloped swiftly over the dark plain towards the sea, towards Temenium where the ships had been berthed and the comrades slept waiting for dawn.

Diomedes woke them and called them to assembly. They were expecting him to announce their triumphal return to Argos, the city that they had left ten years before. Instead their ears heard bitter words, words they would never have wanted to hear.

When the king finished, he asked them to forsake Argos and to follow him: he would bring them to a new homeland, to a distant land in the west where the memories of a futile, bloody war could not follow them. To a place where they would meet other women and father other children, where they would build a city destined to become invincible.

'The world,' he told them, 'is very big, much bigger than we can imagine. We will find a place ruled by other gods, where our gods cannot persecute us. I am Diomedes, son of Tydeus, conqueror of Thebes of the Seven Gates and conqueror of Ilium. Together we shall conquer a new kingdom, a hundred times bigger than this one; and we will have plenty of everything we desire. We will drink wine and feast every night to drive away our memories.'

Some of them, the youngest, the strongest and most faithful, went right to his side, swearing to follow him anywhere. Some pleaded to be allowed to join their wives and bring them along. Others, most of them, stood in silence, their heads bowed. And when the king asked them what they intended to do, they answered: 'Oh lord, we have fought at your side for years without ever sparing our courage. Our chests and our arms bear the scars of many wounds but now, we beseech you, give us our part of the booty and let us go. It is only right that you leave the wife who would betray you, but we are not kings. We want to return to our houses, to reunite with our wives and with the children we left in swaddling when we departed with the other Achaeans to follow the Atreides under the walls of Troy. We want to grow old in peace, to sit in front of our homes in the evenings and watch the sun go down.'

Diomedes entreated them: 'You mustn't stay behind! I supplicate you, leave with us. Either all of us should remain or all of us should go. If we stay, I will have to kill the queen and then live the rest of my days persecuted by her Furies, and all together we will have to combat against the Argives, against our own blood. And there will be more bitter mourning and more, infinite pain. If only some of you remain, you will certainly be overwhelmed and slain as soon as they realize that I am not there to defend you and guide you in battle. An evil spirit has taken possession of the palace and of the city. If this were not true, my wife, who adored me, would never have dishonoured my bed and my home. She would never have plotted my death.'

This is what Diomedes said, but his words did not convince

them. They had been waiting too long to return to their homeland and their families and now that they had arrived they couldn't bear the thought of leaving once again.

A slender crescent moon was rising at that moment from the waves of the sea and the stars began to pale. The time had come. The men embraced one another, weeping, as the booty was lowered from the ship, the plunders of war to be divided.

There were bronze tripods and urns, jewels of gold and of silver. Pelts of bears, lions and leopards, finely engraved shells from the sea, helmets, shields and spears. And there were women with high, rounded hips, with black eyes still moist with regret for all they had lost.

The king took very little for himself. He kept the golden armour which had been gifted him by the chief of the Lycians, Glaucus, after they met in battle, and he kept the divine horses he had taken from Aeneas. Only he and Sthenelus knew what was hidden in the hold of the royal ship; the reason why Diomedes could promise his men that the city they would found would be invincible, a kingdom destined to reign over the world.

Diomedes bid his comrades farewell and turned to Sthenelus to give him the orders of departure for the fleet. But Sthenelus turned towards those who had decided to stay, and said: 'I shall remain here with them. I want to see the sun rising over the sky of Argos. I want to enter through the southern gate, to see the people and the market where we played as children, chasing after one another with little wooden swords. I've fought long enough. Not even for you, my friend, could I return to sea and face the weariness, the cold, the solitude.'

Diomedes understood. And although he felt oppressed by immense sorrow, he knew that his friend was not speaking out of fear. He simply could not abandon their remaining comrades to their destiny. He would enter Argos with them and he would die with them. He was the other half of Diomedes, as Patroclus had been the other half of Achilles: and so he had to remain with his men, those who would not take to the sea again.

'Farewell, my friend,' said the king to him. 'When the sun

rises high in the sky of Argos and over the palace of Tiryns, look up at it, touch the door jamb for me as well. And if you see Aigialeia . . . tell her that . . .'

He could not go on. Emotion overcame him and his words died in his throat.

'I'll tell her, if I can,' said Sthenelus. 'Farewell. Perhaps we'll meet again one day, but if we don't, remember that although I've decided to remain, I am your friend. Forever.'

And thus the son of Tydeus, Diomedes, left the shores of the land which he had desired so fervently, to face the sea once again.

It was still dark when they weighed anchor but the sky was turning lighter at the horizon. He ordered his comrades to row as fast as they could and to hoist the sail. He wanted to be far off on the water when the sun rose: he couldn't bear the sight of his beloved land as he was being forced to abandon it and he didn't want his comrades to suffer for the same reason or to regret having followed him. He donned the golden armour of Glaucus and stood straight at the stern under the royal standard so that all of them could see him and take courage.

When the aurora rose from the east to illuminate the world he was far away: on his right loomed the high rocks of Cape Malea.

He would never know what fate befell the comrades who remained behind. In his heart he hoped that they had been spared and that, with Diomedes gone, the city would no longer have any reason to destroy valiant men, formidable warriors.

But I imagine that a wretched destiny awaited them, no different from the fate of Agamemnon and his comrades when they returned to their homeland. The only word that was ever heard about those men was that Sthenelus had become Aigialeia's lover. I believe that it was the queen herself who spread this story. Since she could no longer reach Diomedes and kill him herself, she hoped that Rumour - a winged monster with one hundred mouths - could overtake him more rapidly than her ships, shattering his mind and making him die of desperation.

Sthenelus died with his sword in hand, honourably, as he had



always lived, toppled from his chariot by the cast of a spear or perhaps pierced through his neck by an arrow. The horses harnessed to his chariot were no longer the divine steeds that Diomedes had taken from Aeneas and he could no longer fly like he had over the plains of Ilium, swifter than the Trojans' arrows, faster than the wind. A man of no worth, perhaps, tore the armour from his shoulders as he fell, crashing into the dust. And watched as his soul fled, groaning, to the Kingdom of the Dead.