

THE CRUELTY OF ACHILLES, AND THE RANSOMING OF HECTOR

In the tale of "The Cruelty of Achilles, and the Ransoming of Hector" from "Tales of Troy," the story begins with the ghost of Patroclus appearing to Achilles, urging him to conduct funeral rites. Achilles responds by gathering wood for a massive funeral pyre, covering Patroclus in white linen, and sacrificing cattle along with twelve Trojan prisoners as an honor—but this act is marked by shame due to Achilles' wrath and grief. After the pyre burns through the night, Patroclus' bones are encased in gold and kept by Achilles, who decrees that their ashes be mixed upon his own death, beneath a memorial chamber on a hill at Troy.

To honor Patroclus, Achilles hosts games including chariot racing and wrestling, where Ulysses excels. Despite these honors, Achilles desecrates Hector's body, dragging it around Patroclus' tomb, until the gods intervene. Thetis, Achilles' mother, is instructed to convince her son to return Hector's body to Priam for ransom. Priam, amid immense sorrow and humiliation, prepares a lavish ransom and personally visits Achilles, pleading for his son's return by invoking common paternal bonds.

Achilles, moved by Priam's plea and reflecting on his own mortality and the shared sorrows of human condition, agrees. Hector's body is cleaned, and returned to Priam in a gesture of respect and recognition of shared humanity. Priam and Achilles share a meal, bonding over their respective losses.

Priam returns to Troy with Hector's body stealthily to avoid Achilles changing his mind. Upon his return, the women of Troy, including Andromache, Hector's wife, and Helen, mourn Hector's death profoundly. The scene concludes with a communal lament, showcasing the depth of grief and loss war brings, and highlighting the fleeting moments of compassion amidst the brutality of conflict. This chapter thus serves as a

poignant reminder of both the cruelty and the humanity that exist within the heart of warriors, set against the backdrop of the legendary Trojan War.

