

THE SLAYING OF PARIS

In "The Slaying of Paris" from "Tales of Troy," the Greek army, facing new challenges under Trojan leader Deiphobus, seeks advice from their seer Calchas. He instructs them to retrieve Philoctetes, a skilled archer abandoned on Lemnos due to a venomous, incurable wound caused by a dragon. Residing in misery, left to fend off with sea birds, his existence is marked by constant agony and isolation. Ulysses and Diomedes are dispatched to bring him back, promising healing and honors.

Upon arrival at the desolate Lemnos, they encounter Philoctetes, a figure of despair and hostility. However, they manage to persuade him to join them back to Troy, promising to heal his wound. His condition improves under the care of the Greek physician Podaleirius, and he is welcomed warmly by Agamemnon and given gifts, regaining his zest for battle.

The narrative shifts to the Trojan front, where Paris, infamous for his role in triggering the war and the death of Achilles, encounters Philoctetes. Boasting superior archery skills, Philoctetes injures Paris with a poisoned arrow. The venom's torment drives Paris to seek Oenone, a nymph and his former lover, on Mount Ida, hoping for a cure. Despite their past and Paris's betrayal for Helen of Troy, he pleads for Oenone's mercy.

Oenone's reaction encapsulates a mixture of old love and deep scorn. She confronts Paris with the consequences of his choices, revealing the emotional turmoil and complexity of their relationship. The chapter intricately weaves themes of betrayal, redemption, and the cruel inevitabilities of fate, showcasing the profound impacts of personal decisions on both the individual and the cosmic scale of the Trojan War.