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## The Paradox of Mighty Achilles

Dripping with ambiguity  
                  he shuffles toward his future  
          forced to lean back  
                  by the burden of expectations  
A twisted story weighs on him  
          Love for a woman \_\_ torn from him  
          Love for a man \_\_ war-ripped from him  
So many names weighing on his story  
          the one he sired    those he loved    those he killed

Diodameia    Briseis    Neoptolemis    Polyxena  
          Patroclus    Hector    Troilus    Penthesilea  
Memnon  
                  so many more

He skulks in his tent  
He will not fight for this contagion of parasites  
          the adherents of despicable Agamemnon  
          the ghastly creature who wrenched  
          heart-stoppingly beautiful Briseis  
          from his arms  
                                  from his tent  
          to be sullied in his own foul bed

Emptiness overwhelms him  
Fellow soldier is there  
          shares his tent

a sort of recompense  
but falls short  
of what he has lost  
Outside Trojans versus Greeks  
Who cares?  
It's all nothing  
without her  
Patroclus remonstrates  
*Trojan warriors threaten Greek ships*  
Achilles remains motionless  
Patroclus pleads  
*Let me lead*  
*I'll wear your armour*  
*Your myrmidons will follow*  
*We will win*  
Achilles acknowledges he loves this man  
more or less

He relents  
gives Patroclus his armour  
but not his full blessing  
Too much glory for Patroclus  
less glory for Achilles

The news comes diffidently to his tent  
His anger  
a huge hissing spitting shrieking  
uncontrollable animal  
Anger at himself for allowing Patroclus  
to fight what was his battle  
for his limp enthusiasm for his beloved's success  
Anger at slippery Apollo  
the never-forget-a-slight god  
who robbed Patroclus of his wits  
dishevelled his borrowed armour  
allowed Hector to make that final fatal thrust  
Hector

With blood pulsating madly against his ears  
    against the crown of his head  
    Achilles dons his sweaty blood-wet armour  
    charges out of the tent where he has mooched for so long.  
He roars blood-curdling revenge on Priam's eldest son  
    the pin-up boy of the Trojan army  
    the hope of the side      he who would lead the locals to victory

    Hector  
but when he sees Achilles's fearsome approach  
    that the Achean hero is coming after him  
    he flees in terror

But not fast enough  
    one deft spear thrust to the throat  
    and Troy's hope of victory gushes blood  
    onto the battle-trampled soil  
    outside its imposing walls

Determined to savour his success  
    not just another in a long list  
    Achilles stands astraddle over the death-jerking body of Hector  
His blood roars *More more*  
He hitches the dead man to the back of his chariot  
    drives in outlandish triumph around the mighty-built-to-last forever walls of Troy  
The body of Hector the contender bobbles over the uneven terrain  
in rough harmony with visceral wails of threnody  
    mourning down from the groups  
    in sad clumps on top of the inviolable walls

Violable they later prove to be  
    not from the front-on attacks  
    by the likes of hairy-chested Achilles  
but by a subtle Greek plot  
    that would have done justice  
to some work by a much later Athenian dramatist

Imagine the opening scene  
    a solitary Greek on a beach  
    the sea empty of the menacing presence  
    of his country's ships

This Greek

his speech so well prepared  
as skilfully delivered as by any actor centuries later  
treading the focused soil of Epidaurus

Aching to hear such words

the Trojans promote their gullibility  
cast off all caution

Joy unconcern runs rampant

grog floods recently parched gullets  
libidos exult in gratification

and Troy will burn

the walls will fall

But Achilles sees none of this

Somewhere along the line he is killed

by that pansy pants man Paris

who had seduced silly simpering pretty-girl Helen  
from the arms of dour Menelaus

How could effete Paris triumph

over all-conquering heroic Achilles?

Not without help

this time from god Apollo

who uses his widely acknowledged love of music and arts  
to mask his bitchy vengeful nature

The god guided Paris's errant arrow

to Achilles' one vulnerable spot

there on his heel

where Thetis's finger held him

while she dunked him

then a squalling brat

in the waters of Styx

Waters that would make him safe from any harm

except there

where her fingers held his weight

the water did not touch

So History gives Paris two headlines  
the ravisher of delectable Helen  
the killer of Achilles  
Paris's name does not echo  
down the long tunnels of the ages  
His identity has been stolen by a city  
more memorable than he  
far outside the orb of Greek knowledge

But not Achilles  
What city would dare usurp the name  
of one so magnificently barbarian  
in his outbursts of rage love grief?  
Handsome fearless wilful  
Achilles  
is the man  
Achilles the mighty

## Pizza

His eyes burn blur  
The car drives itself  
Every roadside tree  
shouts

*Failure!*

The thought of home  
pains hard

At the front steps  
Monica and Charlie  
their eyes laser him

His tongue a stone  
somehow he speaks  
*..Your mum .. not coming....*

*..another man...*

*...his children..*

*not you...*

*Not us*

*Pizza ?*