Book 6

Bk VI:369-439 **Hector speaks with Andromache**

With this, [Hector](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexFGHILMN.htm#Hector) of the gleaming helm departed for his fine house, but failed to find white-armed [Andromache](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Andromache) at home. She had gone with her son and a fair companion, to the battlements, where she stood in tears and sorrow. Failing to find his unrivaled wife, Hector stood at the threshold and spoke to her servants: ‘Tell me, you maids, where is white-armed Andromache? Is she visiting one of my sisters, or my noble brothers’ fair wives, or has she gone to Athena’s shrine, where the rest of Troy’s noble women seek to influence the dread goddess?’

          ‘Hector,’ a busy housemaid replied, ‘if you wish to know the truth, she has done none of those things, but hearing our men were hard pressed, and the Greeks had won a great victory, she rushed to the battlements, in great distress, and the nurse followed carrying your son.’

          At this, Hector sped from the house and retraced his path through the broad streets. When, after crossing the city, he reached the [Scaean](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexRSTUWXZ.htm#ScaeanGates) Gate by which he intended to leave, his wife came running to meet him. Now she ran to her bronze-clad husband, and the nurse was with her, holding a little boy in her arms, a baby son, Hector’s bright star. Hector called him [Scamandrius](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexRSTUWXZ.htm#ScamandriusAstyanax), but the rest [Astyanax](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Astyanax), since, to them, Hector alone protected Ilium. Hector smiled, and gazed at his son in silence, but Andromache crept weeping to his side, and clasped his hand, saying: ‘Husband, this courage of yours dooms you. You show no pity for your little son or your wretched wife, whom you’ll soon make a widow. The Achaeans must soon join arms against you, and destroy you. If I lose you I were better dead, for should you meet your fate, there will be no more joy for me only sorrow. I have no royal father or mother. Achilles killed my noble father when he sacked Cicilian Thebe, that many-peopled city with its high gates. But he shrank from despoiling Eëtion though he slew him, sending him to the pyre in his ornate armour, and heaping a mound above him, round which the mountain-nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, planted elm trees. And seven brothers of mine, swift-footed mighty [Achilles](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Achilles) sent to Hades, all on a day, killing them there among their shambling-gaited cattle and white fleecy sheep. My mother, queen below wooded Placus, he dragged here with the rest of his spoils, but freed her for a princely ransom, only for [Artemis](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Artemis) of the bow to slay her in her father’s house. Hector you are parent, brother, husband to me. Take pity on me now, and stay here on the battlements, don’t make your son an orphan your wife a widow. Station your men above the fig-tree there, where the wall’s most easily scaled, and the city lies then wide open.

Bk VI:440-493 **Hector takes leave of his wife and son**

‘Lady,’ said [Hector](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexFGHILMN.htm#Hector) of the gleaming helm, ‘I too am concerned, but if I hid from the fighting like a coward, I would be shamed before all the Trojans and their wives in their trailing robes. Nor is it my instinct, since I have striven ever to excel always in the vanguard of the battle, seeking to win great glory for my father and myself. And deep in my heart I know the day is coming when sacred [Ilium](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexFGHILMN.htm#Ilium) will fall, [Priam](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexOP.htm#Priam), and his people of the ashen spear. But the thought of the sad fate to come, not even [Hecabe](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexFGHILMN.htm#Hecabe)’s or Priam’s, nor my many noble brothers’ who will bite the dust at the hands of their foes, not even that sorrow moves me as does the thought of your grief when some bronze-clad Greek drags you away weeping, robbing you of your freedom. Perhaps in Argos you’ll toil at the loom at some other woman’s whim, or bear water all unwillingly from some spring bowed down by the yoke of necessity. Seeing your tears, they will say: ‘There goes the wife of Hector, foremost of all the horse-taming Trojans, when the battle raged at Troy.’ And you will sorrow afresh at those words, lacking a man like me to save you from bondage. May I be dead, and the earth piled above me, before I hear your cries as they drag you away.’

With this, glorious Hector held out his arms to take his [son](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Astyanax), but the child, alarmed at sight of his father, shrank back with a cry on his fair nurse’s breast, fearing the helmet’s bronze and the horsehair crest nodding darkly at him. His father and mother smiled, and glorious Hector doffed the shining helmet at once and laid it on the ground. Then he kissed his beloved son, dandled him in his arms, and prayed aloud: ‘Zeus, and all you gods, grant that this boy like me may be foremost among the Trojans, as mighty in strength, and a powerful leader of Ilium. And some day may they say of him, as he returns from war, “He’s a better man than his father”, and may he bear home the blood-stained armour of those he has slain, so his mother’s heart may rejoice.’

With this he placed the child in his dear wife’s arms, and she took him to her fragrant breast, smiling through her tears. Her husband was touched with pity at this, and stroked her with his hand, saying: ‘[Andromache](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Andromache), dear wife, don’t grieve for me too deeply yet. None will send me to Hades before my time: though no man, noble or humble, once born can escape his fate. Go home, and attend to your tasks, the loom and spindle, and see the maids work hard. War is a man’s concern, the business of every man in Ilium, and mine above all.’

Bk VI:494-529 **Hector and Paris go to fight**

So saying, glorious [Hector](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexFGHILMN.htm#Hector) took up his helmet with its horse-hair crest, while his wife returned home, weeping profusely with many a backward glance. [She](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexA.htm#Andromache) soon came to man-killing Hector’s fine palace, gathered her crowd of women, and roused them to lamentation. Thus they mourned for Hector while he still lived, believing he could not escape an Achaean attack in strength, and return alive from the battlefield.

[Paris](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexOP.htm#Paris) meanwhile did not linger long in his high house, but donned his fine armour with bronze trappings, and fleet of foot sped surely through the city. Like a stable-fed stallion, who has had his fill, and breaks the halter and gallops over the fields in triumph, to bathe in the lovely river as is his wont, tossing his head while his mane streams over his shoulders, glorying in his power as his strong legs carry him to the pastures, the haunts of mares; so Paris, son of Priam, strode swiftly down from [Pergamus](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/IlindexOP.htm#Pergamus), glittering in his armour like the shining sun, and filled with joy.

He soon overtook his brother, noble Hector, about to leave the place where he’d talked with his wife. Godlike Paris was first to speak: ‘Brother, I fear my long delay has kept you waiting: I failed to arrive as you requested.’

Hector of the gleaming helm answered him: ‘Perverse man, no one with reason would decry your martial efforts, since you have courage; but you malinger when it suits, and shun the fight. It grieves me when I hear reproaches against you on Trojan lips, you who caused them all this trouble. Go on, we will be reconciled later, if Zeus grants that we drive the bronze-greaved Greeks from the soil of Troy, and we make a free libation in the palace, to the heavenly gods who live forever.’