

SARPEDON

were sent with a fitting dowry to the temple of the great mother where they and their children would be assigned to the service of the goddess.)



Troy: Upper and Lower City, ca. 1300 BCE

IV

INVASION. SOME MEN SEEK PEACE

August 5, 1289 BCE: at Troy

The deep sound of the bronze drum on the rooftop of the South Tower tears through Prince Hector's dream and jolts him awake. He breaks out of Andromache's sleeping embrace, off the canopied bed, and runs, naked, on the cold marbled floor. By the third stroke of the drum, he has reached the open terrace that juts off the bedroom and, from the height of the hilltop on which the royal palace and the citadel are built, offers an unobstructed view to the west. One can look from the holy Mount Ida in the south to the island of olive-rich Tenedos in the distance, across the Scamander plain and beyond the arched beaches at Coloniae and Besika. And to Cape Sigeium, which frames the western side of the bay of Troy and points to the mouth of the Hellespont, the Thracian water gate, the briny pathway to the Euxine Sea.

Eos, dawn's goddess, has already arrived, ahead of the sun god, and is lifting the wig of night from the plain and the sea. Out of Tenedos, a host of dark-prowed ships is emerging. Squadron after squadron, the fleet keeps pouring out, seemingly intent to fill the view all the way to the distant horizon.

"The seafaring merchants from the west were right," thinks Hector, holding to the marbled parapet, "when they reported of a large Achaean expedition assembled in the protected and secluded channel beyond distant Euboea. They had seen innumerable dark-prowed ships-of-war, dragged up on the dry sands and underpinned with long beams, their masts dropped in their crutch, their sails furled and stowed, stranded ashore by the howling wind and by the swift currents of an unfriendly sea. And they had been asked about Troy, and its location, whether it was indeed guarding the Thracian gates."

He hears the gasp of dismay from his bride Andromache, who has reached him after hurriedly draping herself in a loose tunic, and who stands at his side and grasps his right arm with both hands. "Alas! I fear the punishment has reached the shores of Ilium. The punishment for my brother's