

Homer The Iliad

But so far Hector's wife
knew nothing of all this, for no messenger
had come to tell her clearly that her husband
had remained outside the gates. She was in a room
inside their lofty home, weaving purple fabric
for a double cloak, embroidering flowers on it.
She'd told her well-groomed servants in the house
to place a large tripod on the fire, so Hector
could have a hot bath when he came home from battle.
Poor fool! She'd no idea that a long way from that bath,
Athena with the glittering eyes had killed Hector
at Achilles' hands. Then she heard the wailing,
laments coming from the walls. Her limbs began to shake.
The shuttle fell out of her hands onto the floor.
She spoke out once more to her well-groomed housemaids.

“Come here you two and follow me. Let's see
what's happened. For I've just caught the sound
of my husband's noble mother's voice. In my chest,
my heart leapt in my mouth, my lower limbs
are numb. Something disastrous has taken place
to Priam's children. I hope reports like these
never reach my ears, but I'm dreadfully afraid
that godlike Achilles may have cut off
my bold Hector from the city, driving him
into the plain all by himself, then ended
that fearful courage which possessed him.
He's never one to hold back or remain
within the crowd of men – he always moves ahead,
well in front, second to none in fury.”

Saying this, she hurried through the house, heart pounding,
like some mad woman, accompanied by servants.
Once she reached the wall crowded with men, she stopped,
stood there, and looked out from the wall. She saw Hector
as he was being dragged past before the city,
with swift horses pulling him ruthlessly away
to the Achaeans' hollow ships. At the sight,

black night eclipsed her eyes. She fell back in a faint,
gasping her life away. From her head she threw off
her shining headdress – frontlet, cap, woven headband,
the veil that golden Aphrodite gave her
when Hector of the shining helmet led her
from Eëtion’s house as his wife, once he’d paid
an immense price for his bride. Around her
stood her husband’s sisters and his brother’s wives.
They all helped pick her up, almost dead from shock.
When she’d recovered and her spirit had returned,
she started her lament.