

ILIUM RIDGE

by

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INTRODUCTION

NARRATOR

I sing, oh Goddess, of the wrath
of invincible Achilles, and the
treachery of Agamemnon, son of
Atreus.

I sing of a war, ten long years
and longer, when Paris, son of
Priam of Troy, stole away Helen,
wife of Achaean Menelaus.

I sing of the Gods, of Sky King
Zeus who supported Troy, and his
brother Poseidon, Lord of the
Seas, who favoured Achaea.

I sing of the ultimate battle,
the Battle of Ilium Ridge.

1. EXT. THE LAKE DISTRICT - DAY

The year: 1917 (in human reckoning).

A World War I military vehicle is driving along the road, surrounded by the spectacular scenery of the English Lakes District. In the driver's seat, a MILITARY POLICEMAN, with Messenger of the Gods HERMES, dressed as a WWI lieutenant, sitting beside him. There is another SOLDIER in the back seat.

2. EXT. THETIS' LAKE - DAY

The vehicle comes to an idyllic lake. There is no sign of habitation. The driver parks at the very edge of the lake.

Hermes and the soldiers jump out and march straight into the lake, until they are totally submerged.

3. EXT. UNDER THE LAKE - DAY

Hermes and the soldiers continue walking on the lake bed, surrounded by the blue haze of the water. Ahead of them is a quaint old-style stone cottage, walls festooned with seaweed, with marine plants in the garden.

4. INT. THETIS' COTTAGE - DAY

THETIS, an attractive middle-aged sea-nymph, is sitting in her armchair in the cottage. She is embroidering a scene of the marine kingdom. There is a shawl-covered rocking chair opposite her, with its back to the CAMERA.

There is a RAPPING on the front door. Thetis looks up, alarmed.

THETIS

Into the back. Just to be safe.

From the rocking chair a FIGURE IN FEMALE DRESS, seen only from behind, rises silently, runs into the back room and closes the door. Thetis goes to the front door.

5. EXT. THETIS' COTTAGE - DAY

Hermes knocks again. Thetis opens the door.

HERMES

(voice slightly muffled
by the water)

Mrs. Thetis?

THETIS

I think you have the wrong house.

HERMES

I think not. Would Miss Achilleia be at home?

THETIS

She would not. May I know what business the Army has with my daughter?

HERMES

(Turning to the other
soldiers)

Daughter.

They laugh. Hermes turns back to Thetis.

HERMES

That is between, ah, she and I. Secrets of war, don't you know. Where is she?

THETIS

She has stepped out. And I really have no idea where she may be at present, Mr...

HERMES

Lieutenant. Hermes.

THETIS

Of course, Lieutenant. I will be sure to let her know you called. If that is all...

She starts to close the door. Hermes puts out his hand to stop her.

HERMES

I'm afraid that is not all, Mrs. Thetis. My orders are to await her return. However long that takes.

Hermes gestures to the other soldiers, who move out to either side of the cottage. He starts to push past Thetis into the cottage. She pushes him back.

THETIS

Do you know who I am?

HERMES

Your... connection with my father Zeus is not unknown to me. And if I had to treat every one of his lovers and bastards with kid gloves, my usefulness would be seriously curtailed. But in this case, it matters not. He has chosen the other side.

THETIS

(shocked)

Then who has sent you?

HERMES

His brother. Poseidon. And may I remind you that as a sea-nymph, you are sworn only to him. If you will excuse me.

He stares at Thetis. She stares back, then stands aside wordlessly. He starts to enter, when...

SOLDIER 1

(O.S.)

Up here!

THETIS

No!

She grabs Hermes' arm.

THETIS
I have seen his fate. If he goes
there now...

Hermes gently removes her hand from his sleeve.

HERMES
We can none of us escape our fate.
Not even the Gods.
(tipping his cap)
Good day, madam.

He launches himself upwards. Thetis bursts into tears.

THETIS
(sobbing)
My beautiful baby boy.

6. EXT. THETIS' LAKE - DAY

Hermes' head emerges from the lake. He looks around. A small rowboat is heading away from him across the lake at double speed. It seems to be rowed by a woman, covered in a long cape. Hermes SIGHS.

7. EXT. ROWBOAT - DAY

ACHILLES, wearing a woman's dress, face still concealed by the cape, rows frantically for the opposite shore.

There is a LOUD WHISTLE. Achilles looks around wildly. Nothing. Another WHISTLE. He looks up to see Hermes flying above him, smiling down at the boat. He redoubles his rowing, but Hermes swoops down and plucks the struggling Achilles up into the air by the cape. Achilles tries to wiggle loose, but in vain.

Hermes pulls back Achilles' hood to reveal a handsome young man snarling at him. He looks like a WWI recruiting poster.

HERMES
Miss Achilleia, I presume. If I did
not know better, I should say I have
made the acquaintance of a handsome
woman indeed!

ACHILLES
(in a Geordie accent)
Laugh if you want. I am not going
back to that hell.

HERMES

I am afraid you are. When the Gods
give an order, mortals cannot but
obey. Look down.

Achilles does, and recoils in shock.

8. EXT. THE CHANNEL - DAY

Below Achilles is not the peaceful water of the lake, but a storm-tossed sea. White cliffs and green fields dwindle behind him; ahead, equally green fields, but the far horizon is an evil red glow, punctuated with soundless explosions.

They reach the coast. There is a natural harbour below, where several Achaean battleships lie moored, and a triplane parked in an airfield near by.

HERMES

That robe is most becoming, but I
believe a change of outfit is in
order.

Achilles' dress becomes a World War I captain's uniform.

Hermes swoops down towards the airfield.

9. EXT. ACHAEAN AIRFIELD - DAY

There is a triplane idling on the runway. A MAN stands facing it.

Hermes alights silently, with Achilles.

HERMES

You'll be needing an aide.
Corporal Patroclus!

PATROCLUS turns, and his face lights up.

PATROCLUS

(in an Irish accent)

Sir!

ACHILLES

(equally delighted)

Pat!

They shake hands.

ACHILLES

How long has it been?

PATROCLUS
Too long. The Kaffiroi campaign,
down in darkest Nubia.

ACHILLES
Worthy foes.

PATROCLUS
But we got 'em in the end. You saved
me there. Twice.

ACHILLES
Any man would have done the same.

PATROCLUS
But only you did. My life is yours.
Always.

He clasps Achilles' shoulder.

HERMES
Let's fly!

10. EXT. THE WESTERN FRONT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

No-man's land, a vast field of mud filled with half-buried
corpses and the debris of battle, pock-marked by shell
holes, and crossed by miles of barbed wire barriers.

11. EXT. THE ACHAEAN TRENCH - CONTINUOUS

SENTRY 1 is on patrol. His boots make SUCKING SOUNDS as he
tramps through the muck. Rats scurry away at the sound of
his approach. He ducks round the remains of a rotting arm
lodged between sandbags lining the trench walls.

SENTRY 2 comes round a bend in the walls.

SENTRY 1
Bloody cold, innit?

Sentry 2 pulls out a flask, tosses it to Sentry 1. He
unscrews it, drinks greedily.

Sentry 2 looks at the horizon. The sun is slowly rising.

Sentry 1 wipes his lips, hands back the flask.

SENTRY 1
Thanks, mate.

SENTRY 2
Hear anything wrong?

SENTRY 1
Just the wind.

SENTRY 2
Thought I heard something else.

SENTRY 1
It ain't the Trouts. They're still
licking their wounds from that last
drubbing we gave 'em.

Sentry 2 looks nervously at no-man's land. No sign of life.

SENTRY 2
They're crafty though... Well, I
best get a move on.

Sentry 2 moves off, leaving Sentry 1 alone. Sentry 1 moves
closer to the wall, undoes his fly and starts to urinate.

Suddenly, a SHOT RINGS OUT. Sentry 1 crumples to the
ground.

HECTOR, the Trojan hero, tall, muscle-bound, a commanding
presence, leads his platoon over the trench wall.

Hector surveys the scene, sees the entry to the barracks
room.

HECTOR
Are you with me?

SOLDIERS
In life and in death!

HECTOR
Then follow me, all.

Hector leads his men in a rush on the barracks.

12. INT. BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

The sleeping Achaeans are beginning to stir.

Hector and his men burst in, guns blazing. In ten seconds
it's all over. A bloody massacre. No one left alive.

As the Trojans take stock, Sentry 2 rushes in, brandishing
a pistol.

Before he can fire, Hector grabs the Sentry's wrist,
wrenches his arm out of whack. The Sentry drops his gun.

Hector scoops him up, lifting him off the ground like a rag doll.

HECTOR
You know my name?

SENTRY 2
Hector, son of the bastard Priam.

HECTOR
Very good. I bring a message for
your leader.

Hector hurls him to the ground. He pulls a sheet of paper from his tunic and reads.

HECTOR
"Greetings to the mighty General
Agamemnon from Field Marshal Priam.
Today marks ten years since you came
here to die for Menelaus' conniving
whore. Helen still warms my son's
bed and you will never bring her
back..." It goes on. Would you like
to hear more?

SENTRY 2
(spits)
I've heard it. Many times.

Hector places the note on the sentry's chest, and pulls out his dagger.

SENTRY 2
Wait, what are you...?

Hector thrusts his knife through the note, pinning it to the sentry's chest.

HECTOR
Let's go, boys.

The Trojans make a speedy retreat.

Sentry 2 raises the silver trident hanging from the chain around his neck.

SENTRY 2
Poseidon, Lord of the Seas... avenge
me...

Coughing up blood, gasping for air, he dies.

His last prayer travels up...

13. EXT. THE AIR - DAY

... over the hell of no man's land, up and over the fortress of Ilium Ridge to the fields and mountains beyond, through the snowy peaks, up to...

14. EXT. THE OLYMPICA HOTEL AND SPA - DAY

The hotel is grand, in the 19th century style. It is at the very top of a mighty, snowy mountain: Mount Olympus. The sentry's prayer travels in the great front door...

15. INT. THE OLYMPICA HOTEL AND SPA HALLS - DAY

...through the lobby and hallways, which are thronged with people divine and semi-divine, towards the Gaming Room.

16. INT. THE OLYMPICA HOTEL AND SPA GAMING ROOM - DAY

CAMERA PULLS BACK to back to reveal the image and last prayer of the dying sentry on a holographic map embedded in a large circular table. Placed on the map are markers representing the armies of Achaea/Greece (the Allies) and Ilium/Troy (the Central Powers), with men the pieces in the game. Troy occupies a chunk of ground high on a cliff, while Achaea occupies the land below to the sea. Each side controls a vast network of trenches, with a deadly no-man's land between them.

Seated round the table are brother Gods ZEUS, God of the Skies, POSEIDON, God of the Seas and HADES, God of the Land Below. They are identical copies of one completely normal-looking man, though Zeus wears the regalia and facial hair of German Kaiser Wilhelm II, Poseidon of British King George V, Hades of Russian Czar Nicholas II. All bend forward to see the map.

HADES

Achaeans, Trojans, hacking each other to death. May the carnage never end.

POSEIDON

He served me well. He shall have his revenge.

ZEUS

When? It can't go on forever.

POSEIDON

And why not?

ZEUS

You just saw. My Hector is invincible. The Achaeans are no match for him. So brother Poseidon, are you ready to call it quits? This game begins to bore me.

POSEIDON

It is not over quite yet, brother Zeus.

He smiles and points to the screen. It switches to the triplane where Hermes is flying Achilles and Patroclus to the front.

All are shocked.

ZEUS

Achilles! How the hell did you get him in the game?

POSEIDON

(gleefully)

How many Trojans will he bring down? A mighty fighter, and invincible to boot. I think the great Hector has met his match. What do you think, brother?

ZEUS

That depends on... Excuse me. I see someone to whom I must speak urgently.

He departs. Poseidon looks after him curiously.

POSEIDON

What's he up to?

17. INT. THE OLYMPICA HOTEL AND SPA CHILDREN'S ROOM - DAY

The Goddess APHRODITE is ageless and timeless in her beauty. She lounges on a chaise-longue, smoking from a long cigarette holder and idly watching a group of child-gods at play. Zeus approaches.

ZEUS

Greetings, Aphrodite. It has been a while.