

ILIUM RIDGE  
A Fable of the Great War  
by  
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**INTRODUCTION**

NARRATOR

(sung)

*I sing, o Goddess,  
of the wrath of invincible Achilles.  
of the treachery of Agamemnon.  
of the love of selfless Briseis.  
and the destiny that came  
to Ilium Ridge*

*I sing of a war:  
maybe 4 years,  
or maybe 10,  
or maybe since time began.  
Someone was shot,  
or someone was kidnapped.  
Love, land, money, fame,  
what does it matter?  
Whoever needed an excuse  
for war?*

*I sing of three brothers:  
Zeus in the sky,  
Poseidon in the sea,  
Hades down below.  
War is but their eternal game  
which we below must play forever.*

*I sing of the ultimate battle:  
from the blood of the trenches,  
to the hell of No Mans Land,  
to the high high heights above it  
all.  
The Battle of Ilium Ridge!*

**1. EXT. THE LAKE DISTRICT - DAY**

The year: 1917 (in human reckoning).

An idyllic setting in the English Lakes District. The sound of HORSES HOOVES GALLOPING.

The hooves come into sight. The camera PANS UP to reveal three World War I uniformed soldiers riding down a leafy path towards a lake. On the lead horse is HERMES, Messenger of the Gods, dressed as a lieutenant, with wings on his feet.

**2. EXT. THETIS' LAKE - DAY**

The horses comes to the lake. There is no sign of habitation, except for a small rowboat tied up to the edge of the lake.

The horses stop. Hermes and the other soldiers jump off 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. Luckily in this case, it matters not. He has chosen the other team.

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.

(tipping his cap)

Not even the Gods. Good day, madame.

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. The 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. Did I 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, up 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

APHRODITE

Not so long. Just since the last time someone needed a favour only the Lady of Love could grant.

ZEUS

You wrong me. I merely wish to inquire after the well-being of my favourite daughter.

APHRODITE

And...

ZEUS

I believe you are familiar with Poseidon's latest champion.

APHRODITE

Achilles? Not as familiar as I would like. A true warrior, that one. I do not believe he has ever tasted love.

ZEUS

That would be unfortunate indeed. It might even weaken him, detract from his warrior spirit.

APHRODITE

Hmm. Remind me again why I should do you this favour.

ZEUS

Surely you have never needed a reason to bring true lovers together. The joy in their eye, the passion in their touch...

APHRODITE

I will think of something. Meanwhile, get back to your game. The other boys are waiting.

Zeus bows and departs. Aphrodite turns to the group of child-gods.

APHRODITE

Cupid!

CUPID, an angelic-looking godling in a smart sailor suit, detaches himself from the group and toddles over to her.

CUPID

Yes Mummy?

APHRODITE

What are you shooting these days?

Cupid smiles and holds up his hand. A child-size air rifle appears in it.

## **18. EXT. TRIPLANE - DAY**

The triplane piloted by Hermes continues to fly Achilles and Patroclus towards the front. Below them, the green fields gradually give way to scenes of desolation, fleeing refugees, smoking ruins.