

Summary book 23: Funeral games for Patroclus

The Myrmidons, led by Achilles, continue to mourn Patroclus. Patroclus' body remains unburied while Achilles agrees to eat but refuses to bathe until he has buried Patroclus. That night, Patroclus appears to Achilles in a dream and asks his friend to bury him so that he can go to the land of the dead. When dawn breaks, Achilles prepares Patroclus' body to be burned on a funeral pyre. Before lighting the fire, Achilles sacrifices 12 Trojan hostages and then lights the funeral pyre.

The next day, Achilles buries Patroclus' bones. Afterwards, the Greeks compete in what are called funeral games. The warriors honor Patroclus by competing in boxing, wrestling, and chariot races. Diomedes wins the funeral games, assisted by Athena. Achilles, unhappy that Diomedes won because Athena intervened, wants to take the second-place prize from Antilochus and award it to the last place finisher who lost because of Athena's interference. In response, Antilochus reacts angrily to Achilles' plan to offset divine interference. Menelaus enters the fray by chastising Antilochus, whom Menelaus accuses of committing a foul that led to his coming in second place. After the men argue, they agree to call a truce.