

When sleep finally took him, unknotting his heart
And enveloping his shining limbs—so fatigued
From chasing Hector to windy Ilium—
Patroclus' sad spirit came, with his same form
And with his beautiful eyes and his voice
And wearing the same clothes. He stood
Above Achilles' head, and said to him:

“You're asleep and have forgotten me, Achilles.
You never neglected me when I was alive,
But now, when I am dead! Bury me quickly
So I may pass through Hades' gates.
For the spirits keep me at a distance, the phantoms
Of men outworn, and will not yet allow me
To join them beyond the river. I wander
Aimlessly through Hades' wide-doored house.
And give me your hand, for never again
Will I come back from Hades, once you burn me
In my share of fire. Never more in life
Shall we sit apart from our companions and talk.
The fate I was born to has swallowed me,
And it is your destiny, though you are like the gods,
Achilles, to die beneath the wall of Troy.
And one more thing, Achilles. Do not lay my bones
Apart from yours, but let them be together,
Just as we were reared together in your house
After Menoetius brought me, still a boy,
From Opoeis to your land because I had killed
Amphidamas' son on that day we played dice
And I foolishly became angry. I didn't mean to,
Peleus took me into his house then and reared me
With kindness, and he named me your comrade.
So let one coffer enfold the bones of us both,
The two-handled gold one your mother gave you.”

And Achilles answered him, saying:

“Why have you come to me here, dear heart,
With all these instructions? I promise you
I will do everything just as you ask.
But come closer. Let us give in to grief,
However briefly, in each other's arms.”

Saying this, Achilles reached out with his hands
But could not touch him. His spirit vanished like smoke,
Gone under the earth, with a last, shrill cry.
Awestruck, Achilles leapt up, clapping
His palms together, and said lamenting:

“Ah, so there is something in Death's house,
A phantom spirit, although not in a body.
All night long poor Patroclus' spirit
Stood over me, weeping and wailing,
And giving me detailed instructions
About everything. He looked so like himself.