

The Song of Thetis -- inspired by the *Iliad* of Homer

1	They battled here with bloodied hands, subject to the gods' commands;
2	their battle songs linger within the silence of these war-torn lands.
3	Now they sing of shadowed tomb, of ashen spear and coming doom,
4	but one lone voice is all I hear as I pace in the morning gloom.
5	I heard that voice the day I watched my son go off to war.
6	O my son, my sorrow, lay your sword down, I implore --
7	You are but one of many whom the gods with cruel fate smite --
8	Men cast like matches that burned so briefly and so bright.
9	Warriors clash beyond the walls, children laugh behind them.
10	Soldiers drown in tides of blood, maidens drown in satin.
11	My mother, deathless Thetis, do not try to change my mind,
12	I was born for glory, and it is glory I shall find.
13	His voice came ringing back to me, across the wild and untamed seas.
14	His anguish rent the sky apart, a grief for which there was no surcease.
15	It struck me to the bone -- that cry, and crying out in turn --
16	I found him weeping in the dust as if the world would burn.
17	He wept for a comrade fallen, and his glorious guise was broken.
18	He wept in rage and vengeance for the friend whose life was stolen.
19	I held his hands and wept with him, and this warning to him gave --
20	If you return to war you will be destined for the grave.
21	Warriors clash beyond the walls, children laugh behind them.
22	Soldiers drown in tides of blood, maidens drown in satin.
23	Even Patroclus died, a man far greater than us all --

24	Patroclus, my best friend who is like all mortal men must fall.
25	What do his comrades see when they look into his eyes?
26	A pitiless, ruthless warrior from whose face the enemy flies?
27	But all I see within him is the child that I once bore --
28	a child for whom I would give my life, my spirit -- even more.
29	At my request, the fire god wrought a gleaming, ornate shield
30	that I laid before my son's feet for his use on the battlefield.
31	I gazed into his comrade's face, whose death will bring his doom.
32	And kissed it for the love he gave my son before his doom.
33	And now I pace this barren land where the dust at last has cleared,
34	fire and flames still burning and a sea of unwept tears.
35	O my son, my sorrow -- now I see you lying there --
36	the arrow in your heel and the blood woven in your hair.
37	I heard that voice so long ago, and now it's ringing clear --
38	The voice of a man who no longer needs his mother near.
39	I would have given him the skies, the sun and stars and moon -- but no matter now
40	for all I bore was doom.