The following pages are excerpted from the comic book series *Age of Bronze* issues #16 (March 2003) and #17 (June 2003) published by Image Comics, Inc. These pages also appear in the book *Age of Bronze: Sacrifice*, a collection of *Age of Bronze* issues #10 through #19.

*Age of Bronze* is a comprehensive retelling of the Trojan War legend, distilled from the many versions of the famous story and set against the archaeologically correct backdrop of the 13th century BCE.

Story so far: The Trojan prince Paris has run away with Helen, the beautiful wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. Menelaus’s brother is Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and High King of the Achaeans. Menelaus persuades Agamemnon to declare war on Troy in order to recover Helen. Agamemnon gathers the Achaean kings along with their men and ships in to a massive army. These forces gather on the beach at Aulis, ready to sail to the attack. But obstacles keep delaying the army from reaching Troy. As this excerpt begins, Agamemnon and a group of men are hunting in the woods above the bay where the army is beached.
ALLIES.

NODERE SHIPS ENTER THE BAY—ARE THOSE
ACHILLES'S?

YES, I BELIEVE SO.

GOOD. THAT MEANS ODYSSEUS AND
NESTOR, TOO. I WANT THIS TELEPHILS
BUSINESS FINISHED SO WE CAN GET
ON WITH THIS EXPEDITION.

HOW SOON CAN WE BE READY TO
SAIL FOR TROY?

MONTHS YET. WE'RE STILL WAITING FOR
MORE SHIPS. RIGHT NOW WE'RE BARELY
HALF THE STRENGTH OF LAST
TIME.

WE'LL NEED MORE
STRENGTH THAN LAST
TIME—IF
RUMORS ARE TRUE—
THE IROUNS ARE CASTING
FAR AND WIDE
FOR ALLIES.
I think it's the deer, Agamemnon. None of them is getting food half so—

What do they expect? They get plenty of grain, oil, and wine from Delos. I can't spare one deer among hundreds of men. If they want venison, they should hunt!

Their equipment isn't as good as ours, and certainly you realize, with the war coming, they can't waste arrows.

Since you know so much about the men, Palamedes, you take care of them. I won't discuss it here.

He just shot a deer—why is he in a bad mood?

You never know when to stop, do you, Palamedes?

What?
...AND JUST WAIT TILL YOU SEE THE BREASTS ON HER! OWARD TO TROY!

TROY! TO TROY! TROY!
...AND FROM ALL INDICATIONS, SARPEDON OF
LYKIA FAVORS THE IRODIAN SITE. MONTHS HAVE
PASSED SINCE THE LAST SHIPS JOINED US.
WE SEEM TO BE AT FULL STRENGTH, WHO
ELSE ARE WE WAITING FOR?

YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE WAITING.
WOMENNESS--FOR THE WIND TO
DROP. NO SHIP CAN SAIL OUT OF
THE BAY AGAINST THIS WIND AND
WITH THE REVERSES CURRENT.
ROWING IS TOO DANGEROUS.

ON CRETE, HERD BE
LELYED. SAIL IS
CONTINUALLY EMBRAT-
ING THE GODS TO
THIS ISN'T CRETE, WHILE WE'RE WINDBOUND.
BLIND THE GODS WILL BE HARD TO FIND;
BUT I HAVE INSTRUCTED CALCHAS TO FIND
OUR WHY THE GODS have SET THE
WIND AGAINST US.

AND IT SEEMS WEL
SOON HAVE THE
ANSWERS, ODYSSEUS,
MENELAUS.

HIGH KING, KALCHAS
BIDS YOU TO COME
TO THE ALTAR.

FIRST THEY ALL
GRIMMLED BECAUSE
THEY DIDN'T WANT TO
SAIL FOR TROY AGAIN.
NOW THEY ALL GRIMMLE
BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT
SAILING FAST ENOUGH.
Kalchas! Kalchas, do you know why the gods have sent this wind to delay us?

Then tell me! Go on!

Yes, High King... Sheem!

Yes, High King. Sheem's well, it's like this...

The goddess or the rain is Sheem's angry because... well, Sheem because you shot her sacred deer... and when you boasted about it, and long ago your father... and Sheem... Sheem promised her a golden lamb... she promised her.

Sheem...

Is there a way to appease the goddess? And don't tell us to offer the golden fleece of Arcadia... that's been done for years.

Yes, Sheem! She wants something specific... a blood-sacrifice... a sacrifice... Don't worry, Sheem, it's not the... the golden lamb... um... uh...

Sheem!

Just tell me! She... Sheem! She demands the High Kings... Sheem...

She demands your first-born daughter...
WHAT? SAY THAT AGAIN.

HIGH KING, THEMIS, THE GODDESS DEMANDS THE SACRIFICE OF YOUR FIRST-BORN DAUGHTER.

HEM! A WICKED ONE, HELENE'S BLOOD, OTHERWISE THE WIND WILL REMAIN AGAINST US, THE FLEET WILL NEVER REACH TROY.

MY DAUGHTER? IF HELENE'S BLOOD!

I REFUSE TO SACRIFICE MY DAUGHTER.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING! HOW DARE YOU BROACH THE IDEAS OF YOUR OWN DAUGHTER'S LIFE BY THREATENING MY DAUGHTER?

AGAMEMNON:

HUYYY!

THE GODDESS APPEARS!

FHHH!
AGAMEMNON, WAIT!

SHOULD I'VE ASKED FOR THE GOLDEN LAMB, KALCHE? YOU'LL GET THAT LONG BEFORE MY DAUGHTER!

Hey! That's our game!

The High King!

Who cares about your game?

Who doesn't? Thanks to Palamedes, everyone's waiting for the final tourna...
Palamedes?!

Well, he needed the game.

What?

You asked him to keep the men occupied so he did. The army's been relatively content for months—no mutinies, no significant drop in desertions—can you imagine what this endless wait would've been like without the game?"
SON OF AREES, COME IN, AND YOU, TOO, SON OF LAERTES.

HOW IS HE?

MAYBE YOU CAN COAX HIM OUT OF THIS MOOD. HE HAVN'T EATEN IN DAYS. HE WON'T SPEAK TO US. JUST LIES THERE IN THE DARK--

AGAMEMNON!

AGAMEMNON?

THE ARMY'S RESTLESS. THE OTHER KINGS ARE STARTING TO ASK QUESTIONS.

YOU HAVEN'T TOLD THEM--WHAT... WHAT KALCHAS SAID.
NO, OF COURSE NOT.

NOT YET. BUT THIS WIND IS WEARING AWAY THE ARMY'S PATIENCE. THEY'RE GRUMBLING AND ANXIOUS TO GAY. BUT WHERE'S THEIR LEADER? MENELAUS AND I CAN'T COVER FOR YOU FOREVER. THEY'LL TURN AGAINST YOU IF YOU DON'T ACT SOON.

I'M HIGH KING...

AND KINGS OF THE ICHAESANS WITH BLOOD JURISTIC AS ROYAL AS YOURS. WAIT ON THIS BEACH AT YOUR COMMAND. THEY'RE WILLING TO shed THEIR BLOOD WHEN YOU ASK. BUT YOU BALK AT DEDICATING A LITTLE BLOOD WHEN THE GODS ASK.

IF TELEMACUS

IF TELEMACUS LAY BEFORE THE ALTAR, DON'T TELL ME YOU WOULDN'T THROW YOURSELF BETWEEN HIM AND THE KNIFE.

THIS IS YOUR DECISION, NOT MINE. DO YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR POWER OR DO YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR DAUGHTER?

SEND TALITHBIB TO ME. I'LL HAVE HIM ANNOUNCE TO THE ARMY THAT IN RESIGNING MY COMMAND, MENELAUS, YOU CAN TAKE CHARGE -- OR ANYONE -- OR ANY ELSE WHO WANTS IT.

EVEN PALAMEDES? BECAUSE THAT'S WHO THE ARMY WILLS WANT. YOU'LL LET PALAMEDES NAME LINE IN MEMORY AS VICTOR OVER TROY INSTEAD OF YOURS?

I... CAN'T KILL MY DAUGHTER.

FINE. IT'S OVER. MENELAUS, I WISH YOU WELL IN REGAINING YOUR WIFE AND SON. I'M GOING HOME TO MY OWN WIFE AND SON.
You know it. You know NOW. You know NOW. You know NOW. You know NOW. You know NOW.

If you let me take care of your son, I can save him. If you let me take care of your son, I can save him. If you let me take care of your son, I can save him.

I will protect him. I will protect him. I will protect him.

You cannot stop me. You cannot stop me. You cannot stop me.

I will find you. I will find you. I will find you.

What are you doing? What are you doing? What are you doing?

No, I will never lose. I will never lose. I will never lose.

If I lose, I lose. If I lose, I lose. If I lose, I lose.

I can never lose. I can never lose. I can never lose.

What are you doing? What are you doing? What are you doing?
ODYSSEUS IS RIGHT. AGAMEMNON, IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT—to lose everything and even if you throw away all your gains, will Artemis relent?

YOU AND I HAVE STRIVEN THROUGH SO MUCH PAIN TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN HAPPINESS AND SECURITY. WILL YOU DOOM ALL YOUR CHILDREN TO MISERY—MAYBE DEATH—TO SPARE ONE DAUGHTER FOR A LITTLE WHILE?

IT'S THE CURSE, MENELAUS. THE CURSE ON OUR FAMILY. IT'S CAUGHT ME.

I THOUGHT I COULD ESCAPE IT IN OUR GENERATION. I THOUGHT IT HAD SUNK ITS Talons INTO YOU—and I was glad it had missed me.

HOW STUPID COULD I BE?

IT WAS JUST BIRDING ITSELF, LYING IN WAIT, CHICKERING—PREPARING TO DEMAND THAT I KILL MY OWN DAUGHTER.

IT'S SO CLEAR. NON-OUR FAMILY HISTORY IS FULL OF EACH GENERATION PREYING ON THE NEXT. HOW DID I EVER IMAGINE ESCAPE IT?
UNCLE THRESSES RAPED HIS DAUGHTER AND THE SHAME DRIVEN HER TO SUICIDE.

THEN THAT BASTARD OFFSPRING OF THEIRS MURDERED OUR FATHER IN REVERSE FOR THE TIME-FATHER SLAUGHTERED OUR COUSINS AND RAN THEM TO THEIR FATHER—
STOP! STOP!
I can't bear it!

AND BEYOND WHAT THEY DID TO THEIR CHILDREN, WHAT THEY DID TO EACH OTHER...

NO! DON'T... AGAMEMNON, JUST DON'T!

FORGIVE ME, MENELAUS. I haven't always been kind to you. The torments when we were young...

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ARKAS: FIND A FRESH TABLET... AND CALL THE SON OF LAERTE'S BACK INSIDE.

WRITE THIS: KLYTEMNESTRA MUST SEND IPHIGENIA HERE TO MARS BY LAND-- THE WATER IS IMPASSABLE, AND I... HAH-- MY WIFE WON'T LET THE GIRL GO WITHOUT A REASON.

IT'S FOR THE WEDDING OF COURSE! IPHIGENIA'S WEDDING.

YE-E-E-E-S... BUT IO--?

WELL, WHICH OF THE UNMARRIED ACHAIEANS HEAR! SIT DOWN AND LISTEN! WOULDN'T GREAT AJAX?

ACHILLES: YES! HE'S THE SON OF HELODES-- THAT'S HIS NAME! KLYTEMNESTRA, WRITE THAT I'M GIVING HIM MY DAUGHTER! IN MARRIAGE AS REWARD FOR HIS GREAT FEATS IN MYRIA-- FOR SAVING THE LIFE OF THE PRINCESS. SHE WON'T LIKE THAT PART, BUT SHE'LL BELIEVE IT.

AND PUT IN THAT ACHILLES REFUSES TO SAIL UNTIL AFTER THE WEDDING.

ODYSSEUS, I'LL SEND YOU TO AKRAE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE. BUT TELL ANYONE WHO ASKS YOU THAT YOU'RE GOING TO ITACA. NO ONE MUST KNOW ABOUT THIS-- ESPECIALLY ACHILLES.

WAIT, WAIT, I'M GOING TO NEED ANOTHER TABLET TO FIT ALL THAT.
ARKAS, BRING A FRESH TABLET.
READY HIGH KING.

WRITE THIS: DISREGARD THE PREVIOUS MESSAGE.

ACHILLES REFUSES TO MARRY UNTIL TROY FALLS.

YES, YES! NOW LET ME SEAL IT. THERE. ARKAS, YOU'RE LOYAL TO ME, AREN'T YOU?

YESSS, HIGH KING!

I'VE SENT YOU TO MCMENAE, ARKAS. AND TAKE THIS MESSAGE TO MY WIFE: DON'T STOP — AND DON'T LET ANYONE STOP YOU. DON'T SPEAK TO ANYONE.
I won't, High King, but... only if you meet my daughter with her escort on the road. Make them take back the ring if you have it.

I will, High King, but... but what reason will your daughter have to trust that I'm carrying out your wishes?

My seal is on the tablet—here... here is the seal, ring, too. Keep it safe! Show the ring and they'll be sure to obey you.

Now, go! Go! Own is nearly here!
PLEASE, SIR, WE'VE ONLY COME TO SEE THE SHIPS---

FROM CHALKIES, SIR, CLOSE ON THE SHORE OPPOSITE---YET WE HAVEN'T DARED COME BEFORE.

THOUGH THE FLEET'S WINDING A SMALL BOAT CAN MANEUVER. WE THOUGHT IT SAFE ENOUGH TO SEE THIS GREAT ARMY SUCH AS THE WORLD'S NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

WE BROUGHT HOME-BAKED BREAD---FOR OUR HUSBANDS AND SONS AND BROTHERS--A TREAT FOR THEM--AN EXCUSE FOR

#5

COME FROM WHERE?

THEY'RE WITH THE ARMY THEMSELVES, SIR, FIGHTING MEN EVERY ONE OF THEM.

WE HAD TO COME BEFORE THE FLEET SAILS, HAD TO SEE IT FOR OURSELVES.

YES, I SEE, BUT--

MAY THE GODS BLESS YOU AND ALL YOUR FAMILY.

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR STANDING WOMEN! GO ON, GO HOME--

PLEASE, SIR, WE WON'T STAY LONG--JUST TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE ACHAEGIAN KINGS COME FROM FAR OFF.

WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE? LOOK AT HIS OILED HAIR, AND THAT CLOTH IS ANYFULLY FINE-MADE.

DO YOU--DO YOU THINK MAYBE HE'S A GOD IN DISGUISE?

IN YEARS TO COME WE'LL TELL IT TO OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.
Oh, the ships! The ships!

A thousand of 'em, they say!

Too many to count!

Look what I found leaving camp while I was watching the road for any arrivals from Mycenae.

Agamemnon!

Go home!