

The Iliad

Book Four The Armies Clash

[The Council of the Gods on Olympus; Zeus sends Athena to break the truce; Athena persuades Pandarus to fire an arrow at Menelaus; Menelaus is wounded; Machaon tends to Menelaus; Agamemnon tours the battlefield rallying his troops; the battle starts again]

The gods all sat assembled in the golden courtyard,
with Zeus there, too. Gracious Hebe went among them,
pouring nectar. They toasted each other in golden cups,
as they looked out on Troy. Then Zeus, son of Cronos,
wishing to irk Hera with a sarcastic speech,
addressed them in deviously provoking words:

“Menelaus has two goddesses
assisting him, Hera of Argos
and Athena of Alalcomene.

[10] But they sit far away, looking on,
enjoying themselves, while Aphrodite,
who loves laughter, helps Paris all the time,
protecting him from death. Now, for instance,
she’s just rescued him from certain death.
For war-loving Menelaus was the victor,
no doubt of that. But why don’t we discuss
how this warfare is going to finish up—
whether we should re-ignite harsh combat,
this horrific strife, or make both sides friends.

[20] If this second option pleases all of us,
if we find it sweet, then king Priam’s city
remains inhabited, and Menelaus
takes Argive Helen home with him.”

Athena and Hera sat together muttering,
plotting trouble for the Trojans. Angry at Zeus,
her father, Athena sat there silently,
so enraged she didn’t say a word. But Hera,

unable to contain her anger, burst out:

“Most fearful son of Cronos, what are you saying?
[30] How can you wish to undermine my efforts,
prevent them from achieving anything?
What about the sweat which dripped from me,
as I worked so hard, wearing my horses out,
gathering men to wipe out Priam and his children.
Go ahead then. But all we other gods
do not approve of what you’re doing.”

Then cloud-gatherer Zeus, irritated, said to her:

“Dear wife, what sort of crimes have Priam
or Priam’s children committed against you,
[40] that you should be so vehemently keen
to destroy that well-built city Ilion?
If you went through its gates or its huge walls,
you’d gorge on Priam and his children,
other Trojans, too, swallow their flesh raw.
That’s what you’d do to slake your anger.
Do as you wish. We shouldn’t make this matter
something you and I later squabble over,
a source of major disagreements.
But I’ll tell you this—keep it in mind.
[50] Whenever I get the urge to wipe out
some city whose inhabitants you love,
don’t try to thwart me. Let me have my way.
I’ll give in to you freely, though unwillingly.
For of all towns inhabited by earth’s peoples,
under the sun, beneath the heavenly stars,
sacred Ilion, with Priam and his people,
expert spearmen, stands dearest in my heart.
My altar there has always shared their feasts,
with libations and sacrificial smoke,
[60] offerings we get as honours due to us.”

Ox-eyed Hera then said in reply to Zeus:

“The three cities I love the best by far
are Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae,
city of wide streets. Destroy them utterly,
if you ever hate them in your heart.
I won’t deny you or get in your way.
If I tried disagreeing with such destruction,
my hostile stance would be quite useless.
For you are far more powerful than me.

[70] But my own work must not be wasted,
worth nothing. I’m a god, the same race as you—
I’m crooked-minded Cronos’ eldest daughter.
Another thing—in addition to my birth—
I’m called your wife, and you rule all immortals.
In this matter, then, let’s both support
each other’s wishes—you mine, I yours.
Other gods will follow our example.
Instruct Athena to go immediately
where Trojans and Achaeans carry on
[80] their bitter conflict. There she should try
to get the Trojans to break their oaths first,
by harming the glorious Achaeans.”

Hera spoke. The father of gods and men agreed.
He spoke up to Athena—his words had wings.

“Go quickly to the Trojan and Achaean troops.
Try to get the Trojans to break their oaths first,
by injuring the glorious Achaeans.”

Zeus’ words stirred up Athena’s earlier desires.
She darted from Olympus summit, sped off,
[90] like a comet sent by crooked-minded Cronos’ son,
a beacon for sailors and the wide race of men,
showering sparks behind her as she flew.
That’s how Pallas Athena shot to earth, then dropped

right down into the middle of the soldiers.
Horse-taming Trojans looked on in amazement,
well-armed Achaeans, too. As they saw her,
each man said to the person next to him:

“There’s going to be more war, more wretched combat,
or else great Zeus, who serves up war to men,
[100] will make the troops on both sides friends.”

That’s what troops muttered, both Trojan and Achaean.
Athena went down into the Trojan crowd,
looking like Laodocus, Antenor’s son,
a strong spearman, seeking godlike Pandarus.
She met Pandarus, Lycaon’s powerful son,
a fine man, standing there with his sturdy soldiers,
shield-bearing troops who’d come from the river Aesopus.
Standing near him, Athena spoke. Her words had wings:

“Fiery hearted son of Lycaon,
[110] why not do as I suggest? Prepare yourself
to shoot a swift arrow at Menelaus.
You’d earn thanks and glory from all Trojans,
most of all from prince Alexander.
He’d be the very first to bring fine gifts,
if he could see warlike Menelaus,
son of Atreus, mounted on his bier,
his bitter funeral pyre, killed by your arrow.
So come, then, shoot an arrow at him—
at splendid Menelaus. Promise Apollo,
[120] illustrious archer born in Lycia,
you’ll make fine sacrifice, some new-born lambs,
once you get back to your city, holy Zeleia.”

Athena spoke and thus swayed his foolish wits.
Pandarus took up his bow of polished horn,
made from a nimble wild goat he himself once shot
under the chest, as it leapt down from a rock.

He'd waited in an ambush and hit it in the front.
The goat fell down onto the rocks, landing on its back.
Horns on its head were sixteen palm widths long.
[130] A man skilled in shaping horn had worked on them,
to fit the horns together to create a bow.
He'd polished it all over, adding gold caps
snugly fitted on the tips. Pandarus stooped down,
strung the bow, then set it on the ground.
His brave companions held their shields before him,
just in case Achaea's warlike sons attacked them,
before he could shoot Menelaus, Atreus' warrior son.
Then, removing the cover from his quiver,
Pandarus took out an arrow, a fresh-winged courier
[140] bearing dark agony. Next he quickly set
the keen arrow on the string, swearing an oath
to the archer god, Lycian-born Apollo,
that he would make splendid sacrifice, first-born lambs,
when he got back to his city, holy Zaleia.
Gripping the arrow notch, the ox-gut bowstring,
he pulled back, drawing the string right to his nipple,
iron arrow head against the bow. Once he'd bent
that great bow into a circle, the bow twanged,
the string sang out, the sharp-pointed arrow flew away,
[150] eager to bury itself in crowds of men.

But, Menelaus, the immortal sacred gods
did not forget you.* Athena, Zeus' daughter,
goddess of war's spoils, was first to stand before you,
to ward off the piercing arrow—she brushed it from your skin,
just as a mother brushes a fly off her child
while he lies sweetly sleeping. Athena led the arrow
to the spot where the gold buckles on the belt
rest on the joint in the double body armour.
The keen arrow dug into the leather strap,
[160] passed right through the finely decorated belt,
through the richly embossed armour, the body mail,
his most powerful guard, worn to protect his flesh,

by blocking spears and arrows. The arrow pierced it,
going through that mail, and grazed the skin of Menelaus.
Dark blood at once came flowing from the wound.
Just as when some woman of Meonia or Caria
stains white ivory with purple dye, making a cheek piece
for a horse, and leaves it in her room—an object
many riders covet for themselves, a king's treasure
[170] with double value—horse's ornament and rider's glory—
that's how, Menelaus, your strong thighs, shins and ankles
were stained with your own blood below the wound.

When Agamemnon saw dark blood flowing from the wound,
that king of men shuddered. And Menelaus,
who loved war, shuddered, too. But when he saw
barbs of the arrow head, its binding, still outside,
not underneath the skin, his spirits rose, and courage
flowed back into his chest. Mighty Agamemnon,
taking Menelaus by the hand, with a bitter groan,
[180] spoke to his companions, all grieving with him:

“Dear brother, that oath I swore to was your death—
letting you step forward to fight Trojans,
as Achaea's champion. For now the Trojans
have shot you, walking roughshod on their oaths,
that treaty they swore to in good faith. But still,
the oath, lambs' blood, unmixed libations,
handshakes, things in which we placed our trust—
all these will not go in vain. For if Zeus,
the Olympian, does not fulfil them now,
[190] later on he will. Trojans will pay much—
with their heads, their wives, their children.
I know in my mind and heart that day will come
when holy Troy, Priam, and his people,
fine spearmen, will be annihilated,
when high-ruling Zeus, son of Cronos,
who dwells in the sky, angry at their lies,
will shake his dark aegis against them all.

These things will be fulfilled. But, Menelaus,
I'll be in dreadful pain on your account,
[200] if you die, if Fate now ends your life,
if I return to arid Argos totally disgraced.
For Achaeans immediately will think of home,
leaving Priam and his Trojans here in triumph,
abandoning Helen, an Argive woman.
Your bones will lie rotting here in Trojan soil,
recalling the work we failed to finish.
Then some arrogant Trojan, leaping up
onto the tomb of famous Menelaus,
will shout:

'May Agamemnon's anger
[210] always end like this. His Achaean army
he brought here in vain. He returned home,
back to his native land in empty ships,
abandoning courageous Menelaus.'

That's what he'll say. Before that day
I hope the broad earth will lie over me!"

Then Menelaus, to cheer up Agamemnon, said:

"Take courage. Don't upset Achaeans.
This sharp arrow is not a fatal hit.
My gleaming belt protected me on top,
[220] as did my body chain mail underneath,
forged in bronze."

Mighty Agamemnon answered:

"My dear Menelaus, I hope that's true.
But a healer must inspect your wound,
apply his medicine to relieve black pain."

Agamemnon ordered Talthibius, his godlike herald:

“Talthybius, as quickly as you can,
get Machaon here, son of Asclepius,
healer without equal, to look over
warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus,
[230] shot by someone’s arrow, a skilled archer,
Trojan or Lycian—to his glory and our grief.”

Once he heard the order, Talthybius obeyed.
He set off among bronze-clad Achaeans,
seeking heroic Machaon. He saw him there,
standing among the ranks of his strong warriors,
shield-bearing men who’d come with him from Tricca,
land where horses breed. Standing close to him,
Talthybius spoke. His words had wings.

“Son of Asclepius, rouse yourself.
[240] For mighty Agamemnon calls for you
to look at warrior Menelaus, Achaea’s leader,
shot by someone’s arrow, a skilled archer,
Trojan or Lycian—to his glory and our grief.”

At Talthybius’ words Machaon’s spirits
were stirred up in his chest. They set off together,
through the wide Achaean army’s crowded ranks.
They came where wounded fair-haired Menelaus lay.
Around him all the noblest men had gathered in a circle.
Machaon, godlike man, strode into the middle,
[250] drew the arrow from the belt without delay,
twisting back the sharp barbs as he pulled the arrow out.
He undid the finely decorated belt and armour,
then, under that, the chain mail forged in bronze.
Next, he inspected the wound the keen arrow made,
sucked out the blood, then skilfully applied his potions,
soothing medicines which Cheiron gave his father.*

While the Achaeans were looking after Menelaus,

lord of the loud war shout, Trojan ranks advanced,
shields ready, once more armed with all their weapons,
[260] fully charged with passionate desire for battle.
Then you'd not have seen lord Agamemnon sleeping,
hiding, or not keen to fight. Quite the reverse,
he was moving out to combat, to man-ennobling war.
He left his horses and ornate bronze chariot
with his aide Eurymedon, son of Ptolemaeus,
son of Peiraeus, who held the panting horses at a distance.
For Agamemnon had ordered him repeatedly
to keep the horses ready for the time his limbs
grew tired from moving through so many soldiers.
[270] He went around on foot, inspecting warrior ranks.
When he saw Danaans coming up with horses,
he'd approach them, shouting words of encouragement:

“Argives, don't lose your warlike spirit.
Father Zeus will never help those liars.
By attacking us, these Trojans were the first
to violate their oaths. Vultures will gnaw away
their tender flesh, while we lead off their wives
and their dear delicate children to our ships,
when we've destroyed their city.”

[280] But when Agamemnon saw soldiers holding back
from hateful war, he'd lash out at them in anger:

“You cowards, worthless Argives, aren't you ashamed?
What are you doing just standing here,
like dazed fawns exhausted after running
over a large plain, now motionless,
hearts drained of spirit—that's how you stand,
in a trance, not marching up to battle.
Are you waiting for Trojans to come closer,
up to the fine sterns of our ships beached here,
[290] on the grey sea shore, so you can see
if the hand of Cronos' son will shield you?”

In this way, Agamemnon moved around the army,
exerting his authority throughout the ranks.
Going past crowds of men, he met the troops from Crete,
as they armed themselves around Idomeneus,
their fiery-hearted leader at the front,
fierce as a wild boar. In the rear, Meriones
roused the ranks for action. Looking at these two,
Agamemnon, king of men, rejoiced. He spoke out,
[300] talking straight to Idomeneus in a friendly tone:

“Idomeneus, above all Danaans,
with their swift horses, I value you in war,
in all other things, and at banquets,
when Achaea’s finest prepare gleaming wine,
the kind reserved for kings, in mixing bowls.
Other long-haired Achaeans drink their portion,
the amount allotted to them, but your cup
always stands full of wine, as does mine,
so you can drink any time your heart desires.
[310] Set off to battle, then—show you’re a man,
the fine man you claimed to be before.”

Idomeneus, Cretan leader, answered Agamemnon:

“Son of Atreus, indeed I’ll prove myself
a loyal comrade to you, as I promised
that first time long ago. But you should rouse
other long-haired Achaean men to action,
so we may fight at once, without delay.
Since Trojans have broken their sworn promises,
death and sorrow will come to them at last,
[320] for they attacked us first, breaking their oaths.”

At these words, the son of Atreus felt joy fill his heart.
Then he moved off. As he continued on his way,
he met both men called Ajax, arming themselves

among the hordes of troops, with crowds of men on foot.
Just as a goatherd high on a lookout sees a cloud
coming down across the sea, driven by West Wind's force—
something which at a distance seems pitch black
as it moves across the sea, driving a huge storm,
and, shuddering at the sight, he takes his flocks
[330] into a cave—that's how the dense ranks of young men,
gods' favourites, marched around both Ajaxes,
ready for war, all dressed in black, with shields and spears.
Seeing them, powerful Agamemnon felt great joy—
he shouted out to them in words with wings:

“You two Ajaxes,
leaders of the Argives armed in bronze,
for you I have no orders. It's not right
for me to urge you forward—both of you
are rousing men to fight with all their force.
By Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo,
[340] I wish such spirit would fill each man's chest.
Then king Priam's city would soon fall,
we'd capture it, destroy it utterly.”

With these words, he left them there, going on to others.
He met Nestor, clear-voiced orator from Pylos,
setting his troops in order, urging them to fight
under huge Pelagon, Alastor, Chromius,
Haemon, and mighty Bias, his people's shepherd.
Nestor set horses, chariots, and charioteers in front.
In the rear, he placed his many brave foot soldiers,
[350] a battle wall. In the middle he placed his poorer troops,
to force them to keep fighting on against their will.
First, he told the charioteers to control their horses,
to avoid confusing the entire battle line:

“In your eagerness to engage the Trojans,
don't any of you charge ahead of others,
trusting in your strength and horsemanship.

And don't lag behind. That will hurt our charge.
Any man whose chariot confronts an enemy's
should thrust with his spear at him from there.
[360] That's the most effective tactic, the way
men wiped out city strongholds long ago—
their chests full of that style and spirit."

Thus that old man, skilled in war's traditions, roused his men.
Seeing him, mighty Agamemnon was elated.
He spoke to Nestor. His words had wings.

"Old man,
how I wish the power in those knees of yours
could match the spirit in your chest, your strength
remain unbowed. But old age, our common enemy,
has worn you down. If only that had happened
[370] to some other man and left you in place,
among the ranks of younger warriors."

To these words Geranian horseman Nestor said:

"Son of Atreus, yes, indeed, I wish
I were the man I used to be back then,
when I cut down lord Ereuthalion.
But gods don't give men everything at once.
Then I was young. Now old age follows me.
But I'll be with my horsemen, advising them,
giving them their orders, an old man's right.
[380] Fighting with spears is for the younger men
born after me, men who rely on strength."

Nestor spoke. Filled with joy, Atreus' son moved on.
Next, he came upon Menestheus, Peteos' son,
a charioteer, standing still among Athenians,
famous for their battle cries. Close by them,
resourceful Odysseus stood among his troops,
Cephalenian soldiers, powerful fighting men.

These men had not yet heard the call to battle.
For the armies of horse-taming Trojans
[390] and Achaeans had only just begun to march
against each other. So Odysseus' soldiers
stood waiting for the rest of the Achaeans
to charge against the Trojans and begin the fight.
Seeing this, Agamemnon, king of men, spoke out,
rebuking them. His words had wings.

“Son of Peteos, god-given king, and you,
Odysseus, skilled in sly deception,
crafty minded, why are you holding back,
standing apart? Are you waiting for the rest?
[400] By rights you two should be with those in front,
sharing the heat of battle. At banquets,
when we Achaeans feast our senior men,
you hear me call your name out first.
Then you like to have roast meat and cups of wine,
honey sweet, to your heart's content.
But now you'd be quite happy looking on
if ten Achaean groups were fighting here
with ruthless bronze before your very eyes.”

Resourceful Odysseus, scowling grimly, then replied:

[410] “Son of Atreus, how can you say such things?
How can you claim I'm hanging back from battle
each time we Achaeans rouse ourselves for war
against horse-taming Trojans? If you want,
if it's of interest to you, then you'll see
Telemachus' dear father battling
horse-taming Trojans at the very front.
What you've been saying is clearly nonsense.”

Mighty Agamemnon saw the anger in Odysseus.
He smiled at him and took back what he'd just said:

[420] “Odysseus, you resourceful man,
divinely born son of Laertes,
I’m not finding serious fault with you.
I’m issuing no orders to you.
I know that spirit in your loyal chest
is well disposed. We both are of one mind.
If I’ve said something bad we’ll make it good.
May the gods bring all of this to nothing.”

With these words, Agamemnon left Odysseus there,
moving on to other men. He met Diomedes,
[430] Tydeus’ high-spirited son, standing by his horses
and his well-made chariot. Beside him stood Sthenelus,
son of Capaneus. Seeing them, Agamemnon
spoke out in rebuke. His words had wings.

“Alas, Diomedes,
son of fiery-hearted, horse-taming Tydeus,
why are you hiding, just watching battle lanes?
Tydeus was not a man to shirk like this.
He fought his enemies in front of his companions.
That’s what they say, those who saw him work.
I never saw him for myself. People claim
[440] he ranked above the rest. Once he came to Mycenae
as a peaceful guest with godlike Polyneices,
mustering men to assault the sacred walls of Thebes.
They begged us to give them worthy comrades.
Mycenaeans, willing to comply, agreed.
But then Zeus later changed their minds,
revealing an unlucky omen to them.
So Tydeus and Polyneices left.
On their way, they reached the river Asopus,
its lush grassy meadows full of reeds.
[450] Sent by Achaeans as envoy to Thebes,
Tydeus went there. He found Cadmeans
feasting in large numbers in the palace,
home of great Eteocles.* Though a stranger,

all by himself in that Cadmean crowd,
chariot fighter Tydeus was not afraid.
He challenged them in various contests.
Athena helped, so he won them all with ease.
Horse-breaking Cadmeans were upset with him.
They organized a strong ambush against him
[460] as he returned—fifty young men, with two leaders,
that godlike hero Maeon, Haemon's son,
and warlike Polyphontes, son of Autophonos.
But these men came to fatal shameful ends.
For Tydeus killed them, all but one.
He let Maeon go home, sent him away,
in obedience to an omen from the gods.
That's the man Aetolian Tydeus was.
But his son is a lesser man than he,
though better when it comes to talking.”

[470] Mighty Diomedes did not reply to Agamemnon's words,
shamed at the rebuke from a king whom he respected.
But Sthenelus, son of famous Capaneus, answered:

“Son of Atreus, don't spread lies. You know the truth.
We claim we're far better than our fathers.
We captured Thebes, city of seven gates,
leading smaller forces over stronger walls,
trusting signs sent by the gods and Zeus' aid.
The others died through their own foolishness.
So don't give our fathers honours high as mine.”

[480] Powerful Diomedes, frowning, spoke to Sthenelus:

“My friend. Stay quiet. Follow my advice.
For I'm not hurt that Agamemnon,
the army's shepherd, urges armed Achaeans
on to battle. For he will get the glory,
if Achaeans annihilate the Trojans
and capture sacred Ilion. And he'll get

great sorrow, if Achaeans are wiped out.
But come, let's get our two minds working
to rouse our spirits for this coming fight."

[490] Diomedes spoke. Then with his weapons he jumped
from his chariot down to the ground. Around his chest
the bronze rang fearfully, as he moved into action,
a sound to make even brave warriors afraid.

Just as thundering ocean surf crashes on the sand,
wave after wave, driven by the West Wind's power,
one wave rising at sea, then booming down on shore,
arching in crests and crashing down among the rocks,
spewing salt foam, so then Danaan ranks,
row after row, moved out, spirits firmly set on war.

[500] Each leader issued his own orders to his men.
The rest marched on in silence. You'd never think
such a huge army could move out with its voice
buried in those chests, in silent fear of their commanders.
As they marched, the polished armour on them glittered.

As for the Trojans, they were like thousands of ewes
standing in a rich man's farm, bleating constantly,
waiting for someone to come and collect white milk,
as they hear lambs call. Just like that, the din rose up
throughout the widespread Trojan force. They shared no words—

[510] they had no common language, but mixtures of tongues,
with men from many lands. Ares urged the Trojans on,
while bright-eyed Athena kept rousing the Achaeans.
With them came Terror, Fear, and tireless Strife,
sister and companion of man-destroying Ares—
at first small in stature, she later grows enormous,
head reaching heaven, as she strides across the earth.
Strife went through crowds of soldiers, casting hatred
on both sides equally, multiplying human miseries.

When the two armies came to one common ground,

[520] they smashed into each other—shields, spears, fierce angry men
encased in bronze. Studded shields bashed one another.
A huge din arose—human cries of grief and triumph,
those killing and those killed. Earth flowed with blood.
Just as streams swollen with melting snows pour out,
flow downhill into a pool, and meet some torrent
from a great spring in a hollow gully there,
and the shepherd in the distant hills hears the roar—
so the shouts and turmoil resounded then from warriors,
as they collided.

Antilochus was the first to kill a man—
[530] a well-armed Trojan warrior, Echepolus,
son of Thalysius, a courageous man,
who fought in the front ranks. He hit his helmet crest,
topped with horsehair plumes, spearing his forehead.
The bronze point smashed straight through the frontal bone.
Darkness hid his eyes and he collapsed, like a tower,
falling down into that frenzied battle. As he fell,
powerful Elephenor, son of Chalcodon,
courageous leader of the Abantes, seized his feet,
and started pulling him beyond the range of weapons,
[540] eager to strip him of his armour quickly.
But Elephenor's attempt did not go on for long.
Great-hearted Agenor saw him drag the dead man.
He stabbed Elephenor with his bronze spear,
right in his exposed side, where his shield left him
vulnerable as he bent down. His limbs gave way,
as his spirit left him. Over his dead body,
Trojans and Achaeans kept fighting grimly on,
attacking like wolves, man whirling against man.

Then Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Simoeisius,
[550] Anthemion's son, a fine young warrior.
He was born on the banks of the river Simoeis,
while his mother was coming down Mount Ida,
accompanying her parents to watch their flocks.

That's why the people called him Simoeisius.
But he did not repay his fond parents for raising him.
His life was cut short on great Ajax's deadly spear.
As he was moving forward with the men in front,
Ajax struck him in the chest, by the right nipple.
The bronze spear went clean through his shoulder.
[560] He collapsed in the dust, like a poplar tree,
one growing in a large well-watered meadow,
from whose smooth trunk the branches grow up to the top,
until a chariot builder's bright axe topples it,
bends the wood, to make wheel rims for a splendid chariot,
letting the wood season by the riverbank.
That's how godlike Ajax chopped down Simoeisius,
son of Anthemion.

Then Antiphus, Priam's son,
with his shining helmet, hurled his sharp spear at Ajax
through a crowd of men. He missed Ajax, but hit Leucus,
[570] a brave companion of Odysseus, in the groin,
as he was dragging Simoeisius away.
His hands let go. He fell down on the corpse.
Enraged at Leucus' slaughter, Odysseus strode up,
through the front ranks, armed in gleaming bronze. Going in close,
he took his stand. Looking round, he hurled his glittering spear.
As he threw, Trojans moved back, but the spear found a mark.
It hit Democoön, Priam's bastard son, who'd come
from Abydos, where he bred horses for their speed.
Angry for his friend, Odysseus speared him in the temple.
[580] The sharp bronze pressed on through the other side,
coming out his forehead. Darkness fell on his eyes,
and he collapsed with a crash. The armour on him echoed.

Trojans in the front ranks, among them noble Hector,
backed away. Raising a huge shout, the Argives
hailed off the corpses and charged ahead much further.

Looking down from Pergamus, Apollo grew annoyed.

He called out to the Trojans, shouting:

“Charge ahead, you horse-taming Trojans.
Don’t make Argives happy. Their skin’s not made
[590] of stone or iron. Once you strike at them
it can’t stop flesh-ripping bronze. And Achilles,
son of lovely Thetis, isn’t in this fight.
He’s sitting by his ships, nursing his anger.”

So the fearsome god spoke out from the city.
Athena Tritogeneia, mighty Zeus’ daughter,
rushed among Achaeans, urging companies on,
if she saw men holding back, hesitant to fight.*

Death then came to Diores, son of Amarynceus.
He was hit by a jagged rock on his right shin,
[600] beside the ankle. It was thrown by Peirous,
son of Imbrasmus, captain of the Thracians,
who’d come from Aenus. The cruel rock crushed both tendons
and the bone. He fell onto his back down in the dust.
There he reached out with both hands for his companions.
His spirit left his body with each gasp he took.
Peirous, who’d thrown the rock, ran up and speared his gut.
His bowels spilled out onto the ground. Darkness hid his eyes.

As Peirous moved off, Thoas, an Aetolian, hit him,
his spear striking him above the nipple. The bronze spear point
[610] bit into his lungs. Thoas moved in to close quarters,
pulled the heavy spear out from his chest, drew his sharp sword,
then drove it straight into the middle of his belly,
destroying Peirous’ life. But Thoas couldn’t strip
the armour off. For Peirous’ companions,
Thracian men whose hair is piled atop their heads,
rallied round, holding out long spears, forcing Thoas
away from them. Thoas was big, strong, and brave,
but he fell back, shaken. And so those two warriors
lay stretched out in the dirt beside each other—

[620] one Thracian chief, one captain of bronze-clad Epeians.
And many other men lay dead around them.

At that point, no man who joined in the battle there
could take it lightly, not even one who strolled unhurt
through the middle of the fight, untouched by that sharp bronze,
with Pallas Athena escorting him by hand,
shielding him from flying weapons. For on that day,
many Trojans and Achaeans lay there side by side,
stretched out together, face down in the dust.