

The Iliad

Book Five Diomedes Goes to Battle

[Athena inspires Diomedes with special powers; Athena takes Ares from the battle; Achaean leaders kill many Trojans; Diomedes' special glory on the field; Pandarus hits Diomedes with an arrow; Athena restores Diomedes, who continues his battle frenzy; Aeneas and Pandarus move out against Diomedes; Diomedes kills Pandarus, wounds Aeneas; Aphrodite saves Aeneas; Sthenelus captures Aeneas' horses; Diomedes attacks and wounds Aphrodite, who returns to Olympus; Diomedes threatens Apollo; Apollo heals Aeneas; Sarpedon complains to Hector; the battle continues; Sarpedon kills Tlepolemus, but is wounded; Athena and Hera go down to the battlefield; Athena and Diomedes attack and wound Ares; Ares returns to Olympus]

Then Pallas Athena gave Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
strength and courage, so among all Argives,
he'd stand out and win heroic glory.
She made his helmet blaze with tireless flames,
his shield as well—like a late star in summer
which shines especially bright, newly risen from its bath
in Ocean's streams. Around his head and shoulders
the goddess put a fiery glow, then drove him forward,
right into the middle of the strife, the killing zone,
where most warriors fight.

[10] Among the Trojans

was a rich and honourable man called Dares,
priest of Hephaestus. He had two sons—Phegeus
and Idaios—both very skilled in all aspects of war.
Moving forward in their chariot to the front,
these two charged Diomedes, who was on foot,
staying on the ground. When they were at close range,
Phegeus was the first to hurl his long-shadowed spear.
The spear point flew by Diomedes' left shoulder—
it missed him. Tydeus' son then threw his spear.

[20] The weapon did not leave his hand and miss the target.

It hit Phegeus right between the nipples
and knocked him from his splendid chariot.
Idaios jumped out and ran off from his horses.

He didn't dare protect his slaughtered brother's corpse.
Even so, he wouldn't have escaped black doom,
but Hephaestus saved him with a dark cloud cover,
so his aged father wouldn't waste away with grief.
Tydeus' son, great Diomedes, drove the horses off,
then gave them to his comrades to take back to the ships.
[30] When great-hearted Trojans saw those two sons of Dares—
one shunning battle, one dead beside his chariot—
all their hearts were stirred.

Then Athena, eyes glittering,
took her brother, headstrong Ares, by the hand,
and said to him:

“Ares, Ares, insatiable man-killer,
destroyer of cities, why don't we leave
Trojans and Achaeans to fight it out?
Father Zeus will make one group victorious.
Let's withdraw, avoiding Zeus' anger.”

With these words, she led headstrong Ares from the battle,
[40] then sat him down by Scamander river bank.

Danaans then began to push the Trojans back.
Each leader killed his enemy. First, Agamemnon,
king of men, threw huge Odios, chief of the Halizoni,
from his chariot. His spear first struck him in the back,
between the shoulder blades, as he turned to flee.
It drove clean through his chest. Odios pitched forward
with a thud, his armour rattling round him as he fell.
Idomeneus slaughtered Phaestus, son of Borus,
a Meonian, who'd come from fertile Tarne.
[50] With his long spear, skilful Idomeneus struck him
in his right shoulder, as he climbed in his chariot.
Dreadful darkness came and gathered Phaestus in.
Those attending Idomeneus stripped the armour.
Then with his sharp spear Menelaus, son of Atreus,

killed Scamandrius, son of Strophius, a huntsman.
Artemis herself had taught him how to shoot
every animal raised in the mountain forests.
But archer Artemis was no help to him then,
no more than was his expertise in archery,
[60] at which he'd been pre-eminent in former times.
For fine spearman Menelaus, son of Atreus,
caught him as he ran away in front of him,
hitting him in the back between his shoulder blades,
forcing the spear right through Scamandrius' chest.
He fell head first. His armour rattled round him.

Meriones then killed Phereclus, son of Tecton,
Harmon's son, whose hands could make fine objects of all sorts.
Pallas Athena had a special love for him.
He was the one who'd made well-balanced ships
[70] for Paris at the start of all the trouble,
bringing disaster on the Trojans and on Paris, too,
for he was ignorant of what gods had decreed.
Meriones went after Phereclus as he ran off,
hurled his spear straight into his right buttock.
The spear point pushed on through, below the bone,
piercing his bladder. He fell down on his knees,
screaming. Then death carried him into its shadows.

Then Meges killed Pedaeus, Antenor's bastard son.
Theano had raised him with all care, loving him
[80] as one of her own children, to please her husband.
That famous spearman Meges, son of Phyleus,
coming up close, drove a sharp spear in his neck,
into the nape behind his head. The bronze point,
slicing under his tongue, smashed through his teeth.
He fell into the dust, jaws locked on the cold bronze.

Eurypylus, Euaemon's son, killed lord Hypsenor,
son of proud Dolopion, Scamander's priest,
a man honoured by his people as a god.

Eurypylus, Euaemon's splendid son, caught him
[90] as he ran off in front of him. Going quickly after him,
Eurypylus struck at Hypsenor's shoulder—
his sharp sword sliced off Hypsenor's brawny arm.
The bloody limb fell on the ground. Then death's black night,
all-powerful fate, moved in and stole away his sight.

Thus these men kept toiling in the battle frenzy.
As for Diomedes, you couldn't tell where he belonged,
whether among the Trojans or Achaeans.
For he rushed across the plain like a swollen river,
like a swift winter torrent bursting dikes—
[100] no dam put in its wway can hold it back,
no barrier of fruitful vineyards check its current,
as all at once it floods when storms from Zeus roar down.
It knocks aside all fine things built by farmers,
hard-working men. That's how the son of Tydeus
drove the dense ranks of Trojans into mass confusion.
For all their numbers they could not contain him.

Lycaon's fine son saw Diomedes moving fast
along the plain, pushing Trojan ranks in front of him,
in complete disorder. He quickly bent his bow,
[110] taking aim at Diomedes. He shot an arrow
and hit him on his sculpted body armour,
in the right shoulder. The sharp arrow went in there,
kept going, and splattered blood down on the curving metal.
At this Lycaon's noble son gave out a noisy shout:

“Come on, you brave horse-lashing Trojans.
For the finest of Achaeans has been hurt.
I don't think he'll long survive my arrow's force,
if Apollo, son of Zeus, really was the one
who put it in my heart to leave Lycia.”

[120] That's what Lycaon's son cried out, boasting aloud.
But his sharp arrow hadn't killed Diomedes,

who moved back to stand beside his chariot and horses.
He called to Sthenelus, son of Capaneus.

“My friend, son of Capaneus, come on,
get down from the chariot, so you can pull
this sharp arrow from my shoulder for me.”

Diomedes spoke. Sthenelus jumped down on the ground.
Standing beside him, he pulled out the sharp arrow
stuck in his shoulder. Blood seeped through the woven shirt.

[130] Diomedes, expert in war cries, then spoke this prayer:

“Hear me, Athena, unwearied daughter
of aegis-bearing Zeus. If you’ve ever
loved my father, stood by his side
in murderous combat, be my friend now.
Grant that I kill this man, that I come
a spear’s throw from the one who hit me
unexpectedly and now boasts about it,
saying I won’t see daylight for much longer.”

As Diomedes prayed, Pallas Athena heard.

[140] She put fresh strength into his legs and upper arms.
Standing close by, she spoke. Her words had wings.

“Take courage, Diomedes, in this fight with Trojans.
I’ve put your father’s strength into your chest,
that shield-bearing horseman’s fearless power.
And I’ve removed the filter from your eyes
which covered them before, so now,
you’ll easily distinguish gods from men.
If a god comes here and stands against you,
don’t offer to fight any deathless one,

[150] except for Aphrodite, Zeus’ daughter.
If she fights, cut her with your sharp bronze.”

Bright-eyed Athena left. Diomedes charged off,

joining at once those soldiers fighting in the front,
his spirit on fire to battle Trojans, seized by frenzy
three times greater than before. He was like a lion
slightly hurt by a shepherd guarding his sheep flock
out in the wilds, when it jumps the wall into the pen.
But he's not killed it. The wound rouses the beast's strength.
The shepherd can't keep the charging lion from his sheep,
[160] who, left unguarded, panic. Huddled in a mass,
they crowd in on one another. So the lion,
in his hot rage, leaps over the wide sheep-fold wall.
That's how strong Diomedes went to fight the Trojans
in his angry fury.

First he killed Astynous,
and then Hypeiron, a shepherd of his people.
His bronze spear hit one right above the nipple.
His huge sword struck the other on the collar,
by the shoulder, slicing through the shoulder bone,
severing it from Hypeiron's neck and back.
[170] He left them there, to chase Abas and Polyidus,
sons of old Eurydamas, interpreter of dreams.
The old man didn't visit them to explain their dreams,
for mighty Diomedes slaughtered both of them.
Then Diomedes went after Xanthus and Thoön,
two sons of Phaenops, both of whom he loved.
Worn down by sad old age, he'd have no other child,
no person to inherit all his property.
Diomedes killed them, took the life they loved,
leaving bitter grief and anguish for their father,
[180] who wouldn't welcome them back home from war alive.
His next of kin thus divided up his assets.
Diomedes then challenged two sons of Priam,
son of Dardanus, both in a single chariot—
Echemmon and Chromius. Just as a lion
leaps onto cattle and snaps necks on the cows,
some heifer grazing in the bushes, so Tydeus's son
knocked them out of their chariot viciously,

against their will. Then he stripped their armour.
His companions took the horses to the ships.

[190] Aeneas saw Diomedes cutting his way
through ranks of soldiers. He charged on through the fight,
the clash of spears, looking for Pandarus.
He met Lycaon's son, a fine and powerful man.
Standing close by, Aeneas said to him:

“Pandarus,
where's your bow, your feathered arrows,
your reputation as a splendid archer?
No man can match your expertise in that.
No one in Lycia can claim to be your better.
Come, raise your hands in prayer to Zeus,
[200] then shoot an arrow at that man, whose force
now dominates the field, hurting Trojans badly,
hacking limbs from many fine young men,
unless, of course, it is some angry god,
displeased with Trojans' sacrificial gifts.
It's hard to stand against a raging god.”

To Aeneas Lycaon's fine son then replied:

“Aeneas, counsellor to bronze-armed Trojans,
from all I see, I think that man must be
the warlike son of Tydeus. I know him
[210] by his shield, the visor on his helmet,
and by looking at his horses. I'm not sure
he's not a god. But if he's the man
I think he is, the fierce son of Tydeus,
he could not be charging at us in this way
without help from some god beside him,
an immortal with a covering cloud
around his shoulders, the god who pushed aside
that sharp arrow which struck Diomedes.
For I've already shot an arrow at him,

[220] hit his shoulder through that moulded armour.

I thought I'd shipped him straight to Hades.

But I didn't kill him. The man must be
some angry god. But we've no horses here,
no chariot for me to chase him in.

In storage in Lycaon's house somewhere
there are eleven chariots, new ones, too.
They're beautiful and made just recently,
but covered up with drapes. Beside each one
stand pairs of horses, munching wheat and barley.

[230] When I was coming here, old soldier Lycaon,
in his well-built home, gave me much advice.

He told me to take chariots and horses
when I lead Trojans into the hot heart of war.
But I didn't follow his advice. If I had,
things would have been much better for me.
But I worried about the horses—they'd lack forage
with so many men all crammed together,
and they were used to eating very well.
I left them and came to Troy to fight on foot,

[240] relying on my expertise in archery.

But that skill is apparently of little use.
For already I've hit two of their best men,
Tydeus' son and the son of Atreus.
I've drawn blood from both of them, it's true,
but that just made them much more dangerous.
It was a evil time, that day I took
my curved bow off its peg to lead my Lycians
to lovely Troy, a favour for prince Hector.
If I get home and see with my own eyes

[250] my native land, my wife, my large and lofty home,
let someone chop my head off on the spot,
if I don't smash this bow with my own hands
and throw the pieces in the blazing fire.
For me it's been completely useless."

Aeneas, leader of the Trojans, then replied:

“Don’t talk like that. Things won’t change at all
until the two of us go out to challenge
Diomedes with a chariot and horses,
until we confront him with our weapons.

[260] Come, get in my chariot. Then you’ll see
how good these horses are from Tros’ stock,
skilled in rapid movement on the plain,
in all directions, in pursuit or in retreat.
This pair will take us safely to the city,
should Zeus give victory to Diomedes.
Let’s go. Take the whip and glistening reins.
I’ll leave you the horses, so I can fight.
Or if you fight him, I’ll control the horses.”

Lycaon’s fine son then said in reply:

[270] “Aeneas, you should take the reins yourself,
guide your own horses—for they will pull
your curving chariot that much better
with a driver they’re accustomed to,
if we must flee Tydeus’ son this time.
If they miss your voice, they may shy or panic,
or refuse to charge straight into battle.
Then the son of great-hearted Tydeus
in his attack may kill us both, and lead
these swift horses off. You drive the chariot,
[280] guide your horses. I’ll do battle with him—
my spear will give him a sharp welcome.”

They finished talking, climbed up together, and set off,
riding out in a fine chariot, both keen to kill,
driving the swift horses against Tydeus’ son.
Seeing them coming, Sthenelus, Capaneus’ brave son,
at once spoke up to Diomedes—his words had wings.

“Diomedes, son of Tydeus, my heart’s

true friend, I see two men approaching,
eager to attack you, two powerful men,
[290] an outstanding team. One's Pandarus,
the skilful archer, who boasts he's Lycaon's son.
The other is Aeneas, proud Anchises' son,
that's his claim. His mother's Aphrodite.
So come, let's retire with the horses,
in case our quick charge through front lines
ends up costing you your precious life."

Strong Diomedes, with a scowl, answered Sthenelus:

"Don't talk of moving back. For I know well
you won't persuade me. By birth it's not in me
[300] to shirk war or seek refuge. My spirit's strong.
Nor am I keen to climb up in the chariot.
I'll go to fight them as I am, on foot.
Pallas Athena does not allow me
to withdraw in fear. Their horses may be fast,
but they'll not carry them both back again,
away from us, even if one escapes.
But I will tell you this—keep it in mind—
if Athena, that clever schemer, gives me
great glory and I do kill them both,
[310] then you must hold our swift horses here,
tying these reins up to the chariot rail.
Remember to run down Aeneas' team,
then drive those horses from the Trojans
to well-armed Achaeans. For those horses
come from the stock that wide-seeing Zeus
gave Tros, payment for Ganymede, his son.*
They're the finest horses under the sun,
beneath the light of day. Anchises,
king of men, got some of that line by stealth,
[320] putting his mares into Laomedon's herd
without his knowledge. Six of those horses
became the breeding stock on his estate.

He kept four of them in his own stable
and gave Aeneas two, horses so fierce,
they scatter men before them. If we can,
we'll catch these two, win ourselves great glory."

As they talked to each other of their strategy,
the fast horses quickly brought the two men closer.
Lycaon's worthy son spoke first, shouting out:

[330] "Great spirited, warlike son of Tydeus,
that noble man, I see that my sharp arrow,
a bitter shaft, did not destroy you.
So now I'll try to hit you with my spear."

He spoke, balanced his long-shadowed spear, and threw it.
The spear hit the son of Tydeus on his shield.
The bronze point pierced it, but stopped at the body armour.
Seeing that, Lycaon's fine son let out a mighty cheer:

"You're hit, right in the ribs. You won't last long.
I think you've given me a glorious triumph."

[340] Unperturbed, powerful Diomedes said to him:

"You're wrong. You haven't hit me. In my view,
this matter won't end for the two of you,
until one of you falls dead, and his blood
satisfies in full hard warlike Ares."

That said, he threw his spear. Athena guided it
straight to Pandarus' nose, directly by the eyes.
It smashed through his white teeth. The tireless bronze
sliced through his tongue at its root, coming out his chin,
right at the tip. Pandarus fell from the chariot,
[350] his brightly shining armour rattling round him.
The swiftly running horses swerved aside.
Then and there his life-force, his spirit, left him.

Aeneas then leapt down with his long spear and shield,
fearing Achaeans would somehow haul away the corpse.
He made a stand by Pandarus, like a lion,
confident of its strength. He held his spear in front,
his round shield, too, with fearful shouts, fiercely eager
to kill anyone who came up to confront him.
The son of Tydeus picked up a stone, a massive rock
[360] which no two men now alive could lift. He threw it
all by himself with ease. It hit Aeneas' hip,
where thigh meets pelvis, what people call the hip joint.
The boulder smashed the socket and both tendons round it.
The rough edges on the rock scraped off his skin.
Falling to his knees, warlike Aeneas stayed down,
supporting himself with his strong hand on the ground.
Black night came down and covered both his eyes.
Aeneas, king of men, would have perished there,
if Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter, hadn't seen him right away.
[370] She was his mother—she'd conceived him with Anchises,
while he was tending cattle. Wrapping her white arms
around the son she loved, she hid him in the folds
of her bright gown, to ward off any spears,
should some Danaan driving with swift horses
hurl a spear into his chest and take his life.
She then began to carry her dear son from the fight.

Meanwhile, Sthenelus, son of Capaneus,
did not forget what Diomedes, skilled in war cries,
told him. He pulled his sure-footed horses to one side,
[380] beyond the fight, tying the reins onto the rail,
and then went after those fine-maned horses of Aeneas.
He drove the animals away from Trojan lines
towards well-armed Achaeans. There he gave them
to his dear companion Deïpylus, whom he esteemed
above all others the same age as himself,
since they both thought alike. He instructed him
to take them to the hollow ships. Then brave Sthenelus
climbed back into his chariot, grabbed the shining reins,

and raced the strong horses back, keen to rejoin Diomedes.

[390] But Diomedes with his ruthless bronze had gone
to run down Aphrodite—knowing she was not a god
who could do much in battle, not one of those
who control men's wars. She was no Athena,
no goddess Strife, who destroys whole cities.
He chased her through the crowded battle zone.
When he met her, great-hearted Tydeus' son
charged, lunging with his sharp spear at Aphrodite.
His weapon wounded her slim wrist, piercing the skin
above her hand, right through her godlike robe,

[400] a garment the Graces had made for her themselves.*
Immortal divine fluid then flowed out, ichor,
which circulates only in the blessed gods.
They don't eat food or drink down gleaming wine.
Hence, they lack blood, and men call them immortal.
Aphrodite screamed wildly and let go of her son.
But Phoebus Apollo caught him in his hands,
then shielded him with a dark cloud, just in case
some fast-riding Danaan threw a spear into his chest
and took away his life. Then Diomedes,
expert in war cries, shouted loudly:

[410] "Daughter of Zeus,
leave war and fights alone. Isn't it enough
for you to fool around with feeble women?
If you start loitering on the battlefield,
I think the war will make you shake with terror,
even though you learn about it from a distance."

Diomedes spoke. Aphrodite left in agony,
distressed and fearful. Wind-swift Iris came to her,
led her off, out of the crowd, moaning in pain,
her fair skin stained and wounded. She came across

[420] fierce Ares, seated on the left flank of the fight,
his spear and his fast horses resting on a cloud.

Falling on her knees, she implored her dear brother,
pleading hard for his golden-bridled horses:

“Dear brother, save me. Give me your horses,
so I may go back up to Mount Olympus,
the immortals’ home. My wound pains me a lot.
A mortal man inflicted this wound on me,
Tydeus’ son, who’d now fight Father Zeus himself.”

At this, Ares gave her his golden-bridled horses.
[430] She climbed up in the chariot, her fond heart suffering.
Getting in beside her, Iris picked up the reins,
then lashed the horses forward. They flew on willingly.
At once they reached the gods’ home, steep Olympus.
There wind-swift Iris stopped the horses, untied them
from the chariot, and gave them heavenly fodder.
Aphrodite threw herself into her mother’s lap,
divine Dione, who took her daughter in her arms,
caressed her with her hand, then said:

“My dear child,
which of the heavenly gods has done this,
[440] acted so brazenly against you, as if
you’d done something evil in broad daylight?”

Laughter-loving Aphrodite answered her:

“Proud Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
wounded me, for I was carrying off
Aeneas, my dear son, away from battle.
Of all men, he’s the one I love the most.
Now grim war is not just Trojans and Achaeans,
for Danaans fight against immortals, too.”

Dione, queen among the goddesses, replied:

[450] “Be brave, my child, hold on, though you’re in pain.

Many of us living on Olympus
have been hurt by men in our attempts
to bring harsh troubles on each other.
Ares suffered, too, when mighty Otus
and Ephialtes, children of Aloëus,
tied him up in powerful manacles,
then kept him prisoner in a brass jar
for thirteen months. Ares would've died there,
with all his war-lust, if their step-mother,
[460] fair Eëriboea, had not told Hermes.
He stole Ares secretly. Ares was exhausted.
That harsh imprisonment was breaking him.
Hera suffered, as well, when Hercules,
the powerful son of Amphitryon,
hit her right breast with a three-barbed arrow.
She was wracked by pain beyond all cure.
With them huge Hades also suffered
from a sharp arrow, when this same man,
this Hercules, a son of aegis-bearing Zeus,
[470] shot him in Pylos, among the corpses there,
inflicting pain. Hades went straight to Zeus
at home on Olympus—his heart enraged,
in agony, the arrow buried deep
in his strong shoulder. He was incensed.
Paeëon healed him with pain-killing herbs
smeared on the wound, for Hades was immortal.
What a wretch he was, that Hercules,
a trouble maker. He didn't hesitate
to commit bad acts with that bow of his
[480] against the gods who dwell on Mount Olympus.
But Athena, the bright-eyed goddess,
prompted Tydeus' son to go at you.
Still, he's a fool for not remembering
the man who fights wars against immortals
does not live long. His children have no chance
to prattle to their father at his knee,
once he comes home from war's grim butchery.

Diomedes is surely powerful—
but he should take care. A greater power than you
[490] may come against him. Then Aegialeia,
wise daughter of Adrestus, brave wife
of horse-taming Diomedes, with cries of sorrow
will rouse all her dear household from their sleep,
lamenting the husband whom she married,
the best of the Achaeans.”

As she said this,
with her hand Dione cleaned away the ichor
on Aphrodite’s wrist, healing the hand,
curing Aphrodite of her pain. Looking on,
Athena and Hera teased Zeus, son of Cronos:

[500] “Father Zeus, you won’t get angry with me
for what I say, will you? Aphrodite,
trying to coax some new Achaean woman
into running off with one of those Trojans
she loves so much, must have been caressing
some well-dressed Achaean lady and scratched
her delicate hand on a golden brooch.”

When they spoke, the father of gods and men smiled,
called for golden Aphrodite, and then said to her:

“My child, this warfare is not your business.
[510] You should concern yourself with your own work—
love, especially erotic love in marriage.
Swift Ares and Athena will take care of this.”

As the gods talked the matter over with each other,
Diomedes, expert at war cries, sought out Aeneas.
Though he knew Apollo himself was shielding him,
he had no fear at all of that great god, pushing on
to kill Aeneas, then strip his fine armour from him.
Three times he charged forward, in a frenzy for the kill.

Three times Apollo pushed back his shining shield.
[520] But when for the fourth time he came on like a god,
Apollo, the far shooter, in a terrifying voice, cried out:

“Take care, son of Tydeus. Go back.
Don’t think you’re equal to the gods.
The race of men who walk upon the ground
can never match the race of deathless gods.”

At these words, the son of Tydeus drew back somewhat,
avoiding the anger of Apollo, the far shooter.
Apollo put Aeneas some distance from the fight,
on sacred Pergamus, where his temple stood.
[530] There, in the large shrine, Leto and Artemis,
the archer goddess, healed Aeneas, restoring him
to his former power and magnificence.
Apollo of the silver bow then made an image,
a copy of Aeneas, with matching armour,
around which Trojans and brave Achaeans fought,
hacking away at ox-hide covering their chests,
at the round shields or smaller shields with fringes.
Phoebus Apollo then called to foolhardy Ares:

“Ares, Ares, you bloodstained man-killer,
[540] can’t you return to Diomedes
and remove him from the battle? Right now,
he’d stand and fight with Father Zeus himself.
First, he wounded Aphrodite on the wrist,
fighting at close quarters. Then he flung himself,
like some god, at me.”

After saying this,
Apollo took a seat high up on Pergamus.
Murderous Ares went in among the Trojan ranks,
inspiring the troops. In the shape of Acamas,
Thracian leader, he yelled at Priam’s royal sons:

[550] “You sons of Priam, that god-nurtured king,
why are you still allowing the Achaeans
to keep slaughtering your troops? Are you waiting
until they fight by the well-built city gates?
There lies great-hearted Anchises’ son,
Aeneas, whom we honour as we do prince Hector.
Come, let’s save our brave comrade from the battle roar.”

Ares’ words gave each man courage and blood-zest for war.
Then Sarpedon spoke to Hector, bitterly complaining:

“Hector, where’s that courage you used to have?
[560] You kept claiming you could guard the city
on your own, without your people or your allies,
using your own family and relatives.
Looking round now, I can’t see them here,
any of them. They’ve all taken refuge,
like dogs around a lion. Those of us
who’ve come as allies, we do all the fighting.
I marched here as an ally, travelling far,
for Lycia is a long, long way from here,
by the swirling river Xanthus, where I left
[570] my dear wife, my infant son, much property,
something poor men covet. But for all that,
I urge my Lycian troops to action,
I stand and fight all comers on my own,
when I’ve nothing for the enemy to take.
But you stand around, without urging men
to fight back or defend their wives. Watch out.
You may become a prize yourself—a trophy
for your enemies. You’ll be like a fish
snared in the meshes of a fatal net.
[580] They’ll quickly smash your well-built city.
You should be thinking of this day and night,
imploring leaders of your famous allies
to hold on staunchly, thus preventing them
from mounting any serious complaints.”

Sarpedon's speech stung Hector's heart. Fully armed,
he quickly jumped down from his chariot to the ground.
Waving two sharp spears, he roamed through all the army,
rousing men to fight, steeling hearts for dreadful war.
Troops rallied once more and turned to face Achaeans.

[590] Argives, too, stood firm. The men did not withdraw.
As on the sacred threshing floor wind blows the chaff,
while men stand winnowing the crop, when Demeter,
with her golden hair, separates the grain from chaff
in the rushing breeze, and piles of chaff grow whiter,
so then Achaean troops grew white, covered with dust
stirred up by horses' hooves. It coloured the sky bronze.
So the chariots came on to battle once again,
wheeled round by drivers' strong ferocious hands.
Headstrong Ares assisted Trojans in the battle,
[600] concealing them in darkness, roaming everywhere,
carrying out his orders from Phoebus Apollo,
god with the golden sword, who'd told him to arouse
the Trojans' spirits when he saw Pallas Athena
leave the fighting, for she was helping the Danaans.

Apollo then sent Aeneas from his costly shrine,
putting fighting strength into this warrior's heart,
his people's shepherd. Aeneas rejoined his friends,
who were overjoyed to see him safe and sound—alive—
approaching with brave spirits. They didn't question him.
[610] They had too much other work at hand to do.
For Apollo, god with the silver bow, and Ares,
the man killer, along with insatiable Strife,
had stirred things up there on the battlefield.

Then the two Ajaxes, Odysseus, and Diomedes
roused Danaans, urging them to battle.
They did not fear the Trojans' powerful attack
and stood their ground like clouds set in place by Zeus,
son of Cronos, above a range of mountain peaks

on a windless day, quite motionless, while the force
[620] of North Wind and other raging blasts is sound asleep.
When these storm winds blow, they scatter shadowy clouds.
That's the way Danaans held their positions then,
without flinching, without fear. The son of Atreus
moved through the troops and gave out many orders.

“My friends, be men. Let courage fill your hearts.
In the heat of battle remember honour,
each man's reputation. When men recall
their honour, more troops are saved than slaughtered.
Those who run away lose life and fame.”

[630] Agamemnon spoke, then quickly hurled his spear.
He hit a good fighting man, comrade to Aeneas,
great-hearted Deïcoön, son of Pergasus,
whom Trojans honoured as they did king Priam's sons,
for he was quick to take his place among the best,
the men who do their fighting at the very front.
Mighty Agamemnon's spear struck against his shield,
but the shield could not hold out—the bronze went through,
piercing Deïcoön's belt and sinking in his gut.
He fell with a thud, his armour rattling round him.

[640] Then Aeneas killed two of the best Danaans,
Crethon and Orsilochus, whose father lived
in well-built Phere, a man of property,
descended from the river Alpheus, whose broad streams
flow through Pylian land. The river bore Orsilochus,
king of many men, and Orsilochus fathered
great-hearted Diocles, to whom were born twin sons,
Crethon and Orsilochus, experts in all aspects of war.
These two, once grown, came with Argives in black ships
to Troy, city rich in horses, to win honour

[650] for Agamemnon and Menelaus, sons of Atreus.
Death's final moment took them in. As two lions,
cared for by their mother in a deep thick forest

on a mountain peak, steal stout sheep and cattle
and plunder people's farmsteads, until they perish,
killed by sharp bronze in the hands of men, so these two died,
cut down by Aeneas. They fell like lofty pines.

War-loving Menelaus felt pity for these two,
seeing them die. He made his way through the men's front ranks,
armed in glittering bronze, brandishing his spear.

[660] Ares stirred his battle spirit, planning his death
at Aeneas' hand. But then Antilochus,
son of great-hearted Nestor, saw Menelaus.
He hurried through the foremost ranks, in his concern
for this shepherd of the people, that if he came to grief,
all their efforts would be completely futile.
Menelaus and Aeneas, now faced each other,
with eager hands and spears, ready to begin the fight.
But when Antilochus stood by Menelaus,
Aeneas, though a swift fighter, started to withdraw,
[670] seeing these two men standing their ground together.
So Menelaus and Antilochus dragged the corpses
of Crethon and Orsilochus to Achaean troops,
placed the two dead heroes in the hands of friends,
then turned back to fight with those in the front ranks.

Antilochus and Menelaus then killed Pylaemenes,
a man like Ares, leader of the Paphlagonians,
great-hearted, shield-bearing men. The son of Atreus,
famous spearman Menelaus, struck him,
as he stood up in his chariot, hitting him
[680] right on his collar bone. Antilochus hit Mydon,
Atymnius' noble son, the attendant driver,
as he was wheeling his sure-footed horses round.
He struck him with a rock square on the elbow.
The reins, decorated with rich ivory,
fell from his hands down onto the dusty ground.
Antilochus sprang out and with his sword struck Mydon
on the temple. Gasping with pain, Mydon pitched over,

and tumbled from the well-made chariot headfirst,
his head and shoulders disappearing in the dirt.
[690] For some time he stayed stuck, buried in deep sand,
until his horses kicked him flat, level with the dust,
stamping him into the ground, as Antilochus
whipped them on, leading them back to Achaean troops.

Hector saw this from the lines. He ran against them,
shouting wildly, with strong Trojan soldiers in support.
Leading these men came Ares along with fearful Strife,
bringing war's pitiless and murderous confusion.
Ares worked with a huge spear in his hands, moving round,
sometimes behind Hector, sometimes in front of him.

[700] When Diomedes, skilled in war cries, noticed Ares,
he shuddered—just a man crossing a large plain
stops at a raging river rushing to the sea,
looks helplessly at swirling foam, and moves away—
so Tydeus' son backed off then, saying to his men:

“My friends, we're so amazed prince Hector
is such a spearman, so courageous, warlike.
But he's always got some god beside him,
to ward off destruction. Right now, it's Ares
he's has with him, looking like a mortal man.
[710] Stay turned towards the Trojans, but fall back.
Don't try to fight it out with gods.”

Diomedes spoke. Trojans then approached much closer.
Hector killed two men, keen warriors—Menesthes
and Anchialus—both riding in a single chariot.
Seeing them fall, great Telamonian Ajax felt pity.
He approached, stood firm, then threw his shining spear.
The spear struck Amphion, son of Selagus,
who owned much property in Paesus, with many crops.
Fate led him to become allied with Priam and his sons.
[720] Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Amphion in the belt.

The long-shadowed spear struck hard, low in his gut.
He collapsed with a crash. Noble Ajax ran up
to strip the armour off, but Trojans showered him
with bright, sharp spears. His shield took many hits.
Pushing his heel into the corpse he pulled out his bronze spear,
but the hail of weapons stopped him stripping off
Amphion's fine armour from his shoulders.
He feared the fierce brave Trojans standing by the corpse,
for many spearmen crowded him and forced him back.
[730] And Ajax, for all his massive size and strength,
for all his courage, had to withdraw, shaken.

As these men toiled in frantic battle, powerful fate
drove strong, brave Tlepolemus, son of Hercules,
against godlike Sarpedon. These two men approached,
facing each other at close quarters, son and grandson
of cloud-gathering Zeus. Tlepolemus called out first:

“Sarpedon, counsellor to the Lycians,
what forces you to cower down right here,
quite ignorant in battle? Those who say
[740] you're aegis-bearing Zeus' son are liars.
You're far inferior to those men born of Zeus
in times long past. Consider mighty Hercules,
my father. He was quite different, they say—
steadfast, brave, his spirit like a lion.
He came here once for Laomedon's horses.
With fewer men and only six ships, he sacked
the Trojan city and emptied all its streets.*
But you've a paltry spirit, your troops
are withering away. And it's impossible
[750] you'll help the Trojans by coming here
from Lycia, even if you're powerful.
I'll kill you, and you'll pass through Hades' gate.”

Sarpedon, Lycian leader, then said in reply:

“Yes, Tlepolemus, Hercules did destroy
sacred Ilion, but through the foolishness
of the city’s king, high-born Laomedon,
who tricked the man who’d worked so well for him.
He didn’t offer Hercules the horses
he’d come so far to get. As for you,
[760] I’ll now see to your death, that fatal blackness.
You’ll give me great glory, and your life
you’ll give to famous horseman Hades.”

Sarpedon spoke. Tlepolemus raised his ash spear high.
Then two long spears flew from their hands together.
Sarpedon’s spear hit Tlepolemus right in the neck.
The cruel point kept going. Dark night covered up his eyes.
Tlepolemus’ long spear struck Sarpedon in his left thigh.
Its bloodthirsty point pierced him, aiming for the bone.
On this occasion, Father Zeus held off his fate.
[770] His brave companions carried off godlike Sarpedon,
pulled down by the long spear’s weight, as it dragged behind.
No one thought to pull the ash spear from his leg,
so he could walk. They were in such a rush to shift him.

On the opposing side, well-armed Achaeans
carried Tlepolemus away from battle.
Godlike Odysseus noticed them, his spirit steady,
but his fond heart was burning, as he turned over
in his mind, whether to chase after that son of Zeus,
loud thunderer, or stay to kill more Lycians.
[780] But Fate did not decree that brave Odysseus
should kill Zeus’ mighty son with his sharp bronze.
Athena turned his heart against that Lycian crowd.
So he killed Coeranus, Alastor, Chromius,
Alcandrus, Halius, Noëmon, and Prytanis.
Lord Odysseus would have killed still more Lycians,
if Hector of the flashing helmet had not seen him,
then gone through the ranks in front, armed in shining bronze,
terrifying Danaans. Sarpedon, son of Zeus,

was glad to see him coming. He implored Hector:

[790] “Son of Priam, don’t let me lie here,
a trophy for Danaans. Rescue me.
Let me remain forever in your city,
since it seems I’ll not be going home
to cheer up my dear wife and infant son.”

Hector of the flashing helmet made no reply.
He charged on, eager to force the Argives quickly back,
to massacre large numbers of their soldiers.
God-like Sarpedon’s noble comrades placed him
by a fine oak tree, sacred to aegis-bearing Zeus.

[800] Pelagon, his strong, well-loved attendant, then pushed
the ash spear straight out through his thigh. Sarpedon fainted.
A mist fell, clouding his eyes, but soon he breathed again.
North Wind’s breeze revived him, blowing air into his heart,
as his spirit panted, gasping his life away.

Argives weren’t driven back to their black ships by Ares
or by bronze-armed Hector. Nor did they wheel about
to battle Trojans face to face. They kept moving back,
once they realized Ares was with the Trojans.

Among the Argives, who were the first and last men killed
[810] by Hector, son of Priam, and brazen Ares?
They were godlike Teuthras, Orestes the charioteer,
Trechus, an Aetolian spearman, Oenomaus,
Helenus, son of Oenops, and Oresbius,
with his glittering belt, a man who lived in Hyle
and kept himself preoccupied with wealth
along the shores of lake Cephisia. Beside him
lived even more Boeotians, owners of rich lands.

White-armed goddess Hera saw Argives being slaughtered
in the thick of battle. She spoke out to Athena.

[820] “Alas, Athena, child of aegis-bearing Zeus,
tireless one, we’ve made an empty promise
to Menelaus, that he’d wipe out Troy,
that well-built city, before going home,
if we let murderous Ares rage on like this.
Come, let’s both recall our fighting power.”

Athena, the bright-eyed goddess, agreed with Hera’s words.
So that revered goddess Hera, daughter of great Cronos,
went to prepare her horses with their golden bridles.
Then Hebe quickly checked the chariot’s curved wheels,
[830] bronze with eight spokes each, on axles made of iron,
wheel rims made out of imperishable gold,
edged with tires of close-fitted bronze, an amazing sight.
Silver axle boxes revolve on either side.
The body of the chariot has gold and silver strips.
Two rails run round it. The pole is made of silver.
On its end Hebe tied the cross-piece, lovely gold,
then fixed the golden collar straps. Hera, keen for war,
led her swift-footed horses out into their yoke.
Then Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus,
[840] threw on her father’s porch the embroidered gown
which she had made herself with her own hands.
She then put on the robe of cloud-gatherer Zeus
and armed herself with weapons for that wretched war.
She slung across her shoulders the fearsome tasselled aegis,
its borders woven with Fear, Strife, Force, terrorizing Panic,
with the chilling, horrifying and monstrous Gorgon’s head—
the horrifying emblem of aegis-bearing Zeus.
On her head she placed a double-ridged gold helmet,
men from a hundred cities etched upon its four-part crest.
[850] She set foot in her blazing chariot, grasping
her huge, strong, heavy spear, with which she kills men,
heroes who annoy her, goddess with a mighty father.
Hera quickly lashed the horses with her whip.
The gates of heaven scraped open on their own.
The Seasons supervise them, for they’re in charge

of great heavenly Olympus, opening up
the dense packed clouds or closing them again.
Through these gates the goddesses led out their horses,
Hera lashing them ahead. They met the son of Cronos,
[860] sitting some distance from the other gods,
on the highest crest of many-ridged Olympus.
Hera, white-armed goddess, reined in the horses,
then spoke to Zeus, most high son of Cronos:

“Father Zeus, aren’t you angry with Ares
for killing off those warriors? He’s wiped out
so many Achaean men, good ones, too,
and so rashly. It’s not right. It pains me.
Meanwhile, Aphrodite and Apollo,
with his silver bow, are enjoying themselves,
[870] happy about this madman they’ve unleashed,
who has no sense of what’s appropriate.
Father Zeus, would I annoy you very much
if I hurt Ares and chased him from this fight?”

Cloud gatherer Zeus smiled and then said in reply:

“All right, then, do that. But set Athena,
goddess of the battle spoils, against him.
For she’s the one who’s most accustomed
to inflicting nasty pains on Ares.”

White-armed goddess Hera agreed with what Zeus said.
[880] She whipped the horses on. They flew off willingly,
mid-way between the starry heaven and earth.
As far as a man on a height can see in the distant haze
as he looks out across the wine-dark sea, that’s how far
gods’ snorting horses vault in just one stride.
When they came to Troy’s two flowing rivers,
where the Simoeis and the Scamander meet,
white-armed goddess Hera stopped the horses,
loosed them from the chariot and hid them in thick cloud.

Simoeis produced ambrosia for them to eat.

[890] The goddesses moved stealthily, like wild pigeons,
eager to assist the Argive troops. They reached that place
where most of the bravest men were fighting, in a crowd
by mighty Diomedes, tamer of horses,
like lions who eat raw meat or wild boars whose strength
is not easily exhausted. In that place Hera,
white-armed goddess, stood up, looking just like Stentor,
a great-hearted, loud-throated man, whose voice could shout
with the strength of fifty men. Hera cried out:

“Shame on you, you Argive warriors.

[900] You’re a disgrace, good only for display.
When lord Achilles used to go to battle,
the Trojans didn’t dare to venture out
beyond the Dardanian gates. They feared
his mighty spear. But now they’re fighting
well outside the city, by our hollow ships.”

With these words, she roused each man’s heart and spirit.
Bright-eyed Athena quickly moved to Diomedes.
She found that king beside his chariot and horses,
recovering from the wound from Pandarus’ arrow.

[910] The sweat under the wide strap of his round shield
was bothering him. The chafing made his arms grow tired.
He was lifting up the strap, wiping off dark blood.
Setting her hand on the chariot yoke, the goddess said:

“Tydeus had a son not much like his father.
He may have been short, but he was a fighter.
When I would not allow him into battle
or to display himself, that time he came
to Thebes alone, far from his Achaeans,
in the middle of all those Cadmeans,

[920] I told him to be quiet at the palace feast.
But he possessed a powerful spirit
always active in him. So he challenged

Cadmean young men and beat them easily.
That's how much I helped him. Now I stand here,
beside you, taking care of you, your friend.
And I'm telling you to fight the Trojans.
But you're either weary after so much action,
your limbs worn out, or fear has made you timid.
If so, then you're no son of Tydeus,
[930] the son of warlike Oeneus."

In answer to Athena, mighty Diomedes said:

"I recognize you, goddess daughter
of aegis-bearing Zeus. I'll speak to you
quite openly, concealing nothing. It's not
that fear has made me hesitant or anxious.
But I'm remembering your own instructions,
what you laid down. You told me not to fight
face to face with any immortal god,
unless Zeus' daughter Aphrodite
[940] should come to battle. With my sharp bronze,
I was to wound her. I've pulled myself back,
and told the other Argives to stay here
since I see Ares dominates the fight."

Bright-eyed goddess Athena answered him:

"Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
you fill my heart with joy. Don't fear Ares
or any other immortal deity.
For I'll give you all the help you need.
But come, first let your sure-footed horses
[950] charge at Ares. Hit him up close. Have no fear
of headstrong Ares, that madman, born evil,
that fickle god. Just now he gave his word
to me and Hera too that he would fight
the Trojans and assist the Argives. But now,
he's forgotten that and helps the Trojans."

Saying this, Athena grabbed Sthenelus' hand
and hauled him from the chariot to the ground.
He jumped up at once. The goddess climbed up eagerly
beside lord Diomedes in the chariot.

[960] The oaken axle groaned aloud, weighed down,
bearing the fearful goddess and the finest man.
Pallas Athena took up the reins and whip.
First, she led the sure-footed horses against Ares.
He was removing armour from huge Periphas,
Ochesius' fine son, by far the best of the Aetolians.
Blood-stained Ares was stripping him of all his weapons.
Then Athena put Hades' helmet on her head,
so she was invisible to mighty Ares.
But man-killing Ares did see Diomedes.

[970] He let the body of huge Periphas lie there,
where he'd first killed him and ripped out his spirit.
He strode straight up to horse-taming Diomedes.
When the two came to close quarters and faced each other,
Ares thrust his bronze spear first, over the yoke
and horses' reins, eager to take Diomedes' life.
Athena, bright-eyed goddess, hands gripping the reins,
shoved the spear aside, so its thrust was harmless,
above the chariot. Diomedes, skilled in war cries,
then made the second thrust with his bronze spear.

[980] Pallas Athena guided the weapon right to Ares' gut,
the lower part where his waist band went around him.
Diomedes wounded Ares, piercing his fair skin,
then pulled back on his spear. Brazen Ares roared
as loud as the screams of nine or ten thousand men
when they clash in war. Fear seized Achaeans—Trojans, too.
They shuddered. That's how strong that cry sounded
as it came from Ares, insatiable for war.
Just as a dark mist moves upward from the clouds,
when in hot weather a strong wind arises,

[990] so brazen Ares looked to Tydeus' son, Diomedes,
as the god at once soared up into the clouds,

ascending to wide heaven. Ares, in a rush,
went to the gods' home, steep Olympus, sat by Zeus,
distressed at heart. He showed Zeus where he'd been wounded,
dripping with immortal blood, then made his complaint.
His words had wings.

"Father Zeus,
aren't you incensed at this barbarity?
We gods are always suffering dreadfully
at each other's hands, when we bring men help.

[1000] We all lay the blame for this on you.
For you gave birth to that insane young girl,
your destructive daughter, always busy
with some nastiness. All the other gods,
all those on Mount Olympus, do what you say.
And each of us is subject to your will.
But you never punish her in word or deed.
You do nothing, because you gave birth to her
yourself, to Athena, your vicious daughter.*
Just now she urged proud Diomedes,
[1010] son of Tydeus, to charge insanely
against deathless gods. First he attacked
Aphrodite and struck her on the wrist.
Then he charged me, even me, like a god.
But my quick feet took me away. If not,
I'd be in lasting pain with the fearful dead,
or have barely lived, wounded by bronze spears."

Scowling at him, cloud-gatherer Zeus replied:

"You hypocrite, don't sit there whining at me.
Among the gods who live on Mount Olympus,
[1020] you're the one I hate the most. For you love war,
constant strife and battle. Your mother, Hera,
has an implacable, unyielding spirit.
It's hard for me to control how she reacts
to what I say. You're suffering because of her,

through her conniving, that's what I think.
But I'll leave you in pain no longer.
You're my child—your mother and I made you.
But if you'd been born from any other god,
by now you'd be lower than the sons
[1030] of Ouranos—you're so destructive.”

Zeus spoke. He instructed Paeëon to heal Ares.
Paeëon cured him by spreading pain-killing herbs,
for Ares wasn't born to die. Just as fig juice
added quickly to white milk clots it at once,
as it's stirred, that's how fast headstrong Ares healed.
Hebe washed him and clothed him in fine garments.
He sat beside Zeus, son of Cronos, enjoying his splendour.

Athena of Alalcomenae and Argive Hera
returned once more to mighty Zeus' house,
now they'd stopped man-killing Ares'