

Book 15

But when the Trojans had recrossed both stakes and ditch
in their retreat, and many had fallen by Danaän hands,
they came to a halt by their chariots, and remained there,
pale with fear, panic-stricken; and meanwhile Zeus awoke
on that topmost peak of Ida, beside Hērē the golden-throned. 5
He sprang to his feet, and stood, and saw Trojans and Achaians—
the first in rout, and behind them, driving them on,
the Argives, and there among them the lord Poseidōn.
Hektōr too he saw, stretched out on the plain, his comrades
sitting around him, his breathing painful, his mind dazed, 10
vomiting blood: it was no weakling Achaian who'd hit him.
At this sight the Father of gods and men felt pity,
glared furiously at Hērē, and thus addressed her:
“There's no stopping you, Hērē! It's your vile deceitful plotting
that's put Hektōr out of the fighting and routed his troops! 15
Well, maybe once more you'll be the first to reap the rewards
of your own dangerous scheming, and I'll give you a whipping!
Don't you remember that time when you were strung up aloft,
and I weighted your feet with two anvils, and fastened about
your wrists
an unbreakable golden chain? In the upper air amid clouds 20
you hung, and the gods throughout high Olympos raged,
but stood there, unable to free you: any I caught
I'd toss down from the threshold, already half-dead by the time
they reached the earth. Yet not even so was my heart
relieved of incessant pain over godlike Hēraklēs, 25
whom you—along with the North Wind, whose gales you'd bought—
sent on the unharvested deep, with evil intent, and then
carried away to Kōs, that well-populated island.
Him I rescued from there, and brought back once more
to horse-pasturing Argos, after his many travails. 30
Need I once more remind you of this to stop your deceptions,
make you see if the bed love you had with me when you came
from the gods, and deceived me with, gives you any protection?”

So he spoke, and the ox-eyed lady Hērē shivered,
 and, speaking in winged words, replied to him thus: 35
 “To this let Earth now bear witness, and the broad skies above,
 and Styx’s cascading water—which is the greatest,
 most terrible oath for the blessed gods themselves—
 and your own sacred head, and the bed that we two share
 in wedded love—an oath that I’d never swear to falsely: 40
 not by my wish is Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker, bringing
 grief to the Trojans and Hektōr, and aiding their enemies.
 It’s his own heart dictates his actions, after seeing
 the Achaians in rout by their ships, and taking pity on them.
 But truly, even him I’d advise to go wherever 45
 you, my lord of the dark cloud, might lead the way.”

So she spoke, and the Father of men and gods smiled,
 and in response with winged words now addressed her:
 “If ever hereafter, my ox-eyed lady Hērē,
 were our thoughts to agree, when sitting among the immortals, 50
 then would Poseidōn, however contrary his own wishes,
 at once change direction, follow your heart and mine!
 But if you’re speaking honestly, and mean what you say,
 go now to the gods assembled, and summon hither
 both Iris and Apollo, the far-famed archer. She is 55
 to visit the troops of the bronze-corseleted Achaians,
 and carry a message from me to the lord Poseidōn:
 that he must abandon warfare and go back home.
 Phoibos Apollo’s to go to Hektōr and urge him to fight,
 once more breathe power into him, make him forget 60
 the pains now afflicting his senses, and drive the Achaians
 back once more, fill them with craven panic
 so that they’re routed, and fall among the benched ships
 of Achilles, Pēleus’s son, who’ll send out into battle
 his comrade Patroklos: but him will illustrious Hektōr slay 65
 with the spear before Ilion, though first Patroklos will kill
 many other young men, including my noble son Sarpēdōn.
 Then, in his wrath for Patroklos, noble Achilles will slaughter
 Hektōr. Then I’ll set up a countercharge from the ships—
 continuous, unremitting—until, through the counseling 70
 of Athēnē, the Achaians capture steep Ilion.
 But till then I’m neither abating my anger, nor will I

let any other immortal there give aid to the Danaäns
 until Pēleus's son's desire is wholly fulfilled
 as I promised him at the beginning, with my nod of assent, 75
 that day when the goddess Thetis clasped my knees, and begged me
 to honor the sacker of cities, Achilles."

So he spoke,
 and Hērē, white-armed goddess, did not disobey him,
 but went from the mountains of Ida to lofty Olympus.
 Like a man who's travelled to many countries, who 80
 hurries about, reflects, "How I wish I was here, or there",
 whose sharp mind speeds its way through a mass of desires,
 so rapidly in her eagerness flew the lady Hērē,
 and came to lofty Olympus, where she found the immortal
 gods assembled in Zeus's house. On seeing her 85
 they all stood up, and lifted their cups in welcome.
 The rest she ignored, but accepted the cup from fair-cheeked
 Themis, for she was the first to run up and greet her,
 speaking with winged words, and saying: "Hērē,
 why have you come here? You look quite distraught— 90
 Kronos's son, your own husband, must have scared you badly."

Then the white-armed goddess Hērē answered her thus:
 "Themis, goddess, don't ask me—you yourself know
 how arrogant and unbending his temper is! Rather set out
 for the gods in his halls the fairly apportioned feast, 95
 and then, together with all the immortals, you'll hear
 Zeus announce all the vile acts he's planning: in no way,
 I tell you, will this please the hearts of all, either mortals
 or gods—if indeed even now any feast with a cheerful mind."

After making this speech the lady Hērē sat down, 100
 and throughout Zeus's hall the gods were troubled. She smiled
 with her lips, but above the dark brows her forehead revealed
 no comfort: it was in anger she now spoke among them all:
 "Fools we are, who so witlessly rage against Zeus,
 or are even hot to confront him, thwart his intentions 105
 by argument or force! He sits apart, quite indifferent,
 not caring at all, for he says that among the immortal gods
 for power and strength he's beyond all doubt the best.
 So each of you must put up with whatever ills he sends you—

as now already, I think, grief's been fashioned for Arēs, 110
since his son's perished in the fighting—no man he loves more—
Askalaphos, whom strong Arēs claims as his own.”

So she spoke.
Both muscular thighs Arēs struck with his flattened palms,
and, lamenting aloud, then made this declaration:
“You can't blame me now, you who have homes on Olympos, 115
if I seek the Achaians' ships to avenge my son's killing,
though it may be my fate to be struck by the bolt of Zeus,
and to lie among other corpses in the blood and the dust.”

So he spoke, and commanded Terror and Rout to yoke
his horses, while he himself put on his gleaming armor. 120
Then would yet greater, less endurable resentment
and anger have been engendered between the immortals
and Zeus, had not Athēnē, in great fear for all the gods,
hurried out through the doorway, leaving the chair she sat on:
she took Arēs' shield from his shoulders, the helmet from his head, 125
the bronze spear from his brawny hand, and set it down,
and lit into reckless Arēs with words of rebuke: “You're mad,
out of your senses, done for! Your ears listen, but uselessly,
your understanding and sense of shame have perished!
Didn't you hear what the goddess, white-armed Hērē, told us— 130
she who indeed has come straight here from Olympian Zeus?
Or do you intend to get your quota of suffering,
and be forced back, in great distress, to Olympos,
to sow for the rest of us the seeds of great misfortune?
Zeus will very soon leave the Achaians and the high-spirited 135
Trojans, will come to Olympos and throw us into confusion,
laying hands on all alike, the innocent with the guilty.
So I'm telling you now to forego your wrath for your son,
since in times past there's many a stronger, more dexterous fighter
has been killed—and will be hereafter: it's a difficult business 140
to safeguard the line and the offspring of every last mortal.”

So saying, she made reckless Arēs return to his seat.
But Hērē summoned Apollo to come outside the hall,
and Iris too, the messenger of the immortal gods,
and addressed them both, speaking in winged words: 145
“Zeus orders the two of you to come with all speed to Ida,

and when you've come, and looked on the face of Zeus,
then to do whatsoever he may urge and command you."

So saying, the lady Hērē returned inside, and sat
down on her chair, while the two went quickly on their way. 150
To spring-rich Ida they came, mother of wild beasts,
and found Kronos's far-seeing son perched on the topmost peak
of Gargaros, wreathed about with a fragrant cloud.
They approached, and stood before Zeus the cloud-gatherer.
At the sight of them he felt no wrath in his heart, 155
since they'd quickly obeyed the instructions of his dear wife.
To Iris first of the two he then addressed winged words:
"Go now, swift Iris, report to the lord Poseidōn
all that I tell you; you're not to be a false messenger!
My command is, he shall cease from warfare and battle, 160
and seek the gods' company, or go down to the shining sea.
But if he ignores my words, or fails to obey them,
let him ponder this well in his mind and in his heart:
Will he, strong though he is, have the will to confront
my coming? I declare that I far surpass him in might, 165
am, too, the elder by birth—yet his heart does not hesitate
to rank himself equal to me, whom all others dread."

So he spoke,
and wind-footed swift Iris did not disregard him,
but went down from the mountains of Ida to sacred Ilion;
as when from the clouds snowflakes or frozen hail 170
pelt down, impelled by the north wind's blast, that's born
in the clear heavens, so swiftly did urgent Iris fly,
and stood by the far-famed Earth-Shaker, and addressed him:
"A message for you, O dark-maned Earth-Encirler,
I'm here to deliver, from Zeus who bears the aegis. 175
His command is that you must cease from warfare and battle,
and seek the gods' company, or go down to the shining sea.
But if you ignore his words, or fail to obey them, then
he threatens to come here in person, and to confront you
in man-to-man combat; and you should stay clear of his hands, 180
he says, since he far surpasses you in might,
is, too, the elder by birth—yet your heart does not hesitate
to rank yourself equal to him, whom all others dread."

Then to her,

much troubled, the far-famed Earth-Shaker responded:
 “Look now, great though he is, he’s speaking arrogantly 185
 if he means to restrain me, his equal in honor, by force,
 against my will! Three brothers were born to Rhea by Kronos:
 Zeus and I, the third being Hādēs, lord of the dead.
 All was divided three ways: each of us got his domain—
 I was allotted the grey sea to dwell in forever when 190
 the lots were shaken, while Hādēs obtained the murky darkness,
 and Zeus won the wide airy firmament and the clouds;
 but the earth and lofty Olympos remain common to us all.
 So I will in no way walk as Zeus is minded—let him,
 powerful though he is, stay at ease in his own third portion, 195
 nor try to scare me with toughness, as though I were some
 mere weakling: better for him to threaten with violent words
 his own sons and daughters, those he sired himself,
 who’ll be obliged to obey him, whatever his commands.”

Then wind-footed swift Iris answered him: “Is this 200
 really the message, O dark-maned Earth-Encirler,
 that I’m to take back to Zeus—so forceful, so unyielding?
 Or will you concede a little? Good men’s minds can be changed—
 and you know how the Furies always side with the elder-born.”

Poseidōn the Earth-Shaker now answered her once more: 205
 “Iris, goddess, your message you delivered correctly:
 an excellent thing it is when the messenger knows what’s right!
 But there’s this bitter resentment comes over heart and soul
 whenever a person’s minded to upbraid in angry terms
 one of like station, to whom fate’s allotted an equal share. 210
 Still, for now, despite my indignation, I’ll yield—
 but another thing I’ll tell you, and I make this threat in my rage:
 if, in spite of me—and Athēnē the spoil-bringer,
 and Hērē, and Hermēs, and Lord Hēphaistos—he spares
 steep Iliion, and proves unwilling to lay it waste, 215
 or to concede to the Argives their great victory, then
 let him know this: that between us will be bitterness without cure.”

So saying, the Earth-Shaker left the Achaian forces,
 and plunged in the sea. The Achaian heroes missed him.
 Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer thus addressed Apollo: 220
 “Go now, dear Phoibos, in search of bronze-clad Hektōr:

already the Earth-Encircler and Earth-Shaker
 has gone down into the shining sea, avoiding
 our unbridled wrath; others too must have learned of our fight,
 those gods who are in the lower world with Kronos.¹ 225
 But this way was far better, both for me and for him,
 that though earlier angered he still should yield to my hands,
 since not without sweat would this business have been settled.
 So do you now take in your hands the tasseled aegis,
 shake it at these Achaian heroes, put them to flight! 230
 For yourself, long-distance archer, let illustrious Hektōr
 be your concern: stir up great rage in him, until
 the Achaians, routed, flee to their ships and the Hellespont.
 But from then on I myself will devise, in deed and word,
 how the Achaians once more shall have respite from the toil of war.” 235

So he spoke, and Apollo did not disregard his father,
 but went down from the mountains of Ida like a falcon—
 that swift dove-killer, of all winged creatures the swiftest.
 He found the son of wise Priam, noble Hektōr,
 no longer flat on his back, but sitting: he’d come round, 240
 recognized the comrades around him; his gasping and sweating
 had stopped, ever since the will of Zeus of the aegis
 revived him. Apollo, far-worker, standing close, now said:
 “Hektōr, son of Priam, why, quite apart from the rest,
 are you sitting here, barely alive? Are you in some trouble?” 245

Bright-helmeted Hektōr asked faintly: “Which of the gods
 are you, noble sir, who thus question me face to face?
 Have you not heard how, at the ships’ sterns of the Achaians,
 as I was killing his comrades, Aias of the fine war cry
 hit my chest with a great rock, cut short my fighting valor? 250
 Truly, I thought that day I’d be looking upon the dead
 in the house of Hādēs, after gasping my dear life out.”

Lord Apollo the far-worker then addressed him again:
 “Take heart now: such is the helper that the son of Kronos
 has sent from Ida to stand by you and protect you— 255
 Phoibos Apollo of the golden sword! As in the past

1. The “lower world” is Tartaros, “as far beneath Hādēs as the sky is above the earth” (8.13–16), used as a kind of dumping ground and prison for defeated or rebellious gods and primeval monsters; the gods referred to here are the Titans (8.479–81).

I'm here to guard both you and your steep citadel!
 So come now, urge all your many charioteers
 to drive their swift horses on against the hollow ships,
 and I shall go forward, make the whole way smooth 260
 for the horses—and I'll turn the Achaian heroes to flight."

So saying, he breathed great strength into the people's shepherd.
 Just as a stabled horse, that's fed well at its manger,
 will snap its halter and charge, hooves clattering, over the plain—
 since it likes to bathe in the nearest fast-flowing river— 265
 proudly, head held high, its full mane streaming out
 over its shoulders, as, confident in its splendor,
 it plies its nimble limbs towards the haunts and pastures of mares:
 so Hektōr worked feet and knees fast, while urging on
 his charioteers, now that he'd heard the voice of the god. 270
 As when an antlered stag or a wild goat
 is pursued by country folk along with their dogs,
 but is saved by some high rock face or shady thicket—
 the hunters are out of luck, they weren't fated to catch it,
 —and then a great bearded lion appears in their path, 275
 roused by their shouting, turns all back, even the eager:
 so, for a while, the Danaäns kept up the chase in a body,
 jabbing away with their swords and double-edged spears;
 but when they saw Hektōr going to and fro in the ranks
 of the Trojans they panicked, their courage sank to their boots. 280

Then there spoke up among them Thoas, Andraimōn's son,
 far the best of the Aitōlians, well skilled with the javelin,
 a good hand-to-hand fighter too, while few Achaians
 outdid him at public speaking, when young warriors debated.
 He now with friendly intent spoke before the assembly: 285
 "Something truly amazing I'm now witnessing—the way
 he's recovered, has somehow eluded the death-spirits—yes,
 Hektōr! Every man jack of us had high hopes he'd died
 at the hands of Aias, Telamōn's son, but once more
 some god or other has rescued him, kept him alive— 290
 Hektōr, who's unstrung the knees of so many Danaäns,
 as I fear will happen again now, since it can't be without
 loud-thundering Zeus that he stands as so ardent a champion!
 Come then, let's all of us do what I suggest:
 let's order the rank-and-file to return to the ships, 295

but we—all those who claim we're the cream of the army—
let's stand and face him, see if we can thrust him back first,
with leveled spears: I think, despite his determination,
he'll be scared at heart to venture into the Danaäns' ranks."

So he spoke: they heard him out readily, and obeyed. 300

Those who were comrades of Aias and the lord Idomeneus
and Teukros and Mērionēs and Megēs, Arēs' equal,
summoned the finest warriors and prepared for battle,
lined up to face the Trojans and Hektōr: meanwhile
the common troops went back to the ships of the Achaians. 305

Now the Trojans advanced in a body, led by Hektōr,
taking long strides, while in front of him Phoibos Apollo,
shoulders enveloped in cloud, bore the fearsome aegis—
terrible, shaggy-fringed, gleaming: the smith Hēphaistos
gave it to Zeus to carry, to cause panic in mortals: 310
this Apollo had in his hands as he headed the attack.

The Argives in close order awaited them, and a piercing
clamor arose from both sides, while arrows leapt
from the bowstring, and many spears, hurled by bold hands,
lodged, some of them, in the flesh of battle-swift youths, 315
though many, before they could reach a white body, stood fixed
in the earth midway, still yearning to glut themselves with flesh.
Now so long as Phoibos Apollo kept the aegis still in his hands,
the missiles from both sides struck home, and men kept falling;
but when, looking straight at the swift-horse Danaäns, 320
he shook it, and gave a great shout, he cast a spell
on the hearts in their breasts: they forgot their fighting valor.
Just as a herd of cattle or a great flock of sheep can be
stampeded in black night's darkness by a couple of wild beasts
that come on them suddenly, when no herdsman's nearby, 325
so the Achaians were routed, their courage lost; for Apollo
loosed panic on them, gave the glory to Hektōr and the Trojans.

Then man slew man once the conflict was broken open:
Hektōr brought down Arkesilaös and Stichios,
the first a leader among the bronze-corseleted Boiōtians, 330
the second a trusty companion of great-hearted Menestheus,
while Aineias finished off Medōn and Iasos. One of these,
Medōn, was the bastard son of godlike Oileus

and Aias's half-brother; but the place where he dwelt
 was in Phylakē, far from his homeland, since he'd killed a kinsman 335
 of Eriōpis, his stepmother, whom Oīleus married;
 Iasos was a commander of the Athēnians, known
 as Sphēlos's son, and the grandson of Boukolos. Mēkisteus
 was taken down by Poulydamas, while Polītēs slew Echios
 in the battle's forefront, and noble Agēnōr laid Klonios low, 340
 and Paris stabbed Deīochos as he fled with the front-line fighters,
 from behind, in the lower shoulder, and drove the bronze clean
 through.

While they were stripping the gear from these men, the Achaians,
 tripped up by the stakes, caught in the ditch they'd dug,
 fled this way and that, were forced inside their own wall, 345
 and Hektōr called out to the Trojans, in a carrying voice:
 "Press on to the ships, and forget the bloodstained spoils!
 Any man I see going elsewhere, not making for the ships,
 I'll do to death on the spot: he'll not get his due share
 of fire as a corpse from his kinsmen or kinswomen: 350
 no, rather will dogs tear his flesh here, outside our city!"

So he spoke, brought the whip down hard, lashed on his horses,
 calling out to the Trojans along the ranks; and they all,
 cheering, together with him drove their horses onward,
 raising a fearsome clamor. Ahead of them Phoibos Apollo 355
 easily kicked down the banks of the deep ditch,
 heaping them into the middle, creating a causeway
 both long and wide, as far as a spear will fly
 when a man's making trial of his strength. Along this now
 they streamed, still in formation, with Apollo in front 360
 holding the awesome aegis, breaking down the Achaians' wall
 with no trouble. In the way that a child at the seaside
 first builds—as children will—sandcastles, but as part
 of the game, with feet and hands will then knock them down again,
 so you, lord Phoibos, destroyed all the long hard work 365
 of the Argives, and also panicked them into flight.

So these made a halt by the ships, and held their ground,
 calling out one to another; then lifting up their hands
 to all the gods, prayed aloud, and most fervently of all
 Gerēnian Nestōr, protector of the Achaians, 370

prayed, stretching out his hands to the starry heavens:
 “Zeus, Father, if ever any of us, back in wheat-rich Argos,
 burned fat thigh-pieces of sheep or cattle, and prayed
 for a safe return, and you promised, and nodded in consent,
 remember that now, Olympian! Stand off our pitiless day—
 don’t let the Achaians be thus worsted by the Trojans!”

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So he spoke in prayer: Zeus the counselor thundered loudly
 on hearing the prayer of the old man, Nēleus’s son.

But the Trojans, on hearing the thunder of Zeus of the aegis,
 pressed the Argives still harder in their relish for battle,
 and as a great wave of the wide-roaming sea bears down
 over a ship’s bulwarks, when winds at full gale force
 are driving it on—this really swells big breakers—
 so the Trojans, with loud shouts, kept coming beyond the wall,
 driving their horses on, joined the fight at the ships’ sterns
 with two-edged spears, in close combat: they fought from their
 chariots,
 and their foes, who’d climbed to the decks of their black ships,
 wielded long naval pikes that lay there for sea battles,
 jointed in sections, their ends all tipped with bronze.

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Now Patroklos, so long as the Achaians and the Trojans
 were fighting for the wall, away from the swift ships,
 remained sitting back in the hut of kindly Eurypylos,
 cheering him up with chat while on his grievous wound
 he spread powerful applications to ease the black agony.
 But when he perceived the Trojans rushing the wall,
 and the Danaäns crying out in their panicked flight,
 then he groaned aloud, struck both thighs with the flat
 of his hands, and then, lamenting, uttered these words:
 “Eurypylos, there’s no way, despite your need for me,
 that I can remain here: a great conflict’s under way!
 Your attendant can entertain you—but I myself
 am going in all haste to Achilles, to urge him into battle.
 Who knows? With divine assistance I may yet arouse
 his spirit by argument: a friend has persuasive power.”

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So saying, he hurried away. The Achaians stood firm,
 awaiting the Trojans’ assault, yet proved unable
 to thrust them back from the ships, though they were fewer,

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while the Trojans never managed to break the Danaäns' ranks,
and so get through in among the huts and the vessels.

As the chalked string marks off a straight line on a ship's timber
in the hands of a skilled carpenter, who's familiar with all
aspects of his high craft through Athēnē's promptings—

so tautly and evenly was their conflict stretched between them.

Some were fighting by one ship, some beside another,
but Hektōr charged straight at famous Aias. They both
were battling for possession of the same ship, but were unable,
the one to dislodge the other and set the ship on fire,
or the other to force him back, since a god had brought him there.

Then illustrious Aias speared Kalētōr in the chest—
Klytios's son, who was bringing fire to burn up the ship,
and he fell with a thud, and the torch dropped from his hand.

But when Hektōr took in the fact that it was his cousin
who was down in the dust, out in front of the black ship,
then he called to the Trojans and Lycians, in a carrying voice:
"Trojans and Lycians! You Dardanian hand-to-hand fighters!
Don't back off one step from the fighting on this narrow front,
but rescue the son of Klytios, don't let the Achaians
strip a fallen man of his armor in this battle for the ships!"

So saying, he let fly his gleaming spear at Aias:
him he missed, but Lykophrōn, Mastōr's son,
Aias's henchman from Kythēra, who lived with him now,
after killing a man in sacred Kythēra—him he struck
on the head, just over the ear, with the keen-edged bronze
as he stood beside Aias: he slumped from the stern of the ship
on his back in the dust, and his limbs were unstrung, and Aias
shivered, and said to his brother: "Teukros, dear heart,
a most loyal comrade of ours has been killed, yes, the son
of Mastōr, that guest from Kythēra whom we honored
like our own parents during his stay in our halls—
great-hearted Hektōr has slain him! Where, now, are your shafts
of swift death, where's the bow that Phoibos Apollo gave you?"

So he spoke: Teukros heard, ran up and stood beside him,
grasping the back-bent bow and the quiver that held
his arrows, and quickly let fly at the Trojans. His first
shaft struck Kleitos—the splendid son of Peisēnōr,
comrade to Poulydamas, Pánthoös's noble son—

who, reins in hand, was occupied with his horses,
 driving them where the most troops were in headlong flight,
 to oblige the Trojans and Hektōr. But a disaster soon
 caught him that none, though wanting to, could prevent: 450
 for into the back of his neck flew the grief-laden arrow,
 and he fell from the driver's seat, while his horses shied aside,
 rattling the empty chariot. Lord Poulydamas, quickly
 observing this, was the first to come up and stop the horses:
 these he gave to Astynoös, Protiaön's son, 455
 with firm orders to keep them in check, and close, and watch him,
 while he himself went back to rejoin the front-line fighters.

Teukros lined up another shaft against bronze-clad Hektōr,
 that would have cut short his fighting by the Achaians' ships
 had he hit him as he fought valiantly, would have taken his
 life away; 460
 but he failed to escape the notice of sharp-minded Zeus,
 who, guarding Hektōr, robbed Teukros of his glory,
 snapping the well-twisted string of his matchless bow
 as he drew it, so that the shaft with its weight of bronze
 flew wide of its target, and the bow dropped from his hand. 465
 Then Teukros shivered, and thus addressed his brother:
 "Look, our battle plan's being ruined by some maleficent
 spirit, which struck the bow from my hand and broke
 the fresh-twisted bowstring I gave it this morning, to stand
 the force of shafts leaping out from it, thick and fast!" 470

Then great Aias, Telamōn's son, made him this answer:
 "So, brother, leave your bow and your showering arrows
 to lie where they are: some god with a grudge against the Achaians
 has disabled them. Take a lance, put a shield on your shoulder,
 join the fight with the Trojans, urge on our other troops! 475
 Don't let them capture our benched ships without a struggle
 even though they've outfought us: let's put our minds to battle!"

So he spoke. Teukros stowed away his bow in the hut,
 and over his shoulders slung a fourfold shield,
 and on his strong head settled a well-made helmet 480
 with horsehair crest, its plume nodding terribly above it,
 and picked out a solid spear, tipped with sharpened bronze,
 and went on his way, at the double, to stand with Aias.

When Hektōr saw that Teukros's shafts were made useless
 He called out to Trojans and Lycians in a carrying voice: 485
 "Trojans and Lycians! You Dardanian hand-to-hand fighters!
 Be men, my friends! Remember your fighting valor
 here by the hollow ships, for I've seen, with my own eyes,
 one of their best men's weapons rendered harmless by Zeus!
 Easily recognized is the aid Zeus gives to men, 490
 both by those on whom he bestows the greater glory
 and those whom he diminishes, has no mind to assist,
 as now he's reducing the Argives' strength, and supporting us.
 So close ranks, and fight by the ships; and if any man,
 whether shot or speared, meets his death and destiny, 495
 let him die! No dishonor if it's in defense of one's country
 that he dies: his wife will be safe, and his children after him,
 and his house and land intact if it be that the Achaians
 sail away with their ships to their own dear fatherland."

So saying he stirred the strength and spirit of every man. 500
 On the other side Aias too called out to his comrades:
 "For shame, Argives! Now it's certain: we must perish, unless
 we can save ourselves by removing this danger from the ships!
 Do you think, if bright-helmeted Hektōr captures our ships,
 you'll each of you then walk home to your native country? 505
 Can't you hear the way that Hektōr's firing up all his troops
 in his consuming passion to set the ships ablaze?
 It's not to a dance he's inviting them, but to battle!
 For us there's no better counsel or purpose than this,
 to grapple with them, in furious hand-to-hand combat— 510
 better, once and for all, either to perish or survive
 than to be worn out in this grim and hopeless conflict
 beside the ships, by men inferior to ourselves."

So saying, he encouraged each man's strength and spirit.
 Then Hektōr slew Schedios, Perimēdēs's son, 515
 a leader of Phokians, and Aias took down Laodamas,
 an infantry captain, Antēnōr's handsome son,
 while Poulydamas killed a Kyllēnian, Ōtos, the comrade
 of Phyleus's son, the great-hearted Epeians' leader.
 Megēs, on seeing this, sprang at Poulydamas, who 520
 ducked away from the blow. Megēs missed him—Apollo would not
 let Pánthoös's son be vanquished among the front-line fighters—

but instead hit Khroismos full in the chest with his spear.
 He fell with a thud: Megēs started stripping the gear
 from his shoulders, but Dolops, a highly skilled spearman,
 attacked him, 525
 Lampos's most warlike son, and Laomedōn's grandson,
 a man well acquainted with fighting valor, who now
 thrust his spear squarely into the shield of Phyleus's son,
 coming at him from close quarters. But the thick and plated
 corselet he wore protected him, that Phyleus long ago 530
 brought back out of Ephyrē, by the Sellēis river,
 a gift from a guest-friend—Euphētēs, lord of men—
 to wear in battle, a defense against enemies: this
 was what now kept destruction from the flesh of his son.
 Megēs took aim at Dolops's bronze horsehair-plumed 535
 helmet with his sharp spear, hit its topmost plate,
 broke off its horsehair crest, so that the whole piece,
 freshly dyed scarlet, fell to the dusty ground.
 As Megēs, holding his ground, fought Dolops, still hoping to win,
 Menelaös the warlike came over to help him, stood 540
 with his spear, unseen, broadside on: threw, from behind,
 and pierced Dolops's shoulder. The point tore through his chest,
 driving onward: he collapsed on his face. They both rushed forward,
 eager to strip the bronze armor off his shoulders.
 But Hektōr called out to his kinsmen, one and all: the first 545
 to get the rough edge of his tongue was Hiketaōn's son,
 strong Melanippos. Till lately, the foe still far off, he'd stayed
 to pasture his shambling cattle back at Perkōtē,
 but when the Danaäns came with their curved ships, then
 he went back to Ilion, won distinction among the Trojans, 550
 and lived with Priam, who treated him like his own son. Him now
 Hektōr upbraided in these words: "Are we to give up
 like this, Melanippos? Does your dear heart feel nothing
 for your slain cousin? Do you not see the way
 they're busily taking possession of Dolops's battle gear? 555
 So come on with me: no longer can we fight the Argives
 from a distance—either we must slaughter them now, or else
 root and branch they'll vanquish steep Ilion, slaughter her people."
 That said, he led on: Melanippos, mortal but godlike, followed,
 while Telamōn's son, great Aias, urged on the Argives: 560

“My friends, be men now, let shame into your hearts,
feel shame before one another in this violent combat—
of those who feel shame more survive than lose their lives,
while runaways get no glory, win no battles.”

So he spoke. They themselves were hot to stand off the foe, 565
and laid up his words in their hearts, fenced the ships about
with a hedge of bronze. While Zeus roused the Trojans against them,
Menelaös, of the fine war cry, encouraged Antilochos:

“No other Achaian, Antilochos, is younger than you,
or a swifter runner, or as valiant in battle— 570
could you not spring out in front, hit a Trojan fighter?”

So saying, he backed off himself, but stirred up Antilochos,
who emerged from the front-line troops, took aim with his
bright spear,
glancing quickly around. The Trojans all shrank back
as he threw; not in vain was his missile cast, but struck 575

Hiketaön's son, overconfident Melanippos,
in the torso, by one nipple, as he came to the battle line,
and he fell with a thud, and darkness shrouded his eyes,
and Antilochos leapt upon him, like a hunting dog
pinning down a wounded fawn, that some hunter aims at 580
and hits as it darts from its den, and unstrings its limbs:

even so on you, Melanippos, did warlike Antilochos leap
to strip you of your armor. But he failed to escape the notice
of noble Hektör, who ran through the fighting to confront him.
Antilochos didn't stay put, nimble fighter though he was, 585
but fled like a wild beast that's done something really bad—
such as kill a dog or a herdsman guarding his cattle—
and makes its escape before a mass pursuit gets started:

so fled the son of Nestör, while the Trojans and Hektör
noisily showered their pain-laden missiles at him— 590
but he turned and stood at bay when he reached his comrades.

The Trojans still, like lions that devour raw flesh, kept up
their assault on the ships, obeying the behests of Zeus,
who constantly stirred up great fury in them, but beguiled
the Argives' hearts, stole their glory, spurred on their opponents, 595
since to Hektör, Priam's son, it was that his heart longed
to give the glory, to let him cast fire, consuming

and weariless, on the curved ships, and thus finally to fulfill
 the exorbitant prayer of Thetis. What Zeus the counselor
 was waiting for was to see the flare of a burning ship, 600
 since at that point he'd arrange a repulse of the Trojans
 from the ships, and thus to the Danaäns now grant glory.
 With this end in mind, he urged Priam's son Hektör on
 against the hollow ships—he being eager enough already,
 as enraged as Arēs the spear-wielder, or like a deadly fire 605
 raging up in the mountains, in a deep wood's thickets.
 Foam gathered round his mouth, and his eyes blazed bright
 under his shaggy brows, and about his temples
 fearsomely quivered the helmet of this embattled man,
 of Hektör, for from high heaven came as his helper— 610
 alone though he was among many—Zeus himself,
 to grant him honor and glory, since he was fated to be
 short-lived, for already his day of doom at the hands
 of Pēleus's violent son was being hastened by Pallas Athēnē.
 And now his aim was to break the ranks by assault, 615
 wherever he saw the most troops and the finest armor:
 yet not even so could he break them, enraged though he was,
 for they stood firm, set like a high wall, or a rocky
 headland, huge and sheer, that faces the grey sea,
 holding its own against the screaming gales' swift tracks 620
 and the swollen breakers that belch forth their might against it.
 Just so the Danaäns stood off the Trojans, were not routed.
 But Hektör, agleam like bright fire, now assailed their ranks,
 fell upon them, as when a wave falls on a swift ship
 beneath the clouds, fierce, wind-driven, and the entire 625
 vessel is hidden in foam, and the gale's wild blast
 comes roaring against the sail, and the mariners quake
 in terror, being borne along on the very edge of death—
 so too the Achaians' courage was shredded in their breasts,
 for Hektör assailed them like a killer lion that's found 630
 cows grazing the bottomland beside an extensive marsh—
 lots of them, watched by a herdsman who as yet has no idea
 how to fight a wild beast off from a sleek heifer's carcass:
 he always either keeps pace with the leading cows, or with those
 in the rear; but it's in the middle the lion now pounces 635
 to devour a heifer: the rest stampede in panic. Just so
 the Achaians were now stampeded by Hektör and Zeus the Father:

all of them, even though Hektōr slew only Periphētēs
 from Mykēnai, dear son of Kopreus, who'd served as a messenger
 from the lord Eurystheus to that mighty force Hēraklēs: 640
 by him, a far meaner father, was sired a son who proved
 better in all kinds of excellence—speed of foot, warfare,
 brains: in all these he ranked with Mykēnai's leading men.
 This it was now that increased the glory he gave Hektōr,
 for as he turned back, he tripped over his own shield's rim, 645
 one that reached to his feet, a defense against javelins:
 on this he stumbled, fell backwards, and about his temples
 loud clanged the helmet as he went down. Now Hektōr
 was quick to note this, ran swiftly up beside him,
 planted a spear in his chest, and—so close to his own comrades— 650
 slew him. Though sad for their comrade, these could not
 rescue him, being themselves too scared of noble Hektōr.

They came in among the ships, and the beam-ends of those
 vessels first drawn up confined them; but their enemies still
 followed: the Argives were forced to make a further retreat 655
 from the outermost ships, but held a line by their huts
 all in a body, not scattering through the camp
 for very shame and fear. They kept calling to one another,
 and above all Gerēnian Nestōr, the Achaians' guardian,
 begged each man, imploring him in his parents' name: 660
 "My friends, be men now, let shame into your hearts
 before other men; and remember, each one of you,
 your children and wives, your possessions and your parents
 whether for you they're living or dead! On behalf
 of them, far distant now, I who am here beseech you 665
 to make a strong stand, not to turn back in craven flight!"

So saying, he stirred up each man's strength and spirit.
 From their eyes Athēnē removed the heavenly cloud of mist,
 and clear light shone down on them on either side,
 on that of the ships, and that of levelling warfare. 670
 Thus all
 could see Hektōr, good at the war cry, and his comrades—
 both those holding back in the rear, not committed to battle,
 and all who were fighting the good fight beside the swift ships.

No longer did it suffice the courageous heart of Aias
 to stand back where the other Achaians' sons had withdrawn to: 675

he went with great strides from deck to deck of the ships,
 in his hands a huge pike that was intended for sea battles,
 jointed in sections, and twenty-two cubits long.
 As a man who's an expert rider of horses harnesses four
 out of many together, and drives them at a smart clip 680
 from the plain towards a great city, using the public highway,
 with everyone marveling at him, both men and women,
 while he, quite safely, and controlling all his movements,
 will leap from horse to horse as they gallop on—
 so Aias kept ranging from deck to deck of the various 685
 ships with long strides, and his voice went up to heaven
 as, fearsomely shouting, he kept exhorting the Danaäns
 to safeguard their ships and huts. Nor did Hektör hold back
 among the common mass of the well-corseleted Trojans,
 but as a tawny eagle will swoop down on a covey 690
 of winged fowl feeding beside the bank of a river—
 geese or cranes, or long-necked swans—so Hektör
 made straight for a dark-prowed ship, charging right at it,
 while Zeus from behind thrust him forward with one mighty hand,
 cheering on both Hektör himself and the troops that went with him. 695
 So once more bitter fighting took place beside the ships:
 you'd have thought they were facing each other now in battle
 fresh and unwearied, so determinedly did they fight,
 and as they fought, these were their thoughts: the Achaians feared
 they would never escape from danger, but would perish; 700
 and as for the Trojans, the heart in each man's breast
 hoped to fire the ships and to kill the Achaian heroes.
 Such were their thoughts as they stood confronting one another.
 Now Hektör caught hold of the stern of a fine seafaring ship,
 swift to traverse salt water, that had carried Prōtesilaös 705
 to Troy, but never returned him to his own dear fatherland.
 It was all around his ship that Achaians and Trojans
 were engaged in hand-to-hand slaughter, nor did they now
 await volleys of arrows and javelins, but came right in,
 squared off at close quarters, the same thought in every mind, 710
 and battled it out with sharp axes and hatchets, large swords
 and double-edged spears; many fine sword blades there were,
 hilts bound with black cord, that found their way to the ground,
 some dropped from the hands, some fallen from shoulder baldrics
 of men as they fought, and the black earth ran with blood. 715

Hektōr, the ship's stern once grasped, would not let go of it,
kept his hands on the sternpost as he called out to the Trojans:
"Bring fire here, and you all as one man raise the war cry,
for Zeus has now granted us a day worth all the rest,
to take the ships that came here against the gods' will 720
and have brought us much trouble, through the cowardice of
old men

who, when I was ready to fight by the ships' sterns
held me back, and restrained my troops. Though it may have been
far-seeing Zeus who at that time addled our wits,
now it's he who's urging us on—indeed, commanding us!" 725

So he spoke, and they redoubled their onslaughts on the Argives.
Now Aias, hard pressed by missiles, stood firm no longer
but backed off a little, thinking he well might die,
along the seven-foot cross-bench, and left the trim ship's deck,
and stood there, watching warily, using a spear to thrust back, 730
away from the ships, any Trojan who came with a flaming torch,
and kept urging the Danaäns on, in his terrifying voice:

"Friends! Danaän heroes! You henchmen of Arēs!
Be men, my friends! Call up your fighting courage!
Do we suppose we have other helpers at our backs? 735
Or some stronger wall, to ward off disaster from our troops?
No way—and there's no close city, well fortified with towers,
where we could find allies, turn back this assault together!
Here we're stuck, here, on the well-armored Trojans' terrain,
our backs to the sea, far away from our native country: 740
In our own hands lies our salvation, not in respite from battle!"

So saying, Aias, enraged, made fierce play with his keen-edged spear:
any Trojan who now came charging against the hollow ships
with a blazing torch, in answer to Hektōr's exhortations,
Aias would wait for, and wound with that same long spear, 745
and a dozen men he laid low in close combat beside the ships.