

Book 13

Zeus, when he'd brought the Trojans and Hektōr to the ships,
abandoned them there, to endure toil and suffering
without respite, but himself turned his bright eyes away,
gazing far off at the lands of the Thracian horsemen,
of the Mysian close-quarter fighters, of the noble milk-drinking 5
Hippomolgoi, and of the Abioi, the most righteous of mankind;
but to Troy he longer turned his bright eyes at all,
never expecting that any of the immortals would
go to the help of either the Danaäns or the Trojans.

But it was no blind watch that the lordly Earth-Shaker kept: 10
no indeed, for he sat marveling at the war and its conflicts,
high on the topmost peak of wooded Samothrakē.
From there he had a clear view of the whole of Ida;
clear too were Priam's city and the Achaians' ships.
Fresh up from the sea he sat there, full of pity for the Achaians' 15
rout by the Trojans, and in a furious temper with Zeus.

Down he now started at once from the rocky mountain,
striding on with brisk footsteps: the high range and the woodlands
shook under the tread of Poseidōn's immortal feet.
Three strides he took; with the fourth he reached his goal, 20
Aigai, where lies his famed palace, built in the depths
of the water, golden and gleaming, forever imperishable.
Arrived there, he yoked to the chariot his bronze-hoofed horses,
his swift-flying pair, with their flowing manes of gold,
and clad himself in gold, and flourished his whip— 25
of gold too, finely made—and, mounting his chariot,
drove out over the waves. Beneath him sea-beasts gamboled
all around, up from the deep—well they knew their lord—
and in joy the sea parted before him. His steeds flew on
so lightly, the axle of bronze beneath was never wetted, 30
and nimbly bore him across to the ships of the Achaians.

There's a certain wide cavern out there, down in deep water,
midway between Tenedos and rugged Imbros. Here

Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker, reined in his horses,
 unyoked them from the chariot, tossed them ambrosial fodder 35
 to eat, and around their hooves fastened golden hobbles
 they could neither break nor slip off, to make sure they waited
 till their lord returned: then he went to the Achaians' camp.

The Trojans, all in one mass, like a flame or a gale blast,
 were pressing hotly on behind Hektōr, the son of Priam, 40
 shouting and yelling together, confident that they'd capture
 the Achaians' ships, and massacre all the best men there.
 But Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker, the Earth-Encircler,
 came up from the salty deep to encourage the Argives,
 in Kalchas's bodily form, with his untiring voice. 45
 First he addressed the two Aiases, both eager for action:
 "You two now between you can save the Achaian forces,
 if your minds are set on your prowess, not on chilling rout!
 Nowhere else do I fear the invincible hands of those
 Trojans who, in a body, have swarmed up our great wall: 50
 the well-greaved Achaians will hold them all at bay.
 No, it's here I'm really afraid we may meet disaster—
 here, where that madman, flame-like, is leading them on:
 yes, Hektōr, who boasts he's a son of almighty Zeus!
 May some god put the strong will in the hearts of you both 55
 to make a firm stand yourselves, bid others do the same:
 that way, for all his onslaught, you still might force him back
 from the swift ships, even though the Olympian's backing him."

With that the Earth-Shaker and Earth-Encircler tapped
 both men with his staff, filled them with strength and courage, 60
 and made their limbs light, both their legs and their arms above.
 Then, just as a swift-flying hawk will take to the air,
 lifting off from some sheer and inaccessible rock face,
 to hunt down another bird, in pursuit across the plain—
 such was the flight of Poseidōn the Earth-Shaker from them. 65
 It was Oileus's son, swift Aias, who recognized him first,
 and straightway declared to Aias, Telamōn's son:
 "Aias, that was one of the gods who dwell on Olympos,
 in the seer's likeness, urging us to fight by the ships!
 That was not really Kalchas the prophet, the diviner— 70
 the form of his feet and legs from behind as he went
 I easily knew: though gods, they're still recognizable—

and my heart in the breast of me is made that much more eager
to plunge with zest into warfare and battle: my own
feet under and hands above are impatient to go!"¹ 75

Aias, Telamōn's son, then made him this answer:
"So too with me: my invincible hands are urgent
to grasp the spear, my power's aroused, I'm borne forward
by both feet beneath me: I'm ready, even alone, to do battle
with Priam's son Hektōr, hot to fight though he always is." 80
Such were their words to each other, while rejoicing over
the lust for battle the god had put in their hearts.

Meanwhile the Earth-Encircler aroused those Achaians behind them,
now refreshing their spirits beside the swift ships,
their limbs undone by grievous fatigue, while anguish 85
swelled and possessed their spirits as they observed
the Trojans in countless numbers swarm up the great wall:
looking at them they shed tears, never once supposing
that they could escape calamity. But the Earth-Shaker,
easily passing among them, strengthened their ranks 90
by his exhortations. He first approached Teukros and Lēitos,
then Thoas, Dēipyros, the heroic Pēneleōs,
Mērionēs and Antilochos, lords of the battle cry:
These he urged on now, addressed them with winged words:

"Shame on you, Argives, young warriors! It was in your prowess 95
as fighters I trusted to keep our ships in safety—
but if you're about to shrink from warfare's grievous business,
the day's indeed come for us to be beaten by the Trojans!
Alas, this is a great wonder that my eyes now behold,
a terrible sight, something I never thought could happen: 100
the Trojans attacking our ships—the same men who before
resembled timorous hinds, that in the woodlands
become the prey of jackals, of wolves and leopards,
wandering cravenly, no fighting spirit in them:
just so, until now the Trojans refused to stand and face 105
the Achaians' hands, their power, not even briefly.
But now, far from the city, they're engaged by the hollow ships

1. We're not told what was special, and recognizable, about gods' nether extremities, or how Aias knew them. This has seemingly not bothered commentators, ancient or modern, as much as it might.

because of our leader's weakness and our troops' lack of discipline—
 being at loggerheads with him, they have no will to fight
 for the swift-faring ships, but are getting killed among them. 110
 Yet even if it's the truth that the person at fault
 is Atreus's heroic son, wide-ruling Agamemnōn,
 because he dishonored the swift-foot son of Pēleus,
 that's no reason for us to stay aloof from the fighting!
 Let's mend this rift quickly—good men's hearts can be healed— 115
 but it's no good thing that you're still shy of warlike valor—
 you, the elite troops, the army's finest! I'd have
 no quarrel with any man that hung back from the fighting
 who was a worthless fellow, but with you lot I'm furious!
 Gentlemen, this abstention of yours will soon 120
 make matters a good deal worse, and each one of you should
 take shame—and men's censure—to heart, for the struggle
 now unfolding is crucial. Strong Hektōr, of the great war cry,
 is fighting beside our ships, has smashed our gates and their bar!"

Thus the Earth-Encircler's commands urged on the Achaians, 125
 and about the two Aiaes the ranks assembled, in strength,
 such as Arēs himself would not fault if he came among them,
 or Athēnē, the host-rallier; for these were the pick of the best
 that now awaited the Trojans and noble Hektōr,
 spears in serried rows, bucklers pressed against bucklers, 130
 shields overlapping, helmets by helmets, men packed so tight
 the horsehair crests on the gleaming boss of their helmets
 nudged as they bent their heads, so close were the ranks,
 and the spears, brandished in bold hands, intermingled,
 a woven lattice. Their minds were unswervingly set on battle. 135

The mass of the Trojans now charged, with Hektōr at their head,
 driving straight on, like a boulder that rolls down a rock face,
 when some winter torrent has shifted it off the hilltop,
 its huge flood undermining the ruthless stone's embedment,
 and up it bounces, in flight, and the woods echo beneath it 140
 as it plunges straight on down, until it reaches
 the level plain, and there it stops rolling, for all its hurry—
 so, for a while, Hektōr threatened to break right through to the sea
 easily, by way of the Achaians' ships and huts,
 on his killing spree; but when he came to those close-packed ranks 145
 he stopped, brought up short. The Achaians' sons stood against him,

jabbing at him with their swords and double-edged spears,
 and drove him back: he gave ground, badly shaken,
 and in a carrying voice called out to the Trojans:
 “Trojans! Lycians! You Dardanian front-line fighters! 150
 Stand by me! Not for long shall the Achaians hold me back,
 though they’ve closed their ranks like a wall. No, I rather think
 they’ll give ground before my spear, if indeed I was urged on
 by the highest of gods, Hērē’s own loud-thundering lord.”
 So saying Hektōr stirred up each warrior’s force and spirit. 155
 Deīphobos, Priam’s son, strode out amongst them,
 set on greatness, holding his balanced shield before him,
 [advancing light-footedly, under cover of his shield],²
 and Mērionēs took aim at him with his gleaming spear,
 and threw, and did not miss, but struck the balanced shield 160
 of oxhide, yet could not pierce it: far short of that,
 the long spear snapped at its head socket, and Deīphobos
 held his oxhide shield away from him, inwardly scared
 by the spear of Mērionēs, the skilled warrior. But that hero
 backed off to the mass of his comrades, deeply angered 165
 both by missing a victory and at breaking his spear,
 and set out back to the huts and ships of the Achaians
 to fetch another long spear that he’d left in his hut.

But the rest fought on, and an unquenchable clamor went up,
 and Teukros, Telamōn’s son, was the first to slay his man: 170
 Imbrios, spearman, the son of horse-rich Mentōr,
 who lived in Pēdaion before the Achaians’ sons appeared,
 and married Mēdesikastē, a bastard daughter of Priam.
 But when the Danaāns came, in their well-rounded ships,
 to Ilion he returned, won renown among the Trojans, 175
 and lived with Priam, who honored him like one of his own sons.
 Him it was Telamōn’s son now struck beneath one ear
 with his long spear, then withdrew it: like an ash tree he fell
 that on the peak of a mountain in clear view all around
 is cut down by the bronze and scatters its tender leaves 180
 abroad on the ground: so he fell, his bronze-inlaid armor
 rattling upon him, and Teukros, eager to strip his gear,
 rushed up. As he ran, Hektōr flung a gleaming spear at him

2. Probably—but not certainly—an interpolation or alternative line to 157.

but he, watching carefully, avoided the bronze missile—
 a near miss—and it hit Amphimachos in the chest, 185
 Kteatos's son, Aktōr's grandson,³ returning to the battle.
 He fell with a thud, and his armor rattled upon him.
 Now Hektōr moved quickly to rip from Amphimachos's head—
 that great-hearted man—the helmet enclosing his temples;
 and Aias lunged out with his gleaming spear at Hektōr 190
 as he came on, never reaching his flesh—his whole body
 was clad in fearsome bronze—just striking his shield's boss,
 and thrusting him back with huge force. So Hektōr gave ground,
 backwards, from the two corpses. The Achaians dragged them off.
 Amphimachos was taken by Stichios and noble Menestheus, 195
 Athenian leaders, back to the mass of the Achaians,
 and Imbrios by the two Aiases, full of fighting valor.
 Like two lions that have snatched a goat from sharp-toothed
 hounds,
 and carry it off through thickly growing brushwood,
 high up off the ground, held tight in their jaws, so these 200
 two commanders called Aias hefted Imbrios aloft,
 and stripped off his battle gear. Out of rage for Amphimachos
 Oileus's son cut Imbrios's head from his tender neck,
 swung his arm, and threw the head off into the crowd,
 like a ball, and it fell in the dust right at Hektōr's feet. 205

Poseidōn was now very deeply angered at heart
 since his own grandson had fallen in the ruthless struggle;
 and he made his way past the huts and ships of the Achaians
 urging the Danaäns on, but planning harm for the Trojans.
 There he encountered Idomeneus, famed spearman, 210
 come from tending a comrade just in from the fighting,
 cut in the ham of his knee by the keen-edged bronze:
 his comrades had carried him back. Idomeneus, having left orders
 for the healers, was going to his hut, still eager to join in
 the battle. To him now spoke the lordly Earth-Shaker, 215
 likening his voice to that of Thoas, Andraimōn's son,
 who in the whole of Pleurōn and rugged Kalydōn
 ruled the Aitōlians, being honored by his people like a god:

3. Aktōr was only nominally Kteatos's father: his real sire was Poseidōn, which is why the god is deeply angered at the death of Amphimachos, who thus was indeed his grandson (206–7).

“Idomeneus, Krêtan counselor, where now are the threats
that the sons of the Achaians once made against the Trojans?” 220

To him then Idomeneus, leader of Krêtans, replied:

“Ah, Thoas, so far as I know, there’s no one man to blame now—
we’re all of us skilled, these days, in warfare’s business.
No man here’s been gripped by spiritless terror; none,
yielding to hesitancy, has shirked grim war. This must, 225
I suppose, be what pleases the almighty son of Kronos:
that here, far from Argos and nameless, the Achaians should
perish.

But Thoas, you were one who always stood strong in battle,
and prompt to urge on others you noticed hanging back—
so don’t give up now, but call upon every man!” 230

In answer to him Poseidôn the Earth-Shaker then said:

“Idomeneus, may that man never get back home
from Troy, but stay here and become the sport of dogs,
who on this day chooses to shirk the fighting! So then,
fetch your battle gear, come with me: we have to work together 235
to advance our goal. Though two only, we might still help.
When the weakest men unite, their valor’s augmented—
But we two know how to fight even against the best.”

So saying, he went back, a god to the struggle of mortals,
and Idomeneus, on reaching his well-built hut, 240
put on his fine battle gear, picked out two spears,
and set forth, like branched lightning that the son of Kronos
grasps in his hand and flourishes from bright Olympos,
displaying a sign to mortals, and its clear rays dazzle:
so gleamed the bronze around his torso as he ran. 245

Mêrionês, his good henchman, met him a short distance
from the hut, being on his way to collect another spear
of bronze, and mighty Idomeneus now addressed him:
“Mêrionês, Molos’s son, swift-footed, dearest of comrades—
what brings you here, away from the war and the conflict? 250
Are you wounded, perhaps? Is an arrowhead giving you trouble?
Or have you brought me a message? Myself, I’m not minded
to sit here, back in my hut; what I want now is to fight.”

Then sagacious Mêrionês made him this answer:

“Idomeneus, counselor to the bronze-corsleted Krêtans, 255

I'm on my way to get me a spear, if there's still one left
in the hut, since the one I had before, I shattered
when I let fly at the shield of haughty Deïphobos."

To him then Idomeneus, leader of Krêtans, replied:
"If it's spears you want, be it one or twenty, you'll find them 260
lined up there in my hut, against the bright inner wall—
Trojan spears, that I take from men I've killed—I don't
care to stand well away when I fight my opponents,
and so I've a store of spears, and shields with bosses,
and helmets, and bright-glinting corselets."

Then to him 265
sagacious Mērionēs declared in answer:
"In my hut too, and in my black ship, there are many
spoils from the Trojans, but not handy for me to fetch.
Neither have I, I can tell you, forgotten my prowess:
among the foremost in battle, where glory is won, 270
is where I take my place when war's conflicts arise.
Though some other bronze-armored Achaians are perhaps
unaware of my fighting record, you, I think, know it well."

To him then Idomeneus, leader of Krêtans, replied:
"I know how brave you are: what need to tell me? 275
If the best of us were being chosen beside the hollow ships
for an ambush—a task where men's bravery shows most clearly,
and one in which courage and cowardice both are revealed:
for the coward's complexion will always keep changing hue,
his inner thoughts never are calm, won't let him sit still, 280
he shifts from ham to ham, puts his weight on either foot,
and his heart goes thump thump in his breast as he thinks
about the death-spirits, and his teeth begin to chatter;
but the brave man's complexion's unchanging, nor is he overly
scared when he first takes his place in a warriors' ambush, 285
but prays for a speedy entry to the grievous conflict—
not even then would your power, your strong hands come in
question!

For if you were shot, or struck, in the course of the struggle,
not on the nape of your neck would the blow fall, or your back,
but rather would make its mark on your chest or nether belly 290
as you pressed on among the foremost to grapple the foe

like a lover! But come, let's not loiter here, chattering
as though we were children: that's to invite a rebuke.
Off with you to the hut now, pick up that hefty spear."

So he spoke, and Mērionēs, swift Arēs' equal, 295
speedily fetched from the hut a new bronze spear,
and followed Idomeneus, his mind firmly set on battle.

Just as Arēs the killer goes about looking for war,
with his dear son Panic Rout, the mighty and fearless,
who sends even the sturdiest warrior fleeing in terror, 300
and they arm themselves and go from Thrace to the Ephyroi
or the great-hearted Phlegyes, yet never listen
to both sides, but just hand out glory to one or the other—
so Mērionēs and Idomeneus, leaders of men,
went out to the war, both armored in gleaming bronze. 305

It was Mērionēs who first addressed his companion:
"Son of Deukaliōn, where do you want to join the main body?
At the far right wing of the army, or in the middle?
Or out on the left—since I figure there's nowhere else
that the long-haired Achaians will fall so short in the struggle." 310

To him then Idomeneus, leader of Krētans, replied:
"At the ships in the center there are others to mount a defense:
the two Aiases, and Teukros, who's the best among the Achaians
in bowmanship—no slouch, either, at hand-to-hand combat!
These will give Priam's son Hektōr his fill of warfare, 315
however avid he is for it, never mind his mighty strength!
A hard climb he'll have, with all his fighting passion,
to vanquish the strength of their irresistible hands
and set fire to the fleet—unless the son of Kronos himself
should hurl a blazing torch there, in among the swift ships! 320
But great Aias, son of Telamōn, would yield to no mere man,
any person who's mortal, who eats Dēmētēr's grain,
who can be broken apart by the bronze or by great rocks:
not even to Achilles, the rank-breaker, would he submit
in a stand-up fight—though at running Achilles has no rivals. 325
So, yes, on to the army's left, and we'll know soon enough
whether we'll win ourselves glory or yield it to others."

So he spoke, and Mērionēs, the equal of swift Arēs,
led on, until they reached the troops where he'd commanded.

When the Trojans saw Idomeneus, of flame-like prowess, 330
 and with him his henchman in his fine-wrought armor,
 they passed the word down the line and all went at him,
 and a general struggle took place around the vessels' sterns.
 The way that whining gales can generate wind-gusts galore
 on a day when the dust lies thickest along the roads, 335
 and all together stir up an enormous dust cloud,
 just so their battle was joined, and they were urgent at heart
 in the throng to cut down each other with the keen-edged bronze.

The battle that's death to mortals bristled with lengthy
 spears, that they used to rip flesh with, and eyes were blinded 340
 by the bronze radiance from those burnished helmets
 and newly buffed corselets and brightly shining shields
 as they clashed in their masses. Hardhearted would that man be
 who, seeing this scene, experienced joy, not grief.

Opposed in purpose, Kronos's two mighty sons 345
 were fashioning miserable troubles for these warrior heroes:
 Zeus sought victory for Hektōr and the Trojans,
 to honor swift-footed Achilles; yet no way did he
 want the Achaian army wiped out before Ilion,
 wished only to honor Thetis and her stronghearted son. 350
 But Poseidōn had joined the Argives, was urging them on—
 risen secretly from the grey sea—deeply distressed
 at their rout by the Trojans, and in a furious temper with Zeus.
 Nevertheless, though they shared the same ancestry and father,
 Zeus was the elder brother, had more knowledge, 355
 and so Poseidōn avoided providing open support,
 but kept stirring up Argive troops, while disguised as a man.
 So these two drew tight the cords of strong strife and common war
 over both sides, to and fro, made a knot that could be neither
 untied nor broken, but would unstring the knees of many. 360

Now, despite his grey hairs, Idomeneus rallied the Danaāns,
 and charging among the Trojans, turned them to flight,
 for he cut down Othryoneus, from Kabēsos, a guest in Troy
 lately arrived, brought there by report of the war,
 who'd asked to marry the fairest of Priam's daughters, 365
 Kassandrē: offered no bride-price, but made a grandiose promise,
 that he'd force the Achaians' sons, against their will, from Troy;

and the aged Priam assented, bent his head in agreement
 to give him the girl; he trusted the promise, went to war.
 But Idomeneus aimed at him with his gleaming spear 370
 as he high-stepped forward: threw, and struck home. His bronze
 corselet failed to protect him, the spear lodged in his mid-belly.
 He fell with a thud, and Idomeneus boasted over him, saying:
 “Othryoneus, I must compliment you above all mankind,
 if it’s true that you’re going to accomplish all that you promised 375
 to Dardanos’s scion Priam! He promised you his daughter,
 and we too would make the same promise, and fulfill it—
 would give you the son of Atreus’s loveliest daughter,
 bring her here from Argos for you to wed, if you’d join us
 in sacking the populous city of Ilion! So, come along, 380
 here by the seafaring ships we’ll work out our agreement
 over the marriage—and no, we’re not fussy about the bride-price.”

So saying, the hero Idomeneus dragged Othryoneus out
 through the crush of battle, but Asios came to the rescue,
 on foot, ahead of his horses—their breath kept right on his shoulders 385
 by the charioteer, his henchman—eager to take a shot at
 Idomeneus, but he threw first, hit Asios with his spear
 in the throat, under the chin, driving the bronze right through;
 and he fell as falls an oak or white poplar, or a lofty
 pine tree that up in the mountains shipwrights fell 390
 with their newly sharpened axes to serve as a ship timber:
 so there in front of his horses and chariot Asios lay
 stretched out, screaming, hands clutching the bloody dust,
 while his charioteer, scared out of the wits that he had before,
 dared not wheel his team round, and so escape 395
 the hands of the enemy. Steadfast Antilochos took
 aim, hit him squarely. The corselet of bronze that he wore
 failed to protect him, the spear lodged in his mid-belly,
 and gasping for breath he slumped from his well-built chariot,
 while his horses Antilochos, great-hearted Nestōr’s son, 400
 drove off, away from the Trojans to the well-greaved Achaians.

Now Deïphobos came right up close to Idomeneus,
 grieving for Asios, took a shot with his gleaming spear,
 but Idomeneus, on the lookout, ducked the bronze-pointed shaft,
 took cover behind the well-balanced shield he bore, 405
 fashioned from circles of oxhide and glinting bronze,

and well-equipped with two cross-bars. Beneath this shield
 he crouched, and the bronze spear flew over and past him,
 harshly scraping the shield's rim. Yet not in vain
 had Deïphobos launched it from his brawny hand: 410
 Hippiasos's son Hypsēnōr, shepherd of men, it struck
 in the liver below his midriff, and at once unstrung his knees;
 and Deïphobos shouted aloud, vaunted terribly over him:
 "Not unavenged does Asios lie now: no, I declare,
 though he's going to the house of Hādēs, mighty gate-guardian, 415
 he'll rejoice at heart, since I've furnished him with an escort!"

So he spoke: and grief stirred the Argives at his boasting,
 but roused most passion in warlike Antilochos's heart:
 yet despite his sorrow he wasn't unmindful of his comrade,
 but ran up and stood over him, protecting him with his shield, 420
 while two other trusty comrades—Echios's son Mēkisteus
 and noble Alastōr—stooped and lifted him up,
 and carried him, groaning deeply, back to the hollow ships.

Idomeneus never slackened his raging attack, kept up
 his drive either to shroud some Trojan in black night, 425
 or to fall himself, while keeping disaster from the Achaians.
 Next, the dear son of Aisyētēs, Zeus's nursling,
 the hero Alkathōös—son-in-law to Anchīsēs,
 having married his eldest daughter, Hippodameia,
 whom her father and lady mother cherished in their house 430
 since she excelled all other girls of her age
 in beauty and wit and fine handiwork, this being why
 the man she wed was the best in all broad Troy—
 him, by Idomeneus's hand, Poseidōn laid low,
 holding his bright eyes spellbound, shackled his glorious limbs, 435
 so he could neither flee backwards nor dodge aside,
 but stood, like a pillar or some high leafy tree,
 motionless, while he was run through in mid-chest
 by the hero Idomeneus's spear. It tore clean through the bronze
 corselet, that hitherto had kept death from his flesh, 440
 but now rasped harshly around the rending spear.
 He fell with a thud, the spear lodged firm in his heart,
 which, beating still, sent vibration out to the spear's
 butt-end; then at last mighty Arēs stopped its force.
 Idomeneus shouted aloud, vaunted terribly over him: 445

“Deïphobos, now perhaps we can call it fair recompense—
 the way you boast—three killed in exchange for one?
 Crazy man, now stand up against me yourself, and learn
 how I’m descended from Zeus, I who have voyaged here:
 first Zeus begot Mīnōs to be Krētē’s guardian; then 450
 Mīnōs in turn sired a son, the peerless Deukaliōn,
 and Deukaliōn fathered me, to be lord over many warriors
 in spacious Krētē; and now the ships have brought me to Troy
 to make trouble for you, and your father, and the Trojans generally.”

So he spoke. Deïphobos pondered, mind uncertain: 455
 should he seek out a comrade from the great-hearted Trojans,
 withdrawing to do so, or make trial of Idomeneus on his own?
 And to him, on reflection, this seemed the better course:
 to go and look for Aineias. He found him standing idle
 on the far side of the action, still resentful of noble Priam, 460
 who would accord him no honor, good warrior though he was.⁴
 Deïphobos now came up and addressed him with winged words:
 “Aineias, the Trojans’ counselor, there is sore need for you
 to rescue your brother-in-law—if the loss of kin can move you!
 Come with me and rescue Alkathōōs, who, long years ago, 465
 as your sister’s husband, kept you as a child in his house:
 he’s been killed by Idomeneus, the famous spearman.”⁵

So he spoke, and aroused the spirit in the breast of Aineias,
 who charged straight at Idomeneus, mind set on battle.
 Idomeneus was not seized by panic, like some youngster, 470
 but waited, as when a boar in the mountains, trusting his strength,
 awaits the huge pack of men that’s coming against him
 at a lonely spot: he pricks up the bristles along his back,
 his eyes blaze with fire, he whets his tusks, makes ready
 to fight off, zestfully, attacks from both dogs and hunters— 475
 so Idomeneus, famous spearman, awaiting Aineias’s charge,
 did not back off, but rather called out to his comrades,
 looking round at Askalaphos, Dēïpyros, and Aphareus,
 Mērionēs and Antilochos, lords of the battle cry,

4. There was a traditional rivalry between Priam’s and Anchīsēs’ branches of the royal house of Troy for the kingship: see also 20.178–86, 302–6; Janko 106; A. T. Murray 2: 37n1.

5. This may sound a rather odd appeal, until we recall that, both in Homer’s day and later, giving a corpse proper burial rites, at home, was essential to ensure that the dead man’s spirit was not condemned to wander in limbo. See Vermeule, 11–12.

to whom he addressed now winged words of exhortation: 480

“Come help me, friends! I’m alone, and terribly afraid
of swift-footed Aineias, now advancing to attack me—
very strong he is, very good at killing men in battle,
and he’s in the flower of youth, when a man’s strength is greatest.
Were we in our present mood, but of a like age, 485
then straightway either he or I would win a great victory.”

So he spoke, and they all, with a single end in mind,
came and stood round him, shields settled on their shoulders.
On the other side Aineias called out to his own comrades,
looking round at Deïphobos, Paris, and the noble Agēnōr, 490
leaders with him of the Trojans. Arrayed in their rear
there followed a mass of troops: as sheep will trail a ram
to water from feeding place, and the shepherd’s glad at heart—
so the heart in Aineias’s breast rejoiced at the sight
of these massed troops that were following on behind him. 495

So over Alkathōös they went at it hand to hand
with their long spears: the bronze girding their chests
rang loudly with thrusts made to and fro in the turmoil
one at another. Two men, fighters skilled above the rest,
Idomeneus and Aineias, both equals of Arēs, hungered 500
to cut up each other’s flesh with the pitiless bronze:
Aineias had the first shot, let fly at Idomeneus,
who, watching carefully, avoided the bronze spear,
and Aineias’s shaft ended quivering, stuck point first
deep in the ground, flung in vain from his sturdy hand. 505

But Idomeneus hit Oinomāos square in the mid-belly,
broke the plate of his corslet, so that his guts spilled out
through the bronze: in the dust he fell, hand clawing the earth,
and Idomeneus from his corpse pulled the far-shadowing
spear, yet could not also strip the splendid battle gear 510
from off his shoulders, so hard-pressed he was by missiles;
for his leg joints no longer were steady when he ran,
wouldn’t let him retrieve his own spear, or dodge another’s.
So in close combat he stood off his pitiless death-day,
but his feet could no longer hurry him out of the fighting, 515
and as, step by step, he backed off, Deïphobos—who’d long nursed
an undying grudge against him—let fly his gleaming spear
but missed him once more, and instead hit Askalaphos,

Enyalios's son: through his shoulder the mighty spear
drove: in the dust he fell, hand clawing the earth. 520
(As yet mighty loud-voiced Arēs knew nothing about
the fall of his son⁶ in the relentless grind of battle;
he sat on the heights of Olympos, beneath the golden clouds,
kept there by the will of Zeus, like all the other
immortal gods, well away from the war and the fighting.) 525

Now over Askalaphos they battled hand to hand.
Deïphobos tore loose from the corpse his gleaming
helmet, but Mērionēs, swift Arēs' equal,
sprang at him, jabbed his arm with his spear. From his hand
the visored headpiece fell, clanged as it hit the ground, 530
and Mērionēs, like a vulture, pounced once more,
pulled out his mighty spear from Deïphobos's arm,
then backed off to rejoin his companions, while Polītēs,
Deïphobos's brother, one arm around his waist,
led him out of warfare's grim clamor, till he reached 535
the swift horses awaiting him, out back behind the fighting,
that stood there along with their driver and their inlaid chariot.
These bore him away to the city, groaning deeply, in great pain,
the blood still dripping down from his newly wounded arm.

But the rest fought on, and a clamor unquenchable went up. 540
Aineias now went for Aphareus, Kalētōr's son,
as he turned to face him, drove a sharp spear into his throat;
and his head lolled to one side, and his shield fell on him,
his helmet too; death, the life-queller, was shed about him.
Then Antilochos, seizing his chance, as Thoön turned away 545
pounced and stabbed him, completely severed the vein
that runs the length of the back till it reaches the neck:⁷
this he severed completely, and Thoön slumped down
on his back in the dust, stretching out both hands to his comrades.
Antilochos crouched, started stripping the gear off his shoulders, 550
but kept an eye out, for the Trojans were all around him,
taking shots at his broad bright shield; yet they could not get through

6. Though Arēs and Enyalios were originally different war gods, their identities tended, as here, to merge: the second becomes no more than a mere epithet attached to the first at 17.211 below.

7. There is in fact no such vein, but the idea of it was widespread in antiquity, supposedly either running close to the spine, or, sometimes, in the spinal column itself.

to mar with their pitiless bronze Antilochos's soft flesh,
 since Poseidōn, the Earth-Shaker, protected Nestōr's son 555
 too closely, even amid a shower of missiles—
 for Antilochos never lacked enemies. He kept turning about
 amongst them, nor was his spear ever still, but always
 poised, brandished, while he debated in his mind
 whether to throw from a distance or close in hand to hand.
 His sighting for shots down the ranks was not lost on Adamas, 560
 Asios's son, who struck his shield with the pitiless bronze,
 squarely, up close. But his spear point was robbed of its force
 by dark-maned Poseidōn, who grudged it his favorite's life:
 half the spear, like a charred stake, stayed stuck fast
 in Antilochos's shield; the other half lay on the ground, 565
 and Adamas backed away to his comrades, avoiding fate.
 But Mērionēs followed after him, speared him midway
 between navel and genitals, the place where a battle-wound
 inflicts on wretched mortals the sharpest pain of all.
 Here he thrust in his spear, and Adamas, flung forward, 570
 convulsed on the spike, like an ox that herdsmen in the mountains
 have bound with ropes and are dragging off against its will:
 so he, when hit, convulsed for a little, but not for long,
 till the hero Mērionēs came up and tore the spear
 out of his flesh, and darkness shrouded his eyes. 575

Then Helenos at close quarters hit Dēipyros on the temple
 with a great Thracian sword, and ripped off his helmet.
 Torn from his head it dropped groundwards, and an Achaian
 scooped it up as it rolled among the fighters' feet,
 and night's darkness fell on Dēipyros, shrouding his eyes. 580

This grieved Atreus's son Menelaös, of the fine war cry:
 out he strode, with loud threats for heroic prince Helenos,
 and waving his sharp spear. But Helenos drew his bow,
 and they both let fly together, the one with his sharp spear,
 the other with an arrow sped from the bowstring. 585
 Priam's son hit Menelaös in the chest with his arrow,
 on the plate of his corselet, and off it the bitter arrow glanced.
 Just as off a broad shovel on a big threshing-floor
 the dark-hued beans or chickpeas fly through the air
 before the shrill storm blast and the sweep of the winnower, 590
 in such wise from the corselet of glorious Menelaös

the bitter arrow glanced off, and flew wide of the mark.
 But Atreus's son Menelaös, of the fine war cry, threw
 and hit Helenos in the hand that held his well-polished bow.
 Through his hand into the bow the bronze spear was driven; 595
 he backed off to rejoin his comrades, avoiding fate,
 hand inert at his side, the ash spear dragging behind it,
 and great-hearted Agēnōr drew the spear from his hand,
 and closed the wound with a length of twisted wool,
 a sling, that his henchman, the people's shepherd, kept for him. 600

Next Peisandros went straight for glorious Menelaös;
 but an ill fate was leading him to the end that's death,
 to be brought down by you, Menelaös, in the grim conflict.
 When in their advance they'd drawn close, the one to the other,
 the son of Atreus missed, his spear flew wide, 605
 and Peisandros hit on the shield of glorious Menelaös,
 yet could not manage to drive the bronze clean through,
 for the broad shield stopped it, his spear broke off at the socket.
 Even so he was cheerful at heart, looked for a victory,
 but Atreus's son drew his silver-studded sword, 610
 and sprang at Peisandros, who, from behind his shield,
 brought out a fine bronze axe on a haft of olive wood,
 long and well-polished. Each attacked at the same moment:
 Peisandros caught Menelaös on his helmet's central strip,
 at the top, by the horsehair crest; but Menelaös hit him 615
 as he came, in the forehead above the bridge of his nose.
 Bone crunched, both bloody eyeballs fell in the dust at his feet,
 he crumpled and fell. Menelaös set one foot on his breast,
 stripped off his armor, and boasted over him: "This
 is how you'll all leave the ships of the swift-colted Danaäns, 620
 you arrogant Trojans, never sated with war's dread clamor,
 who have no lack of other shaming or wrongful acts
 that you've done against me, foul dogs, no fear in your hearts
 of the harsh wrath of thundering Zeus, guest-friendship's lord,
 who in time to come will lay your high city low: 625
 for my wedded wife it was, and a load of my possessions,
 that you wantonly sailed away with, after being entertained
 in her home—and now, again, among our seafaring ships
 you're minded to fling fatal fire, to kill Achaian heroes!
 But you'll be stopped short, however hot you are for fighting! 630

Zeus, Father, they claim that in wisdom you beat all others,
 both men and gods—yet all these things happen through you,
 such as now, when you're favoring the arrogant wrongdoers,
 these Trojans, whose power's forever outrageous, who cannot
 ever glut their urge for the clamor of common warfare. 635
 All things attain their satiety: sleep and love,
 sweet song and the blameless dance—these are the things
 of which any man would, most happily, get his fill
 rather than war; but these Trojans are insatiate of battle.”

So saying, having stripped from its flesh the bloodied armor, 640
 and given it to his comrades, Menelaös the blameless
 himself went back again, mixed with the front-line fighters.
 Then there sprang out against him king Pylaimenēs' son,
 Harpaliön: he'd come with his father to Troy to join
 the fighting, but never returned to the land of his birth. He now 645
 came close, scored a clear hit on the son of Atreus's shield,
 yet could not manage to drive the bronze clean through,
 and backed off to rejoin his comrades, avoiding fate,
 glancing all round, lest someone should wound him with the bronze.
 But as he went, Mērionēs let fly a bronze-tipped arrow 650
 that hit him on the right buttock. The shaft passed through
 along the line of the bladder, under the bone. He sank,
 sat where he was, and in the arms of his comrades
 breathed out his life, and like a worm lay stretched
 there on the ground: his dark blood ran, soaked the earth. 655
 The great-hearted Paphlagōnians attended to him,
 lifted him into a chariot, bore him to sacred Ilion,
 lamenting; and with them went his father, shedding tears—
 but no blood-price was ever paid for his dead son.

His killing left Paris incensed beyond measure, since he— 660
 out of so many Paphlagōnians—had at one time been his host.
 Angered on his behalf, Paris flighted a bronze-tipped arrow.
 There was a man named Euchēnōr, the seer Polyidos's son,
 rich, a fine warrior, who made his home in Korinthos.
 He'd shipped out well aware of his baneful death-spirit, 665
 since often told by his father, the virtuous Polyidos,
 that he'd either perish at home of some fatal disease,
 or else be slain by the Trojans among the Achaians' ships.

This way he avoided both a heavy Achaian fine⁸
 and the loathsome disease, suffered no grief at heart. 670
 Him Paris hit under the ear and jaw: swiftly the breath
 of life fled from his limbs, and hateful darkness claimed him.

So these fought on in the likeness of blazing fire:
 But Hektōr, so dear to Zeus, had not heard, was quite unaware
 that out to the left of the ships his men were being slaughtered 675
 by the Argives: soon great glory would have been the Achaians' lot,
 such a force was the Earth-Shaker, Earth-Enfolder
 now urging the Argives on, and himself also aiding them.
 Where Hektōr had first made his charge at gates and wall,
 breaking the serried ranks of the Danaän shield men, 680
 around the ships of Aias and Prōtesilaös,
 drawn up along the shore of the grey sea, where beyond them
 the wall was built lowest—it was here that those warriors
 fighting with chariots and horses now showed the strongest.
 Here troops from Boiōtia, robe-trailing Ionians, 685
 men of Lokris and Phthiē, illustrious Epeians,
 strove hard to repel the attack on the ships, yet could not
 fend off from themselves noble Hektōr, so like a flame,
 not even the picked Athenians—whose leader was
 Peteōs's son Menestheus, accompanied by men 690
 such as Stichios, Pheidias, strong Bias; while the Epeians
 were led by Phyleus's son Megēs, by Amphión, Drakios,
 and Medōn and staunch Podarkēs headed the Phthians—
 one of these, Medōn, a bastard of godlike Oileus
 and brother to Aias, nevertheless lived far away 695
 from his native land, in Phylakē, after killing a man, a kinsman
 of his stepmother Eriōpis, wife to Oileus. The other,
 Podarkēs, was Iphiklos's son and grandson of Phylakos.
 These, in their armor, headed the great-hearted Phthians,
 who, with the Boiōtians, were fighting to save the ships. 700
 Now Aias, Oileus's swift son, would no more stand apart
 from Aias the son of Telamōn, not for one instant,

8. Apparently a payment required to purchase exemption from military service: see 23.296–99, where Echépōlos bribes Agamemnōn with a mare in order to continue the uninterrupted enjoyment of his wealth at home. Buying or bribing your way out of going to war has a long and widespread history: in neither case here, interestingly, does the narrator indicate overt disapproval.

but as in a fallow field two wine-hued oxen
 both strain with one accord at the jointed plow,
 while round the base of their horns sweat breaks, and trickles, 705
 and only the polished yoke keeps the two apart
 as they force on down the furrow, plow to the field's edge:
 just so did both Aiasēs stand, together, side by side,
 and after Telamōn's son there followed a mass of valiant
 soldiers, his comrades, relieving him of his shield 710
 whenever sweat and exhaustion took over his limbs.
 But the Lokrians did not follow with Oīleus's great-hearted son,
 for their hearts were not in close-quarter fighting, seeing
 they'd arrived with neither bronze horsehair-crested helmets,
 nor trimly rounded shields, nor ash-wood spears; 715
 it was trusting their bows, their slings of braided sheep's wool
 that they'd followed him here, to Ilion, and using these,
 shooting thick and fast, that they'd tried to break the Trojans' ranks.
 So the ones with their fine-wrought war gear, out in front,
 fought against the Trojans and bronze-armored Hektōr, 720
 while the others, behind, kept shooting from cover: the Trojans
 lost their taste for the fight, upset by this shower of arrows.

In sad disarray, then, thrust back from the ships and the huts,
 would the Trojans have retreated to windy Ilion, had not
 Poulydamas gone to bold Hektōr, and, standing beside him, said: 725
 "Hektōr, there's no way to persuade you through argument!
 In your god-given knowledge of warfare you have no rival,
 but that makes you also want to outshine others in counsel.
 Never will you be able to master all things yourself:
 on one man heaven bestows expertise in warfare, 730
 on another in dancing, or in singing and playing the lyre,
 while in yet another man's breast far-seeing Zeus implants
 a clever mind, from which many people get benefit,
 and many he saves, but he knows it most clearly himself.
 Anyway I will declare what seems to me to be best: 735
 All round you now there blazes a ring of warfare,
 and the great-hearted Trojans, now they've surmounted the wall,
 are some of them standing by with their gear, while others
 fight on, few against many, scattered among the ships.
 I say pull back now, summon here all the leaders, 740
 then let's debate every single suggestion—should we

make our assault on the many-benched ships, if maybe
 some god is willing us victory, or rather retreat
 unscathed from those ships hereafter? For my own part,
 I fear the Achaians may pay back yesterday's debt, 745
 since beside the ships there lingers a war-obsessed man
 who will not, I think, much longer hold off from battle."

So spoke Poulydamas: his shrewd advice pleased Hektōr,
 who at once sprang, fully armed, from his chariot to the ground,
 and then addressed him, speaking in winged words: 750
 "Poulydamas, while you're assembling all the leaders here
 I shall go up to the front, take a close look at the fighting,
 and come straight back, when I've given them my full orders."

So he spoke, and at once set off, like some snowclad mountain,⁹
 shouting, and sped through the ranks of the Trojans and their allies, 755
 who all rallied to Pánthoös's son, hospitable Poulydamas,
 when they heard the voice of Hektōr. But he meanwhile
 went in search of Deïphobos, and the mighty prince Helenos,
 and Adamas son of Asios, and Asios, Hyrtakos's son,
 ranging among the front-line fighters in his quest. 760
 But he found them no longer unscathed or disaster-free:
 some lay dead by the sterns of the Achaian ships,
 who'd lost their lives at the hands of the Argives; others
 were inside the wall, all wounded, either shot or cut up. However,
 there was one he soon found, to the left of the tearful battle: 765
 the godlike Aléxandros, husband of fair-haired Helen,
 cheering his comrades on and urging them to fight,
 and he went and stood close and addressed him in shaming words:
 "Wretched Paris, so handsome, so mad for women, seducer,
 where is Deïphobos, tell me? or the mighty prince Helenos? 770
 Or Adamas son of Asios, or Asios, Hyrtakos's son?
 Yes, and Othryoneus? Now the whole of steep Ilion's
 on the brink of disaster, now sheer destruction's certain—"

Then Aléxandros the godlike made him this response:
 "Hektōr, since your mind-set is to blame the blameless, 775

9. It is hard not to be brought up short by this image. We are here being asked to consider not only Hektōr's hugeness, but also his speed (and perhaps the dazzle of his armor). Despite scholarly support, the metaphor remains disconcerting. Mountains neither move (at any speed) nor do they shout. Yes, Homer sometimes nods.

at other times indeed I may have thought of withdrawing
 from battle, but not now: I wasn't born wholly a weakling.
 From the moment you roused your comrades to fight beside
 the ships,
 we've been engaged here nonstop against the Danaäns!
 As for the comrades you're asking after, they're dead— 780
 all but two: Deïphobos and the mighty prince Helenos,
 and they've both left the field, both with arm wounds inflicted
 by long spears, though Kronos's son saved them from death.
 So now lead on, wherever your heart and spirit tell you,
 and we'll follow you gladly, nor do I think you'll find us 785
 in any way lacking in valor, while we still have strength:
 but beyond their strength none can fight, however eager."

With these words the hero persuaded his brother's mind,
 and they went where the uproar of battle was most intense,
 all around Kebrionēs and the peerless Poulydamas, 790
 Phalkēs and Orthaios and godlike Polyphētēs,
 Palmys, Askanios, and Morys, Hippotīōn's son,
 who'd arrived from rich-soiled Askania as reliefs
 the morning before, and now Zeus stirred their fighting spirit.
 They came on as strong as the blast of threatening winds 795
 that beneath the thunder of Zeus, the Father, scours the plain,
 its wondrous clamor confused with the sea's roar, and in the mix
 wave after boiling wave of the thunderous ocean,
 arching high, foam-flecked, some ahead, others behind—
 so the Trojans, in order, some ahead, others behind, 800
 gleaming in bronze, now followed behind their leaders.
 Hektōr was their commander—a match for Arēs the killer,
 this son of Priam; before him he bore his balanced shield,
 with its close-packed hides, on which abundant bronze
 was layered, and, set round his temples, his shining helmet bobbed 805
 as this way and that he strode, making trial of the ranks,
 finding out if they'd shrink before him as he came on under his shield;
 but no way could he daunt the spirit in the Achaians' breasts,
 and Aias challenged him first, advancing with long-legged strides:
 "Hey, crazy, come closer! Why are you uselessly trying 810
 to scare the Argives? We're no beginners in warfare—
 it was through the vile scourge of Zeus that we Achaians were beaten!
 In your heart, at a guess, you're expecting to despoil

our ships, but we too have strong hands to defend them!
Before that day, indeed, this populous city of yours 815
may well be taken, laid waste beneath our hands—
and as for yourself, I declare that day near when you
will pray, in flight, to Zeus the Father and other immortals
to make your fine-maned horses swifter than falcons
as they carry you citywards, raising dust-clouds over the plain!” 820

As he spoke thus, a bird flew across on the right,
a high-soaring eagle: the Achaian troops raised a cheer,
made bold by the omen. But illustrious Hektōr replied:
“Aias, you bumbling speaker, you braggart, what mere stuff
your words are! I wish I were the son of Zeus of the aegis 825
all my days, and it was the lady Hērē who bore me,
and I was honored as are Athēnē and Apollo,
as surely as this day is bringing disaster to the Argives,
every last one, and amongst them you too will die, if you dare
await my long spear, that will tear your lily-white skin, 830
and you’ll glut the Trojans’ dogs, and their birds of prey
with your fat and flesh, after you fall beside the Achaians’ ships!”

So saying, he led on, and they followed on after him
with a deafening clamor, and the troops behind them cheered.
The Argives facing them shouted in answer, did not forget 835
their valor, stood firm as the Trojan leaders advanced:
both sides’ clamor went up the high sky to Zeus’s glory.