Scene 1

*The Battlefield. Men only*

Aeneas and Pandarus vs Diomedes and Sthenelus

*Iliad 5*

HOMER. Gleaming-eyed Athene departed. Diomedes went back to join the fighters in the front rank [134]

Aeneas saw him mowing down men and set out among the flying spears to look for Pandarus. [168]

He found the mighty son of Lycaon, and stood before him and spoke: [170]

AENEAS. Pandarus, where are your bow and winged arrows? Where is your fame? You are the best archer in this land or the whole of Lycia. [173]

Now, pray to Zeus and let fly an arrow at that man, who has done Troy such harm and killed so many noble men — [176]

unless he is a god, with a grievance against Troy: the anger of a god is dangerous to men. [178]

PANDARUS. Aeneas, counsellor of the Trojans, he looks to me like Diomedes, judging by his shield, crested helmet and horses. [183]

My arrow struck him just now, piercing his armour on the right shoulder. I thought I’d sent him straight to Hades, but I failed. Surely some god is angry. [191]

It was an ill day when I took my bow from its peg and led my men to Troy as a favour to Hector. [211]

If ever I see wife and home again may some stranger cut my head off
if I do not break this bow and burn it,  
useless as it is.  [216]

AENEAS. Don’t say that. Nothing will improve  
till we two, with horses and chariot,  
face that man and challenge him.  [220]

Come, climb on to my chariot and see  
what sort of horses Troy breeds, how they race  
over the plain, in pursuit or flight.  
They’ll bring us safely to the city,  
if Zeus still favours Diomedes.  [225]

Come, you take the whip and the reins, and I’ll  
get down to fight; or you wait for that man  
and I’ll see to the horses.  [228]

PANDARUS. Keep the reins, drive your horses yourself,  
they’ll go better for the charioteer they know  
if we have to flee from Diomedes.  
I’ll engage that man with my spear.  [238]

HOMER. With these words they mounted the chariot  
and drove the horses at Diomedes.  
Sthenelus saw them coming and warned him.  [242]

STHENELUS. Diomedes, I see two mighty warriors  
eager to attack you. Pandarus,  
a great archer, proud son of Lycaon,  
and Anchises’ son Aeneas,  
whose mother is Aphrodite.  [248]

Let’s get away in our chariot, please don’t  
risk your life in the front rank.  [250]

DIOMEDES. No talk of flight! You won’t persuade me!  
I’ll not mount a chariot, but meet them  
on foot: Athene forbids me to flee.  [256]

Their swift horses will not get both of them away,  
even if one of them escapes.  [258]

And something else I’ll tell you:  
remember, rush at Aeneas’ horses,  
drive them towards the Greeks. To capture  
those horses would bring us great fame.  [273]
HOMER. They spoke, and the two Trojans came up with their swift horses; Pandarus called out:

PANDARUS. Mighty Diomedes, my arrows failed to kill you. Now I'll try you with my spear, and see if I can hit you. [279]

HOMER. With that he poised and threw his spear which pierced Diomedes’ shield and struck his corselet. Pandarus cried out: [283]

PANDARUS. You are hit through the belly, you’ll soon be dead. You have won me great fame. [285]

DIOMEDES. No! You missed. But soon one of you two will fall and glut Ares with his blood. [289]

HOMER. He hurled his spear and Athene guided it to pierce his face and come out under his chin. [293]

Pandarus fell from the chariot, bright armour clanging; the horses shied and his life and strength fled. [296]

Aeneas leapt down with shield and spear, fearful the Greeks might drag the body off. He stood over him, bold as a lion, eager to kill any man who came to seize the corpse, and gave a fierce war-cry. [302]

Diomedes seized a heavy rock, so big that two men of today could not lift it, but he threw it with ease. He struck Aeneas on the hip joint. [305]

The warrior fell to one knee, his strong hand braced on the ground. Darkness covered his eyes. [310]

Scene 2

*The Battlefield. Man and Gods*  
**Diomedes vs Aphrodite and Apollo**  
*that moment when, in madness, I attacked a goddess*
HOMER. Aeneas would have died, but his mother
Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, saw him. [313]

She flung her arms round her son
and sheltered him with her robe
lest any Greek hurl a spear and kill him,
and began to carry him from the field. [318]

Diomedes pursued her, knowing she was weak,
not a warrior goddess, like Athene
or Enyo, destroyer of cities. [333]

When he caught up with her he struck her
with his spear, and cut her soft hand. [337]

The point went through her robe, and pierced her wrist:
out flowed her immortal blood, the ichor
which flows in the veins of gods. [340]

She let fall her son with a great cry
and Apollo caught him in a dark cloud. [345]

Diomedes shouted after her:
DIOMEDES. Daughter of Zeus, keep away from warfare!
Isn’t it enough to fool weak women? [349]

If you will meddle with war, then even
hearing about it will terrify you. [351]

HOMER. The goddess fled, frantic with pain,
and wind-swift Iris led her away,
her flesh darkened by the wound. [354]

Diomedes charged at Aeneas; he knew
Apollo’s hand was over him, but was still
eager to kill him and strip off his armour. [435]

Three times he charged, and three times Apollo
beat back his gleaming shield.
But when he charged a fourth time
Apollo cried in a terrible voice: [439]
APOLLO. Think, Diomedes, draw back! Do not try to match the gods! The deathless gods and mortal men are not of one race. [442]

HOMER. Diomedes drew back a little to escape the anger of Apollo. [444]

Apollo took Aeneas to his temple on Pergamus, far from the tumult. In the great shrine Leto and Artemis healed the man and restored his glory. [448]

Scene 3

Olympus. Gods only

Aphrodite and Dione vs Hera and Athene

HOMER. Aphrodite found wrathful Ares sitting, spear propped on a cloud, with his swift horses nearby. She knelt and begged for the horses: [358]

APHRODITE. Brother dear, save me, give me your horses to go to Olympus, home of the gods. For a man wounded me, Diomedes, who would now fight even Zeus. [362]

HOMER. She spoke, and Ares gave her the horses. In pain, she climbed on to the chariot. Iris mounted too, and took the reins. [366]

Swiftly they reached lofty Olympus where Aphrodite flung herself on the knees of her mother, Dione, who clasped her daughter, caressed her, and said: [372]

DIONE. Which of the gods, dear child, has injured you, as if you’d been caught doing wrong? [374]

APHRODITE. Arrogant Diomedes stabbed me because I was carrying Aeneas, my dear son, away from the battle. [379]
For now the battle is not just between
Trojans and Greeks: the Greeks, at least,
are now fighting even with the gods. [380]

DIONE. Be brave, my child, bear your pain with patience.
Many gods have been hurt by men
while trying to hurt each other.
Athene has set that man against you. [405]

That fool Diomedes does not know
that men who fight the gods do not live long,
nor do they ever return home
to see their children prattling round them. [409]

So now Diomedes, great as he is,
should fear a stronger god than you, [411]

or fear that wise Aigialeia his wife
may wake her servants from sleep
as she mourns her husband, best of the Greeks,
Diomedes, tamer of horses. [415]

HOMER. With both hands she wiped the ichor
from the injured arm, healed it,
and the pain went away. [417]

Athene and Hera, watching, tried
to provoke Zeus with mocking words.
Athene spoke first:

ATHENE. Father Zeus, will my words anger you?
I think Aphrodite has encouraged
some Greek woman to pursue those Trojans
whom she adores. And caressing the woman,
she pricked her wrist on a gold brooch! [425]

ZEUS (to Aphrodite). War is not for you, my child; you
attend to the sweet duties of marriage.
Ares and Athene will deal with warfare. [430]
POSEIDON. Why, lord of lightning, have you called us here?  
What do you intend for Trojans and Greeks?  
For fighting is about to break out. [18]

ZEUS. Earth-shaker, you know my mind.  
These humans are my care, mortal though they be.  
Yet I shall stay here, on Olympus  
from where I shall watch for my pleasure. [23]

All of you now have my leave to descend  
among the Trojans and Greeks, and help  
whichever side you choose. [25]

HOMER. He spoke, and rekindled the never-ending battle,  
and the gods set out to join the side they favoured. [32]

Hera went to the ships with Athene,  
Poseidon and Hermes, bringer of luck,  
Hephaestus too, proud of his strength, though lame. [37]

To the Trojans went Ares, with glittering  
helmet, and with him long-haired Phoebus,  
Artemis the archer, Leto, Xanthus  
and laughter-loving Aphrodite. [40]

When the gods entered the throng,  
up leapt Strife, driver of armies,  
and Athene gave her loud war-cry,  
now from the trench outside the wall,  
now from the echoing shore. [50]

On the other side Ares, like a dark storm,  
urged the Trojans on from the citadel,  
and again, rushing along by Simois  
towards Mount Callicolone. [53]

Thus the gods spurred on the clashing armies,  
and fought among themselves.  
Then the father of gods and men  
thundered terribly from above [57]
and from below, Poseidon
shook the earth, and the mountain tops;
Mount Ida shivered,
so did Troy and the Greek ships. [60]

Struck by fear, Hades, lord of the dead,
leapt from his throne, in dread lest Poseidon
split the earth apart and reveal his house,
that dread, dank dwelling the very gods detest, [65]

for so loud was the clash of fighting gods. [66]

Against Lord Poseidon stood Apollo
with winged arrows; against Ares,
Athene; against Hera, Artemis
the archer, sister of Apollo; [71]

against Leto, strong Hermes, bringer of luck;
and against Hephaestus,
the deep-swirling river called by gods
Xanthus, but by men Scamander. [74]

Scene 5
The Battlefield. Gods and Man
Apollo and Aeneas vs Hera and Achilles

Iliad 20

HOMER. So gods met gods; but Achilles wished most
to meet with Hector, with whose blood
he longed to sate the warrior, harsh Ares. [78]

Apollo urged Aeneas to face
Achilles, and gave him strength, and then
assumed the voice of Lycaon son of Priam
and spoke to Aeneas in that guise. [82]

APOLLO (as Lycaon). Aeneas, counsellor of the Trojans,
where are your threats now? In your cups you bragged
to the Trojan princes you would fight
Achilles man to man in battle. [85]
AENEAS. Lycaon, why urge me to fight Achilles against my will?
It would not be my first encounter with swift Achilles. [90]

Once before he chased me with his spear down from Mount Ida, when he raided our herds, then sacked Lyrnessus
and Pedasus – but Zeus saved me. [93]

He made me strong and swift, or Achilles and Athene would have killed me.
She lit the way for him and urged him to kill the Leleges and Trojans. [96]

No man can face Achilles, for always some god is at his side to ward off death. [98]

His spear flies straight and never stops till it has pierced flesh. But if the gods directed war even-handedly,
he would find me hard to beat even if as he boasts, he were made all of bronze! [102]

APOLLO (as Lycaon) You too should call upon the gods, warrior.
Your mother is a daughter of Zeus while his is a lesser goddess, whose father
is Ocean, the old sea-dweller. [107]

Go straight for him with your bronze spear,
and ignore his scornful threats. [109]

HOMER. With that he breathed strength into the prince,
who strode in the front ranks, clad in bronze. [111]

Hera saw him as he went out to face Achilles: she gathered the gods and said: [114]

HERA. Consider, Poseidon and Athene, what is to happen. Aeneas goes out
against Achilles, urged by Apollo. [118]

Let us turn him back, or one of us stand by Achilles, to give him strength
and unwavering courage. [122]
He shall know that the best immortals love him
while those who till now have helped the Trojans
are worthless as the wind. [124]

We’ve all come from Olympus for this battle
so that Achilles may be safe today.
though later he must suffer what Fate
spun for him when his mother bore him. [128]

If we do not tell Achilles this,
he will take fright when a god meets him
in battle, for gods are dangerous
when they take visible form. [131]

POSEIDON. Hera, you need not be angry.
I would not wish to see gods fight gods.
Let us go aside to some look-out point
and leave the combat to men. [137]

If Ares or Apollo starts to fight
or holds Achilles back from battle
then we shall join in straight away. [141]

And soon, I think, they’ll leave the field
and go back to Olympus, to rejoin
the other gods, defeated by us. [143]

HOMER. Then the god led the way to the wall
built round the town for Heracles
by the Trojans and Pallas Athene. [147]

There sat Poseidon and his allied gods,
wrapped in a thick cloud; and opposite,
the others sat on Mount Callicolone
gathered about you, Apollo, and Ares. [152]

Scene 6
The Battlefield. Men only
Aeneas vs Achilles

Iliad 20
HOMER. The plain was full of men and horses and flashing bronze; the earth shook under their pounding feet. [158]

The two best warriors met between the armies, eager to fight: Aeneas, Anchises’ son, and great Achilles. [160]

Aeneas came forward, threatening, his heavy helmet nodding on his head, holding his shield before him, brandishing his bronze-tipped spear. [163]

Against him rushed Achilles like a lion, a hungry lion with a crowd of men, a whole town, wanting to kill him. [166]

As they neared each other, swift Achilles spoke first to Aeneas: [177]

ACHILLES. Aeneas, why have you come out to face me? Do you fight me in the hope of gaining Priam’s power among the Trojans? [181]

Priam will not yield his kingdom to you, for he has sons, and is still strong in body and mind. [183]

Or have the Trojans promised you a great estate with orchards and ploughland, if you kill me? I think you’ll find that hard to do. [186]

Once before I drove you with my spear. Remember? You were alone, I chased you at a run, away from the cattle, down the slopes of Ida. You never looked behind! [190]

You fled to Lyrnessus but I sacked it, helped by Athene and Father Zeus, and took the women captive; but you were saved by Zeus and the other gods. [194]

I don’t think they will save you today, as you suppose. Go back into the ranks and don’t challenge me, or you’ll get hurt. A fool can understand things once they happen. [198]
AENEAS. Son of Peleus, I don’t fear your words, 
as a child might: I too can jeer and curse.  [202]

We know each other’s lineage and parents,  
we’ve heard the old stories. But you  
have not seen my parents, nor I yours.  [205]

They say you are the son of Peleus  
and your mother is the sea-nymph Thetis.  
But I can boast I am Anchises’ son  
and Aphrodite is my mother.  [209]

One of these couples will mourn a son today  
for you and I will surely not leave it  
at childish banter, and give up the fight.  [212]

Zeus makes men’s courage wax or wane  
just as he pleases.  [243]

Let’s have no more of this childish talk  
here in the thick of battle. We could fill  
and sink a great ship with our insults.  [247]

The tongue of man is glib, words are many,  
there’s plenty of room for speech; whatever you say  
may be said back to you.  [250]

We two need not argue like angry women,  
in the street, hurling words at each other,  
some true, some false, for anger provokes lies.  [255]

I long for battle: you will not sway me  
with words, till we have fought man to man.  
Let’s try each other out with bronze-tipped spears.  [258]

HOMER. With that he hurled his great spear  
against the shield of the other, which rang out  
as the spear struck it.  [260]

Peleus’ son held his shield away from him,  
alarmed. But the spear did not pierce it,  
blocked by gold, the gift of a god.  [265]
Then Achilles threw his spear and struck
Aeneas’ well-balanced shield, near the rim
where bronze and oxhide were thinnest.  [276]

The spear went straight through
and the shield resounded. Aeneas crouched,
holding the shield away, afraid. The spear
went over his back and stuck in the ground.  [280]

Achilles drew his sharp sword and leapt at him
in fury, with a war-cry.  [285]

Aeneas grasped a rock, so big
that two men of today could not lift it,
but he wielded it with ease on his own.  [287]

Scene 7
The Battlefield. God and Man
Poseidon rescues Aeneas

HOMER. Aeneas would have struck him with the stone
as he charged, hitting shield or helmet;
Achilles would have killed Aeneas
with his sword —  [290]

but Earthshaker Poseidon saw,
and spoke among the gods, saying:  [292]

POSEIDON. I grieve for Aeneas who will soon go down
to the house of Hades, killed by Achilles
because like a fool he listened to Apollo,
who will not protect him now.  [296]

Why should a guiltless man suffer
for the griefs of others, though his sacrifices
please the gods who rule above?  [299]

Let us rescue him from death,
or Zeus may be angry if Achilles kills him;  [302]
for he is fated to survive, so that
the race of Dardanus should not die out,
Dardanus, the favourite son of Zeus
by a mortal woman. [305]

Zeus has come to hate the line of Priam;
and great Aeneas and his descendants
will surely be the future Trojan kings. [308]

HERA. Earth-shaker, take thought for Aeneas.
Do you wish to save him, or let him
be defeated by Achilles, brave though he be? [312]

Athene and I have sworn many oaths
not to save the Trojans even if [315]

the city burns, set alight by Greeks. [317]

HOMER. When Poseidon heard this he went
to the battle-line, to Aeneas
and great Achilles. [320]

He cast a mist over Achilles’ eyes,
drew out the spear from Aeneas’ shield
and laid it at Achilles’ feet. [324]

He lifted Aeneas and bore him high
over men and chariots till he came
to the edge of the battlefield. [329]

Then Poseidon came close and spoke: [331]

POSEIDON. Aeneas, what god urges you to the folly
of fighting Achilles? He is your better
and preferred by the gods. [334]

Draw back when you meet him, or you may die
in spite of what Fate intends. [336]

But when Achilles has met his end,
then be bold and fight in the front line [338]

for no other Greek can kill you. [339]

ΤΕΛΟΣ