Odyssey

HOMER

8th century BC

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᾽Οδύσσεια

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited



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Odyssey · Homer (8th century BC)

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INTRODUCTION

"Tell me, Muse, about the man of many turns." Ten years after the fall of Troy, Odysseus, the cleverest of the Greek heroes, still hasn't come home. On his island of Ithaca, more than a hundred young nobles are courting his wife Penelope and eating up his estate, and his son Telemachus, now grown, sets out to look for news of him.

Odysseus himself, washed up among the seafaring Phaeacians, tells the story of his wanderings: the one-eyed Cyclops, the witch Circe, a journey to the land of the dead, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis. The second half of the poem is set on Ithaca, where he arrives disguised as an old beggar, tests who has stayed loyal, and takes his revenge.

Like the Iliad, the Odyssey was composed in the eighth or seventh century BC out of a long tradition of oral song, and the Greeks attributed it to Homer. It is a poem about homecoming, hospitality and cunning—and about a marriage between two equally clever people. The translation here is in prose, passage by passage beside the Greek.

Book 1

Telemachus
The gods decide on Odysseus' return; Athena visits Telemachus in a house overrun by suitors.

1.1 Tell me, Muse, of the man of many turns, who wandered far and wide after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose minds he came to know, and many the pains he suffered in his heart upon the sea, struggling to save his own life and to win his comrades' homecoming. But even so he could not save his comrades, much as he longed to. They perished by their own reckless folly, the fools, for they devoured the cattle of Hyperion the Sun, and he took from them the day of their homecoming. Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, begin where you will, and tell us too.

1.11 By then all the others, all who had escaped sheer destruction, were at home, safe from the war and from the sea. Him alone, longing for his homecoming and for his wife, the lady nymph Calypso, bright among goddesses, held back in her hollow caves, yearning to make him her husband. But when, as the seasons rolled round, the year came in which the gods had spun the thread for him to return home to Ithaca, even there he was not free of trials, even among his own people. All the gods pitied him except Poseidon, who raged unceasingly against godlike Odysseus until he reached his own land.

1.22 But Poseidon had gone to visit the Ethiopians far away, the Ethiopians who are split in two, the farthest of men, some where Hyperion sets and some where he rises. He had gone to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams, and there he sat at the feast and

took his pleasure. The other gods, meanwhile, were gathered together in the halls of Olympian Zeus, and the father of men and gods was the first to speak among them. He was thinking in his heart of the noble Aegisthus, whom Agamemnon's son, far-famed Orestes, had killed, and with him in mind he spoke these words among the immortals:[1]

1.32 "Ah, how mortals blame the gods! They say their troubles come from us, when it is they themselves who, through their own reckless folly, suffer sorrows beyond their portion. Look at Aegisthus now. Beyond his portion he married the wedded wife of Atreus' son and killed the man on his return, though he knew it meant sheer destruction. We had warned him beforehand. We sent Hermes, keen-sighted Argeïphontes, to tell him not to kill the man and not to court his wife: 'For vengeance for the son of Atreus will come from Orestes, once he comes of age and longs for his own land.' So Hermes spoke, but for all his good intent he could not sway Aegisthus' mind. And now he has paid for everything at once."

1.44 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Father of ours, son of Cronus, highest of all who rule, that man lies in a death he richly deserved. So may anyone else perish who does such things! But my heart is torn for wise-hearted Odysseus, the ill-fated man, who has long been suffering misery far from his loved ones on a sea-girt island, where the navel of the sea is. It is a wooded island, and a goddess has her home there, the daughter of baleful Atlas, who knows the depths of every sea and himself holds up the tall pillars that keep earth and sky apart.

1.55 It is his daughter who keeps the poor man there in his grief. Always, with soft and wheedling words, she charms him, so that he will forget Ithaca. But Odysseus longs to see even the smoke leaping up from his own land, and he longs to die. And

1 Aegisthus seduced Clytemnestra, wife of Agamemnon, and murdered Agamemnon when he came home from Troy. Years later Agamemnon's son Orestes avenged him, and the poem returns again and again to this story as a pattern set against Odysseus' homecoming.

still your own heart pays no heed, Olympian. Did Odysseus not please you beside the ships of the Argives, offering sacrifices in broad Troy? Why are you so angry with him, Zeus?" Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered her: "My child, what a word has escaped the barrier of your teeth! How could I ever forget godlike Odysseus, who is beyond all mortals in mind, and beyond them too in the sacrifices he has given to the immortal gods who hold broad heaven?[2]

1.68 No, it is Poseidon the Earth-holder who is stubbornly, endlessly furious with him, on account of the Cyclops whose eye he blinded: godlike Polyphemus, whose strength is the greatest among all the Cyclopes. The nymph Thoösa bore him, daughter of Phorcys who rules over the barren sea, after she lay with Poseidon in her hollow caves. Ever since then Poseidon the Earth-shaker does not quite kill Odysseus, but drives him wandering away from his native land. But come, let all of us here plan his homecoming, how he may get back. Poseidon will let go of his anger, for he will not be able to fight alone against all the immortal gods, against their will." Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him:

1.81 "Father of ours, son of Cronus, highest of all who rule, if it truly pleases the blessed gods now that wise-minded Odysseus should come home to his own house, then let us send Hermes, the guide, Argeïphontes, to the island of Ogygia, so that he may quickly tell the nymph of the lovely hair our unerring decision: the homecoming of steadfast Odysseus, that he is to return. And I will go to Ithaca, to stir his son on all the more and put courage in his heart, so that he will call the long-haired Achaeans to an assembly and speak out against all the suitors, who keep on slaughtering his thronging sheep and his shambling, crook-horned cattle. And I will send him to Sparta and to sandy Pylos to ask about his dear father's homecoming, in case he hears something, and so that good fame among men may be his."

2 The Greek verb for "be angry with" (*ōdusao*) echoes the name Odysseus, a play on his name that the poem returns to later.

ATHENA VISITS ITHACA

Disguised as Mentes, Athena finds the suitors feasting and is welcomed by Telemachus.

1.96 So she spoke, and she bound beneath her feet her beautiful sandals, immortal and golden, which carried her over the water and over the boundless earth as swift as the gusts of the wind. She took up her mighty spear, tipped with sharp bronze, heavy, huge and strong, with which she overpowers the ranks of heroes when the daughter of the mighty father is angry with them. Down she went, darting from the peaks of Olympus, and she stood in the land of Ithaca at Odysseus' gateway, on the threshold of the courtyard, holding the bronze spear in her hand, in the likeness of a stranger, Mentes, leader of the Taphians. There she found the overbearing suitors. They were amusing themselves with board games in front of the doors, sitting on the hides of oxen they had slaughtered themselves. Heralds and busy attendants were serving them: some were mixing wine and water in the mixing bowls, others were wiping the tables with porous sponges and setting them out, and others were carving meat in plenty.[3]

1.113 Godlike Telemachus was by far the first to see her. He was sitting among the suitors, sad at heart, picturing his noble father in his mind: if only he would come from somewhere and scatter the suitors through the house, and win back his honor and rule over his own household! With these thoughts in his mind, sitting among the suitors, he caught sight of Athena. He went straight to the gateway, ashamed in his heart that a stranger should be left standing so long at the doors. Coming up close, he took her right hand and relieved her of the bronze spear, and he spoke to her winged words: "Greetings, stranger! With us you'll find a friendly welcome. Then, once you've had

3 The Taphians were a seafaring island people north-west of Ithaca; Athena takes the shape of their chief, an old friend of Odysseus' family.

your fill of supper, you can tell us what you need." So he spoke and led the way, and Pallas Athena followed.

1.126 When they were inside the lofty house, he carried the spear and stood it against a tall pillar, in a rack of polished wood, where many other spears of steadfast Odysseus stood. He led her to a chair and seated her on it, spreading a linen cloth beneath her: a beautiful chair, finely worked, with a footstool under her feet. Beside it he set an inlaid seat for himself, apart from the others, the suitors, so that the stranger, put off by the din, would not lose his appetite for the meal after coming among such arrogant men, and so that he could ask him about his absent father. A maid brought water for their hands in a beautiful golden jug and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash, and beside them she drew up a polished table. The respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, adding many dishes, giving freely of what was on hand. A carver lifted platters of all kinds of meat and set them down, and placed golden cups beside them, and a herald came to them again and again, pouring them wine.

1.144 In came the overbearing suitors. They sat down in rows on the seats and chairs, and heralds poured water over their hands, maids heaped bread beside them in baskets, and young men filled the mixing bowls to the brim with drink. They reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when the suitors had put away their desire for food and drink, their minds turned to other things, song and dance, for these are the crowning delights of a feast. A herald put a beautiful lyre into the hands of Phemius, who sang among the suitors under compulsion. He struck up on the lyre and began a fine song.

1.156 But Telemachus spoke to gray-eyed Athena, holding his head close to her so that the others would not hear: "Dear stranger, will you be offended at what I say? These men care for this sort of thing, the lyre and song—and why not, it's easy, since they're eating up another man's livelihood without paying for it, the livelihood of a man whose white bones are rotting in the

rain somewhere, lying on the mainland, or else the waves are rolling them in the sea. If they ever saw him come home to Ithaca, they would all pray to be quicker on their feet rather than richer in gold and clothes. But as it is he has perished, an evil death, and there is no comfort for us, not even if some man on earth says he will come. The day of his homecoming is lost.

1.169 But come, tell me this and give me a true account. Who are you among men, and where are you from? Where is your city, and your parents? What sort of ship did you come on? How did sailors bring you to Ithaca, and who did they claim to be? For I don't suppose you got here on foot. And tell me this truly too, so that I know it well: are you new here, or are you a guest-friend of my father's family? Many other men used to come to our house, since he too was one who went about among men." Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him in turn:[4]

1.179 "Well then, I will tell you all this quite truly. I am Mentes, I declare, son of wise-hearted Anchialus, and I rule over the oar-loving Taphians. I have just put in here with my ship and my comrades, sailing over the wine-dark sea to men of foreign speech, to Temesa, for copper, and I carry gleaming iron. My ship is moored over there by the fields, away from the town, in the harbor of Rheithron, below wooded Neion. We claim to be guest-friends of each other's families from long ago, as you'll learn if you go and ask the old man, the hero Laertes. They say he no longer comes to town, but suffers his troubles far off in the country with an old woman to serve him, who sets food and drink before him whenever weariness takes hold of his limbs as he creeps along the slope of his vineyard. 1.194 And now I have come, because they said he was home—your father, I mean. But the gods must be hindering him on his way. For godlike Odysseus is not yet dead upon the earth. He is still alive somewhere, held back on the broad sea, on a sea-girt island, and harsh, wild men have him, who must be keeping him there against his will. But now I will make you a prophecy, as the immortals put it into

4 Guest-friendship was a hereditary bond: families that had once exchanged hospitality remained bound to each other's descendants.

my heart and as I think it will come true, though I am no seer and have no sure knowledge of birds. He will not be away from his dear native land much longer, not even if bonds of iron hold him. He will find a way to return, for he is a man of many wiles.
1.206 But come, tell me this and give me a true account: are you, grown so tall, really the son of Odysseus himself? You are remarkably like him in your head and your fine eyes, for we often used to meet each other just like this, before he set off for Troy, where the other best men of the Argives went too in their hollow ships. Since then I have not seen Odysseus, nor he me." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Well then, stranger, I will tell you quite truly. My mother says I am his. But I for my part don't know: no one has ever known his own father for himself.

1.217 How I wish I were the son of some fortunate man, whom old age overtook among his own possessions! But as it is, the most ill-fated of mortal men—he is the one they say I come from, since you ask me this." Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him in turn: "Surely the gods have not made your line nameless for the future, since Penelope bore such a son as you. But come, tell me this and give me a true account: what feast is this, what gathering? What need have you of it? Is it a banquet or a wedding? It is certainly no meal where each man brings his share. How arrogantly, how outrageously they seem to me to be feasting through the house! Any man of sense who came among them would be indignant to see so many shameful things."

1.230 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Stranger, since you ask me this and question me, this house was once on its way to being wealthy and beyond reproach, as long as that man was still here among his people. But now the gods, devising evil, have willed otherwise. They have made him vanish from sight as no other man has. I would not grieve for him so, even if he were dead, had he fallen among his comrades in the land of the Trojans, or in the arms of his friends once he had wound up the war. Then all the Achaeans would have heaped up a burial

mound for him, and he would have won great glory for his son as well, in days to come.

1.241 But as it is, the Harpies have snatched him away without glory. He is gone, unseen, unheard of, and to me he has left pain and weeping. Nor is it for him alone that I groan and lament, since the gods have made other cruel troubles for me. All the nobles who hold power over the islands, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus, and all who rule over rocky Ithaca: every one of them is courting my mother and wearing away my house. She neither refuses the hateful marriage nor can bring herself to make an end of it. And they are eating away my household, and soon they'll tear me to pieces too." Then Pallas Athena, stirred to indignation, spoke to him:[5]

1.253 "For shame! You really are in sore need of Odysseus, gone so long, to lay his hands on these shameless suitors. If only he would come now and stand at the outer doors of the house, with his helmet and shield and two spears, just as he was when I first saw him in our house, drinking and enjoying himself on his way back from Ephyra, from Ilus son of Mermerus. Odysseus had gone there too on his swift ship, looking for a deadly poison to smear on his bronze-tipped arrows. Ilus would not give it to him, since he feared the indignation of the gods who live forever, but my father gave it to him, for he loved him dearly. If Odysseus, such a man as that, were to mix with the suitors, they would all find a swift death and a bitter marriage. 1.267 But these things lie on the knees of the gods, whether he will come home and take vengeance in his own halls or not. You, though, I urge to consider how you will drive the suitors out of the hall. Come now, listen and take heed of my words. Tomorrow call the Achaean heroes to an assembly and declare your word to them all, and let the gods be witnesses. Order the suitors to scatter, each to his own. As for your mother, if her heart is set on marrying, let her go back to the hall of her father, a man of great power. Her people there will arrange the marriage and prepare

5 Dulichium, Same and Zacynthus are islands near Ithaca. Their nobles, like Ithaca's own, are among Penelope's suitors.

the bride-gifts, a great many, as many as ought to go with a dear daughter. 1.279 And for you yourself I have shrewd advice, if you will listen. Fit out a ship with twenty oarsmen, the best there is, and go to learn news of your father, so long gone. Some mortal may tell you, or you may hear a rumor from Zeus, which more than anything spreads report among men. First go to Pylos and question noble Nestor, and from there to Sparta, to fair-haired Menelaus, for he was the last of the bronze-clad Achaeans to come home. If you hear that your father is alive and on his way home, then, worn down as you are, you could still hold out for a year. But if you hear that he is dead and no longer living, then come home to your dear native land, heap up a mound for him and pay him funeral honors, a great many, as is fitting, and give your mother to a husband.[6] 1.293 And when you have finished and done all this, then consider in your mind and heart how you may kill the suitors in your halls, whether by a trick or openly. You must not keep up childish ways, since you are no longer of that age. Or haven't you heard what glory noble Orestes won among all men when he killed his father's murderer, crafty Aegisthus, who had killed his famous father? You too, my friend —for I can see you are very handsome and tall—be brave, so that men born later may speak well of you. But now I will go down to my swift ship and my comrades, who must be growing impatient waiting for me. Look to this yourself, and take heed of my words."

1.306 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Stranger, you say these things with kindly intent, like a father to his son, and I will never forget them. But come, stay a while now, eager though you are for your journey, so that once you have bathed and refreshed your heart, you may go to your ship happy in spirit, taking a gift, precious and very beautiful, to be a keepsake from me, the kind of gift dear guest-friends give one another." Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Don't hold me back any longer now, eager as I am for my jour-

6 Nestor, the aged king of Pylos, and Menelaus, king of Sparta and husband of Helen, both fought at Troy alongside Odysseus.

ney. Whatever gift your heart urges you to give me, give it when I come back again, for me to take home. Choose a very beautiful one, and it will earn you its worth in return."

PENELOPE AND THE BARD

Penelope asks Phemius to stop his song; Telemachus sends her upstairs and challenges the suitors.

1.319 So gray-eyed Athena spoke and departed. Like a bird she flew up and away, and in his heart she put strength and courage, and made him think of his father even more than before. He sensed it in his mind and was amazed in his heart, for he thought it was a god. At once he went among the suitors, a godlike man. The famous bard was singing for them, and they sat listening in silence. He sang of the Achaeans' bitter homecoming from Troy, which Pallas Athena had laid upon them. From the upper room the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, took his wondrous song to heart, and she came down the high stairway of her house, not alone, for two maids went with her.

1.332 When she, bright among women, reached the suitors, she stood beside a pillar of the strongly built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks, with a trusty maid standing on either side of her. Then, weeping, she spoke to the godlike bard: "Phemius, you know many other songs that enchant mortals, deeds of men and gods that bards make famous. Sing them one of those as you sit here, and let them drink their wine in silence. But stop this song, this bitter song, which always wears away the heart in my breast, since an unforgettable grief has come upon me above all others. So dear a man I long for, always remembering him: my husband, whose fame spreads wide through Hellas and the heart of Argos." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her:[7]

1.346 "Mother, why do you begrudge the trusty bard his giving pleasure in whatever way his mind moves him? It isn't the bards

7 "Hellas and the heart of Argos" stand together for the whole of Greece, north and south.

who are to blame. Zeus, I think, is to blame, who gives to men who eat bread, to each as he pleases. No one can blame this man for singing the evil fate of the Danaans, for people praise most the song that comes newest to their ears. Let your heart and spirit bear to listen. Odysseus was not the only one who lost his day of homecoming at Troy; many other men perished too. Go to your rooms and look after your own work, the loom and the distaff, and tell your maids to get on with their work. Speaking will be the concern of men, all of them, and of me most of all, for mine is the authority in this house."

1.360 Amazed, she went back to her rooms, for she took her son's thoughtful words to heart. She went up to the upper room with her maids, and there she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids. But the suitors broke into uproar throughout the shadowy halls, and every one of them prayed to lie beside her in bed. Then thoughtful Telemachus began to speak among them: "Suitors of my mother, overbearing in your arrogance, for now let us feast and enjoy ourselves, and let there be no shouting, since it is a fine thing to listen to a bard such as this one, like the gods in voice. But in the morning let us all go and sit in assembly, so that I may tell you my word plainly: leave these halls. Arrange other feasts for yourselves, eating your own possessions, taking turns from house to house.

1.376 But if this seems better and more profitable to you, to destroy one man's livelihood without paying for it, then go on devouring it. I will call upon the gods who live forever, in the hope that Zeus may somehow grant that deeds be paid back in kind. Then you would perish inside this house, and no one would pay for you." So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachus, that he had spoken so boldly. Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke to him: "Telemachus, the gods themselves must surely be teaching you to talk big and speak boldly. May the son of Cronus never make you king in sea-girt Ithaca, though it is yours by birth, from your father."[8]

8 Antinous and Eurymachus, who speaks next, are the leaders of the suitors.

1.388 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, will you be angry with me for what I say? I would gladly win that too, if Zeus should grant it. Or do you say it's the worst thing that can befall a man? It's no bad thing to be king: a king's house quickly grows rich, and he himself is held in greater honor. But there are many other lords of the Achaeans in sea-girt Ithaca, young and old, and one of them may have this, since noble Odysseus is dead. But I will be master of our own house and of the slaves whom noble Odysseus won as plunder for me." Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him:

1.400 "Telemachus, it lies on the knees of the gods which of the Achaeans shall be king in sea-girt Ithaca. But may you keep your possessions yourself and be master in your own house. May no man ever come to wrest your possessions from you by force, against your will, while Ithaca is still a place where people live. But I want to ask you, my good friend, about the stranger. Where does this man come from? What land does he claim as his? Where are his family and his native fields? Does he bring some news of your father's coming, or has he come here on some business of his own? How suddenly he sprang up and was gone, and didn't stay for us to know him! And yet he didn't look like a lowborn man in the face." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him:

1.413 "Eurymachus, my father's homecoming is lost, surely. So I no longer trust any news, should any come from anywhere, nor do I care for any prophecy my mother may seek when she calls a seer into the hall. This stranger is a guest-friend of my father's from Taphos. He says he is Mentes, son of wise-hearted Anchialus, and he is lord of the oar-loving Taphians." So Telemachus spoke, but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess. They turned to dancing and lovely song and took their pleasure, waiting for evening to come; and as they took their pleasure, dark evening came on. Then each of them went home to lie down. But Telemachus went to bed where his chamber had been built, high up in the beautiful courtyard, in a place with a view all round, pondering many things in his mind.

1.428 With him, carrying blazing torches, went Eurycleia, wise in good counsel, daughter of Ops son of Peisenor. Laertes had once bought her with his own wealth when she was still in her first youth, and paid twenty oxen for her. He honored her in his halls as much as his faithful wife, but he never lay with her, for he shrank from his wife's anger. She it was who carried the blazing torches with him. Of all the maids she loved him most, and she had nursed him when he was little. He opened the doors of the strongly built chamber, sat down on the bed and took off his soft tunic, and put it into the hands of the shrewd old woman. She folded the tunic and smoothed it, hung it on a peg beside the corded bed, and went out of the chamber. She pulled the door to by its silver handle and drew the bolt home with the strap. There all night long, wrapped in a fleece of sheep's wool, he pondered in his mind the journey Athena had shown him.

Book 2

The assembly in Ithaca
Telemachus confronts the suitors and sails secretly for news of his father.

2.1 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, the dear son of Odysseus rose from his bed and put on his clothes. He slung his sharp sword around his shoulder, bound fine sandals beneath his shining feet, and went out of his chamber looking like a god. At once he ordered the clear-voiced heralds to summon the long-haired Achaeans to assembly. They made the proclamation, and the men gathered very quickly. And when they had gathered and were all assembled, he went to the assembly with a bronze spear in his hand. He did not go alone: two swift dogs went with him. And Athena poured a wondrous grace over him. 2.13 All the people marveled at him as he came. He sat down in his father's seat, and the elders made way for him. Then the hero Aegyptius began to speak among them. He was bent with age and knew things beyond counting. His own dear son, Antiphus the spearman, had gone with godlike Odysseus in the hollow ships to Ilium, land of fine horses. But the savage Cyclops had killed him in his hollow cave and made him the last of his suppers. Aegyptius had three other sons: one, Eurynomus, kept company with the suitors, and two always worked their father's fields. Even so he could not forget the lost one, but mourned and grieved for him. Weeping for him, he addressed them and spoke:

2.25 "Hear me now, men of Ithaca, and what I have to say. We have never once held an assembly or a session since godlike

Odysseus went away in the hollow ships. So who has called us together now? What great need has come upon him, whether he is one of the young men or one of the older? Has he heard some news of the army coming home, news he could tell us plainly because he learned it first? Or is there some other public matter he wants to raise and speak about? He seems a good man to me. May he prosper! May Zeus bring about some good for him, whatever his heart desires." So he spoke, and the dear son of Odysseus rejoiced at the omen in his words. He did not stay seated much longer, for he was eager to speak, and he stood up in the middle of the assembly. The herald Peisenor, a man of thoughtful counsel, put the staff into his hand. Then he turned first to the old man and spoke to him:

2.40 "Old man, the one who gathered the people is not far off, and you will soon know him yourself: it is I. Grief has come upon me more than on anyone. I have not heard any news of the army coming home, news I could tell you plainly because I learned it first, nor do I want to raise or speak about any other public matter. It is my own need, for trouble has fallen on my house, and it is twofold. First, I have lost my noble father, who was once king among you here and was as gentle as a father. And now there is something far worse, which will soon shatter my whole house utterly and destroy all my livelihood. 2.50 Suitors have beset my mother against her will, the dear sons of the men who are the best here. They shrink from going to the house of her father Icarius, so that he himself might set the bride-gifts for his daughter and give her to whomever he wished and whoever pleased him. Instead they haunt our house day after day, slaughtering cattle and sheep and fat goats, feasting and drinking the sparkling wine without restraint, and much of our wealth is being wasted. For there is no man here like Odysseus to ward off ruin from the house. We are in no way fit to ward it off ourselves. Even if we tried, we would prove pitiful, and untaught in courage.[1] 2.62 Truly I would defend myself, if only I

1 In Homer, marriage involved an exchange of gifts: suitors offered gifts to the bride's father, and her family might also send gifts with the bride.

had the strength. For deeds past bearing have been done, and my house has been ruined past all decency. Feel indignation yourselves. Have some shame before our neighbors, the people who live around us. And fear the wrath of the gods, in case their anger at evil deeds turns things against you. I beg you by Olympian Zeus and by Themis, who dissolves and convenes the assemblies of men: hold off, friends, and leave me alone to waste away in bitter grief. Or else perhaps my noble father Odysseus once did the well-greaved Achaeans harm in malice, and you are paying me back for it, doing me harm in malice by urging these men on. Better for me if you yourselves ate up my treasures and my flocks.[2] 2.76 If you were the ones eating them, there might soon be some repayment. We would go through the town pleading with you and asking for our goods back, until all of it was returned. But as it is, you heap pains on my heart that I can do nothing about." So he spoke in anger and dashed the staff to the ground, bursting into tears, and pity took hold of all the people. Then all the others were silent, and no one dared answer Telemachus with harsh words. Antinous alone answered him and said:

PENELOPE'S WEB

Antinous blames Penelope, who for three years unwove by night the shroud she wove by day.

2.85 "Telemachus, you braggart, unchecked in your fury, what a thing you've said to shame us! You'd like to pin the blame on us. But it isn't the Achaean suitors who are to blame for your troubles. It's your own dear mother, who knows tricks beyond anyone. It's already the third year, and soon the fourth will come, that she has been cheating the hearts in the Achaeans' breasts. She gives all of us hope and makes promises to every man, sending him messages, but her mind intends something else. And she devised this further trick in her mind: she set up a

2 Themis is the goddess of right order and custom, who presides over gatherings.

great loom in the halls and began to weave a web, fine and very wide, and at once she said to us:

2.96 'Young men, my suitors, since godlike Odysseus is dead, wait, eager though you are for my marriage, until I finish this shroud, so that my yarn won't be wasted and lost. It is a burial shroud for the hero Laertes, for the time when the deadly fate of grievous death lays him low. I don't want any of the Achaean women in the land to blame me if he lies without a shroud, a man who won such great possessions.' So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. Then by day she would weave at the great loom, but at night she would unravel it, with torches set beside her. So for three years she kept her trick hidden and deceived the Achaeans. But when the fourth year came and the seasons rolled round, one of her women who knew it well told us, and we caught her unraveling the splendid web.

2.110 So she finished it, against her will, under compulsion. Now here is the suitors' answer to you, so that you yourself may know it in your heart, and all the Achaeans may know it: send your mother away, and order her to marry whichever man her father bids and who pleases her. But if she keeps tormenting the sons of the Achaeans much longer, relying in her heart on the gifts Athena gave her beyond others: skill in beautiful handiwork, and a good mind, and cunning such as we have never heard of in anyone, not even among the women of old, the Achaean women of lovely hair who lived before, Tyro and Alcmene and Mycene of the fine crown. Not one of them had wits like Penelope's. Yet in this one thing she has not planned rightly.[3] 2.123 For they will eat up your livelihood and your possessions for just as long as she holds to the purpose that the gods are now putting in her breast. She is winning great fame for herself, but for you, the loss of a great deal of wealth. As for us, we won't go back to our estates or anywhere else until she marries whichever of the Achaeans she chooses." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, there is no way I can

3 Tyro, Alcmene (mother of Heracles) and Mycene (who gave her name to Mycenae) were famous heroines of legend.

thrust the woman who bore me and raised me out of the house against her will. My father is somewhere else in the world, alive or dead. And it would go hard with me to pay back so much to Icarius if I sent my mother away of my own accord.

2.134 For I will suffer harm from her father, and some god will send me other troubles, since my mother, as she left the house, would call down the hateful Furies, and I would face the indignation of men. So I will never speak that word. But if your own hearts feel indignation at this, get out of my halls. Arrange other feasts for yourselves, eating your own possessions, taking turns from house to house. But if this seems better and more profitable to you, to destroy one man's livelihood without paying for it, then go on devouring it. I will call upon the gods who live forever, in the hope that Zeus may somehow grant that deeds be paid back in kind. Then you would perish inside this house, and no one would pay for you."

THE EAGLES

Zeus sends two eagles, and Halitherses reads them as a sign that Odysseus is near.

2.146 So spoke Telemachus, and far-seeing Zeus sent two eagles flying from high on a mountain peak. For a while they flew with the gusts of the wind, close beside each other, their wings outstretched. But when they reached the middle of the clamorous assembly, they wheeled about and beat their wings rapidly. They looked down on the heads of all, and their eyes foretold death. Then, tearing each other's cheeks and necks with their talons, they darted away to the right over the people's houses and city. The men were amazed at the birds when they saw them with their own eyes, and they pondered in their hearts what was going to come to pass. Then the old hero Halitherses, son of Mastor, spoke among them, for he alone surpassed everyone of his generation at reading birds and declaring what was fated. With good will toward them he addressed them and spoke:

2.161 "Hear me now, men of Ithaca, and what I have to say. It is to the suitors above all that I speak and declare these things, for a great disaster is rolling toward them. Odysseus will not be away from his friends much longer. Already, I think, he is somewhere near, sowing death and doom for these men, every one of them. And there will be trouble for many others of us who live in clear-skied Ithaca. Let us take thought well beforehand how we may put a stop to them. Or better, let them stop of their own accord, for that is better for them, and at once. I am not prophesying without experience, but with sure knowledge. For I say that everything has been fulfilled for him just as I told him when the Argives were embarking for Ilium and resourceful Odysseus went with them. 2.174 I said that after suffering many hardships and losing all his companions, he would come home in the twentieth year, unrecognized by all. And now all of this is coming to pass." Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him: "Old man, go home now and prophesy to your own children, so they don't suffer some harm later on. In this matter I'm a far better prophet than you. Plenty of birds go to and fro under the rays of the sun, and not all of them are omens. But Odysseus has perished far away, and how I wish you had perished along with him! Then you wouldn't be spouting all these prophecies, or stirring up Telemachus in his anger like this, hoping for some gift for your house, in case he gives you one.

2.187 But I'll tell you plainly, and it will surely come to pass: if you, with all your old lore, lead on a younger man with your talk and goad him into anger, first of all it will go worse for him, and he won't be able to accomplish anything against these men anyway. And on you, old man, we will lay a fine that will gall your heart to pay. It will be a bitter grief to you. To Telemachus I myself will give this advice, in front of everyone: let him order his mother to go back to her father's house. Her people will arrange the marriage and prepare the bride-gifts, a great many, as many as ought to go with a dear daughter. For I don't think the sons of the Achaeans will give up their troublesome wooing before then, since we fear no one at all, certainly not

Telemachus, for all his many words. Nor do we care about any prophecy that you, old man, may utter. It will come to nothing, and you'll only be hated all the more. 2.203 And his goods will be wretchedly devoured, and there will never be any recompense, as long as she keeps the Achaeans dangling over her marriage. And we wait day after day, competing for the sake of her excellence, and we don't go after other women whom it would be fitting for each of us to marry." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Eurymachus, and all you other noble suitors, I will not plead with you about these things any longer or speak of them, for the gods know them now, and so do all the Achaeans. But come, give me a swift ship and twenty companions to make the journey for me there and back.

2.214 For I am going to Sparta and to sandy Pylos to learn about the homecoming of my father, who has been gone so long. Perhaps some mortal can tell me, or I may hear a rumor from Zeus, which more than anything spreads report among men. If I hear that my father is alive and on his way home, then, worn down as I am, I could still hold out for a year. But if I hear that he is dead and no longer living, then I will come home to my dear native land, heap up a mound for him and pay him funeral honors, a great many, as is fitting, and give my mother to a husband." So he spoke and sat down, and Mentor rose among them. He was a companion of excellent Odysseus, and when Odysseus left in the ships, he had entrusted his whole household to him: it was to obey the old man, and Mentor was to keep everything safe. With good will toward them he addressed them and spoke:[4]

2.229 "Hear me now, men of Ithaca, and what I have to say. Let no sceptered king ever again be eager to be kind and gentle, or keep what is right in his mind. Let him always be harsh and do lawless deeds, since not one of the people he ruled remembers godlike Odysseus, though he was as gentle as a father. Still, I don't begrudge the overbearing suitors their violent deeds, done out of the evil scheming of their minds. They are staking their

4 Mentor is an old friend of Odysseus; Athena will soon take on his appearance to help Telemachus.

own heads when they violently devour the house of Odysseus and say he will never come home. It's the rest of the people I'm indignant with: the way you all sit there in silence and never once rebuke them and restrain the suitors, though they are few and you are many." Then Leocritus, son of Euenor, answered him:

2.243 "Mentor, you mischief-maker, you witless fool, what are you saying, urging them to make us stop? It's a hard thing to fight over a feast against men who outnumber you. Even if Odysseus of Ithaca came back in person and set his heart on driving the noble suitors out of his hall as they feasted in his house, his wife would get no joy from his coming, however much she longs for him. No, he would meet a shameful death right there, if he fought against so many. What you've said is not right. Come on, people, scatter, each of you to your work. As for this boy, Mentor and Halitherses can speed him on his journey, since they were his father's companions from the start. But I think he'll sit here for a long time, collecting his news in Ithaca, and he'll never make this journey."

TELEMACHUS SETS SAIL

Athena, disguised as Mentor, finds a ship and crew, and Telemachus leaves secretly at night.

2.257 So he spoke, and quickly broke up the assembly. The people scattered, each to his own house, and the suitors went to the house of godlike Odysseus. But Telemachus went off by himself to the seashore, washed his hands in the gray salt water, and prayed to Athena: "Hear me, you who came to our house yesterday as a god and told me to go by ship over the misty sea to learn about the homecoming of my father, so long gone. All of this the Achaeans are holding up, and most of all the suitors, in their wicked arrogance." So he spoke in prayer, and Athena came close to him, looking like Mentor in both build and voice, and addressing him she spoke winged words:

2.270 "Telemachus, you won't be a coward or a fool from now on, if your father's fine strength has really been instilled in you —and what a man he was for carrying through both word and deed! Then this journey of yours won't be in vain or come to nothing. But if you are not his son and Penelope's, then I have no hope that you will accomplish what you have in mind. Few sons, after all, turn out like their fathers: most are worse, and only a few are better. But since you won't be a coward or a fool from now on, and the cunning of Odysseus hasn't wholly deserted you, there is hope that you will see this work through." 2.281 "So now, leave aside the plans and purposes of the suitors, senseless as they are, since they have neither sense nor justice. They know nothing of the death and black doom that is already close at hand, that they will all perish in a single day. The journey you have in mind won't be far off much longer, for I am such a companion of your father's that I will fit out a swift ship for you and come along myself. But you go home and mix with the suitors. Get provisions ready and pack everything in containers—wine in jars, and barley meal, the marrow of men, in tightly sewn skins. I'll go through the town and quickly gather volunteers to go with us. There are many ships in sea-girt Ithaca, new and old. I'll look them over for you and pick the best, and we'll rig her quickly and launch her on the broad sea."

2.296 So spoke Athena, daughter of Zeus, and Telemachus did not linger long once he had heard the goddess's voice. He set off for the house, troubled at heart, and found the overbearing suitors in the hall, skinning goats and singeing fat hogs in the courtyard. Antinous came straight up to Telemachus with a laugh, clasped his hand, and spoke to him, calling him by name: "Telemachus, you braggart, unchecked in your fury, don't let any other harm, in word or deed, weigh on your heart. Just eat and drink with me, the way you used to. The Achaeans will see to all of this for you—a ship and picked oarsmen—so you can get to holy Pylos all the quicker in search of news of your noble father."

2.309 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, there's no way I can dine with you arrogant men and keep quiet, and enjoy myself in peace. Isn't it enough that in the past you suitors cut down so many of my fine possessions, while I was still a child? But now that I'm grown and learn by listening to what others say, and the spirit within me is growing, I will try to bring evil doom down on you, whether I go to Pylos or stay here in this land. I am going, and the journey I speak of won't be in vain—as a passenger, since I have no ship or oarsmen of my own. That, I suppose, is how you thought it best."

2.321 He spoke, and easily pulled his hand out of Antinous' hand. The suitors were busy preparing the feast throughout the house, and they mocked him and jeered at him, and one of the arrogant young men would say something like this: "Telemachus is plotting our murder, no doubt about it. He'll bring back men from sandy Pylos to help him, or even from Sparta, he's so terribly eager. Or maybe he wants to go to Ephyre, that rich land, to fetch life-destroying poisons from there, throw them into the mixing bowl, and kill us all." And another of the arrogant young men would say: "Who knows? Maybe he too will go off in a hollow ship and perish far from his own people, wandering just like Odysseus.[5]

2.334 That way he'd make even more work for us: we'd have to divide up all his possessions, and give the house to his mother to keep, and to whoever marries her." So they spoke. But he went down into his father's high-roofed storeroom, a wide one, where gold and bronze lay piled up, and clothing in chests, and plenty of fragrant oil. In it stood jars of old, sweet-tasting wine, holding the unmixed, divine drink, ranged in a row against the wall, in case Odysseus should ever come home, even after suffering many hardships. Close-fitted double doors shut it in, and a housekeeper was in charge of it night and day, who guarded everything with her shrewd and wide-ranging mind—Eurycleia,

5 Ephyre, in northwest Greece, was famous for poisons; in Book 1 Athena-as-Mentes tells how Odysseus once went there looking for poison for his arrows.

daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor. Telemachus called her into the storeroom and said to her:

2.349 "Nurse, come, draw off some wine for me in jars—sweet wine, the finest after the one you're keeping in mind of that ill-fated man, in case Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, should somehow come home, escaping death and doom. Fill twelve, and seal them all with lids. And pour me barley meal into well-stitched skins—let there be twenty measures of milled barley. You alone must know. Get it all gathered together, for I'll pick it up this evening, once my mother has gone upstairs and is thinking of bed. I'm going to Sparta and sandy Pylos to learn about my dear father's homecoming, if I can hear anything."

2.361 So he spoke, and his dear nurse Eurycleia let out a wail, and lamenting she spoke winged words: "Why, dear child, has this idea come into your head? Where do you want to go, out over the wide world—you, an only son, so dearly loved? He has perished far from his native land, Odysseus sprung from Zeus, among strangers. And these men, the moment you're gone, will plot evil against you behind your back, so that you die by some trick, and they themselves share out everything here. No, stay here and sit tight among your own things. There's no need for you to suffer hardship on the barren sea and go wandering." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her:

2.372 "Take heart, nurse: this plan is not without a god behind it. But swear you won't tell my dear mother any of this until the eleventh or twelfth day comes, or until she misses me herself and hears I've gone, so that she won't ruin her lovely face with weeping." So he spoke, and the old woman swore the great oath of the gods not to tell. And when she had sworn and completed the oath, she immediately drew off wine for him in jars and poured barley meal into well-stitched skins. And Telemachus went into the house and mixed with the suitors.

2.382 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, thought of something else. Taking the likeness of Telemachus, she went all over the city, and standing beside each man she spoke to him and told them all to gather at evening by the swift ship. She also

asked Noemon, the splendid son of Phronius, for a swift ship, and he gladly agreed. The sun set and all the streets grew dark, and then she dragged the swift ship down to the sea and put in it all the gear that well-benched ships carry. She moored it at the far end of the harbor, and the good companions gathered around in a body, and the goddess spurred each one on.

2.393 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, thought of something else. She set off for the house of godlike Odysseus, and there she poured sweet sleep over the suitors. She muddled them as they drank and knocked the cups from their hands. They got up to go to sleep throughout the city and did not stay sitting long, since sleep was settling on their eyelids. But gray-eyed Athena called Telemachus out of the stately hall and spoke to him, looking like Mentor in both build and voice: "Telemachus, your well-greaved companions are already sitting at the oars, waiting for you to give the word to start. Come, let's go, so we don't hold up our journey any longer." So speaking, Pallas Athena swiftly led the way, and he followed in the goddess's footsteps. And when they had come down to the ship and the sea, they found the long-haired companions on the shore. And Telemachus, in his sacred strength, spoke among them:

2.410 "Come on, friends, let's fetch the provisions. Everything is already gathered in the hall. My mother knows nothing about it, nor do the other maids; only one has heard of it." So speaking he led the way, and they went with him. They carried everything down and stowed it in the well-benched ship, as the dear son of Odysseus told them. Then Telemachus went aboard the ship; Athena went first and sat down in the stern, and Telemachus sat down close beside her. The men cast off the stern cables, then climbed aboard themselves and sat down at the benches. And gray-eyed Athena sent them a favorable wind, a fresh West Wind, singing over the wine-dark sea.

2.422 Telemachus called out to his companions and told them to take hold of the rigging, and they heard his call. They raised the pine mast, set it in the hollow mast-box, and made it fast with forestays, and they hauled up the white sails with twisted

oxhide ropes. The wind filled the belly of the sail, and the dark wave roared loudly around the stem as the ship sped on, and she ran over the waves, making her way. Then, when they had made the rigging fast throughout the swift black ship, they set up mixing bowls brimful of wine and poured libations to the immortal gods who live forever, and most of all to the gray-eyed daughter of Zeus. All night long and into the dawn the ship cut her way.

Book 3

At Pylos
Nestor tells of the Greeks' homecomings and the murder of Agamemnon.

3.1 The Sun sprang up, leaving the lovely lake, into the bronze sky, to shine for the immortals and for mortal men upon the grain-giving earth. And they came to Pylos, the well-built citadel of Neleus. There on the seashore the people were making sacrifice of all-black bulls to the dark-haired Earth-shaker. There were nine companies of seats, five hundred men sat in each, and each company held out nine bulls. As they were tasting the innards and burning the thigh-pieces for the god, the travelers put straight in to shore, hauled up and furled the sails of their balanced ship, moored her, and stepped out themselves. Telemachus stepped out of the ship, and Athena led the way. The goddess, gray-eyed Athena, was first to speak to him:[1]

3.14 "Telemachus, there's no call for shyness now, not the least bit. This is why you sailed across the sea: to learn about your father—where the earth has hidden him and what fate he met. So come, go straight to Nestor, tamer of horses. Let's find out what counsel he keeps hidden in his breast. Beg him yourself to tell you the plain truth. He won't lie to you; he is a very wise man." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mentor, how am I to go? How am I to greet him? I have no practice yet in shrewd speaking, and a young man feels shame to question an older one."

1 Pylos, on the west coast of the Peloponnese, was ruled by Nestor, son of Neleus, the oldest and wisest of the Greek leaders at Troy.

3.25 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him again: "Telemachus, some things you will think of yourself, in your own mind, and others a god will prompt; for I don't believe you were born and raised without the gods' good will." So Pallas Athena spoke, and swiftly led the way, and he followed in the goddess's footsteps. They came to the gathering and the seats of the men of Pylos, where Nestor sat with his sons, while around him his companions were preparing the feast, roasting some of the meat and spitting more. When they saw the strangers, they all came crowding together, welcomed them with their hands, and invited them to sit.

3.36 Nestor's son Pisistratus was first to come up close. He took them both by the hand and sat them down at the feast on soft fleeces on the sea sand, beside his brother Thrasymedes and his father. He gave them portions of the innards and poured wine into a golden cup, and, greeting her with it, he spoke to Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis: "Pray now, stranger, to lord Poseidon, for it is his feast you have come upon in coming here. And when you have poured a libation and prayed, as is right, then give this man the cup of honey-sweet wine to pour as well, since I think he too prays to the immortals: all men have need of the gods. But he is younger, my own age, so I'll give the golden cup to you first."

3.51 So saying, he put the cup of sweet wine into her hand. Athena was pleased with this thoughtful, just young man, because he had given the golden cup to her first, and at once she prayed earnestly to lord Poseidon: "Hear me, Poseidon, Earth-holder, and do not begrudge us, who pray to you, the fulfillment of these tasks. To Nestor first of all, and to his sons, grant glory; and then give the rest, all the people of Pylos, a gracious return for their splendid hecatomb. And grant, too, that Telemachus and I may go home having accomplished what we came here for in our swift black ship."

3.62 So she prayed—and she herself was bringing it all to pass. Then she gave Telemachus the fine two-handled cup, and Odysseus' dear son prayed in the same way. When they had roasted

the outer flesh and drawn it off the spits, they divided the portions and feasted a glorious feast. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, was first to speak among them: "Now is the better time to question the strangers and ask who they are, since they've had their fill of food. Strangers, who are you? From where do you sail the watery ways? Are you on some business, or do you roam at random over the sea like pirates, who wander, staking their own lives and bringing harm to men of other lands?"

3.75 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him, taking courage—for Athena herself had put courage in his heart, so that he might ask about his absent father, and so that good fame might be his among men: "Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans, you ask where we come from, and I will tell you. We have come from Ithaca, beneath Mount Neion, and the business I speak of is private, not public. I am following the wide report of my father, in the hope of hearing something—godlike, steadfast Odysseus, who they say once fought at your side and sacked the city of the Trojans. All the others who fought against the Trojans, we have heard where each of them perished in grim destruction; but even his destruction the son of Cronus has left unknown.

3.89 No one can say for certain where he perished—whether he was overcome on land by enemy men or out on the open sea among the waves of Amphitrite. That is why I have come now to your knees, in case you are willing to tell me of his grim destruction, if perhaps you saw it with your own eyes or heard the tale of his wanderings from someone else; for beyond all men his mother bore him to misery. Don't soften anything out of respect for me or pity, but tell me plainly how you came to witness it. I beg you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, promised you some word or deed and carried it out in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaeans suffered so much, remember it now for my sake, and tell me the truth."

NESTOR'S STORY

Nestor tells how the Greeks quarreled after Troy and scattered on their way home.

3.102 Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, answered him: "My friend, you've reminded me of the misery we endured in that land, we sons of the Achaeans, unchecked in our fury—all we went through on ships over the misty sea, roaming after plunder wherever Achilles led us, and all our fighting around the great city of lord Priam. There the best of us were killed. There lies warlike Ajax, there Achilles, there Patroclus, a counselor equal to the gods, and there my own dear son, strong and flawless both, Antilochus, surpassingly swift of foot and a fighter too. And many other evils we suffered besides. Who among mortal men could tell them all?

3.115 Not even if you stayed five years, or six, asking about all the evils the noble Achaeans suffered there—you'd grow weary and go back to your native land before the end. For nine years we were stitching up evil for them, busy with every kind of trick, and the son of Cronus barely brought it to an end. There no one ever wished to match him face to face in cunning, since godlike Odysseus far surpassed everyone in every kind of trick—your father, if you really are his son. Awe takes hold of me as I look at you. Your way of speaking is just like his; you'd never think a younger man could speak so fittingly. All that time godlike Odysseus and I never spoke at odds, whether in the assembly or in council; with one heart, with mind and shrewd counsel, we planned how things might go best for the Argives.

3.130 But when we had sacked the steep city of Priam and gone aboard our ships, and a god had scattered the Achaeans, then Zeus devised in his mind a grim homecoming for the Argives, since not all of them were sensible or just. So many of them met an evil end through the deadly wrath of the gray-eyed one, daughter of the mighty father, who set strife between the two sons of Atreus. These two called all the Achaeans to an

assembly, recklessly and not in due order, at sunset—and the sons of the Achaeans came heavy with wine—and they declared why they had gathered the army.[2] 3.141 Then Menelaus urged all the Achaeans to turn their thoughts to homecoming over the broad back of the sea, but this did not please Agamemnon at all. He wanted to hold the army back and offer sacred hecatombs, to heal Athena's terrible anger—the fool, he didn't know she was not going to be won over; for the mind of the gods who live forever is not quickly turned. So the two of them stood there trading harsh words, and the well-greaved Achaeans sprang up with a tremendous din, and they were split between the two plans. That night we slept, brooding hard thoughts against each other, for Zeus was preparing a disaster of ruin for us. At dawn some of us dragged our ships down into the bright sea and loaded our goods aboard, and the deep-girdled women. 3.155 Half the army held back and stayed there with the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, shepherd of the people; and half of us went aboard and rowed away. The ships sailed very fast, for a god had smoothed the sea with its great monsters. When we reached Tenedos, we made sacrifice to the gods, eager for home; but Zeus was not yet planning our homecoming—cruel god, who stirred up evil strife a second time. Some turned their curved ships back and went off with lord Odysseus, wise and of subtle cunning, to do Agamemnon, son of Atreus, a favor once more; but I fled with the whole company of ships that followed me, since I knew that some god was planning evil. And the warlike son of Tydeus fled too, and roused his companions. 3.168 Late indeed fair-haired Menelaus came after the two of us, and caught up with us at Lesbos as we were weighing the long voyage: whether we should sail outside rugged Chios, by the island of Psyria, keeping it on our left, or inside Chios, past windy Mimas. We asked the god to show us a sign, and he showed us one and told us to cut across the open sea to Euboea, so as to escape from trouble as quickly as we could. A whistling fair

2 The two sons of Atreus are Agamemnon, commander of the Greek army, and his brother Menelaus, Helen's husband.

wind rose up to blow, and the ships ran very swiftly over the fish-filled ways and put in at Geraestus in the night. There we laid many thighs of bulls on the altar for Poseidon, having measured out the great sea. It was the fourth day when the companions of Diomedes, son of Tydeus, tamer of horses, brought their balanced ships to rest in Argos; but I held my course for Pylos, and the wind never once died away from the moment the god first sent it forth to blow.

3.184 So I came home, dear child, without news, and I know nothing of the others, which of the Achaeans were saved and which perished. But all that I have learned, sitting in my halls, you shall hear, as is right; I won't hide it from you. They say the Myrmidons, famed spearmen, came home safely, led by the glorious son of great-hearted Achilles; and Philoctetes came home safely too, the splendid son of Poeas. Idomeneus brought back to Crete all his companions who escaped the war, and the sea took none of them from him. As for the son of Atreus, you have heard yourselves, though you live far away, how he came home and how Aegisthus devised his grim destruction. But Aegisthus paid for it dreadfully. So good a thing it is for a man who dies to leave a son behind, since that son, too, took vengeance on his father's murderer, crafty Aegisthus, who had killed his famous father. 3.199 You too, my friend—for I can see you are very handsome and tall—be brave, so that men born later may speak well of you." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans, he certainly took vengeance, and the Achaeans will spread his fame far and wide, for men yet to come to hear of. If only the gods would clothe me in such strength, to take vengeance on the suitors for their painful transgression, who in their arrogance devise reckless deeds against me! But the gods have spun no such happiness for me and my father. Now I must simply endure it all the same." Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, answered him:

3.211 "My friend, since you've reminded me of this and spoken of it: they say many suitors, for your mother's sake, are plotting

evil in your halls against your will. Tell me, are you willingly giving way to them, or do the people throughout the land hate you, following some voice from a god? Who knows whether he may come one day and pay them back for their violence, either alone or with all the Achaeans behind him? If only gray-eyed Athena would choose to love you as she cared for glorious Odysseus back then in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaeans suffered griefs—I've never seen the gods show love so openly as Pallas Athena openly stood by him—if she would choose to love you like that and care for you in her heart, then some of them would forget all about marriage."

3.225 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Old man, I don't think that word will ever come true. What you've said is far too much; awe takes hold of me. That could never happen for me, however much I hoped, not even if the gods willed it so." Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him: "Telemachus, what a word has escaped the barrier of your teeth! A god can easily save a man, if he wishes, even from far away. For my part, I would rather suffer many hardships and then come home and see the day of homecoming, than come home and perish at my own hearth, as Agamemnon perished through the treachery of Aegisthus and his own wife. But death, which comes to all alike, not even the gods can ward off from a man they love, when the deadly fate of grievous death lays him low."

3.239 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mentor, let's not talk of this any more, troubled though we are. For him there is no true homecoming now; the immortals have already devised death and black doom for him. But now I want to search out and ask Nestor about something else, since beyond all others he knows what is just and what is wise. They say he has been king over three generations of men, so that he looks to me like an immortal. Nestor, son of Neleus, tell me the truth: how did the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, die? Where was Menelaus? What destruction did crafty Aegisthus devise for him, to kill a far better man than himself? Was Menelaus away from

Achaean Argos, wandering somewhere else among men, so that Aegisthus grew bold and struck him down?"

THE MURDER OF AGAMEMNON

Nestor tells how Aegisthus took Agamemnon's wife, killed him, and was killed by Orestes.

3.253 Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, answered him: "Well then, my child, I'll tell you the whole truth. You can guess for yourself how it would have turned out if the son of Atreus, fair-haired Menelaus, coming back from Troy, had found Aegisthus still alive in the halls. Then no one would have heaped up a mound of earth over him even in death. No, the dogs and the birds would have torn him apart as he lay on the plain far from the city, and not one of the Achaean women would have wept for him, so monstrous was the deed he plotted. We were sitting over there at Troy, toiling through one ordeal after another, while he, at his ease in a corner of horse-pasturing Argos, kept trying to beguile Agamemnon's wife with words.

3.265 At first noble Clytemnestra refused the shameful deed, for her heart was sound. And there was a bard with her too, whom the son of Atreus, when he set out for Troy, had strictly charged to watch over his wife. But when the fate of the gods bound her and she was overcome, Aegisthus took the bard to a desert island and left him there to be prey and plunder for the birds. Then he led her to his own house, she as willing as he. He burned many thigh-pieces on the holy altars of the gods and hung up many offerings, woven cloth and gold, now that he had accomplished a great deed his heart had never hoped to achieve.

3.276 The son of Atreus and I were sailing together on our way from Troy, the best of friends. But when we reached holy Sunium, the cape of Athens, Phoebus Apollo came upon Menelaus' helmsman with his gentle arrows and killed him as he held the steering-oar of the speeding ship in his hands. This was Phrontis son of Onetor, who surpassed every tribe of men at steering a ship when storms drove hard. So Menelaus was held

back there, eager though he was to be on his way, to bury his comrade and give him funeral honors. But when he too set out over the wine-dark sea in the hollow ships and came racing to the steep headland of Malea, far-seeing Zeus devised a hateful voyage for him. He poured blasts of shrill winds on him, and the waves swelled huge, like mountains.[3] 3.291 There Zeus split the fleet and drove some of the ships to Crete, where the Cydonians lived around the streams of the Iardanus. There is a smooth rock, sheer to the water, at the far edge of Gortyn's land in the misty sea, where the South Wind drives a great wave against the headland on the left, toward Phaestus, and a small rock holds back the great wave. Those ships came there, and the men barely escaped destruction, but the waves smashed the ships against the reefs. The other five, the dark-prowed ships, the wind and the water carried off and brought to Egypt. So Menelaus wandered there with his ships among men of foreign speech, gathering wealth and gold in plenty; and meanwhile Aegisthus plotted these grim things at home. 3.305 For seven years he ruled over Mycenae, rich in gold, after killing the son of Atreus, and the people were crushed beneath him. But in the eighth, to his ruin, noble Orestes came back from Athens and killed his father's murderer, crafty Aegisthus, who had killed his glorious father. When he had killed him, he gave the Argives a funeral feast for his hateful mother and for the coward Aegisthus; and on that very day Menelaus, good at the war cry, came to him, bringing all the treasure his ships could carry as cargo. So you too, my friend, don't wander long and far from home, leaving your possessions behind and men in your house so arrogant, or they may divide up your possessions and devour them all, and you'll have made your journey for nothing.

3.317 But I urge you, I tell you, go to Menelaus. He has only lately come back from abroad, from people no one would ever hope in his heart to return from, once storms had driven him off course into a sea so vast that not even the birds come back from it within the year, so huge and terrible it is. Go now with your

3 Apollo's "gentle arrows" stand for a sudden, painless death.

ship and your companions. Or if you'd rather go by land, there's a chariot and horses at hand, and my sons as well, who will escort you to bright Lacedaemon, where fair-haired Menelaus lives. Beg him yourself to tell you the plain truth. He won't lie to you; he is a very wise man." So he spoke, and the sun set and darkness came on. Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke among them:

3.331 "Old man, all you have told us is right and proper. But come, cut out the tongues and mix the wine, so that we can pour libations to Poseidon and the other immortals and then think of bed; it's time for it. The light has already gone down under the darkness, and it isn't fitting to sit long at the feast of the gods; we should go home." So spoke the daughter of Zeus, and they listened to her words. Heralds poured water over their hands, and young men filled the mixing bowls to the brim with drink and served it out to everyone, first pouring a few drops into each cup. They threw the tongues into the fire, then stood and poured libations. But when they had poured libations and drunk as much as their hearts desired, Athena and godlike Telemachus both made to go back to the hollow ship. But Nestor held them back, and rebuked them with these words:

3.346 "Zeus forbid it, and the other immortal gods, that you should leave my house for your swift ship as if from someone utterly without clothes, some pauper who has no cloaks or blankets to speak of in his house for himself or his guests to sleep in softly! But I have cloaks and fine blankets. Surely the dear son of this man Odysseus will not lie down on a ship's deck as long as I'm alive, and after me there are sons left in my halls to entertain strangers, whoever comes to my house." Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him:

3.357 "That was well said, dear old man, and Telemachus ought to do as you say, since that is far better. So he'll go along with you now, to sleep in your halls; but I'll go to the black ship to put heart into our companions and tell them everything. I'm the only older man among them, I tell you; the others, who come along out of friendship, are younger men, all the same age as

great-hearted Telemachus. I'll lie down there tonight by the black hollow ship. And in the morning I'm going to the great-hearted Caucones, where a debt is owed me, and not a recent one or a small one. As for him, since he has come to your house, send him on his way with a chariot and your son, and give him horses, the swiftest you have at running and the best in strength."

3.371 With these words gray-eyed Athena went away in the likeness of a sea-eagle, and amazement seized everyone who saw it. The old man marveled at what his eyes had seen. He took Telemachus by the hand and spoke to him, calling him by name: "My friend, I don't expect you'll turn out a coward or a weakling, if the gods go with you as escorts while you're still so young. That was none other of those who live in the houses of Olympus than the daughter of Zeus, most glorious Tritogeneia, who honored your noble father too among the Argives. Come, lady, be gracious, and grant me noble fame, to me and my children and my honored wife. And in return I'll sacrifice to you a yearling heifer, broad-browed and unbroken, which no man has ever yet led under the yoke. I'll sacrifice her to you with gold poured around her horns."[4]

3.385 So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athena heard him. Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, led them, his sons and his sons-in-law, to his own fine house. When they reached the lord's glorious house, they sat down in rows on chairs and high seats, and as they came in the old man mixed them a bowl of sweet wine, which the housekeeper had opened in its eleventh year, loosening the lid. The old man mixed a bowl of this, and as he poured a libation he prayed long to Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus.

3.395 But when they had poured libations and drunk as much as their hearts desired, they went off to bed, each to his own home. But Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, had Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, sleep there in the house, on a corded bed under the echoing portico, and beside him Pisistratus of the

4 Tritogeneia is an ancient title of Athena, of uncertain meaning.

good ash spear, leader of men, the one among his sons in the halls who was still unmarried. He himself slept in the inner room of the lofty house, and his wife, the lady of the house, made ready the bed and bedding for him.

SACRIFICE AT PYLOS

Nestor sacrifices a heifer to Athena and sends Telemachus to Sparta with his son Pisistratus.

3.404 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, rose from his bed. He went out and sat down on the polished stones that stood in front of his high doors, white and glistening as if with oil. Neleus used to sit on them in days gone by, a counselor equal to the gods; but he had long since been overcome by his fate and gone down to Hades, and now Gerenian Nestor, guardian of the Achaeans, sat on them in his turn, holding the scepter. His sons came out of their chambers and gathered around him together: Echephron and Stratius, Perseus and Aretus and godlike Thrasymedes. Then a sixth joined them, the hero Pisistratus, and they brought godlike Telemachus and seated him beside them. Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, began to speak among them:

3.418 "Quickly, my dear children, do what I want, so that first of all the gods I may win the favor of Athena, who came to me plainly at the rich feast of the god. Come, let one of you go to the plain for a heifer, and have the herdsman in charge of the cattle drive her here as fast as he can. Let another go to great-hearted Telemachus' black ship and bring all his companions, leaving just two behind. Let another tell the goldsmith Laerces to come here, to pour gold around the heifer's horns. The rest of you stay here together, and tell the maids inside to prepare a feast throughout the glorious house, and to bring seats, and firewood to set around, and clear water."

3.430 So he spoke, and they all set busily to work. The heifer came from the plain; the companions of great-hearted Telemachus came from the swift, balanced ship; and the smith

came holding his bronze tools in his hands, the instruments of his craft, anvil and hammer and well-made tongs, with which he worked the gold. And Athena came to receive her sacrifice. The old horseman Nestor handed over the gold, and the smith worked it and poured it around the heifer's horns, so that the goddess might delight in seeing the offering. Stratius and noble Echephron led the heifer by the horns. 3.440 Aretus came out of the storeroom bringing them water for washing in a bowl with a flower pattern, and in his other hand he held barley grains in a basket. Thrasymedes, staunch in battle, stood by with a sharp axe in his hand, ready to strike the heifer, and Perseus held the bowl for the blood. The old horseman Nestor began the rite with the washing water and the barley, and prayed long to Athena as he made the first offering, throwing hairs from the victim's head into the fire. But when they had prayed and scattered the barley, at once Nestor's son, high-spirited Thrasymedes, stepped close and struck. The axe cut through the tendons of the neck and loosed the heifer's strength, and the women raised their cry, Nestor's daughters and his sons' wives and his honored wife Eurydice, eldest of the daughters of Clymenus.[5]

3.453 Then they lifted the heifer from the broad-pathed earth and held her, and Pisistratus, leader of men, cut her throat. When the dark blood had flowed out of her and life had left her bones, they quickly cut her apart and at once carved out the thigh-bones, all in due order, wrapped them in fat folded double, and laid raw pieces on top. The old man burned them on split wood and poured sparkling wine over them, while the young men beside him held five-pronged forks in their hands. But when the thighs were burned up and they had tasted the innards, they cut up the rest and threaded it on spits, and roasted it, holding the pointed spits in their hands.

3.464 Meanwhile lovely Polycaste, youngest daughter of Nestor son of Neleus, bathed Telemachus. When she had bathed him and rubbed him richly with oil, and thrown a fine cloak and a

5 At the moment of the killing, the women of the household traditionally raised a shrill ritual cry.

tunic around him, he stepped out of the bath looking like the immortals in form, and went and sat down beside Nestor, shepherd of the people. When they had roasted the outer flesh and drawn it off the spits, they sat down and feasted, and good men rose to wait on them, pouring wine into golden cups. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, began to speak among them:

3.475 "My sons, come, bring fine-maned horses for Telemachus and yoke them to a chariot, so that he can get on with his journey." So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed, and quickly yoked the swift horses to the chariot. The housekeeper put bread and wine in it, and the kind of dainties that kings fostered by Zeus eat. Then Telemachus stepped up into the beautiful chariot, and beside him Nestor's son Pisistratus, leader of men, mounted the chariot and took the reins in his hands. He touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew off willingly toward the plain and left the steep citadel of Pylos behind. All day long they shook the yoke they bore between them.

3.487 The sun set and all the streets grew dark, and they came to Pherae, to the house of Diocles, son of Ortilochus, whose father was the Alpheus. There they spent the night, and he set before them the gifts due to guests. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, they yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot, and drove out through the gateway and the echoing portico. Pisistratus touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew off willingly. They came to the wheat-bearing plain, and there they pressed on to the end of their journey, so well did the swift horses carry them. The sun set and all the streets grew dark.[6]

6 The Alpheus, the great river of the western Peloponnese, is here a god who fathers a son.

Book 4

At Sparta
Menelaus and Helen; the Old Man of the Sea; the suitors plot an ambush.

4.1 They came to hollow Lacedaemon with its many ravines and drove up to the house of glorious Menelaus. They found him in his house giving a wedding feast for his many kinsmen, for his son and for his peerless daughter. The daughter he was sending to the son of Achilles, breaker of men. Long ago at Troy he had promised and nodded his assent that he would give her, and now the gods were bringing the marriage to pass. So he was sending her off with horses and chariots to go to the famous city of the Myrmidons, over whom her bridegroom ruled. For his son he was bringing home from Sparta the daughter of Alector. This son, mighty Megapenthes, had been born to him late in life by a slave woman, for the gods granted Helen no more children once she had borne her first, a lovely daughter, Hermione, who had the beauty of golden Aphrodite.[1] 4.15 So they were feasting throughout the great high-roofed house, the neighbors and kinsmen of glorious Menelaus, and enjoying themselves. Among them a godlike bard sang to the lyre, and as he led off the song two tumblers whirled about in their midst. Meanwhile the two of them, the young men and their horses, the hero Telemachus and the splendid son of Nestor, halted at the gateway of the house. Lord Eteoneus came forward and saw them, the ready attendant of glorious Menelaus, and he went through the house

1 The son of Achilles is Neoptolemus, who after his father's death fought at Troy and ruled the Myrmidons in Thessaly.

to bring the news to the shepherd of the people. Standing close by, he spoke winged words:

4.26 "Here are two strangers, Menelaus, cherished by Zeus, two men who look like the offspring of great Zeus. Tell me: shall we unyoke their swift horses for them, or send them on to someone else who will make them welcome?" Then, deeply vexed, fair-haired Menelaus said to him: "You were no fool before, Eteoneus, son of Boethous, but now you babble nonsense like a child. Surely the two of us ate plenty of other men's hospitality on our way here, hoping that Zeus would someday put an end to our misery. Go, unyoke the strangers' horses, and bring the men themselves inside to feast."

4.37 So he spoke, and Eteoneus hurried out through the hall and called the other ready attendants to come along with him. They loosed the sweating horses from the yoke and tied them at the horses' mangers, threw spelt before them and mixed in white barley. They leaned the chariots against the gleaming walls of the entrance and led the men themselves into the god-like house. When they saw it they marveled at the house of the king cherished by Zeus, for a radiance like the sun's or the moon's lay over the high-roofed house of glorious Menelaus. But when they had had their fill of gazing, they stepped into well-polished bathtubs and bathed. 4.49 When the maids had bathed them and rubbed them with oil, and put thick woolen cloaks and tunics about them, they sat down on chairs beside Menelaus, son of Atreus. A maid brought water for their hands in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash, and beside them she drew up a polished table. The respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, adding many dishes, giving freely from her store. A carver lifted up platters of every kind of meat and set them before them, and placed golden cups beside them. Then fair-haired Menelaus greeted the two of them and said: "Help yourselves to the food, and enjoy it. Once you have eaten your supper, we'll ask who you are, for your parents' blood is not lost in you. You are of the line of kings cherished by Zeus, kings who

bear the scepter, since common men could not father sons like you."

4.65 So he spoke, and taking in his hands the rich roasted chine of beef that had been set before him as his own portion of honor, he put it before them. And they put out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, Telemachus spoke to Nestor's son, holding his head close so that the others would not hear: "Look, son of Nestor, dear to my heart, at the flash of bronze all through the echoing halls, and of gold and amber, of silver and ivory. The court of Olympian Zeus must look like this inside, with such untold wealth. Awe takes hold of me as I look."

4.76 Fair-haired Menelaus caught what he was saying, and he addressed them and spoke winged words: "Dear children, no mortal could rival Zeus, for his halls and his possessions are deathless. Among men, there may be someone who could rival me in possessions, or there may not. It was only after much suffering and much wandering that I brought them home in my ships, and I came back in the eighth year. I wandered to Cyprus and Phoenicia and to the Egyptians; I reached the Ethiopians and the Sidonians and the Erembi, and Libya, where the lambs have horns from the moment they are born, for there the ewes give birth three times in the full round of a year.

4.87 There neither lord nor shepherd goes short of cheese or meat or sweet milk; the flocks give milk to suckle all year round. While I was wandering in those parts, gathering much wealth, another man killed my brother, by stealth, when he least expected it, through the treachery of his accursed wife. So it gives me no joy to be lord of these possessions. You must have heard all this from your fathers, whoever they are, for I suffered a great deal, and I lost a house that was a fine place to live in and held many good things. I wish I lived in my halls with only a third of that wealth, and that those men were safe who died back then in wide Troy, far from Argos, the pastureland of horses. 4.100 Even so, I mourn and grieve for them all, often sitting here in our halls. Sometimes I satisfy my heart with weeping, and some-

times I stop, for one soon has one's fill of chill lament. Yet for none of them all do I mourn so much, grieved as I am, as for one man, who makes sleep and food hateful to me when I remember him, since no one of the Achaeans toiled as much as Odysseus toiled and took upon himself. For him, it seems, there were to be sorrows, and for me a grief over him that never fades, that he has been gone so long and we know nothing, whether he is alive or dead. I suppose they mourn for him, old Laertes and sensible Penelope, and Telemachus, whom he left a newborn child at home."

HELEN

Helen recognizes Telemachus, drugs the wine against grief, and tells of Odysseus spying in Troy.

4.113 So he spoke, and stirred in Telemachus a longing to weep for his father. Tears fell from his eyelids to the ground when he heard of his father, and with both hands he held his purple cloak up before his eyes. Menelaus noticed him, and then he pondered in his mind and heart whether to let him speak of his father himself, or first to question him and test him on every point. While he was turning this over in his mind and heart, Helen came out of her fragrant, high-roofed chamber, like Artemis of the golden distaff.

4.123 With her came Adreste, who set a well-made chair for her; Alcippe brought a rug of soft wool, and Phylo brought a silver workbasket. Alcandre had given it to her, the wife of Polybus, who lived in Egyptian Thebes, where the greatest wealth lies stored in men's houses. Polybus had given Menelaus two silver bathtubs, two tripods and ten talents of gold, and his wife, separately, gave Helen beautiful gifts: she presented her with a golden distaff and a silver basket on wheels, its rims finished in gold. This was the basket the maid Phylo brought and set beside her, filled with finely spun yarn, and across it lay the distaff, loaded with violet-dark wool. Helen sat down on the chair, with

a footstool under her feet, and at once she questioned her husband on every point:

4.138 "Do we know, Menelaus, cherished by Zeus, who these men claim to be who have come to our house? Am I mistaken, or am I right? Still, my heart bids me speak. For I tell you, I have never yet seen anyone, man or woman, so like another—awe takes hold of me as I look—as this man is like the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachus, whom that man left a newborn child at home when for my sake, shameless creature that I was, you Achaeans came to Troy, bent on bold war." Then fair-haired Menelaus answered her: "I see it too now, wife, just as you compare them. Those were his feet, those his hands, the glances of his eyes, his head and the hair above it.

4.151 And just now, as I was remembering Odysseus and telling of all the toil and misery he went through for my sake, the boy let fall a bitter tear from under his brows, holding his purple cloak up before his eyes." Then Pisistratus, son of Nestor, spoke to him in turn: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people, this is truly that man's son, as you say. But he is modest, and in his heart he thinks it improper, on coming here for the first time, to make a show of forward talk in front of you, whose voice we both delight in as if it were a god's. Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, sent me along with him as his escort, for he longed to see you, so that you might offer him some advice, or some help.

4.164 A son has many troubles in his halls when his father is gone and he has no one else to help him, as it is now with Telemachus: his father is gone, and there is no one else among the people who could ward off ruin." Then fair-haired Menelaus answered him: "Oh! So the son of a man very dear to me has come to my house, a man who for my sake endured many trials. I used to say that when he came I would welcome him above all the other Argives, if far-seeing Olympian Zeus had granted the two of us a homecoming over the sea in our swift ships. I would have given him a city to live in in Argos and built him a house, bringing him from Ithaca with his possessions and his son and

all his people, and clearing out one of the cities that lie round about and are under my rule.

4.178 Then, living here, we would often have been together, and nothing would have parted us in our friendship and our delight in each other, until the black cloud of death had covered us. But the god himself, I suppose, must have begrudged us this, the god who made that unhappy man, alone of all, miss his homecoming." So he spoke, and stirred in them all a longing to weep. Argive Helen wept, born of Zeus; Telemachus wept, and Menelaus, son of Atreus; nor did the son of Nestor keep his eyes free of tears, for he remembered in his heart peerless Antilochus, whom the splendid son of shining Dawn had killed. Remembering him, he spoke winged words:[2]

4.190 "Son of Atreus, old Nestor always said you were wise beyond all mortals, whenever we spoke of you in his halls and questioned one another. So now, if you possibly can, do as I ask. I take no pleasure in weeping after supper; besides, early-born Dawn will come. Not that I find any fault in weeping for any mortal who has died and met his fate. This is the only tribute we can pay to wretched mortals: to cut our hair and let tears fall down our cheeks. My own brother is dead too, by no means the worst of the Argives. You must have known him; I never met him or saw him myself, but they say Antilochus was above the rest, fast above all in running, and a fighter."

4.203 Then fair-haired Menelaus answered him: "My friend, you have said all that a sensible man would say and do, even one older than you. You are the son of such a father, and so your words are sensible too. Easily recognized is the offspring of a man for whom the son of Cronus spins out good fortune at his marriage and at his birth, as now he has granted Nestor all his days, from first to last, to grow old in comfort in his halls, and to have sons who are sensible and the best with the spear. So let us leave off the weeping we fell into just now and turn our thoughts again to supper; let them pour water over our hands. In the

2 Antilochus, Nestor's son, was killed at Troy by Memnon, king of the Ethiopians and son of the goddess Dawn.

morning too there will be stories for Telemachus and me to tell each other in full."

4.216 So he spoke, and Asphalion poured water over their hands, the ready attendant of glorious Menelaus. And they put out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. Then Helen, born of Zeus, had another thought. At once she cast a drug into the wine they were drinking, a drug that banishes grief and anger and brings forgetfulness of every sorrow. Whoever swallowed it, once it was mixed in the bowl, would not shed a tear down his cheeks all that day, not even if his mother and father died, not even if men cut down his brother or his own dear son with bronze right in front of him, and he watched it with his own eyes.

4.227 Such cunning drugs the daughter of Zeus possessed, good ones, given her by Polydamna, the wife of Thon, an Egyptian woman. There the grain-giving land yields drugs in the greatest number, many good and many deadly, mixed together, and every man is a physician, skilled beyond all other people, for they are of the race of Paeëon. When she had put the drug in and ordered the wine to be poured, she spoke again in answer: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, cherished by Zeus, and you here, sons of noble men—it is the god Zeus who gives good and bad, now to one man, now to another, for he can do all things. So now feast, sitting here in the hall, and enjoy hearing stories, for I'll tell you one that suits the occasion.[3]

4.240 I could not tell you all of them or name them, all the exploits of steadfast Odysseus, but here is one thing that strong man did and dared in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaeans suffered hardship. He disfigured himself with shameful blows, threw wretched rags around his shoulders like a servant, and slipped into the wide-streeted city of his enemies. He disguised himself as another man, a beggar, though he was nothing of the kind beside the Achaeans' ships. Looking like that, he slipped into the Trojans' city, and none of them suspected a thing. I alone recognized him for who he was, and I questioned

3 Paeëon is the physician of the gods.

him, but he cleverly evaded me. 4.252 But when I had bathed him and rubbed him with oil, dressed him in clothes, and sworn a mighty oath not to reveal to the Trojans that it was Odysseus until he had reached the swift ships and the huts, then at last he told me the whole plan of the Achaeans. And after killing many Trojans with the long-edged bronze he went back to the Argives, taking much intelligence with him. Then the other Trojan women wailed shrilly, but my heart was glad, for my spirit had already turned toward going back home, and I grieved for the blindness Aphrodite gave me when she led me there from my dear native land, leaving behind my daughter, my bridal chamber and my husband, a man who lacked nothing, either in mind or in looks."

4.265 Then fair-haired Menelaus answered her: "Yes, wife, all this you have told rightly. Before now I have come to know the counsel and the mind of many heroes, and I have traveled over much of the earth, but never yet have I seen with my own eyes anyone with a heart like steadfast Odysseus'. Here is another thing that strong man did and dared, inside the polished horse, where all of us, the best of the Argives, sat waiting to bring slaughter and death to the Trojans. Then you came there—some god must have urged you, one who wished to grant glory to the Trojans—and godlike Deiphobus followed you as you went.[4]

4.277 Three times you walked around the hollow ambush, feeling it all over, and you called out the best of the Danaans by name, making your voice sound like the wives of all the Argives. Now I and the son of Tydeus and godlike Odysseus were sitting in the middle, and we heard you calling. The two of us were eager and started up, wanting either to go out or to answer at once from inside, but Odysseus held us back and stopped us, for all our eagerness. Then all the other sons of the Achaeans kept silent; only Anticlus wanted to answer you. But Odysseus clamped his jaws shut with his strong hands and never let go, and so saved all the Achaeans; he held him like that until Pallas

4 Deiphobus, a son of Priam, became Helen's husband after Paris was killed.

Athena led you away." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him:

4.291 "Son of Atreus, Menelaus, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people, that makes it all the more painful. None of this kept grim destruction from him, not even if the heart within him had been made of iron. But come, send us off to bed, so that we can lie down now and take our pleasure in sweet sleep." So he spoke, and Argive Helen told her maids to set beds under the portico, to lay fine purple blankets on them and spread rugs over these, and to put woolly cloaks on top for covering. They went out of the hall with torches in their hands and made up the beds, and the herald led the guests out. So they slept there in the forecourt of the house, the hero Telemachus and Nestor's splendid son. But the son of Atreus slept in the innermost part of the lofty house, and beside him lay long-robed Helen, bright among women.

4.306 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, Menelaus of the great war cry rose from his bed and put on his clothes. He slung his sharp sword around his shoulder, bound his fine sandals under his shining feet, and went out of his chamber, like a god to look upon. He sat down beside Telemachus, and spoke to him and called him by name: "What need has brought you here, hero Telemachus, to shining Lacedaemon over the broad back of the sea? Is it a public matter or a private one? Tell me this truly." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Son of Atreus, Menelaus, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people, I've come to see if you can give me any news of my father.

4.318 My house is being eaten up, my rich farmlands are ruined, and the house is full of hostile men who keep slaughtering my thronging sheep and my shambling, crook-horned cattle —my mother's suitors, men of overweening arrogance. That is why I have come now to your knees, in case you are willing to tell me of his grim destruction, if perhaps you saw it with your own eyes or heard the tale of his wanderings from someone else; for beyond all men his mother bore him to misery. Don't soften anything out of respect for me or pity, but tell me plainly

how you came to witness it. I beg you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, promised you some word or deed and carried it out in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaeans suffered so much, remember it now for my sake, and tell me the truth."

4.332 Then fair-haired Menelaus, deeply troubled, said to him: "Oh, the shame of it! So they wanted to sleep in the bed of a strong-hearted man, cowards that they are themselves! It's as when a doe has laid her newborn, suckling fawns to sleep in the lair of a mighty lion and goes off ranging over the hillsides and grassy glens to graze, and then he comes back to his lair and brings an ugly death on both of them—so Odysseus will bring an ugly death on those men. If only, father Zeus and Athena and Apollo, he were the man he was once in well-built Lesbos, when he stood up in a quarrel to wrestle Philomeleides and threw him down hard, and all the Achaeans cheered—if only Odysseus, being such a man, might meet the suitors face to face: they would all find a swift death and a bitter marriage.

THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

Menelaus tells how, stranded on Pharos, he caught the shape-changing Proteus and learned the Greeks' fates.

4.347 As for what you ask and beg of me, I wouldn't swerve aside and tell you something else, nor will I deceive you. But of all that the unerring Old Man of the Sea told me, I will hide no word from you or keep anything back. In Egypt, eager as I was to come home, the gods still held me back, because I had not offered them perfect hecatombs; and the gods always wanted their commands to be remembered. Now, there is an island out in the surging sea, off Egypt, which they call Pharos, as far out as a hollow ship can travel in a whole day when a shrill wind blows behind her. In it is a harbor with good anchorage, from which men launch their balanced ships into the sea after drawing dark water.[5]

5 Pharos is a small island off the Egyptian coast; Homer places it much farther out than it actually lies.

4.360 There the gods kept me for twenty days, and no winds ever appeared blowing out to sea, the winds that speed ships over the broad back of the sea. And now all our provisions would have been used up, and the men's strength too, if one of the gods had not pitied me and saved me: Eidothea, daughter of mighty Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea; for it was her heart above all that I had moved. She met me as I wandered alone, apart from my companions; for they were always roaming around the island fishing with bent hooks, and hunger gnawed at their bellies. She came and stood close by me and spoke to me:

4.371 'Are you such a fool, stranger, so utterly simple-minded? Or are you letting things slide on purpose and enjoying your suffering? You've been held on this island so long now, and you can find no way out, and your companions' hearts grow faint.' So she spoke, and I answered her: 'I'll tell you plainly, whichever of the goddesses you are, that I'm not held here of my own will; I must have offended the immortals who hold the wide heaven. But you tell me—for the gods know everything—which of the immortals is hobbling me and has barred me from my way, and tell me of my homecoming, how I may go over the fish-filled sea.'

4.382 So I spoke, and she, bright among goddesses, answered at once: 'Then I will tell you, stranger, very truly. There is an unerring Old Man of the Sea who often comes here, immortal Proteus of Egypt, who knows the depths of every sea, the servant of Poseidon. They say he is my father, that he begot me. If you could somehow lie in wait and catch hold of him, he would tell you your way and the measures of your journey, and your homecoming, how you may go over the fish-filled sea. And he will tell you too, you whom Zeus cherishes, if you wish it, whatever evil and good has been done in your halls while you have been away on your long and painful journey.'

4.394 So she spoke, and I answered her: 'Then you yourself must devise an ambush for the divine old man, so that he doesn't somehow see me first, or learn of it beforehand, and slip away from me; for a god is hard for a mortal man to master.' So I

spoke, and she, bright among goddesses, answered at once: 'Then I will tell you, stranger, very truly. When the sun has climbed to the middle of the sky, the unerring Old Man of the Sea comes up out of the salt water under the breath of the West Wind, hidden in its dark ripples. When he has come out he lies down to sleep in the hollow caves, and around him the flippered seals, brood of the lovely daughter of the sea, sleep in a herd, having come up out of the gray salt water, breathing out the bitter smell of the deep sea.

4.407 There I will bring you at the first light of dawn and lay you down in a row. You must choose carefully three companions, the best you have by your well-benched ships. And I'll tell you all the old man's tricks. First he will count the seals and go over them; but when he has counted them all off by fives and looked them over, he will lie down among them like a shepherd among his flocks of sheep. As soon as you see him laid down to sleep, then let strength and force be your concern: hold him there, however he strains and struggles to escape. He will try you by turning into everything that creeps on the earth, and into water and fierce blazing fire; but you must hold him steadily and squeeze him all the harder. 4.420 But when he questions you himself in words, in the same shape you saw him in when he lay down to sleep, then, hero, let go your force and release the old man, and ask him which of the gods is angry with you, and about your homecoming, how you may go over the fish-filled sea.' So saying, she plunged beneath the surging sea. But I went to the ships where they stood on the sand, and my heart churned with many thoughts as I went. When I had come down to the ship and the sea, we made ready our supper, and ambrosial night came on; and then we lay down to sleep on the shore of the sea. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, I went along the shore of the wide-wayed sea, praying earnestly to the gods, and I took with me three companions, the ones I trusted most for any venture.

4.435 Meanwhile she had plunged into the broad bosom of the sea and brought four sealskins up out of the water, all freshly

flayed; she was plotting a trick against her father. She scooped out beds in the sand of the shore and sat waiting, and we came up very close to her. She laid us down in a row and threw a skin over each of us. That would have been a most terrible ambush, for the deadly stench of the sea-bred seals tormented us terribly —who would lie down beside a beast of the sea? But she herself saved us and thought of a great relief: she brought ambrosia and put it under each man's nose, with its very sweet fragrance, and it killed the stench of the beast. 4.447 All morning we waited with enduring hearts, and the seals came up from the sea in a crowd and lay down in rows along the shore of the sea. At noon the old man came out of the sea and found his well-fed seals; he went over them all and counted their number. Among the beasts he counted us first, and never suspected in his heart there was a trick; and then he lay down himself. We rushed at him with a shout and threw our arms around him; but the old man did not forget his crafty skill. First he became a bearded lion, and then a serpent, and a leopard, and a great boar; he became flowing water, and a tree with towering leaves; but we held on steadily with enduring hearts. 4.460 But when the old man, for all his tricks, grew weary, then at last he questioned me in words: 'Which of the gods, son of Atreus, plotted with you, so that you could lie in wait and take me against my will? What do you want?' So he spoke, and I answered him: 'You know, old man— why try to sidetrack me with this question? I've been held on this island so long now, and I can find no way out, and my heart grows faint within me. But you tell me—for the gods know everything—which of the immortals is hobbling me and has barred me from my way, and tell me of my homecoming, how I may go over the fish-filled sea.' So I spoke, and he answered me at once:

4.472 'But you ought to have offered fine sacrifices to Zeus and the other gods before you embarked, so as to reach your native land as quickly as possible, sailing over the wine-dark sea. For it is not your fate to see your loved ones and reach your well-built house and your native land until you have gone once more to

the water of Egypt, the heaven-fed river, and offered holy hecatombs to the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven. Then the gods will grant you the journey you long for.' So he spoke, and my heart was broken within me, because he told me to go back over the misty sea to Egypt, a long and painful journey. But even so I answered him and said:[6]

4.485 'All this I will do, old man, just as you command. But come, tell me this and give me a true account: did all the Achaeans whom Nestor and I left behind when we set out from Troy come home with their ships unharmed, or did any of them die a cruel death on board his ship, or in the arms of his friends, once he had wound the war to its end?' So I spoke, and he answered me at once: 'Son of Atreus, why do you ask me this? You have no need to know it, or to learn what is in my mind; and I tell you, you won't stay dry-eyed for long once you've heard it all. Many of them were killed, and many were left alive; but only two leaders of the bronze-clad Achaeans perished on the way home—as for the fighting, you were there yourself. And one, I think, is still alive somewhere, held back on the wide sea.

4.499 Ajax was destroyed along with his long-oared ships. First Poseidon drove him onto the great rocks of Gyrae, and saved him from the sea; and he would have escaped his doom, hated though he was by Athena, if he had not let fly an arrogant boast in his great blindness: he said he had escaped the great gulf of the sea in spite of the gods. Poseidon heard his loud boasting, and at once he took his trident in his mighty hands and struck the Gyrean rock and split it apart. One part stayed where it was, but the broken piece, the one Ajax had sat on at first in his great blindness, fell into the sea and carried him down into the boundless, surging deep. So he perished there, when he had drunk the salt water.[7]

4.512 Your brother, I think, escaped the fates of death and got away in his hollow ships; queenly Hera saved him. But just

6 Homer uses "Egypt" (Aegyptus) also as the name of the river we call the Nile.
7 This is the lesser Ajax, son of Oïleus, who had offended Athena at the sack of Troy; the greater Ajax, son of Telamon, died at Troy.

when he was about to reach the steep headland of Malea, a storm wind snatched him up and carried him, groaning heavily, over the fish-filled sea to the far edge of the land, where Thyestes once had his home, but where Thyestes' son Aegisthus was living then. But when from there too a safe homecoming appeared, and the gods turned the wind back again and they reached home, he stepped joyfully onto his native land, and touched his native soil and kissed it, and many hot tears poured from him, so glad he was to see his land. 4.524 But a watchman saw him from his lookout, one whom crafty Aegisthus had taken and posted there, promising him two talents of gold as wages. He had kept watch for a year, so that Agamemnon would not slip past him unseen and call up his fierce strength. He went to the palace to bring word to the shepherd of the people. At once Aegisthus devised a crafty scheme: he picked out twenty of the best men in the land and set them in ambush, and on the other side of the hall he ordered a feast to be prepared. Then he went with horses and chariots to invite Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, his mind full of ugly designs. He brought him up, unaware of his doom, and killed him after feasting him, as a man kills an ox at its manger. Not one was left of the companions of Atreus' son who followed him, nor one of Aegisthus' men; they were all killed in the hall.'

4.538 So he spoke, and my heart was broken within me. I sat on the sand and wept, and my heart no longer wished to live and see the light of the sun. But when I had had my fill of weeping and rolling on the ground, then the unerring Old Man of the Sea said to me: 'Son of Atreus, weep no longer like this, so long and so unceasingly, for we'll get nowhere by it; but try as quickly as you can to reach your native land. For either you will find him still alive, or Orestes will have killed him before you, and you may arrive in time for the funeral.' So he spoke, and my heart and proud spirit were warmed again within my breast, grieving though I was, and I spoke winged words to him:

4.551 'These two I know of now. But you, name the third man, the one who is still alive and held back somewhere on the wide

sea, or else dead. I want to hear it, grieved as I am.' So I spoke, and he answered me at once: 'The son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca. I saw him on an island, shedding big tears, in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him there by force. He cannot reach his native land, for he has no ships with oars and no companions to carry him over the broad back of the sea.

4.561 As for you, Menelaus, cherished by Zeus, it is not your destiny to die and meet your fate in horse-pasturing Argos. The immortals will send you to the Elysian Plain at the ends of the earth, where fair-haired Rhadamanthys lives, where life is easiest for men. There is no snow there, no long winter, never any rain; Ocean always sends up the breezes of the shrill-blowing West Wind to cool men. This is because you have Helen, and in the gods' eyes you are the son-in-law of Zeus.' So he spoke, and dived under the surging sea. But I went back to the ships with my godlike companions, and my heart was in turmoil as I went.[8]

4.573 When we had come down to the ship and the sea, and had made our supper ready, and ambrosial night came on, we lay down to sleep on the shore of the sea. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, first of all we dragged the ships down into the bright sea and set up the masts and sails in the balanced ships; then we went aboard ourselves and sat down at the benches, and sitting in order we struck the gray sea with our oars. Back into the river of Egypt, fed from the sky, I brought the ships to a stop, and offered perfect hecatombs. And when I had stilled the anger of the gods who live forever, I heaped up a mound for Agamemnon, so that his fame might never be quenched. When I had done all this I set off for home, and the immortals gave me a fair wind and quickly sent me back to my own native land. 4.587 But come now, stay on in my halls until the eleventh or twelfth day has come. Then I'll send you off well and give you splendid gifts: three horses and a finely polished chariot. And after that I'll give you a beautiful cup, so you can pour libations to the immortal gods and remember me all your

8 Rhadamanthys, a son of Zeus, was proverbial for his justice; the Elysian Plain is a paradise at the edge of the world, reserved for a favored few.

days." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Son of Atreus, don't keep me here a long time. I could sit by you for a year, and no longing for home or for my parents would take hold of me, for I take a wonderful delight in listening to your stories and your words. But my companions in holy Pylos are already growing impatient, and you are keeping me here a long time.

4.600 Whatever gift you give me, let it be a treasure to keep. But I won't take horses to Ithaca; I'll leave them here for you yourself, to be your delight. You rule over a broad plain, with plenty of clover in it, and galingale, wheat and spelt and broad-eared white barley. In Ithaca there are no wide courses to run on, no meadow at all; it's a land for goats, and lovelier than horse country. None of the islands that slope down into the sea is fit for driving horses or rich in meadows, and Ithaca least of all." So he spoke, and Menelaus, good at the war cry, smiled, stroked him with his hand, and spoke to him and called him by name:

4.611 "You come of good blood, dear child, to judge by what you say. So I'll exchange these gifts for you; I can do that. Of all the gifts that lie stored as treasures in my house, I'll give you the one that is most beautiful and most precious. I'll give you a finely wrought mixing-bowl. It is solid silver, and its rims are finished in gold, the work of Hephaestus. The hero Phaedimus, king of the Sidonians, gave it to me, when his house sheltered me as I passed there on my way home; and now I want to give it to you." So they talked like this with each other, while the banqueters were arriving at the house of the godlike king. They drove in sheep and brought wine that makes men strong, and their wives with lovely headbands sent them bread.

THE SUITORS' PLOT

The suitors learn that Telemachus has sailed and set an ambush for his return.

4.624 So they were busy over the meal in the halls. But the suitors, in front of Odysseus' hall, were amusing themselves throwing the discus and the javelin on the leveled ground, where they had

before, full of arrogance. Antinous was sitting there, and godlike Eurymachus, the leaders of the suitors and by far the finest of them in excellence. Noemon, son of Phronius, came up to them and put a question to Antinous: "Antinous, do we have any idea in our minds or not when Telemachus will be back from sandy Pylos? He went off with my ship, and I need it to cross over to spacious Elis, where I have twelve mares, and hardy mules with them, still unbroken. I'd like to drive one of them off and break it in."

4.638 So he spoke, and they were astounded in their hearts; they had not thought he had gone to Pylos, the city of Neleus, but that he was somewhere there on the estate, out with the flocks or with the swineherd. Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to him: "Tell me truly: when did he go, and what young men went with him? Picked men of Ithaca, or his own hired men and slaves? He could manage that as well. And tell me this truly, so that I know it well: did he take the black ship from you by force, against your will, or did you give it to him willingly, because he talked you round?" Then Noemon, son of Phronius, answered him:

4.649 "I gave it to him myself, willingly. What else would anyone do, when a man like that, with cares weighing on his heart, asks for something? It would be hard to refuse the gift. The young men who went with him are the best in the land after ourselves. And I saw Mentor going aboard as their leader—or a god, though he looked like Mentor in every way. But this is what puzzles me: I saw noble Mentor here yesterday at dawn, and yet at that time he had already boarded the ship for Pylos." So he spoke and went off to his father's house, and the proud hearts of both men were filled with indignation. They made the suitors sit down together and stopped their games. Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them in distress; his darkened heart was filled to the brim with fury, and his eyes were like blazing fire:

4.663 "Look at that! Telemachus has carried out a great thing, and an insolent one—this journey. And we said it would never

come off! Against the will of all of us, a mere boy simply goes off like this, hauling down a ship and picking the best men in the land. He'll start being trouble, and worse later on. May Zeus destroy his strength before he reaches the full measure of manhood! But come, give me a swift ship and twenty companions, so that I can lie in wait and watch for him myself as he comes back, in the strait between Ithaca and rugged Samos. Then this voyaging in search of his father will end in misery for him."[9]

PENELOPE'S FEARS

Penelope hears of the journey and the plot, prays to Athena, and is comforted by a dream.

4.673 So he spoke, and they all approved and urged him on. Then at once they got up and went into the house of Odysseus. Nor was Penelope long without hearing of the plans the suitors were devising deep in their minds. The herald Medon told her; he had overheard their counsels while he was outside the courtyard and they were weaving their scheme within. He went through the house to bring the news to Penelope, and as he stepped over the threshold Penelope spoke to him: "Herald, why have the proud suitors sent you? To tell the maids of godlike Odysseus to stop their work and prepare a feast for them?

4.684 May they never court again, never gather anywhere else, but dine here now for the last and very last time! You who keep gathering here and eating away so much of the livelihood, the property of wise Telemachus—did you never hear from your fathers in the old days, when you were children, what kind of man Odysseus was among your parents? He never did or said anything out of measure to anyone in the land, though that is the way of godlike kings: one man they'll hate, another they'll favor. But he never did any reckless wrong to any man at all. Your spirit and your shameful deeds are plain to see, and there's

9 Samos here is not the Aegean island but a large island near Ithaca, probably the later Cephallenia.

no gratitude afterward for good deeds done." Then Medon, whose mind was wise, spoke to her in turn:

4.697 "If only, my queen, this were the worst of it! But the suitors are planning another thing, far greater and more grievous—may the son of Cronus not bring it to pass. They are eager to kill Telemachus with the sharp bronze on his way home. He has gone in search of news of his father, to holy Pylos and to bright Lacedaemon." So he spoke, and her knees and her heart gave way where she sat. For a long time she could not speak; her eyes filled with tears, and her full voice was choked. At last she answered him: "Herald, why has my son gone? He had no need to board swift-going ships, which serve men as horses of the sea and cross the great expanse of water. Was it so that not even his name would be left among men?"

4.711 Then Medon, whose mind was wise, answered her: "I don't know whether some god stirred him, or his own heart moved him to go to Pylos, to learn of his father's homecoming or what fate he has met." So he spoke and went off through the house of Odysseus. A heart-destroying grief poured over her; she could no longer bear to sit on a chair, though there were many in the house, but sat down on the threshold of her well-built chamber, lamenting piteously. Around her the maids wailed softly, all who were in the house, young and old. And Penelope, sobbing hard, spoke among them:

4.722 "Listen, friends. The Olympian has given me sorrows beyond all the women who were born and raised in my time. First I lost a noble husband with a lion's heart, outstanding among the Danaans in every kind of excellence, a noble man, whose fame spreads wide through Hellas and the heart of Argos. And now the storm-winds have snatched my beloved son away from the halls without a word, and I never even heard that he had set out. Heartless women! Not one of you thought to wake me from my bed, though you knew perfectly well in your hearts when he went off to the black hollow ship. If I had learned he was planning this journey, he would certainly have stayed, however eager for the road—or else he would have left me dead in the

halls. 4.735 But let someone quickly call old Dolius, my servant, whom my father gave me when I came here, and who keeps my orchard full of trees, so that he can go at once and sit by Laertes and tell him all this. Perhaps Laertes may weave some plan in his mind, and go out and plead in tears with the people who are eager to wipe out his line, which is godlike Odysseus' line too." Then her dear nurse Eurycleia spoke to her in turn: "Dear child, kill me with the pitiless bronze or let me live on in the hall—I won't hide the story from you.

4.745 I knew all this, and I gave him everything he asked for, bread and sweet wine. But he made me swear a great oath not to tell you before the twelfth day had come, or until you missed him yourself and heard that he had gone, so that you wouldn't mar your lovely skin with weeping. Now wash, put clean clothes on your body, go up to the upper rooms with your attendant women, and pray to Athena, daughter of Zeus who bears the aegis; for then she may save him even from death. And don't trouble an old man who is troubled enough. I don't think the line of Arceisius' son is altogether hateful to the blessed gods; there will still be someone, I think, to hold the high-roofed house and the rich fields that lie far off."[10]

4.758 So she spoke, and lulled her weeping and kept her eyes from tears. Penelope washed, put clean clothes on her body, went up to the upper rooms with her attendant women, put barley grains in a basket, and prayed to Athena: "Hear me, child of Zeus who bears the aegis, Atrytone: if ever resourceful Odysseus burned fat thigh-pieces of ox or sheep to you in his halls, remember them now for my sake, save my dear son, and ward off the suitors in their wicked arrogance." So saying she raised the women's cry of prayer, and the goddess heard her. But the suitors broke into uproar throughout the shadowy halls, and one of the arrogant young men would say something like this: "The queen so many have courted is surely getting our wedding

10 Arceisius was Laertes' father, Odysseus' grandfather; his "son" is Laertes.

ready, and has no idea that murder has been prepared for her son."[11]

4.772 So one would say, but they did not know how things really stood. Then Antinous addressed them and spoke among them: "You fools, keep clear of all such arrogant talk, every one of you, or someone may carry word of it even inside. Come, let us get up quietly, just as we are, and carry out the plan that we have all agreed on in our hearts." So saying he picked out twenty of the best men, and they went off to the swift ship and the shore of the sea. First of all they dragged the ship down into deep water, set the mast and sails in the black ship, and fitted the oars in their leather straps, all in due order, and spread out the white sails; and their high-spirited attendants brought them their armor.

4.785 They anchored her well out in the roadstead and came ashore themselves; there they took their supper and waited for evening to come. But wise Penelope lay there in the upper room without food, having tasted neither food nor drink, pondering whether her flawless son would escape death or be brought down by the arrogant suitors. As a lion broods, afraid, in a crowd of men, when they draw their cunning ring around him, so she was brooding when sweet sleep came over her; she sank back and slept, and all her limbs went slack.

4.795 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, thought of something else. She made a phantom, and gave it the form of a woman, Iphthime, daughter of great-hearted Icarius, whom Eumelus had married, whose home was in Pherae. She sent it to the house of godlike Odysseus, to make Penelope, in her grief and lamenting, cease from her weeping and tearful wailing. It entered the chamber past the strap of the bolt, stood above her head, and spoke to her: "Are you asleep, Penelope, your dear heart troubled? The gods who live at ease don't allow you to weep or grieve, since your son will still come home; he has done

11 Atrytone, perhaps meaning "the Unwearied," is a title of Athena.

no wrong at all against the gods." Then wise Penelope answered her, slumbering very sweetly at the gates of dreams:[12]

4.810 "Why have you come here, sister? You never used to come before, since your home is very far away. And you tell me to stop my misery and the many pains that torment me in my mind and heart—I who first lost a noble husband with a lion's heart, outstanding among the Danaans in every kind of excellence, a noble man, whose fame spreads wide through Hellas and the heart of Argos. And now my beloved son has gone off in a hollow ship, a child, who knows little of hard work or of assemblies. For him I grieve even more than for that other one. For him I tremble, and I fear he may come to some harm, either among the people of the land he has gone to, or on the sea; for many enemies are plotting against him, eager to kill him before he reaches his native land."

4.824 Then the shadowy phantom answered her: "Take heart, and don't be so very afraid in your mind. He has a guide going with him such as other men too have prayed to stand at their side—for she has the power—Pallas Athena. She pities you in your grief, and she has sent me now to tell you this." Then wise Penelope spoke to her in turn: "If you really are a god and have heard a god's voice, then come, tell me about that unhappy man as well: is he still alive somewhere and seeing the light of the sun, or is he already dead and in the house of Hades?" Then the shadowy phantom answered her:

4.836 "About him I won't tell you plainly whether he is alive or dead. It's a bad thing to babble empty words." So saying it slipped away past the bolt of the doorpost into the breath of the winds. And the daughter of Icarius started up from sleep, and her dear heart was warmed, because so clear a dream had rushed to her in the dead of night. But the suitors went aboard and sailed the watery ways, pondering sheer murder for Telemachus in their minds. There is a rocky island in the middle of the sea, between Ithaca and rugged Samos—Asteris, not large,

12 Iphthime is Penelope's sister; Eumelus ruled Pherae in Thessaly and fought at Troy.

with twin harbors in it where ships can lie at anchor. There the Achaeans waited in ambush for him.

Book 5

Calypso
Hermes brings the order to free Odysseus; he builds a raft and is wrecked off Phaeacia.

5.1 Dawn rose from her bed beside lordly Tithonus to bring light to the immortals and to mortals. The gods sat down in assembly, and among them was Zeus who thunders on high, whose power is greatest. Athena spoke to them of the many sorrows of Odysseus, calling them to mind, for it troubled her that he was in the house of the nymph: "Father Zeus, and you other blessed gods who live forever, let no sceptered king ever again be eager to be kind and gentle, or keep what is right in his mind. Let him always be harsh and do lawless deeds, since not one of the people he ruled remembers godlike Odysseus, though he was as gentle as a father.[1]

5.13 No, he lies on an island suffering bitter pains, in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him there by force. He cannot reach his native land, for he has no ships with oars and no companions to carry him over the broad back of the sea. And now, on top of this, they are eager to kill his beloved son on his way home. He went for news of his father to holy Pylos and to bright Lacedaemon." Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered her: "My child, what a word has escaped the barrier of your teeth! Wasn't it you yourself who planned this very scheme, that Odysseus should come back and pay those men out? As for Telemachus, escort him with skill, since you can, so that he reaches his nat-

1 Tithonus was a mortal prince loved by Dawn, who won immortality for him.

ive land quite unharmed and the suitors sail back in their ship with nothing done."

5.28 He spoke, and turned to Hermes, his dear son: "Hermes, since you are our messenger in all other things as well, tell the nymph of the lovely hair our unerring decision: the homecoming of steadfast Odysseus, that he is to go home with no escort of gods or of mortal men. On a raft lashed with many bonds, suffering hardships, he will reach fertile Scheria on the twentieth day, the land of the Phaeacians, who are close kin to the gods. They will honor him in their hearts like a god and send him in a ship to his own native land. They will give him bronze and gold in plenty, and clothing, a great deal of it, more than Odysseus would ever have won for himself from Troy if he had come home unharmed with his allotted share of the spoils. For it is his fate to see his loved ones and to reach his high-roofed house and his native land."

HERMES ON OGYGIA

Hermes flies to Calypso's island with Zeus' order to let Odysseus go.

5.43 So he spoke, and the guide Argeïphontes did not disobey. At once he bound on his feet his beautiful sandals, immortal and golden, which carried him over the water and over the boundless earth as swift as the gusts of the wind. He took the wand with which he charms the eyes of men, whomever he wishes, and with which he also wakes the sleeping. With this in his hands the strong Argeïphontes flew. Touching down on Pieria, he dropped from the upper air onto the sea, and then sped over the waves like a gull, which hunts for fish down the dread gulfs of the barren sea and wets its thick-set wings in the brine. Like this, Hermes rode over the many waves. 5.55 But when he reached the island, far off as it was, he stepped out of the violet sea onto dry land and walked on until he came to a great cave, where the nymph of the lovely hair lived, and he found her inside. A great fire was burning on the hearth, and the scent of split cedar and citron-wood burning spread far across the island. Inside, she

was singing in a lovely voice as she moved to and fro before her loom, weaving with a golden shuttle. Around the cave grew a flourishing wood of alder and poplar and fragrant cypress. Long-winged birds nested there: owls and hawks and long-tongued sea-crows, whose business is the work of the sea. 5.68 There, too, a garden vine in its prime spread all around the hollow cave, heavy with clusters of grapes. Four springs in a row ran with bright water, close to one another but each turned its own way. All around, soft meadows of violets and wild celery were in bloom. Even an immortal who came there would gaze in wonder at the sight and delight in his heart. There the guide Argeïphontes stood and gazed. But when he had gazed at everything to his heart's content, he went straight into the wide cave. Calypso, bright among goddesses, knew him at once when she saw him face to face, for the immortal gods are never strangers to one another, even if one of them lives in a house far away. 5.81 But he did not find great-hearted Odysseus inside. He was sitting on the shore weeping, where he always sat, racking his heart with tears and groans and griefs. He would gaze out over the barren sea, shedding tears. Calypso, bright among goddesses, seated Hermes on a shining, glossy chair and questioned him: "Why have you come to me, Hermes of the golden wand, honored and welcome as you are? You've hardly been a visitor before. Tell me what's on your mind. My heart urges me to do it, if I can do it and if it is a thing that can be done. But come in farther first, so that I can set a guest's welcome before you."

5.92 So the goddess spoke, and set beside him a table she had filled with ambrosia, and mixed red nectar. Then the guide Argeïphontes ate and drank. But when he had dined and satisfied his heart with food, then at last he answered her and said: "You ask me, goddess to god, why I have come. Well, I will tell you my errand truthfully, since you bid me. It was Zeus who ordered me to come here, against my will. Who would willingly race across such an endless stretch of salt water? And there's no city of mortals nearby to offer the gods sacrifices and choice

hecatombs. But there is no way for any other god to get around the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus, or to make it come to nothing.

5.105 He says you have a man here with you more wretched than all the rest of those who fought around the city of Priam for nine years, and in the tenth sacked the city and set off for home. But on their way home they sinned against Athena, and she roused an evil wind against them and towering waves. There all the others, his brave companions, perished, but the wind and the waves carried him here and brought him to shore. Now Zeus orders you to send him away as quickly as you can. It is not his lot to die here, far from his loved ones; it is still his fate to see his loved ones and to reach his high-roofed house and his native land." So he spoke, and Calypso, bright among goddesses, shuddered, and she spoke to him winged words:

5.118 "You are cruel, you gods, and jealous beyond all others! You begrudge goddesses who sleep openly with men, if one of them makes a mortal her dear husband. So it was when rosy-fingered Dawn took Orion: you gods who live at ease begrudged her him, until chaste Artemis of the golden throne came upon him in Ortygia and killed him with her gentle arrows. So it was, too, when Demeter of the lovely hair gave in to her heart and lay in love with Iasion in a thrice-plowed fallow field. Zeus did not go long without hearing of it, and he struck him dead with his bright thunderbolt. And so now, you gods, you begrudge me a mortal man by my side. It was I who saved him when he was astride the keel, all alone, after Zeus had struck his swift ship with his bright thunderbolt and shattered it in the middle of the wine-dark sea.[2] 5.133 There all the others, his brave companions, perished, but the wind and the waves carried him here and brought him to shore. I loved him and cared for him, and I used to say that I would make him immortal and ageless for all his days. But since there is no way for any other god to get around the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus, or to make it come to nothing, let him be gone over the barren sea, if Zeus urges and com-

2 Orion and Iasion were mortal lovers of goddesses, killed by the gods; Artemis' "gentle arrows" bring a sudden, painless death.

mands it! But I won't send him off, not in any way, for I have no ships with oars and no companions to carry him over the broad back of the sea. Still, I will gladly advise him and hide nothing from him, so that he reaches his native land quite unharmed." Then the guide Argeïphontes spoke to her again:

CALYPSO'S FAREWELL

Calypso promises to help Odysseus leave, and he chooses home over immortality.

5.146 "Then send him off now, and beware the anger of Zeus, or he may hold a grudge and turn harsh against you later." So he spoke, and the strong Argeïphontes went away. The lady nymph went to great-hearted Odysseus, since she had heard the message of Zeus. She found him sitting on the shore. His eyes were never dry of tears, and his sweet life was ebbing away as he wept for his homecoming, since the nymph no longer pleased him. At night, it's true, he slept beside her in the hollow caves, because he had to, unwilling beside a willing woman. But by day he would sit on the rocks and the beaches, racking his heart with tears and groans and griefs, and would gaze out over the barren sea, shedding tears. She who was bright among goddesses stood close by and spoke to him:

5.160 "Poor man, don't grieve here any longer, and don't let your life waste away. I am ready now to send you off, and gladly. Come, cut long beams and fit them together with the bronze into a broad raft, and fix decking on it, high up, so that it can carry you over the misty sea. I will stow bread and water and red wine on board, as much as you could want, to keep hunger away, and I'll dress you in clothes. And I'll send a fair wind behind you, so that you reach your native land quite unharmed, if the gods are willing, who hold the broad heaven and are stronger than I am, both to plan and to bring about."

5.171 So she spoke, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus shuddered, and he spoke to her winged words: "This is something else you're planning, goddess, and not my send-off at all,

when you tell me to cross the great gulf of the sea on a raft, dreadful and hard as it is. Not even swift, well-balanced ships cross it, though they rejoice in a wind from Zeus. I won't set foot on a raft against your will, unless you bring yourself, goddess, to swear me a great oath that you are not plotting some other harm and trouble for me." So he spoke, and Calypso, bright among goddesses, smiled, stroked him with her hand, and spoke and addressed him:

5.182 "What a rogue you are, and no fool, to have thought of saying such a thing! Now let earth be my witness to this, and the broad heaven above, and the down-flowing water of the Styx, which is the greatest and most dreadful oath for the blessed gods: I am not plotting some other harm and trouble for you. No, what I have in mind and am planning for you is just what I would devise for myself, if such a need ever came upon me. For I too have a mind that knows what is right, and the heart in my breast is not made of iron. It knows pity."[3]

5.192 So she spoke, and she, bright among goddesses, led the way quickly, and he followed in the goddess's footsteps. The goddess and the man came to the hollow cave, and he sat down on the chair from which Hermes had risen. The nymph set all kinds of food beside him to eat and drink, the things that mortal men eat, and she herself sat facing godlike Odysseus, and her maids set ambrosia and nectar beside her. They reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when they had had their fill of food and drink, Calypso, bright among goddesses, was the first to speak:

5.203 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, so you really want to go home now, right away, to your own native land? Well, farewell to you all the same. But if you knew in your heart how many sorrows it is your lot to fill up before you reach your native land, you would stay right here with me and keep this house, and be immortal, however much you long to see your wife, whom you yearn for all your days.

3 The Styx is a river of the underworld; an oath sworn by its water is the most binding a god can take.

And yet I can surely claim I'm not inferior to her, in body or in build, since it isn't at all fitting for mortal women to compete with immortals in body and looks." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her:

5.215 "Lady goddess, don't be angry with me for this. I know it all perfectly well myself: wise Penelope is a lesser sight than you, in looks and in stature, for she is mortal, and you are immortal and ageless. But even so, I want and long all my days to go home and see the day of homecoming. And if some god shatters me again on the wine-dark sea, I will bear it, with a heart in my breast that has learned to endure suffering. I have already suffered a great many things and toiled through a great many, among the waves and in war. Let this be added to the rest." So he spoke, and the sun set and darkness came on. The two of them went into the inmost part of the hollow cave and took their pleasure in love, staying side by side.

5.228 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, Odysseus at once put on a cloak and tunic. The nymph herself put on a great silvery robe, fine-spun and lovely; around her waist she fastened a beautiful golden belt, and on her head she set a veil. Then she began to plan great-hearted Odysseus' journey home. She gave him a great axe that fitted well in his hands, made of bronze and sharpened on both sides, with a very beautiful handle of olive wood, firmly fixed in it. Then she gave him a well-polished adze. She led the way to the far edge of the island, where tall trees grew: alder and poplar, and fir that reached up to the sky. They had been dead a long time and were well seasoned, so they would float lightly for him. 5.241 When she had shown him where the tall trees grew, Calypso, bright among goddesses, went back to her house. He set to cutting timbers, and the work went quickly for him. He felled twenty in all and trimmed them with the bronze. Then he smoothed them skillfully and made them straight to the line. Meanwhile Calypso, bright among goddesses, brought him augers. He bored all the timbers and fitted them to one another, and hammered the raft together with pegs and joints. A man well skilled in carpentry

marks out the hull of a broad-beamed cargo ship to a certain width, and Odysseus made his raft just as wide. He set up decking and fitted it to close-set ribs, and he worked on until he finished it with long side-planks. 5.254 He made a mast for it, with a yard fitted to the mast, and he made a steering oar besides, to steer by. He fenced it all along with wickerwork of willow, to be a bulwark against the waves, and he heaped plenty of brushwood on it. Meanwhile Calypso, bright among goddesses, brought cloth to make sails, and he fashioned these skillfully too. He made the braces, halyards and sheets fast on board, and then with levers he hauled the raft down into the shining sea. It was the fourth day, and all his work was done. On the fifth day bright Calypso sent him from the island, after she had bathed him and dressed him in fragrant clothes.

5.265 The goddess put a skin of dark wine on board for him, and another, a big one, full of water, and provisions in a leather bag. She put in plenty of good things to eat, all he could wish for, and she sent a fair wind blowing, gentle and warm. Godlike Odysseus was glad of the breeze and spread his sails to it. He sat and steered skillfully with the steering oar, and sleep never fell on his eyelids. He kept watching the Pleiades and Boötes, who sets late, and the Bear, which men also call the Wagon. The Bear wheels round in one place and keeps watch on Orion, and she alone has no share in the baths of Ocean. Calypso, bright among goddesses, had told him to keep this star on his left hand as he crossed the sea.[4]

POSEIDON'S STORM

Poseidon wrecks the raft; Ino gives Odysseus her veil, and he swims ashore at a river mouth.

5.278 For seventeen days he sailed across the sea. On the eighteenth day the shadowy mountains of the Phaeacians' land came into view, where it lay nearest to him, and it looked like a shield

4 In Greek skies the Great Bear never sinks below the horizon, so it never "bathes" in Ocean. Keeping it on his left means that Odysseus is sailing east.

lying on the misty sea. But the lord Earth-shaker was coming back from the Ethiopians, and from far off, from the mountains of the Solymi, he saw him: there was Odysseus in plain sight, sailing over the sea. Poseidon grew angrier still at heart, and shaking his head he spoke to his own spirit: "Well! So the gods have changed their minds about Odysseus while I was away among the Ethiopians. And now he's close to the land of the Phaeacians, where it is his fate to escape the great snare of misery that has caught him. But I think I can still give him his fill of trouble."

5.291 So he spoke. He gathered the clouds, seized his trident in his hands and stirred up the sea. He roused the blasts of every kind of wind and covered land and sea together with clouds, and night rushed down from the sky. The East Wind and the South Wind clashed together, and the stormy West Wind, and the North Wind born in the bright sky, rolling a great wave before him. Then Odysseus' knees and his heart gave way, and deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit: "Oh, poor wretch that I am, what will become of me in the end? I'm afraid the goddess told me the whole truth when she said I would have my fill of suffering out at sea, before I reached my native land. Now it is all coming true.

5.303 Look at the clouds Zeus is wreathing over the wide sky! He has stirred up the sea, and the blasts of every kind of wind are rushing on. Now my sheer destruction is certain. Three and four times blessed were the Danaans who died back then in broad Troy, doing a service for the sons of Atreus. If only I had died and met my fate on the day the Trojans in their crowds hurled their bronze-tipped spears at me over the body of the dead son of Peleus! Then I would have had my funeral rites, and the Achaeans would have spread my fame. Now it is my fate to be caught by a miserable death." As he said this, a great wave crashed down on him from above, rushing on him terribly, and spun the raft around.[5]

5 The son of Peleus is Achilles. After Achilles fell at Troy, Odysseus and Ajax fought off the Trojans to recover his body.

5.315 He himself was thrown far from the raft, and the steering oar slipped from his hands. A terrible squall of clashing winds came and snapped his mast in the middle, and sail and yard fell far off into the sea. The wave held him under for a long time. He could not quickly struggle up from under the rush of the great wave, because the clothes bright Calypso had given him weighed him down. At long last he came up and spat the bitter brine out of his mouth, while it streamed in torrents down from his head. Worn out as he was, even then he did not forget the raft. He lunged after it through the waves and caught hold of it, and he sat down in the middle of it, trying to escape death's end. 5.327 The great wave carried the raft this way and that along the current. As in autumn the North Wind carries thistle-tufts over a plain, and they cling close together, so the winds carried the raft this way and that across the sea. Now the South Wind would toss it to the North Wind to carry along, and now the East Wind would give it up to the West Wind to chase. But the daughter of Cadmus saw him, Ino of the lovely ankles, also called Leucothea. Once she was a mortal who spoke with a human voice, but now in the depths of the sea she has received her share of honor from the gods. She pitied Odysseus as he drifted and suffered. She rose from the water like a sea-bird on the wing, perched on the raft with its many lashings, and spoke to him:[6]

5.339 "Poor unlucky man, why is Poseidon the Earth-shaker so furiously angry with you that he keeps planting so many troubles in your path? Still, for all his eagerness, he won't destroy you. Just do as I tell you; you don't seem to me to lack sense. Strip off these clothes and leave the raft for the winds to carry off. Then swim with your arms and strive to reach the land of the Phaeacians, where it is your fate to escape. Here, take this veil and tie it around under your chest. It is immortal, and with it you need not fear harm or death. When you have touched the mainland with your hands, untie it and throw it back into the wine-dark sea, far from the shore, and turn your face away."

6 Ino, daughter of Cadmus of Thebes, threw herself into the sea and became the sea-goddess Leucothea, "the White Goddess."

5.351 So saying, the goddess gave him the veil. She herself plunged back into the surging sea like a sea-bird, and the dark wave covered her. But much-enduring, godlike Odysseus could not decide what to do, and deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit: "Oh no, I hope this isn't another of the immortals weaving a trick against me, telling me to get off my raft! No, I won't obey her yet. I saw the land with my own eyes, and it's a long way off, the land where she said I would find refuge. Here's what I'll do instead, and it seems best to me. As long as the timbers hold together in their joints, I'll stay right here and endure my sufferings. When the waves shake the raft to pieces, then I'll swim, since I can't think of a better plan."

5.365 While he was turning this over in his mind and heart, Poseidon the Earth-shaker raised up a great wave, terrible and cruel, arching over him, and drove it down on him. As a strong wind shakes a heap of dry chaff and scatters it this way and that, so the wave scattered the long timbers of the raft. But Odysseus got astride one timber, as if he were riding a racehorse, and stripped off the clothes bright Calypso had given him. At once he tied the veil around under his chest and fell headlong into the sea, spreading out his arms, eager to swim. The lord Earth-shaker saw him, and shaking his head he spoke to his own heart:

5.377 "Go on, then. Suffer plenty of hardships and wander over the sea, until you come among men cherished by Zeus. Even so, I don't expect you'll complain that you got too little trouble." So he spoke, and he whipped up his horses with their lovely manes and came to Aegae, where his glorious house stands. But Athena, daughter of Zeus, had other plans. She blocked the paths of the other winds and ordered them all to stop and go to rest. Then she roused the swift North Wind and broke the waves before Odysseus, so that Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, could escape death and doom and come among the oar-loving Phaeacians. For two nights and two days he drifted on the heavy swell, and many times his heart foresaw destruction.

5.390 When Dawn of the lovely hair brought the third day to its end, the wind dropped at last and there was a windless calm. A great wave lifted him up, and as he peered out keenly he caught sight of land close by. As welcome as a father's life seems to his children when he has lain sick, suffering harsh pains and wasting away for a long time because some hateful god has attacked him, and then, to their joy, the gods free him from his affliction —so welcome did the land and the woods seem to Odysseus, and he swam on hard, eager to set his feet on the shore. But when he was as far off as a man's shout can carry, he heard the thunder of the sea against the reefs. The great wave crashed and roared against the dry land, belching terribly, and everything was wrapped in sea-foam. There were no harbors there to hold ships, and no sheltered anchorage, 5.405 only jutting headlands, reefs and crags. Then Odysseus' knees and his heart gave way, and deeply troubled he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit: "Oh no! Zeus has let me see land when I had lost all hope, and I have cut my way across this gulf of sea and made it through. Yet I can see no way out of the gray sea anywhere. Out here there are sharp crags, and the surf roars and booms all around them. The smooth rock rises sheer, and the water is deep right up to it, so there is no place to stand on both feet and escape disaster. If I try to climb out, I'm afraid a great wave will snatch me up and dash me against the jagged rock, and all my effort will be wasted.

5.417 But suppose I swim on further along the coast, hoping to find somewhere a shelving beach or a harbor. Then I'm afraid the squall will snatch me up again and carry me, groaning heavily, out onto the fish-filled sea. Or some god may even set a great sea-monster on me out of the deep, one of the many that famous Amphitrite breeds. I know how the famous Earth-shaker hates me." While he was turning this over in his mind and heart, a great wave carried him toward the rugged shore. His skin would have been stripped off there and his bones crushed, if the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had not put a thought in his mind. He

rushed forward, grabbed the rock with both hands, and clung to it groaning until the great wave had gone by.[7]

5.430 So he escaped that wave. But as it flowed back it rushed at him and struck him again, and it flung him far out to sea. As pebbles cling thick to the suckers of an octopus dragged from its den, so the skin was torn from his strong hands and left on the rocks, and the great wave covered him. Poor Odysseus would have perished then, beyond what fate allowed, if gray-eyed Athena had not given him presence of mind. He came up out of the wave where it surges toward the land, swam along outside the breakers, and kept looking toward the land, hoping to find somewhere a shelving beach or a harbor. At last, still swimming, he came to the mouth of a fair-flowing river. This seemed to him the best place, clear of rocks and sheltered from the wind as well. He recognized the river as it streamed out toward him, and he prayed to it in his heart:

5.445 "Hear me, lord, whoever you are. I have prayed long and hard to reach you, and I come to you fleeing out of the sea from Poseidon's threats. Even the immortal gods respect a man who comes to them as a wanderer, as I now come to your stream and to your knees after all my struggles. Have pity on me, lord: I declare myself your suppliant." So he spoke. At once the river stopped his current and held back the waves. He made the water calm in front of Odysseus and brought him safely into the river's mouth. Then both his knees and his strong arms gave way, for the sea had crushed the heart in him.[8]

5.455 His whole body was swollen, and sea-water gushed in streams from his mouth and nostrils. He lay breathless and speechless, barely able to move, and a terrible weariness came over him. When he had got his breath back and his spirit had come back into his heart, he untied the goddess's veil from his body. He let it go into the river where it runs into the sea, and the great wave carried it back down the current, and at once Ino

7 Amphitrite is a sea-goddess, wife of Poseidon and queen of the sea.
8 Clasping someone's knees was the gesture of a suppliant. Here Odysseus comes to the river god as a suppliant.

caught it in her own hands. Then Odysseus moved away from the river, sank down among the reeds and kissed the grain-giving earth. Deeply troubled, he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit:

5.465 "Oh no, what am I to do? What will become of me in the end? If I keep watch through the comfortless night here by the river, I'm afraid the cruel frost and the fresh dew together will be too much for me, faint as I am from exhaustion. And a cold breeze blows off the river in the early morning. But suppose I climb the slope into the shady wood and fall asleep in the thick bushes, hoping that the cold and weariness will leave me and sweet sleep will come over me. Then I fear I'll become prey and spoil for wild beasts." As he thought it over, this second course seemed the better one. He set off into the wood, and he found it near the water, in a spot open on every side. There he crept under two bushes growing from the same spot, one a wild olive and the other an olive.

5.478 The force of the damp winds never blew through them, and the shining sun never struck them with its rays, and the rain never soaked right through them, so thick and intertwined they grew. Odysseus crept underneath them. At once he heaped up a bed for himself with his own hands, a broad one, for a great drift of fallen leaves lay there. There were enough leaves to shelter two or three men in winter weather, however harsh it might be. Much-enduring, godlike Odysseus was glad when he saw them. He lay down in the middle and heaped the drift of leaves over himself. As a man who lives at the far edge of the farmland, with no neighbors near, buries a glowing brand in dark ashes, saving the seed of fire so that he need not fetch a light from somewhere else, so Odysseus covered himself with the leaves. Then Athena poured sleep over his eyes and closed his eyelids, so that sleep might quickly release him from his painful weariness.

Book 6

Nausicaa
The princess finds Odysseus on the shore and shows him the way to the city.

6.1 So he slept there, much-enduring, godlike Odysseus, overcome by sleep and weariness. But Athena went to the land and city of the Phaeacians. They had once lived in spacious Hypereia, near the Cyclopes, overbearing men who kept plundering them and were stronger than they were. From there godlike Nausithous had moved them and led them away, and he settled them in Scheria, far from men who labor for their bread. He drove a wall around the city, built houses, made temples for the gods, and divided up the fields. But he had already been overcome by his fate and gone down to Hades, and Alcinous was ruling then, a man whose wisdom came from the gods. It was to his house that the goddess went, gray-eyed Athena, planning a homecoming for great-hearted Odysseus.[1] 6.15 She went to the richly decorated chamber where a girl lay asleep, like the immortal goddesses in stature and looks: Nausicaa, the daughter of great-hearted Alcinous. Near her slept two handmaids, whose beauty came from the Graces, one on either side of the doorposts, and the shining doors were closed. Athena swept like a breath of wind to the girl's bed and stood above her head and spoke to her, taking the likeness of the daughter of Dymas, famous for his ships. This girl was the same age as Nausicaa and dear to her heart. In her likeness gray-eyed Athena spoke to her:

1 The Phaeacians are a seafaring people living at the edge of the known world; their island, Scheria, is where Odysseus has just washed ashore.

"Nausicaa, how did your mother come to have such a careless daughter? Your shining clothes are lying there neglected, and yet your wedding is near, when you'll need to wear fine things yourself and give them to those who lead you home as a bride.

6.29 That's how a good name spreads among people, and it makes your father and lady mother happy. So let's go and do the washing as soon as dawn appears. I'll come along to help you, so you can get ready as quickly as possible, because you won't be a girl for much longer. Already the best men of the whole land are courting you—of all the Phaeacians, your own people. Come on, then: early in the morning urge your glorious father to have the mules and a wagon harnessed, to carry the sashes and robes and shining coverlets. And for you yourself it's much better to go that way than on foot, since the washing pools are a long way from the city."

6.41 So speaking, gray-eyed Athena went away to Olympus, where they say the seat of the gods stands forever firm. It is not shaken by winds or ever soaked by rain, and snow does not come near it; clear air spreads all around it, cloudless, and a white radiance plays over it. There the blessed gods take their delight all their days. There the gray-eyed goddess went, once she had made her meaning plain to the girl. Soon fair-throned Dawn came and woke Nausicaa of the lovely robes. At once she wondered at her dream, and went through the house to tell her parents, her dear father and her mother. She found them at home. Her mother was sitting by the hearth with her serving-women, spinning yarn dyed with sea-purple; her father she met just as he was going out of doors to join the famous lords at the council, where the noble Phaeacians had summoned him. She stood very close to her dear father and said:

6.57 "Daddy dear, won't you have the wagon harnessed for me, the tall one with the good wheels, so I can take our fine clothes to the river to wash? They're lying around dirty. And it's only right for you, when you sit among the leading men deliberating, to have clean clothes on. You also have five dear sons living in the house, two married and three bachelors in their prime, and

they always want freshly washed clothes to wear when they go dancing. I have to think about all of this." So she spoke, for she was too shy to speak of her own ripening marriage to her dear father. But he understood it all, and answered her with these words: "I don't begrudge you the mules, child, or anything else. Go. The servants will harness the wagon for you, the tall one with the good wheels, fitted with its frame on top."

6.71 So saying, he called to the servants, and they obeyed. Outside they got the smooth-running mule wagon ready, led the mules under the yoke and harnessed them to the wagon, while the girl brought the shining clothes out of her chamber and laid them in the polished wagon. Her mother packed a box with food of every kind, all the heart could want, and put in savory things too, and poured wine into a goatskin; and the girl climbed onto the wagon. Her mother also gave her liquid olive oil in a golden flask, so that she and her serving-women could anoint themselves after bathing. She took the whip and the shining reins and touched up the mules to get them going. There was a clatter of hooves, and the mules pulled steadily on, carrying the clothes and the girl herself—and not her alone: the other handmaids went along with her.

6.85 When they came to the lovely stream of the river, where the washing pools were that never ran dry, and plenty of clear water welled up and flowed over them, enough to clean even the dirtiest things, there they unhitched the mules from the wagon and drove them along the eddying river to graze on the honey-sweet grass. They took the clothes from the wagon in their arms, carried them into the dark water, and trampled them in the trenches, quickly, racing one another. When they had washed them and cleaned off all the dirt, they spread them out in a row along the seashore, where the sea washed the pebbles up onto the beach most cleanly. Then they bathed, rubbed themselves richly with oil, and had their meal on the riverbanks, waiting for the clothes to dry in the sunshine. 6.99 When they had eaten their fill, the maids and the princess herself, they threw off their headscarves and played ball, and white-armed Nausicaa led

them in their song. As Artemis the archer goes over the mountains, along towering Taygetus or Erymanthus, delighting in the boars and swift deer, and with her the nymphs, daughters of Zeus who bears the aegis, roam the wild country and play, and Leto's heart is glad; for Artemis holds her head and brow above them all, and is easily known, though all of them are beautiful—so the unmarried girl stood out among her handmaids.

ODYSSEUS AND NAUSICAA

Odysseus wakes, approaches the girls naked and begs Nausicaa for help.

6.110 But when she was about to set off home again, after yoking the mules and folding the fine clothes, then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another idea: that Odysseus should wake up and see the lovely-eyed girl, so that she might lead him to the city of the Phaeacians. So the princess threw the ball to one of her handmaids. She missed the handmaid and threw it into a deep eddy, and they all let out a long shriek. Godlike Odysseus woke up, sat up, and turned things over in his mind and heart: "Oh, wretched me, whose land have I come to now? Are they violent and savage and unjust, or kind to strangers, with minds that fear the gods?

6.122 It sounded as if a high cry of girls rang around me—of nymphs, who haunt the steep peaks of the mountains, and the springs of rivers, and the grassy meadows. Or am I somewhere near human beings who speak? Well, I'll go and find out for myself, and see." So speaking, godlike Odysseus crept out from under the bushes, and with his strong hand he broke a leafy branch from the thick wood, to hold around his body and cover his genitals. He went forward like a mountain-bred lion, trusting in his strength, who goes out through rain and wind with his eyes blazing; he goes in among the cattle or the sheep, or after the wild deer, and his belly drives him to attack the flocks and even to enter a well-built fold—so Odysseus was about to go

among the girls with the lovely hair, naked as he was, for need had come upon him.

6.137 He appeared terrible to them, all fouled with brine, and they scattered this way and that along the jutting beaches. Only the daughter of Alcinous stayed, for Athena put courage in her heart and took the fear from her limbs. She stood her ground, facing him. And Odysseus pondered whether to clasp the lovely-eyed girl by the knees and beg her, or just to stand apart and beg her with gentle words to show him the city and give him clothes. As he thought it over, this seemed the better course: to stand apart and beg her with gentle words, in case the girl was angered at heart if he clasped her knees. At once he spoke, gently and shrewdly:[2]

6.149 "I implore you, my lady—are you a goddess or a mortal? If you are a goddess, one of those who hold wide heaven, I would liken you most closely to Artemis, daughter of great Zeus, in beauty, stature and form. But if you are one of the mortals who live upon the earth, three times blessed are your father and your lady mother, and three times blessed your brothers. Their hearts must always glow with happiness because of you, when they watch such a young sapling entering the dance. But happiest at heart beyond all others is the man who outdoes the rest with his bride-gifts and leads you home. I have never yet set eyes on such a mortal, man or woman; awe takes hold of me as I look at you. 6.162 Once, on Delos, beside the altar of Apollo, I saw something like you: a young palm shoot springing up. For I went there too, and a great company followed me, on the journey that was to bring me cruel troubles. And just as, when I saw that, I stood amazed at it in my heart for a long time, since no such sapling had ever sprung up from the earth, so, lady, I admire you and stand amazed, and I am terribly afraid to touch your knees. Hard grief has come upon me. Yesterday, on the twentieth day, I escaped from the wine-dark sea; all that time the waves and the rushing storms had carried me along from the island of Ogygia.

2 A suppliant traditionally clasped the knees of the person whose help he begged, a gesture that placed him under the protection of the gods.

And now some god has cast me up here, so that I may suffer more harm here too, I suppose; for I don't think it will end—the gods will bring about much more before that.[3] 6.175 But have pity, my lady. You are the first I have come to after all my hardships, and I know none of the other people who hold this city and land. Show me the town, and give me a rag to throw around me, if you had some wrapper for the clothes when you came here. And may the gods give you all that your heart longs for, a husband and a home, and grant you a good harmony of mind; for there is nothing better or finer than when a husband and wife keep house together, of one mind in their thoughts. It brings great pain to their enemies and joy to their friends, and they themselves know it best." Then white-armed Nausicaa answered him in turn:

6.187 "Stranger, you don't seem to be a bad man or a foolish one. It is Olympian Zeus himself who deals out happiness to people, to the good and the bad, to each as he wishes; he must have given you this lot, and you have to bear it all the same. But now that you have come to our city and our land, you won't lack clothing or anything else that a hard-pressed suppliant ought to have when he meets with someone. I will show you the town, and tell you the name of the people. The Phaeacians hold this city and land, and I am the daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, on whom the strength and power of the Phaeacians depend." She spoke, and called to her handmaids with the lovely hair:

6.199 "Stop, my handmaids! Where are you running off to, just because you've seen a man? You surely don't think he's an enemy? There is no man living, and there never will be, who could come to the land of the Phaeacians bringing war, for we are very dear to the immortals. We live far away in the surging sea, at the very edge of the world, and no other mortals have dealings with us. No, this is some poor wanderer who has come here, and we must take care of him now; for all strangers and beggars come from Zeus, and a gift, however small, is welcome.

3 Delos, a small Aegean island, was sacred to Apollo; it was said that Leto clung to a palm tree there when she gave birth to him.

So give the stranger food and drink, my handmaids, and bathe him in the river, where there's shelter from the wind."

6.211 So she spoke, and they stopped and called to one another, and they sat Odysseus down in a sheltered spot, as Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, had told them. Beside him they laid clothes, a cloak and a tunic, and gave him liquid olive oil in the golden flask, and told him to bathe in the river's stream. Then godlike Odysseus said to the handmaids: "Handmaids, stand off over there, so that I can wash the brine from my shoulders myself and rub myself with oil—it's been a long time since oil touched my skin. I won't bathe in front of you; I'm ashamed to strip naked when I've come among girls with lovely hair."

6.223 So he spoke, and they went off a distance and told the girl. And godlike Odysseus washed from his skin with river water the brine that caked his back and his broad shoulders, and from his head he scrubbed the scurf of the barren sea. When he had washed himself all over and rubbed himself with oil, and put on the clothes the unmarried girl had given him, Athena, born of Zeus, made him taller to look at and sturdier, and from his head she made his hair fall in curls, like the hyacinth flower. As when a skilled man overlays silver with gold, one whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught every kind of craft, and the work he finishes is full of grace, so she poured grace over his head and shoulders. 6.236 Then he went off a little way and sat down on the seashore, shining with beauty and grace; and the girl gazed at him. Then she said to her handmaids with the lovely hair: "Listen to me, white-armed handmaids, I have something to tell you. It's not against the will of all the gods who hold Olympus that this man has come among the godlike Phaeacians. Before, he looked shabby to me, but now he looks like the gods who hold wide heaven. If only a man like this could be called my husband, living here, and be happy to stay here! But come, handmaids, give the stranger food and drink."

DIRECTIONS TO THE CITY

Nausicaa tells Odysseus how to reach the palace and win over her mother.

6.247 So she spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed, and set food and drink beside Odysseus. Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus drank and ate ravenously, for he had gone a long time without food. But white-armed Nausicaa had another idea. She folded the clothes and put them in the fine wagon, yoked the strong-hoofed mules, and climbed up herself. Then she urged Odysseus on, and spoke to him and addressed him: "Get up now, stranger, and come to the city, so that I can take you to my wise father's house, where I promise you'll meet all the best of the Phaeacians.

6.258 But do it like this—you don't seem to me to lack sense. As long as we're going through the fields and the farmland, walk quickly with the handmaids behind the mules and the wagon, and I'll lead the way. But when we come to the city—there's a high wall around it, and a fine harbor on either side of the city, and the entrance is narrow; the curved ships are drawn up along the road, for every one of them has its own berth. There too is their meeting place, around the fine shrine of Poseidon, built of quarried stones set deep in the ground. There they look after the gear of their black ships, the cables and sails, and plane the oars down. For the Phaeacians care nothing for the bow or the quiver, only for masts and the oars of ships and well-balanced ships, in which they take pride as they cross the gray sea. 6.273 It's their ugly gossip I want to avoid, in case someone mocks me afterward; there are some very arrogant people in the town. Some low fellow might meet us and say something like this: 'Who's this tall, handsome stranger following Nausicaa? Where did she find him? He'll be her husband, you can be sure. She must have picked up some castaway from his ship, someone from a faraway people, since nobody lives near us. Or some god she's prayed and prayed for has come down from heaven in

answer, and she'll have him all her days. Good for her if she's gone out herself and found a husband from somewhere else, since she looks down on the Phaeacians here in town, though plenty of fine men are courting her.'

6.285 That's what they'll say, and it would be a disgrace to me. I'd blame any other girl myself who did such things, who kept company with men against the wishes of her father and mother while they were still alive, before her wedding was held in the open. So, stranger, listen carefully to what I tell you, so that you can get an escort and a homecoming from my father as soon as possible. Near the road you'll find a splendid grove of poplars sacred to Athena; a spring flows in it, and there's a meadow all around. My father has his estate there, and a flourishing orchard, as far from the city as a man's shout carries. Sit down there and wait for a while, until we get to town and reach my father's house. 6.297 Then, when you think we've reached the house, go into the city of the Phaeacians and ask for the house of my father, great-hearted Alcinous. It's easy to recognize, and even a little child could lead you there, for the Phaeacians' houses are built nothing like the home of the hero Alcinous. But once you're inside the house and the courtyard, go quickly through the hall until you come to my mother. She sits at the hearth in the light of the fire, spinning yarn dyed with sea-purple, a wonder to see, leaning against a pillar, with her maids sitting behind her. My father's throne is set against the same pillar, close beside her, and there he sits and drinks his wine like an immortal. 6.310 Go past him and throw your arms around our mother's knees, so that you may see the day of your homecoming with joy, and soon, however far away your home may be. If she feels kindly toward you in her heart, then there is hope that you'll see your loved ones and reach your well-built house and your native land." So saying, she struck the mules with her shining whip, and they quickly left the river's streams behind. They trotted well and stepped out smartly, and she drove carefully, so that the handmaids and Odysseus could keep up on foot, and used the whip with judgment.

6.321 The sun set, and they came to the famous grove sacred to Athena, where godlike Odysseus sat down. At once he prayed to the daughter of great Zeus: "Hear me, child of Zeus who bears the aegis, Atrytone! Listen to me now at last, since you never listened before, when I was being battered, when the famous Earth-shaker battered me. Grant that I come among the Phaeacians as a friend, and one to be pitied." So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athena heard him. But she did not yet appear to him face to face, for she respected her father's brother; and he kept up his furious rage against godlike Odysseus until he reached his own land.[4]

4 Poseidon, Odysseus' enemy, is the brother of Athena's father Zeus.

Book 7

The palace of Alcinous
Odysseus is welcomed by Queen Arete and King Alcinous.

7.1 So he prayed there, much-enduring, godlike Odysseus, while the strength of the two mules carried the girl to the city. When she reached her father's glorious house, she halted them at the gateway, and her brothers, like the immortals, gathered around her. They unyoked the mules from the wagon and carried the clothes inside. She herself went to her chamber, and an old woman from Apeire lit a fire for her: Eurymedusa, her chambermaid, whom curved ships had once brought from Apeire. The people had picked her out as a prize of honor for Alcinous, because he ruled over all the Phaeacians and the people listened to him as to a god. She had raised white-armed Nausicaa in the hall. Now she lit the fire for her and made ready her supper inside.

7.14 Then Odysseus set out to go to the city. Athena, kindly disposed toward Odysseus, poured a thick mist around him, so that none of the great-hearted Phaeacians who met him would taunt him or ask him who he was. But just as he was about to enter the lovely city, the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, met him there in the likeness of a young girl carrying a pitcher. She stopped in front of him, and godlike Odysseus asked her: "My child, won't you guide me to the house of Alcinous, the man who rules over the people here? I've come here as a stranger, worn out by suffering, from far away, from a distant land, so I don't know any of the people who live in this city and this country."

7.27 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him in turn: "Well then, stranger, father, I'll show you the house you ask for, since it lies close to my own excellent father's. But walk on just as you are, in silence, and I'll lead the way. Don't look at anyone or question anyone. The people here don't much put up with strangers, and they give no warm welcome to anyone who comes from elsewhere. Trusting in their swift, quick ships, they cross the great gulf of the sea, since the Earth-shaker granted them that; their ships are as quick as a wing or a thought."

7.37 So she spoke, and Pallas Athena led the way quickly, and he followed in the goddess's footsteps. The Phaeacians, famed for their ships, did not notice him as he walked through the city among them, for Athena of the lovely hair, the dread goddess, would not allow it: with kindness in her heart she had poured a wondrous mist over him. Odysseus marveled at the harbors and the well-balanced ships, at the meeting-places of the heroes themselves, and at the long walls, high and topped with stakes, a wonder to see. But when they reached the glorious house of the king, the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, was the first to speak:

7.48 "This, stranger, father, is the house you asked me to show you. You'll find the lords whom Zeus cherishes feasting at their banquet. Go on inside, and don't be afraid at heart: a bold man comes off better in every venture, even if he comes from some other land. In the hall you'll first come upon the queen. Arete is the name she's called by, and she comes from the very same forebears who gave birth to King Alcinous. First, Nausithous was born to Poseidon the Earth-shaker and Periboea, the loveliest of women in looks, youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedon, who was once king over the overweening Giants. But he brought his reckless people to destruction, and was destroyed himself. Poseidon lay with her, and she bore a son, great-hearted Nausithous, who ruled among the Phaeacians. Nausithous fathered Rhexenor and Alcinous. 7.64 Rhexenor, still without a son and newly married, was struck down in the hall by Apollo of the silver bow, leaving one child only, a daughter: Arete. Alcinous made her his wife, and honored her as no other

woman on earth is honored, of all the women who now keep house under their husbands. So she has been honored from the heart, and still is, by her dear children, by Alcinous himself, and by the people, who look on her as a god and greet her with words of welcome whenever she walks through the town. For she herself is in no way lacking in good sense, and for those she favors she settles quarrels, even between men. If she is well disposed toward you in her heart, then there's hope that you'll see your loved ones and reach your high-roofed house and your native land."

THE PALACE OF ALCINOUS

Odysseus marvels at the palace and gardens, then clasps Queen Arete's knees.

7.78 So she spoke, and gray-eyed Athena went away over the barren sea and left lovely Scheria. She came to Marathon and to Athens of the wide streets, and entered the solid house of Erechtheus. But Odysseus went toward the glorious house of Alcinous, and his heart turned over many things as he stood there before reaching the bronze threshold. For a gleam as of the sun or the moon lay over the high-roofed house of great-hearted Alcinous. Walls of bronze ran this way and that, from the threshold to the innermost room, with a frieze of dark-blue enamel along the top. Golden doors closed in the solid house; silver doorposts stood on the bronze threshold, the lintel above them was silver, and the door-handle gold.[1] 7.91 On either side stood dogs of gold and silver, which Hephaestus had made with his skillful mind to guard the house of great-hearted Alcinous, immortal and ageless for all their days. Inside, seats were set firmly along the wall on either side, right through from the threshold to the innermost room, and on them were spread fine, well-woven coverings, the work of women. There the leaders of the Phaeacians used to sit eating and drinking, for they had plenty all year

1 Erechtheus was a legendary early king of Athens, whose house on the Acropolis Athena shared as her temple.

round. Golden youths stood on well-built pedestals, holding blazing torches in their hands, lighting up the nights throughout the house for the feasters. He has fifty serving women in the house: some grind the yellow grain at the millstones, others weave at their looms or sit twisting the spindle, their hands moving like the leaves of a tall poplar; and the liquid oil drips off the close-woven linen. 7.108 Just as the Phaeacians are skilled beyond all men at driving a swift ship over the sea, so are their women at the loom; for Athena has given them, beyond others, the knowledge of beautiful handiwork and good minds. Outside the courtyard, near the doors, lies a large orchard of four acres, with a fence running round it on every side. There tall trees grow, in full bloom: pears and pomegranates and apple trees with shining fruit, sweet figs and flourishing olives. Their fruit never perishes or fails, winter or summer; it lasts all year. The West Wind is always blowing, bringing some to bud and ripening others. 7.120 Pear ripens upon pear, apple upon apple, grape-cluster upon grape-cluster, fig upon fig. There too his fruitful vineyard is planted. In one part of it, a warm drying-floor on level ground, the grapes are drying in the sun; elsewhere they are gathering others, and treading still others. In front are unripe grapes just shedding their blossom, and others turning dark. There, beside the last row of vines, grow neat garden beds of every kind, bright all year round. And in it are two springs: one runs through the whole garden, while the other, from the opposite side, flows under the courtyard threshold toward the high house, and from it the townspeople draw their water. Such were the splendid gifts of the gods at the house of Alcinous.

7.133 There much-enduring, godlike Odysseus stood and gazed. But when he had gazed at everything to his heart's content, he quickly stepped over the threshold into the house. He found the leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians pouring libations from their cups to keen-sighted Argeïphontes, to whom they always poured last, when they turned their thoughts to bed. Much-enduring, godlike Odysseus went through the house, wrapped in the thick mist that Athena had poured around him, until he

came to Arete and King Alcinous. Odysseus threw his arms around Arete's knees, and at that moment the god-sent mist streamed away from him. They all fell silent throughout the house when they saw the man, and they marveled as they looked. Then Odysseus made his plea:[2]

7.146 "Arete, daughter of godlike Rhexenor, after much suffering I come to your husband and to your knees, and to these feasters. May the gods grant them prosperity in their lives, and may each of them hand down to his children the wealth in his halls and whatever honor the people have given him. But as for me, make ready a passage home, to bring me quickly to my native land, since I have long been suffering hardships far from my own people." So he spoke, and sat down on the hearth in the ashes beside the fire, and they all were hushed in silence. At last the old hero Echeneus spoke out. He was the eldest of the Phaeacian men, and excelled in speaking, knowing many things of long ago. With good intent he addressed them and said:[3]

7.159 "Alcinous, this is not the better way, nor is it fitting, for a stranger to sit on the ground at the hearth in the ashes, while these men hold back, waiting for your word. Come, raise the stranger up and seat him on a silver-studded chair, and tell the heralds to mix wine, so that we may pour a libation to Zeus who delights in thunder, who attends on suppliants, who deserve respect. And let the housekeeper give the stranger supper from what is in store." When the sacred strength of Alcinous heard this, he took Odysseus, wise and of subtle cunning, by the hand, raised him from the hearth and seated him on a shining chair, making his son, manly Laodamas, get up from it; he sat next to him, and was the son he loved most.

7.172 A maid brought water for washing in a beautiful golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for him to wash his hands, and beside him she drew up a polished table. The respec-

2 Argeïphontes is a title of Hermes, who as a bringer of sleep received the last libation of the evening.

3 Sitting in the ashes of the hearth was the posture of a suppliant, who placed himself under the protection of the household and of Zeus.

ted housekeeper brought bread and set it before him, adding many dishes, giving freely of what she had. And much-enduring, godlike Odysseus drank and ate. Then the might of Alcinous spoke to the herald: "Pontonous, mix a bowl and serve wine to everyone throughout the hall, so that we may pour a libation to Zeus who delights in thunder, who attends on suppliants, who deserve respect." So he spoke, and Pontonous mixed the honey-sweet wine and served it out to all, first pouring a few drops into each cup. But when they had poured their libations and drunk as much as their hearts desired, Alcinous addressed them and said:

7.186 "Hear me, leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians, so that I may say what the heart in my breast bids me. Now that you've feasted, go home and lie down to rest. At dawn we'll call more of the elders together, entertain the stranger in our halls and offer fine sacrifices to the gods; and after that we'll give thought to his passage home, so that the stranger, free of toil and distress, may reach his native land under our escort, rejoicing, quickly, even if he comes from very far away, and suffer no harm or hardship on the way before he sets foot on his own land. There, after that, he must suffer whatever fate and the grim Spinners spun for him with their thread at his birth, when his mother bore him. 7.199 But if he is one of the immortals come down from heaven, then the gods are contriving something different. For always before now the gods have appeared to us plainly, whenever we offer glorious hecatombs, and they feast beside us, sitting just where we sit. And if one of us, traveling alone, should meet them on the road, they don't hide themselves at all, since we are close kin to them, as the Cyclopes are, and the wild tribes of the Giants." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Alcinous, put some other thought in your mind. I am not like the immortals who hold wide heaven, neither in stature nor in build, but like mortal men. Whoever you know of among men who bears the heaviest load of misery—those are the ones I'd match in my sufferings.

7.213 And I could tell of still more troubles, all that I have endured by the will of the gods. But let me eat my supper, dis-

tressed as I am. There is nothing more shameless than the hateful belly, which forces a man to think of it, however worn down he is and however much grief he has in his heart. So it is with me: I have grief in my heart, but the belly keeps bidding me eat and drink, makes me forget everything I've suffered, and demands to be filled. But you, as soon as dawn appears, make haste to set me, wretched as I am, on my native soil, after all my suffering. Let life leave me, once I've seen my possessions, my servants and my great high-roofed house."

ARETE'S QUESTION

Arete recognizes the clothes, and Odysseus tells of Calypso and his shipwreck.

7.226 So he spoke, and they all approved and urged that the stranger be sent on his way, since he had spoken fittingly. But when they had poured their libations and drunk as much as their hearts desired, they went home to lie down, each to his own house; but godlike Odysseus was left behind in the hall, and beside him sat Arete and godlike Alcinous, while the maids cleared away the dishes of the feast. White-armed Arete was the first to speak, for when she saw his fine clothes she recognized the cloak and tunic, which she herself had made with her serving women; and she spoke winged words to him:

7.237 "Stranger, I will ask you this first myself: who are you, and where are you from? Who gave you these clothes? Didn't you say you came here after wandering over the sea?" Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "It's hard, my queen, to tell my troubles from start to finish, since the gods of heaven have given me so many. But I will tell you this, what you ask and inquire about. There is an island, Ogygia, that lies far off in the sea. There lives the daughter of Atlas, crafty Calypso of the lovely hair, a dread goddess, and no one keeps company with her, neither god nor mortal man. But some god brought me, wretched as I am, alone to her hearth, after Zeus had struck my swift ship with his blaz-

ing thunderbolt and shattered it in the middle of the wine-dark sea.

7.251 There all the rest of my good companions perished, but I clasped the keel of the curved ship in my arms and was carried along for nine days; on the tenth, in the black night, the gods brought me to the island of Ogygia, where Calypso of the lovely hair lives, a dread goddess. She took me in, loved me warmly and cared for me, and kept saying she would make me immortal and ageless all my days; but she never won over the heart in my chest. There I stayed for seven years without a break, and I was always wetting with my tears the immortal clothes that Calypso had given me. But when the eighth year came round, then at last she urged me and bade me go home, whether at a message from Zeus or because her own mind had changed. 7.264 She sent me off on a raft bound with many fastenings, and gave me plenty—bread and sweet wine—and dressed me in immortal clothes, and sent a breeze to carry me, gentle and warm. For seventeen days I sailed over the sea, and on the eighteenth the shadowy mountains of your land appeared, and my heart was glad, ill-fated as I was. For I was still to keep company with great misery, which Poseidon the Earth-shaker stirred up against me. He roused the winds against me and blocked my way, and stirred up the sea beyond telling, and the waves would not let me be carried along on my raft, groaning heavily as I was. Then the storm scattered it; but I swam and cut my way through this gulf of sea, until wind and water carried me and brought me near your land. 7.278 There, as I tried to come ashore, the wave would have overpowered me on the land, hurling me against great rocks in a cheerless place; but I drew back and swam on again, until I came to a river, and there the place seemed best to me, clear of rocks, and sheltered from the wind as well. I staggered out, gathering my strength, and the ambrosial night came on. I climbed out, away from the Zeus-fed river, and slept among the bushes, heaping leaves around me; and a god poured boundless sleep over me. There among the leaves, sick at heart, I slept all night long, and on through dawn and midday. The sun was going

down when sweet sleep released me. 7.290 Then I noticed your daughter's maids playing on the shore, and she herself was among them, like the goddesses. I made my plea to her, and she did not fall short of good judgment—more than you'd expect of a younger person meeting a stranger, for the young are always thoughtless. She gave me plenty of bread and sparkling wine, had me bathed in the river, and gave me these clothes. That is the truth I've told you, though it grieves me." Then Alcinous answered him in turn and said: "Stranger, my child certainly didn't think of what was proper in this, that she didn't bring you to our house along with her serving women—and yet it was to her that you first made your plea." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him:

7.303 "Hero, don't blame your blameless daughter for that. She did tell me to follow along with her serving women, but I didn't want to, out of fear and shame, in case your heart should grow angry when you saw it; for we tribes of men on earth are quick to suspicion." Then Alcinous answered him in turn and said: "Stranger, the heart in my chest is not the kind to be angered without cause; it's better for everything to be in due measure. If only—father Zeus, and Athena, and Apollo!—a man like you, thinking as I think, would take my daughter and be called my son-in-law, and stay here! I would give you a house and possessions, if you were willing to stay; but no one among the Phaeacians will keep you here against your will. May that never be pleasing to father Zeus.

7.317 As for your passage home, I set it for this day, so that you know it well: tomorrow. Then you will lie overcome by sleep, while they row over the calm sea, until you reach your native land and your house, or wherever you wish to go—even if it is much farther away than Euboea, which those of our people who saw it say is the farthest of all lands, when they took fair-haired Rhadamanthys to visit Tityus, the son of Earth. They went there, completed the journey without toil on that same day, and made the return trip home. You'll see for yourself in your own mind how far my ships are the best, and my young men, at tossing up

the sea with the oar-blade." So he spoke, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus rejoiced, and he prayed, calling on the god by name, and said:[4]

7.331 "Father Zeus, may Alcinous bring about everything he has said! Then his glory would never be quenched over the grain-giving earth, and I would reach my native land." So they spoke such words to one another. White-armed Arete told her maids to set up a bed in the portico and lay fine purple blankets on it, spread rugs over them, and put woolly cloaks on top to cover him. They went out of the hall with torches in their hands, and when they had busily spread the sturdy bed, they came and stood beside Odysseus and urged him: "Get up and come to bed, stranger; your bed is made." So they spoke, and the thought of lying down to sleep was welcome to him. So there much-enduring, godlike Odysseus slept on the corded bed in the echoing portico; and Alcinous lay down in the innermost room of the high house, and beside him lay the lady his wife, who had prepared their bed and bedding.

4 Euboea is the long island off the east coast of central Greece. Tityus was a giant son of Earth, later punished in the underworld.

Book 8

Among the Phaeacians
Games, the songs of the bard Demodocus, and Odysseus' tears.

8.1 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, the sacred might of Alcinous rose from his bed, and up rose Odysseus too, sprung from Zeus, sacker of cities. The sacred might of Alcinous led them to the Phaeacians' place of assembly, which had been built for them beside the ships. When they arrived, they sat down side by side on the polished stones. Meanwhile Pallas Athena went up and down through the city in the likeness of wise-hearted Alcinous' herald, planning the homecoming of great-hearted Odysseus. She stood beside each man and spoke to him: "Come now, leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians, come to the assembly and learn about the stranger who has just arrived at the house of wise-hearted Alcinous after wandering over the sea. In build he is like the immortals."

8.15 So saying, she stirred the strength and spirit of each man. Quickly the assembly place and its seats filled with people gathering, and many gazed in wonder when they saw Laertes' wise-hearted son. Athena had poured wondrous grace over his head and shoulders and made him taller and broader to look at. She wanted all the Phaeacians to welcome him as a friend, to hold him in awe and respect, and she wanted him to come through the many contests in which the Phaeacians would test Odysseus. But when they had gathered and were all assembled together, Alcinous addressed them and spoke among them: "Hear me, leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians, so that I may say what the heart in my breast bids me. This stranger—I don't know who he

is—has come to my house in his wanderings, whether from the men of the east or of the west. He urges us to give him passage home, and begs that it be made sure.

8.31 Let us press on with his passage, as we have done before. For no one else who comes to my house stays here long, grieving for want of passage. Come, let us drag a black ship down to the bright sea, one sailing for the first time, and let fifty-two young men be chosen from among the people, those who have proved themselves the best. When you have all tied the oars fast at the benches, come ashore. Then come to our house and busy yourselves with a quick meal; I will provide well for everyone. These are my orders to the young men. But the rest of you, sceptered lords, come to my fine house, so that we may make the stranger welcome in the halls, and let no one refuse. And call the divine bard Demodocus; for to him above all a god has given song, to delight in whatever way his heart prompts him to sing."

8.46 Having spoken, he led the way, and the sceptered lords followed with him, while a herald went to fetch the divine bard. The fifty-two chosen young men went, as he had ordered, to the shore of the barren sea. When they had come down to the ship and the sea, they dragged the black ship down into deep water and set the mast and sail in the black ship. They fitted the oars in their leather straps, all in due order, and spread out the white sails. They moored her well out in the water, and then they went their way to the great house of wise-hearted Alcinous. The colonnades, the courtyards and the rooms were filled with men gathering; there were many of them, young and old. 8.59 For them Alcinous sacrificed twelve sheep, eight white-tusked boars and two oxen with rolling gait. These they skinned and dressed, and they made ready a lovely feast. The herald came near, leading the trusty bard, whom the Muse loved above all others. She had given him both good and evil: she took away his eyes, but gave him sweet song. For him Pontonous set a silver-studded chair in the middle of the banqueters, propping it against a tall pillar. The herald hung the clear-toned lyre on a peg just above

his head and showed him how to reach it with his hands. Beside him he set a basket and a fine table, and beside it a cup of wine, to drink whenever his heart bid him.

8.71 And they reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, the Muse moved the bard to sing the famous deeds of men. He chose a song whose fame had by then reached the wide heaven: the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles son of Peleus. He sang how they once fought with violent words at a rich feast of the gods, and how Agamemnon, lord of men, was glad at heart that the best of the Achaeans were quarreling. For so Phoebus Apollo had told him in prophecy at holy Pytho, when he crossed the stone threshold to consult the oracle. At that time the beginning of woe was rolling on for Trojans and Danaans through the plans of great Zeus.[1]

8.83 This was the song the famous bard sang. But Odysseus took his great purple cloak in his strong hands, drew it down over his head and covered his handsome face, for he was ashamed before the Phaeacians to shed tears from under his brows. Each time the divine bard paused in his singing, Odysseus would wipe away his tears and take the cloak from his head. Then he would take up a two-handled cup and pour a libation to the gods. But whenever the bard began again, and the best of the Phaeacians urged him to sing because they delighted in his words, Odysseus would cover his head again and weep. Then he shed his tears unnoticed by all the others. Alcinous alone noticed and observed him, sitting next to him, and heard him groaning heavily. At once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians:

1 Pytho is Delphi. The oracle was said to have told Agamemnon that Troy would fall when the best of the Achaeans quarreled; this quarrel is known from no other surviving source.

THE GAMES

The Phaeacians hold contests; taunted by Euryalus, Odysseus throws the discus past every mark.

8.97 "Hear me, leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians. We have now satisfied our hearts with the shared feast and with the lyre, which is the companion of the rich feast. Now let us go out and try all kinds of contests, so that when the stranger has returned home, he may tell his friends how far we surpass others at boxing and wrestling, at jumping and running." Having spoken, he led the way, and they followed with him. The herald hung the clear-toned lyre on its peg, took Demodocus by the hand and led him out of the hall. He led him along the same road the others were taking, the best of the Phaeacians, on their way to marvel at the contests.

8.109 They went their way to the place of assembly, and a great crowd went with them, thousands of them. Many fine young men stood up. Up rose Acroneus and Ocyalus and Elatreus, Nauteus and Prymneus and Anchialus and Eretmeus, Ponteus and Proreus, Thoön and Anabesineus, and Amphialus, son of Polyneus, son of Tecton. Up rose Euryalus too, the equal of Ares, the bane of men, the son of Naubolus. After peerless Laodamas, he was the best of all the Phaeacians in looks and build. And up stood the three sons of peerless Alcinous: Laodamas, Halius and godlike Clytoneus. These first tested each other at running.[2] 8.121 For them the course was laid out from the starting post, and all together they flew swiftly over the plain, raising the dust. Far the best of them at running was peerless Clytoneus. By as far as a pair of mules plows a furrow in fallow land, by that much he ran out ahead and reached the crowd, and the others were left behind. Then they tried painful wrestling, and in this Euryalus beat all the best. At jumping Amphialus was the most outstand-

2 Almost all these Phaeacian names are built from words for ships and the sea: Nauteus means "Sailor", Eretmeus "Oarsman", Prymneus "Stern-man", Proreus "Bow-man".

ing of all. With the discus, again, Elatreus was far the best of all, and at boxing Laodamas, the good son of Alcinous. But when they had all delighted their hearts with the contests, Laodamas, the son of Alcinous, spoke among them:

8.133 "Come, friends, let's ask the stranger whether he knows some contest and has learned it. In build he's certainly no weakling—look at his thighs and calves, and both his arms, and his sturdy neck, and his great strength. Nor is he past his prime; but he has been broken by many hardships. For I say there is nothing worse than the sea for wrecking a man, however strong he may be." Then Euryalus answered him in turn and said: "Laodamas, you've spoken quite rightly. Go now yourself and challenge him, and put it to him." When Alcinous' good son heard this, he went and stood in the middle and spoke to Odysseus:

8.145 "Come on, stranger, good father, you try your hand at the contests too, if you've learned any; and you look like a man who knows his contests. For there's no greater glory for a man, as long as he lives, than what he achieves with his own feet and hands. So come, try, and scatter the cares from your heart. Your journey won't be put off much longer; your ship has already been launched, and the crew is ready." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Laodamas, why do you all urge these things on me to mock me? Cares are on my mind far more than contests. I have suffered a great deal before and toiled a great deal, and now I sit in your assembly longing for my homecoming, begging the king and all the people."

8.158 Then Euryalus answered him in turn, and taunted him to his face: "No, stranger, I don't take you for a man skilled in contests, of the many kinds there are among men. You look to me like someone who travels back and forth in a ship with many oarlocks, a captain of sailors who are merchants. You're the kind who keeps his cargo in mind and keeps an eye on his freight and his grabbing profits. You don't look like an athlete." Then resourceful Odysseus, looking at him from under his brows, said to him: "Stranger, that was not well said; you seem like a

reckless man. So it is that the gods do not give their graces to all men alike—not build, nor mind, nor eloquence.

8.169 One man is rather unimpressive in looks, but a god crowns his form with words, and people look at him with delight. He speaks without faltering, with a winning modesty, and he stands out among those gathered, and as he goes through the town they gaze on him as on a god. Another, again, is like the immortals in looks, but no grace crowns his words. So it is with you. Your looks are outstanding, and not even a god could fashion them otherwise, but your mind is empty. You have stirred the heart in my breast by speaking so improperly. I am no novice at contests, as you claim. I think I was among the first, as long as I could trust in my youth and my hands. 8.182 But now I am held fast by misery and pain, for I have endured much, passing through the wars of men and the painful waves. Even so, though I have suffered many hardships, I will try the contests. Your words have bitten my heart, and what you said has provoked me." He spoke, and leapt up, cloak and all, and seized a discus. It was larger and thicker than the ones the Phaeacians threw against one another, and heavier by no small amount. Swinging it round, he let it fly from his strong hand, and the stone hummed. The Phaeacians, men of the long oars, famed for their ships, crouched down to the ground under the rush of the stone. It flew beyond the marks of all, speeding lightly from his hand. Athena, in the likeness of a man, set down the mark, and she spoke to him and addressed him:

8.195 "Even a blind man, stranger, could tell your mark by feeling for it, since it isn't mixed in with the crowd but lies far in front. In this contest at least you can be confident: no Phaeacian will reach this, let alone throw past it." So she spoke, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus was glad, rejoicing because he saw a kindly friend in the arena. Then he spoke among the Phaeacians in a lighter tone: "Reach that now, young men. Soon I'll throw another after it, I think, as far as this, or even farther. And of the rest, if anyone's heart and spirit urge him, let him come here and try me, since you have made me very angry. Boxing or

wrestling or even running, I don't refuse anything. Let anyone of all the Phaeacians try, except Laodamas himself.

8.208 For he is my host: who would fight with a man who treats him as a friend? Senseless and worthless is the man who challenges his host to a contest in a foreign land; he ruins everything for himself. But of the others I refuse no one, nor do I scorn any. I want to know them and test them face to face. For I am not bad at any of the contests there are among men. I know well how to handle the polished bow. I would be the first to hit my man with an arrow in a throng of enemies, even if a great many of my companions stood close beside me shooting at men. Only Philoctetes surpassed me with the bow in the land of the Trojans, whenever we Achaeans shot.[3] 8.221 But of the others I say I am far the best, of all the mortals who are now on the earth and eat bread. With men of earlier times, though, I will not wish to compete, neither with Heracles nor with Eurytus of Oechalia, who competed even with the immortals in archery. That is why great Eurytus died suddenly and did not reach old age in his halls. Apollo was angry and killed him, because Eurytus challenged him to an archery contest. With the spear I can throw farther than any other man can shoot an arrow. Only in running I fear that one of the Phaeacians may outstrip me. I was battered very shamefully among the many waves, since there were no lasting provisions on board my ship. And so my limbs have lost their strength."[4]

8.234 So he spoke, and they all fell hushed in silence. Alcinous alone answered him and said: "Stranger, what you say among us is not ungracious. You wish to show the excellence that goes with you, angry that this man stood beside you in the arena and taunted you—though no mortal who knew in his heart how to speak fittingly would belittle your excellence. So come now, listen to what I say, so that you may tell it to some other hero too, when you are feasting in your halls beside your wife and your children. Then you will remember our excellence, and the

3 Philoctetes, the greatest Greek archer at Troy, carried the bow of Heracles.
4 Eurytus' bow later passed to Odysseus; it is the bow he will string in Book 21.

skills Zeus has given to us too, generation after generation since our fathers' time.

8.246 We are not faultless boxers or wrestlers. But we run swiftly on our feet and are the best with ships. Always dear to us are the feast and the lyre and dances, changes of clothes, warm baths and bed. But come, all you who are the best dancers of the Phaeacians, dance and play. Then the stranger, when he has returned home, may tell his friends how far we surpass others in seafaring and running, in dancing and song. And let someone go at once and bring Demodocus the clear-toned lyre, which lies somewhere in our house." So spoke godlike Alcinous, and the herald rose to fetch the hollow lyre from the king's house.

ARES AND APHRODITE

Demodocus sings how Hephaestus caught his wife Aphrodite in bed with Ares.

8.258 Then the stewards stood up, nine chosen men in all, public officials who managed everything well at the games. They smoothed the dancing floor and widened a fine space for the dance. The herald came near, bringing Demodocus the clear-toned lyre, and he then went into the middle. Around him stood boys in their first youth, skilled in dancing, and they struck the sacred dancing floor with their feet. Odysseus gazed at the flashing of their feet and marveled in his heart. Then the bard, playing the lyre, struck up a lovely song about the love of Ares and fair-crowned Aphrodite. He sang how they first lay together in the house of Hephaestus, secretly; how Ares gave her many gifts and shamed the bed and marriage of lord Hephaestus. But at once a messenger came to Hephaestus: Helios, who had seen them lying together in love.

8.272 As soon as Hephaestus heard the painful story, he went his way to his forge, brooding evil in his heart. He set the great anvil on its block and forged bonds that could not be broken or loosed, so that the pair would stay fast where they were. When he had made his trick, in his anger at Ares, he went his way to

the bedchamber where his own bed lay. All round the bedposts he spread the bonds in a circle, and many hung down from above, from the roof-beam, like fine spider-webs. No one could see them, not even the blessed gods, so very cunningly were they made. 8.282 When he had spread the whole trick around the bed, he made as if to go to Lemnos, the well-built citadel, which is far the dearest to him of all lands. Nor did Ares of the golden reins keep a blind watch, when he saw Hephaestus, the famed craftsman, going away. He went his way to the house of glorious Hephaestus, eager for the love of fair-crowned Cytherea. She had just come from her father, the mighty son of Cronus, and had sat down. Ares came into the house, clasped her hand, and spoke to her and addressed her: "Come, my love, let's go to bed and lie down together. Hephaestus is no longer at home. He must have gone off to Lemnos by now, to the Sintians with their wild speech."[5]

8.295 So he spoke, and to her it seemed a welcome thing to lie with him. The two of them went to the bed and lay down to sleep, and all around them poured the cunning bonds of wise Hephaestus, so that they could not move a limb or lift one. And then at last they knew there was no escape. The famous lame god came up close to them, having turned back before he reached the land of Lemnos, for Helios had kept watch for him and told him the story. He went toward his own house, grieved at heart. He stood in the doorway, and savage anger seized him, and he gave a terrible shout and called out to all the gods:

8.306 "Father Zeus, and you other blessed gods who live forever, come here and see a laughable thing, a thing not to be borne: how Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, is forever dishonoring me because I'm lame, and loves destructive Ares, because he is handsome and sound of foot, while I was born a weakling. Yet no one else is to blame for that, only my two parents. I wish they had never fathered me! But you'll see where these two have climbed into my bed and are sleeping together in love, and the

5 Cytherea is a title of Aphrodite. The Sintians were the people of Lemnos, Hephaestus' favorite island.

sight of it pains me. Still, I don't expect they'll want to lie like this even a little longer, however much in love they are. Soon neither of them will want to sleep. But the trick and the bonds will hold them until her father pays me back every one of the bride-gifts I put in his hands for the sake of his shameless girl—for his daughter is beautiful, but she has no self-control."

8.321 So he spoke, and the gods gathered at the house with the bronze floor. Poseidon the Earth-holder came; Hermes the helper came; and lord Apollo who works from afar came. But the goddesses stayed at home, each of them, out of modesty. The gods, the givers of good things, stood in the doorway, and unquenchable laughter rose among the blessed gods as they looked at the craft of wise Hephaestus. And this is what one would say, glancing at his neighbor: "Bad deeds don't prosper. The slow catches the swift—just as now Hephaestus, slow as he is, has caught Ares, though he's the swiftest of the gods who hold Olympus. Lame as he is, he caught him by craft. So Ares owes the adulterer's fine."

8.333 So they talked among themselves. And lord Apollo, son of Zeus, said to Hermes: "Hermes, son of Zeus, guide, giver of good things, would you really be willing to be pinned down in strong bonds and sleep in bed beside golden Aphrodite?" Then the guide, Argeïphontes, answered him: "If only that could happen, lord Apollo who shoots from afar! Let three times as many endless bonds hold me fast all round, and let you gods look on, and all the goddesses too—so long as I could sleep beside golden Aphrodite." So he spoke, and laughter rose among the immortal gods. But no laughter took hold of Poseidon; he kept begging Hephaestus, the famous craftsman, to set Ares free. And he called out to him and spoke winged words:

8.347 "Set him free! I promise you that he will pay, as you demand, everything that is due, in the presence of the immortal gods." Then the famous lame god said to him in turn: "Don't ask this of me, Poseidon, Earth-holder. Pledges given for worthless men are worthless pledges. How could I hold you bound among the immortal gods, if Ares went off, escaping both the debt and

the bonds?" Then Poseidon the Earth-shaker said to him in turn: "Hephaestus, if Ares does slip out of the debt and runs off, I myself will pay you this." Then the famous lame god answered him: "It isn't possible, nor would it be right, to refuse your word."

8.359 So saying, mighty Hephaestus loosed the bonds. And the two, once they were free of the bonds, strong as they were, sprang up at once. He went off to Thrace, and laughter-loving Aphrodite came to Cyprus, to Paphos, where she has a precinct and a fragrant altar. There the Graces bathed her and anointed her with immortal oil, such as gleams on the gods who live forever, and dressed her in lovely clothes, a wonder to see. This was the song the famous bard sang; and Odysseus was delighted in his heart as he listened, and so were the rest, the Phaeacians of the long oars, men famous for ships.

GIFTS FOR THE STRANGER

After the dancing, the Phaeacian lords give Odysseus gifts and Euryalus apologizes.

8.370 Then Alcinous told Halius and Laodamas to dance by themselves, since no one could rival them. So they took in their hands a beautiful purple ball, which skilled Polybus had made for them. One of them would bend backward and toss it toward the shadowy clouds, and the other would leap high off the ground and catch it easily before his feet touched the earth again. And when they had tried their skill at throwing the ball straight up, they danced on the nourishing earth, quickly changing places, while the other young men stood around the arena beating time, and a great din went up. Then godlike Odysseus spoke to Alcinous: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned among all the people, you boasted that your dancers were the best, and so it has proved. Wonder takes hold of me as I watch."

8.385 So he spoke, and the sacred might of Alcinous was glad, and at once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians: "Hear me, leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians. This stranger seems to

me a man of real good sense. Come, let's give him a guest-gift, as is fitting. There are twelve distinguished lords who rule as chiefs among the people, and I myself am the thirteenth. Let each of you bring him a freshly washed cloak and a tunic and a talent of precious gold. And let's bring it all together quickly, so that the stranger can have it in his hands and go to dinner glad at heart. And let Euryalus make amends to him in person, with words and with a gift, since what he said was not at all fitting."

8.398 So he spoke, and they all approved and urged it on, and each of them sent off a herald to fetch the gifts. And Euryalus answered him and said: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned among all the people, then I'll make amends to the stranger, as you tell me. I'll give him this sword, all of bronze, with a silver hilt and a sheath of freshly sawn ivory wrapped around it. It will be worth a great deal to him." So saying, he placed the silver-studded sword in his hands, and he called out to him and spoke winged words: "Farewell, stranger, my father; and if any harsh word was spoken, may the storm winds snatch it up at once and carry it away. And may the gods grant that you see your wife and reach your native land, since you've been suffering hardships far from your own people for so long."

8.412 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Farewell to you too, my friend, with all my heart, and may the gods grant you prosperity. And may you never miss this sword in time to come, this sword you've given me, making amends with your words." He spoke, and slung the silver-studded sword around his shoulders. The sun set, and the glorious gifts were there for him. The noble heralds carried them to the house of Alcinous, and the sons of excellent Alcinous received the beautiful gifts and set them beside their honored mother. The sacred might of Alcinous led the way, and they came in and sat down on the high chairs. Then the might of Alcinous spoke to Arete:

8.424 "Come here, wife, bring a splendid chest, the best one there is, and put a freshly washed cloak and a tunic in it yourself. And all of you, heat a bronze cauldron on the fire for him and warm some water, so that once he has bathed and seen all

the gifts neatly laid out, the gifts the excellent Phaeacians brought here, he may enjoy the feast and the strains of the song as he listens. And I'll give him this beautiful cup of mine, made of gold, so that he'll remember me all his days as he pours libations in his hall to Zeus and the other gods."

8.433 So he spoke, and Arete told her maids to set a great tripod over the fire as quickly as they could. They set the bath-tripod on the blazing fire, poured water into it, and took wood and kindled it beneath. The fire licked around the belly of the tripod, and the water grew warm. Meanwhile Arete brought out from the storeroom a beautiful chest for the stranger and put the splendid gifts in it, the clothing and gold the Phaeacians had given him; and in it she herself placed a cloak and a fine tunic, and she called out to him and spoke winged words:

8.443 "Now see to the lid yourself, and tie a knot on it quickly, so that no one robs you on the way when you're sleeping a sweet sleep later as you travel in the black ship." And when much-enduring, godlike Odysseus heard this, at once he fitted the lid and quickly tied an intricate knot on it, one that lady Circe had once taught him. Then the housekeeper told him to step into the tub and bathe straightaway, and his heart was glad to see the hot bath, since he had not often been cared for since he left the house of Calypso of the lovely hair. Until then he had been cared for constantly, like a god.[6]

8.454 When the maids had bathed him and anointed him with oil and put a fine cloak and tunic on him, he stepped out of the tub and went to join the men at their wine. And Nausicaa, who had her beauty from the gods, stood by the doorpost of the well-built hall and gazed at Odysseus in wonder as she saw him before her eyes, and she called out to him and spoke winged words: "Farewell, stranger, and when you're in your native land again, remember me, since it's to me first that you owe your life." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, may Zeus, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, grant that I reach home and see the day of

6 Circe is the enchantress whose island Odysseus will describe in Book 10.

homecoming. Then even there I will pray to you as to a god, always, all my days. For it was you, young lady, who gave me my life."

THE WOODEN HORSE

Odysseus asks for the song of the Trojan horse, weeps again, and Alcinous asks his name.

8.469 He spoke, and sat down on a chair beside King Alcinous. They were already serving out portions and mixing the wine. The herald came near, leading the trusty bard, Demodocus, honored by the people, and seated him in the middle of the feasters, propped against a tall pillar. Then resourceful Odysseus spoke to the herald, cutting off a piece of the chine of a white-tusked hog—and more of it was still left—with rich fat all around it: "Herald, here, give this meat to Demodocus to eat. I'll greet him warmly, grieving though I am. For among all men on earth bards have their share of honor and respect, because the Muse has taught them the paths of song and loves the tribe of bards."

8.482 So he spoke, and the herald carried it and put it in the hands of the hero Demodocus; he took it and was glad at heart. And they reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, then resourceful Odysseus spoke to Demodocus: "Demodocus, I praise you above all mortal men. Either the Muse, daughter of Zeus, taught you, or Apollo; for you sing the fate of the Achaeans exactly as it was, in perfect order—all that the Achaeans did and suffered and toiled through—as if you had been there yourself or heard it from someone who was.

8.492 But come now, change your theme and sing of the building of the wooden horse, which Epeius made with Athena's help, the trick that godlike Odysseus once brought into the citadel, after filling it with the men who sacked Ilium. If you tell me this properly, as it happened, I'll tell all mankind at once that a god has graciously granted you the gift of inspired song." So he spoke, and the bard, moved by the god, began, and let his song

shine forth, taking it up from where the Argives had boarded their well-benched ships and were sailing away, having set fire to their huts, while the others, with glorious Odysseus, were already sitting in the Trojans' place of assembly, hidden in the horse; for the Trojans themselves had dragged it up into the citadel.

8.505 So there it stood, while the Trojans sat around it and talked on and on without deciding anything. Three plans appealed to them: to split the hollow timber with the pitiless bronze, or to drag it to the top of the cliff and hurl it down the rocks, or to let it stand as a great offering to win the gods' favor—and that was how it was in fact going to end. For it was their fate to perish once the city had taken in the great wooden horse, where all the best of the Argives sat, bringing death and doom to the Trojans. And he sang how the sons of the Achaeans poured out of the horse, leaving their hollow ambush, and sacked the city. He sang how they ravaged the steep city, each in a different place, but how Odysseus went to the house of Deiphobus like Ares, together with godlike Menelaus. There, he said, Odysseus dared the most terrible fighting and won through then too, thanks to great-hearted Athena.

8.521 This was the song the famous bard sang; but Odysseus melted, and tears from under his eyelids wet his cheeks. As a woman weeps, flinging herself on her dear husband, who has fallen in front of his city and his people, trying to keep the pitiless day from his town and his children; she sees him dying and gasping for breath, and clings to him and wails shrilly, while the enemy behind her beat her back and shoulders with their spears and lead her off into slavery, to a life of toil and misery, and her cheeks waste away with most pitiful grief—so Odysseus let fall pitiful tears from under his brows. Then he shed his tears unnoticed by all the others. Alcinous alone noticed and observed him, sitting next to him, and heard him groaning heavily. At once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians:

8.536 "Hear me, leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians: let Demodocus stop his clear-toned lyre now, for what he sings is

hardly pleasing to everyone. Ever since we began dining and the divine bard struck up, our guest hasn't once stopped his sorrowful lamenting. Some great grief, surely, has gripped his heart. So let the bard stop, so that we may all enjoy ourselves alike, hosts and guest; that is far better. For it's for the sake of our honored guest that all this has been prepared, his passage home and the gifts we give him in friendship. To any man with even a little sense, a stranger and suppliant is as good as a brother. So now don't you hide with crafty thoughts whatever I ask you; it's better for you to speak. 8.550 Tell me the name your mother and father called you by back home, and the others in the town and those who live round about. For no one among men is altogether nameless, neither the lowly nor the noble, once he is born; parents give names to all of them, when they bring them into the world. And tell me your land, your people and your city, so that our ships may carry you there, finding the way with their own minds. For the Phaeacians have no helmsmen, nor are there rudders, such as other ships have; the ships themselves know men's thoughts and minds, and they know the cities and rich fields of all men, and they cross the gulf of the sea at great speed, wrapped in mist and cloud. And they never have any fear of being damaged or lost. 8.564 But this is something I once heard my father Nausithous say. He used to say that Poseidon resented us because we give everyone safe passage. He said that one day, as a well-built ship of the Phaeacians was coming home from such a voyage over the misty sea, Poseidon would wreck it and would cover our city over with a great mountain. So the old man used to say; and these things the god will either bring about or leave undone, as his heart pleases. But come, tell me this and tell it truly: where you have wandered, and what lands of men you came to—the people themselves and their well-peopled cities, both those who are harsh and savage and unjust, and those who are kind to strangers and have god-fearing minds. 8.577 And tell me why you weep and grieve in your heart when you hear of the fate of the Argive Danaans and of Ilium. The gods brought it about, and spun ruin for men, so that there might be a song for

those still to come. Did some kinsman of yours by marriage die before Ilium, a good man, a son-in-law or a father-in-law, who are the dearest after one's own blood and family? Or was it perhaps a comrade, a good man who was dear to your heart? For a comrade with an understanding heart is in no way less than a brother."

Book 9

The Cyclops
Odysseus names himself and tells of the Lotus-eaters and Polyphemus.

9.1 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: Lord Alcinous, most renowned among all peoples, it is a fine thing, truly, to listen to a bard like this one, whose voice is like the gods'. For I say there is no fulfillment more gracious than when good cheer fills the whole people, and the banqueters sit in rows throughout the house listening to a bard, and beside them the tables are laden with bread and meat, and the wine-steward draws wine from the mixing bowl, carries it round and pours it into the cups. This seems to me, in my heart, the finest thing there is.

9.12 But your heart has turned to asking about my sorrowful troubles, so that I may lament and groan still more. What shall I tell you first, then, and what last? For the gods of heaven have given me many troubles. First I will tell you my name, so that you too may know it, and so that afterward, if I escape the pitiless day, I may be your guest-friend, though the house I live in is far away. I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to all men for my tricks, and my fame reaches heaven. I live in clear-skied Ithaca. On it is a mountain, Neritus, with quivering leaves, standing out from afar; and around it lie many islands very close to one another, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus. 9.25 Ithaca itself lies low, farthest out in the sea toward the western gloom, while the others lie apart toward the dawn and the sun. It is rugged, but a good nurse of young men. For my part, I can see nothing sweeter than my own land. Calypso,

bright among goddesses, kept me with her in her hollow caves, longing for me to be her husband; and in the same way crafty Circe of Aeaea held me back in her halls, longing for me to be her husband. But they never won over the heart in my breast. So nothing is sweeter than one's native land and one's parents, even if a man lives in a rich house far off in a foreign land, away from his parents. But come, let me tell you too of my homecoming, full of troubles, which Zeus laid on me as I came from Troy.

9.39 From Ilium the wind carried me and brought me to the Cicones, to Ismarus. There I sacked the city and killed the men. From the city we took their wives and many goods and divided them, so that no one, as far as it lay with me, would go off cheated of his fair share. Then I urged that we flee with nimble feet, but the others, the great fools, would not listen. There much wine was drunk, and they slaughtered many sheep along the shore, and shambling cattle with crooked horns. Meanwhile the Cicones who had got away called out to other Cicones, their neighbors, who were more numerous and better fighters, living inland, skilled at fighting men from chariots and, where need be, on foot.[1] 9.51 Then they came at dawn, as many as the leaves and flowers that grow in season; and then an evil fate from Zeus stood by us, doomed as we were, so that we would suffer many pains. They drew up their lines and fought beside the swift ships, and the two sides cast bronze-tipped spears at each other. As long as it was morning and the sacred day was growing, we held our ground and kept them off, though they were more. But when the sun moved on toward the hour for unyoking oxen, then the Cicones overcame the Achaeans and broke them. From each ship six well-greaved companions perished; the rest of us escaped death and doom.

9.62 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our dear companions. Yet my curved ships did not go on until we had called three times on each of our poor companions who had died on the plain, cut down by the Cicones. Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer roused the

1 The Cicones were a Thracian people, allies of Troy in the *Iliad*.

North Wind against the ships with a terrible storm, and covered land and sea alike with clouds; and night rushed down from heaven. The ships were driven headlong, and the force of the wind tore their sails into three and four pieces. These we lowered into the ships, fearing destruction, and rowed the ships hard toward the mainland. There for two nights and two days on end we lay, eating our hearts out with weariness and grief.

THE LOTUS-EATERS

A storm drives the ships past Malea to the Lotus-eaters, whose fruit makes men forget home.

9.76 But when Dawn of the lovely hair brought the third day to its fullness, we set up the masts, hoisted the white sails and sat, and the wind and the helmsmen steered the ships. And I would have reached my native land unharmed; but as I was rounding Malea, the swell and the current and the North Wind drove me off course and carried me past Cythera. From there for nine days I was swept by deadly winds over the fish-filled sea; but on the tenth we set foot on the land of the Lotus-eaters, who eat a food of flowers. There we went ashore and drew water, and my companions quickly took their meal beside the swift ships. But when we had tasted food and drink, I sent some of my companions to go and find out what men these were who ate bread upon this land, choosing two men and sending a herald with them as a third.[2]

9.91 They went off at once and mingled with the Lotus-eaters; and the Lotus-eaters did not plot destruction for our companions, but gave them lotus to taste. Whoever of them ate the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus no longer wished to bring back word or to return, but they wanted to stay there among the Lotus-eaters, feeding on lotus, and forget their homecoming. I brought them back to the ships by force, weeping, and dragged them under the benches in the hollow ships and tied them fast.

2 Malea is the storm-prone southeastern cape of the Peloponnese, with the island of Cythera just off it; Odysseus was nearly home.

Then I ordered the rest of my trusty companions to board the swift ships with all speed, so that no one else might eat the lotus and forget his homecoming. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches, and sitting in their rows they struck the gray sea with their oars.

9.105 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart. And we came to the land of the Cyclopes, arrogant and lawless, who, trusting in the immortal gods, neither plant anything with their hands nor plow. Everything grows for them unsown and unplowed—wheat and barley and vines, which bear wine from heavy clusters, and the rain of Zeus makes it grow for them. They have no assemblies for counsel and no laws. They live on the peaks of high mountains in hollow caves, and each one lays down the law for his children and his wives, and they pay no heed to one another.

9.116 Now a level island stretches out beyond the harbor, neither close to the land of the Cyclopes nor far off, a wooded island. Countless wild goats live on it, for no tread of men keeps them away, nor do hunters go there, men who suffer hardships in the woods as they range over the mountain peaks. Nor is it taken up by flocks or by plowing; unsown and unplowed all its days, it is empty of men and feeds bleating goats. For the Cyclopes have no ships with red-painted cheeks, nor are there shipwrights among them who could build well-benched ships to do all their errands, reaching the cities of men, the way men often cross the sea in ships to visit one another. Such craftsmen would have made the island a well-settled place for them as well. 9.131 For it is not a poor land at all; it would bear everything in season. On it there are meadows along the shores of the gray sea, well-watered and soft; vines would never fail there. The plowland is level; men could reap a deep crop at every harvest, for the soil beneath is very rich. And there is a harbor with good anchorage, where there is no need of a mooring rope, nor of casting anchor-stones or tying stern cables: you can beach your ship and wait until the sailors' hearts urge them on and the winds blow fair. At the head of the harbor flows bright water, a

spring beneath a cave, and poplars grow around it. There we sailed in, and some god guided us through the murky night, for nothing could be seen: thick mist lay around the ships, and the moon did not shine out from heaven but was hidden in clouds. 9.146 No one caught sight of the island with his eyes, nor did we see the long waves rolling against the shore, until our well-benched ships ran aground. When the ships were beached, we took down all the sails and went out ourselves onto the shore of the sea; and there we fell asleep and waited for bright Dawn. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, we wandered over the island, marveling at it. And the nymphs, daughters of Zeus who bears the aegis, roused the mountain goats so that my companions might have a meal. At once we took our curved bows and long-socketed hunting spears from the ships, split into three bands, and began to shoot; and the god soon gave us game to satisfy our hearts. Twelve ships were with me, and to each fell nine goats by lot; for me alone they picked out ten.

9.161 So then all day long, until the sun went down, we sat feasting on endless meat and sweet wine; for the red wine in the ships had not yet run out, but there was still some left, since each crew had drawn plenty into jars when we took the sacred citadel of the Cicones. And we looked across at the land of the Cyclopes, who were close by, and saw their smoke and heard their voices and the bleating of their sheep and goats. When the sun set and darkness came on, we lay down to sleep on the shore of the sea. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, I called an assembly and spoke among them all:

9.172 "The rest of you stay here for now, my trusty companions, while I go with my own ship and my own companions and find out about these men, who they are—whether they are insolent and savage and unjust, or kind to strangers, with minds that fear the gods." So I spoke, and went on board, and ordered my companions to embark themselves and loose the stern cables. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches, and sitting in their rows they struck the gray sea with their oars.

THE CYCLOPS' CAVE

Odysseus waits in the cave of Polyphemus, who traps the men and eats two of them.

9.181 But when we came to the place, which was close by, there at its farthest edge, near the sea, we saw a cave, high and roofed over with laurels. There many flocks, sheep and goats, used to pass the night; and around it a high courtyard had been built with stones sunk deep in the ground and tall pines and high-crowned oaks. There a monstrous man used to sleep, who pastured his flocks alone, far off. He did not go among the others, but kept to himself and had lawless ways. For he was made a monstrous wonder, not like a man who eats bread, but like a wooded peak of high mountains that stands out alone, apart from the rest.

9.193 Then I ordered the rest of my trusty companions to stay there by the ship and guard it, while I chose twelve of my best companions and set out. But I had with me a goatskin of dark wine, sweet wine, which Maron, son of Euanthes, had given me, the priest of Apollo who watched over Ismarus, because out of reverence we had protected him, together with his child and his wife; for he lived in the wooded grove of Phoebus Apollo. And he gave me splendid gifts: he gave me seven talents of well-wrought gold, he gave me a mixing bowl of solid silver, and then he drew off wine for me into twelve jars in all, sweet and unmixed, a drink fit for the gods. No one in the house knew of it, none of the servants or the maids, only he himself and his dear wife and a single housekeeper. 9.208 Whenever they drank that honey-sweet red wine, he would fill one cup and pour it into twenty measures of water, and a sweet smell rose from the mixing bowl, a marvelous smell; then you would have had no wish to hold back. I filled a great skin with this wine and took it with me, and provisions too in a leather bag; for my proud heart suspected at once that I would meet a man clothed in great strength, a savage, who had no proper knowledge of justice or of laws. We soon reached

the cave, but did not find him inside; he was out in the pasture, grazing his fat flocks. We went into the cave and looked at everything.

9.219 The drying racks were laden with cheeses, and the pens were crowded with lambs and kids. Each kind was penned separately: the firstlings by themselves, the middle ones by themselves, and the newborn by themselves again. And all the vessels were brimming with whey, the well-made pails and bowls into which he did his milking. Then my companions begged me, first, to take some of the cheeses and go back, and then to drive the kids and lambs quickly out of the pens to the swift ship and sail off over the salt water. But I did not listen—it would have been far better if I had—because I wanted to see the man himself, and whether he would give me guest-gifts. And when he appeared, he was not going to be a welcome sight to my companions.

9.231 There we lit a fire and made an offering, and we ourselves took some of the cheeses and ate, and sat waiting for him inside until he came back with his flocks. He was carrying a heavy load of dry wood to use at his supper, and he threw it down inside the cave with a crash, and in fear we scurried back into the far corner of the cave. Then he drove into the wide cave his fat flocks, all of those he milked, and left the males outside the door, the rams and the he-goats, out in the deep courtyard. Then he lifted high a great door-stone and set it in place, a massive thing: twenty-two good four-wheeled wagons could not have shifted it from the ground—so huge was the towering rock he set against the doorway. Then he sat down and milked the ewes and the bleating goats, all in due order, and put her young beneath each one. 9.246 At once he curdled half of the white milk, gathered it up and set it in woven baskets, and the other half he stood in vessels, so that he could take it and drink, and have it for his supper. But when he had busily finished his tasks, he lit the fire, and caught sight of us, and asked: "Strangers, who are you? Where do you sail from over the watery ways? Are you here on some business, or do you roam recklessly over the sea like pir-

ates, who wander about risking their lives and bringing harm to men of other lands?" So he spoke, and our hearts were shattered within us, in terror of his deep voice and of the monster himself. But even so I answered him and said:

9.259 "We are Achaeans, driven off course from Troy by every kind of wind over the great gulf of the sea. Heading for home, we have come by another way, by other paths—so, I suppose, Zeus wished to devise it. We are proud to be men of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, whose fame is now the greatest under heaven, so great a city did he sack and so many people did he destroy. And we in our turn have come to your knees, in the hope that you might give us a guest-gift or some other present, as is right toward strangers. Respect the gods, mighty one. We are your suppliants, and Zeus is the avenger of suppliants and strangers—Zeus, god of strangers, who walks beside strangers who deserve respect."

9.272 So I spoke, and he answered me at once with a pitiless heart: "You're a fool, stranger, or you've come from far away, to tell me to fear the gods or keep clear of them. The Cyclopes pay no heed to Zeus who bears the aegis, or to the blessed gods, since we are far stronger. I wouldn't spare you or your companions to avoid the anger of Zeus, unless my own heart told me to. But tell me where you moored your well-made ship when you came—at the far end of the coast, maybe, or close by?—so that I may know." So he spoke, testing me, but he did not get past me, for I knew a great deal; and I answered him in turn with crafty words:

9.283 "My ship was shattered by Poseidon the Earth-shaker. He drove her against the rocks at the edge of your land and brought her onto a headland, and the wind carried her in from the sea. But I, with these men here, escaped sheer destruction." So I spoke, but he gave me no answer, with his pitiless heart. Instead he sprang up and flung out his hands at my companions. He seized two of them together and dashed them to the ground like puppies, and their brains ran out on the floor and soaked the earth. Then he cut them up limb by limb and made his supper of

them. He ate like a mountain-bred lion and left nothing: entrails, flesh and marrow-filled bones.

9.294 We wept and lifted our hands to Zeus at the sight of those cruel deeds, and helplessness gripped our hearts. But when the Cyclops had filled his huge belly, eating human flesh and drinking unmixed milk on top of it, he lay down inside the cave, stretched out among his flocks. Then I made a plan in my great heart. I would go up close, draw the sharp sword from beside my thigh, feel for the spot with my hand, and stab him in the chest where the midriff holds the liver. But a second thought held me back. We too would have perished right there in sheer destruction, because we could never have pushed the massive stone he had set against the high doorway away with our hands. So then, groaning, we waited for bright Dawn.

9.307 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, he lit the fire again and milked his splendid flocks, all in due order, and put her young beneath each one. But when he had busily finished his tasks, he seized two men together once again and made his meal of them. After his meal he drove his fat flocks out of the cave, easily lifting away the great door-stone, and then set it back again, as a man might put the lid on a quiver. With loud whistling the Cyclops turned his fat flocks toward the mountain, and I was left behind, brooding on evil deep in my heart, in case I might somehow take revenge and Athena grant me glory.

NOBODY BLINDS THE CYCLOPS

Odysseus gets the Cyclops drunk, calls himself Nobody, and drives a burning stake into his eye.

9.318 And this seemed to my mind the best plan. Beside the pen lay the Cyclops' great club, of green olive wood. He had cut it to carry once it had dried. Looking at it, we judged it as big as the mast of a black ship with twenty oars, a broad-beamed merchantman that crosses the great gulf of the sea. That was how long it was, and how thick it looked. I stood over it and cut off about a fathom's length, handed it to my companions and told

them to shave it down. They made it smooth, and I stood by and sharpened the tip. Then I took it at once and hardened it in the blazing fire. After that I laid it carefully away, hiding it under the dung, which lay scattered in great heaps all through the cave. And I told the others to cast lots to decide who would dare to lift the stake with me and grind it into his eye when sweet sleep came over him. 9.334 The lot fell on the very men I would have chosen myself, four of them, and I was counted fifth among them. In the evening he came, herding his fine-fleeced flocks. At once he drove his fat flocks into the wide cave, every one of them, and left none outside in the deep courtyard. Perhaps he suspected something, or perhaps a god ordered it so. Then he lifted the great door-stone high and set it in place, sat down and milked the ewes and bleating goats, all in due order, and put her young beneath each one. But when he had busily finished his tasks, he seized two men together once again and made his supper of them. Then I stood close to the Cyclops and spoke to him, holding in my hands an ivy-wood bowl of dark wine:

9.347 "Here, Cyclops, drink some wine, now that you've eaten human flesh, so you can find out what kind of drink our ship had stored away. I was bringing it to you as an offering, in the hope that you'd pity me and send me home. But your raging is past all bearing. Cruel one, how will any other man, of all the many in the world, ever come to you again, when you've acted against all that's right?" So I spoke, and he took it and drained it, and he was hugely pleased as he drank the sweet drink. Then he asked me for a second bowl: "Give me more, and be generous, and tell me your name right now, so I can give you a guest-gift that will please you. The grain-giving earth bears wine from heavy-clustered grapes for the Cyclopes too, and the rain of Zeus makes it grow for them. But this is a drop drawn off from ambrosia and nectar."

9.360 So he spoke, and I handed him the gleaming wine again. Three times I brought it and gave it to him, and three times he drained it in his folly. But when the wine had got round the Cyclops' wits, then I spoke to him with soothing words: "Cyclops,

you ask me my famous name, and I'll tell it to you. And you give me the guest-gift, as you promised. Nobody is my name. Nobody is what they call me, my mother and my father and all my companions." So I spoke, and he answered me at once with pitiless heart: "Nobody I'll eat last, after his companions, and the others before him. That will be your guest-gift."[3]

9.371 He spoke, toppled backward and fell flat on his back, and lay there with his thick neck twisted to one side, and sleep, the all-conqueror, took hold of him. Wine and lumps of human flesh gushed from his throat as he belched, heavy with wine. Then I drove the stake deep under the heaped embers until it grew hot, and I put heart into all my companions with my words, so that none of them would shrink back in fear and leave me. But when the olive stake, green as it was, was just about to catch fire and was glowing fiercely, I brought it out of the fire and close to him, and my companions stood around me. Then some god breathed great courage into us. 9.382 They took the olive stake, sharp at the tip, and thrust it into his eye, while I leaned my weight on it from above and twirled it round. It was like a man boring a ship's timber with a drill, while the others below keep it spinning with a strap, holding it at either end, and it runs round steadily without a pause. In the same way we took the fire-pointed stake and twirled it in his eye, and the blood flowed around it, hot as it was. The blast from the burning eyeball singed his eyelids and his brows all round, and the roots of the eye crackled in the fire. As when a smith dips a great axe or an adze in cold water and it hisses loudly—he is tempering it, for that is what gives iron its strength—so his eye hissed around the olive stake. 9.395 He let out a huge, dreadful howl, and the rock rang all around, and we drew back in terror. He wrenched the stake out of his eye, smeared with blood, and flung it away from him with his hands in a frenzy. Then he shouted loudly to the Cyclopes who lived around him in caves among the windy heights. They heard his cry and came from every side, and standing around

3 "Nobody" renders the Greek Outis, "no one"; the trick pays off when the Cyclops calls for help.

the cave they asked what was troubling him: "What's hurting you so badly, Polyphemus, that you shout like this through the ambrosial night and keep us from our sleep? Surely no man is driving off your flocks against your will? Surely no one is killing you yourself, by trickery or by force?" And mighty Polyphemus answered them from inside the cave:

9.408 "Friends, Nobody is killing me by trickery, not by force!" And they answered him and spoke winged words: "Well, if no one is forcing you, alone as you are, then it's a sickness sent by great Zeus, and there's no escaping that. You'd better pray to your father, lord Poseidon." So they spoke as they went away, and my heart laughed within me at how my name and my flawless cunning had fooled them. But the Cyclops, groaning and racked with pain, groped with his hands and took the stone away from the doorway. Then he sat down in the entrance with his arms spread wide, to catch anyone who tried to slip out among the sheep. That was how foolish, it seems, he hoped I was.[4]

9.420 But I was planning how things might turn out best, whether I could find some escape from death for my companions and for myself. I wove every kind of trick and scheme, as a man does when his life is at stake, for great evil was close at hand. And this seemed to my mind the best plan. There were rams, well fed and thick of fleece, handsome and big, with wool dark as violets. These I quietly bound together in threes with the well-twisted withies on which the Cyclops slept, that monster with his lawless mind. The one in the middle would carry a man, and the other two went on either side, keeping my companions safe. 9.431 So each man was carried by three sheep. As for me—there was a ram, by far the best of the whole flock—I took hold of him by the back, curled up under his shaggy belly, and lay there, twisted into his wonderful fleece and clinging on with my hands, unflinching, with an enduring heart. So then, groaning, we waited for bright Dawn. When early-born Dawn

4 The neighbors' "no one" (mē tis) sounds just like mētis, "cunning," the word Odysseus uses of himself a moment later.

appeared, rosy-fingered, the rams rushed out to pasture, while the ewes bleated unmilked around the pens, for their udders were bursting. Their master, worn down by cruel pains, felt along the backs of all the sheep as they stood upright. But the fool didn't notice that the men were tied beneath the chests of his woolly sheep. Last of the flock the ram went out the door, weighed down by his wool and by me with my crafty thoughts. Mighty Polyphemus felt him over and said:

9.447 "My dear ram, why are you the last of the flock to leave the cave like this? You never used to lag behind the sheep. You were always far the first to graze on the tender blossoms of the grass, with your long strides, first to reach the streams of the rivers, first to be eager to come back to the fold in the evening. Now you're the very last of all. Surely you're grieving for your master's eye, which a wicked man blinded with his wretched companions, after he'd overpowered my wits with wine—Nobody, who I tell you hasn't escaped destruction yet. If only you could feel as I do and had a voice to tell me where he's skulking from my fury! Then his brains would be dashed out on the floor and splattered all over the cave as I smashed him, and my heart would find some relief from the evils that no-good Nobody has brought me."

ODYSSEUS NAMES HIMSELF

Escaping under the rams, Odysseus taunts the Cyclops and names himself; Polyphemus prays to Poseidon.

9.461 So saying, he sent the ram away from him out of the door. When we had gone a little way from the cave and the courtyard, I first freed myself from under the ram and then untied my companions. Quickly we drove off those long-shanked sheep, rich with fat, taking many a turn, until we reached the ship. Our dear companions were glad to see those of us who had escaped death, but they groaned and wept for the others. I wouldn't let them weep, though: I nodded with my brows to each man to stop, and ordered them to throw the many fine-fleeced sheep aboard

quickly and sail off over the salt water. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches, and sitting in their rows they struck the gray sea with their oars. But when I was as far off as a man's shout carries, I called to the Cyclops with mocking words:

9.475 "Cyclops, so it wasn't a weakling's companions after all that you were going to eat in your hollow cave by brute force! Your evil deeds were bound to catch up with you, you cruel wretch, since you didn't shrink from eating guests in your own house. That's why Zeus and the other gods have paid you back." So I spoke, and he grew angrier still at heart. He broke off the peak of a great mountain and hurled it. It came down just in front of the dark-prowed ship, and only just missed the tip of the steering oar. The sea surged up under the falling rock, and the backwash, a swell from the open sea, quickly carried the ship toward the land and drove it to reach the shore.

9.487 But I took a very long pole in my hands and pushed the ship off and away, and urged my companions on, signaling with nods of my head for them to fall to their oars so that we might escape out of danger. They leaned forward and rowed. But when we had crossed twice as much sea and were that far off, I called to the Cyclops again, though my companions all around tried to hold me back with soothing words, one from one side, one from another: "Reckless man, why do you want to provoke a savage? Just now he threw that missile into the sea and drove the ship back to land, and we thought we'd die right there. If he'd heard any of us make a sound or speak, he'd have smashed our heads and the ship's timbers together with a jagged rock—that's how far he throws." So they spoke, but they didn't persuade my great heart, and I called back to him again with an angry heart:

9.502 "Cyclops, if any mortal man ever asks you about the shameful blinding of your eye, tell him it was Odysseus, sacker of cities, who blinded you—the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca." So I spoke, and he groaned and answered me: "Oh, no! So the prophecies spoken long ago have come true for me. There was once a seer here, a good and great man, Telemus son of

Eurymus, who excelled at prophecy and grew old prophesying among the Cyclopes. He told me that all this would come to pass one day: that I would lose my sight at the hands of Odysseus. But I always expected some big, handsome man to come here, clothed in great strength. And now a puny, no-good weakling has blinded my eye, after he overpowered me with wine.

9.517 But come here, Odysseus, so I can set guest-gifts before you and urge the famous Earth-shaker to give you safe passage home. I'm his son, and he declares he's my father. He himself will heal me, if he wishes, and no one else, none of the blessed gods or of mortal men." So he spoke, and I answered him: "I only wish I could rob you of life and of your days and send you into the house of Hades, as surely as not even the Earth-shaker will heal your eye." So I spoke, and then he prayed to lord Poseidon, stretching out his hands to the starry sky:

9.528 "Hear me, Poseidon, Earth-holder, dark-haired: if I truly am yours and you declare that you are my father, grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, never reaches home—the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca. But if it is his fate to see his own people and reach his well-built house and his native land, may he come late and in misery, having lost all his companions, on someone else's ship, and find troubles in his house." So he spoke in prayer, and the dark-haired god heard him. Then he lifted again a far bigger stone, swung it round and hurled it, putting measureless force behind it. It came down just behind the dark-prowed ship, and only just missed the tip of the steering oar. The sea surged up under the falling rock, and the wave carried the ship forward and drove it to reach the shore.

9.543 When we reached the island where the rest of our well-benched ships were waiting together, and our companions sat around them grieving, always watching for us, we ran our ship onto the sand there and stepped out ourselves onto the seashore. We took the Cyclops' sheep out of the hollow ship and divided them up, so that no one would go away cheated of his fair share. But when the sheep were shared out, my well-greaved companions gave the ram to me alone, as a special prize. I sacrificed him

on the shore to Zeus of the dark clouds, son of Cronus, who rules over all, and burned the thigh pieces. But he took no notice of the offerings. Instead he was planning how all my well-benched ships and my trusty companions might be destroyed.

9.556 So then all day long, until the sun went down, we sat feasting on endless meat and sweet wine. When the sun went down and darkness came on, we lay down to sleep on the seashore. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, I urged my companions on and ordered them to go aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches, and sitting in their rows they struck the gray sea with their oars. From there we sailed on, grieving at heart, glad to have escaped death, but having lost our dear companions.

Book 10

Aeolus and Circe
The bag of winds, the Laestrygonians, and Circe's island.

10.1 We came to the island of Aeolia. There lived Aeolus, son of Hippotas, dear to the immortal gods, on a floating island. All around it runs a wall of unbreakable bronze, and the rock rises up sheer and smooth. Twelve children were born to him in his halls, six daughters and six sons in the prime of youth, and he gave his daughters to his sons to be their wives. They feast forever beside their dear father and their devoted mother, and countless good things lie before them. All day the house, rich with the savor of roasting meat, echoes round the courtyard, and at night they sleep beside their modest wives on coverlets and on corded beds. To their city and their fine house we came. 10.14 For a whole month he made me welcome and questioned me about everything: Ilium, the ships of the Argives, and the homecoming of the Achaeans. I told him all of it in due order. But when I in turn asked to be on my way and begged him to send me off, he refused me nothing and prepared my passage. He flayed a nine-year-old ox and gave me its hide made into a bag, and in it he bound up the paths of the howling winds, for the son of Cronus had made him keeper of the winds, to calm or to rouse whichever he wished. He tied it fast in the hollow ship with a shining silver cord, so that not the slightest breath could slip out. For me he sent the breath of the West Wind to blow and carry the ships and ourselves along. But it was not to be accomplished: we were ruined by our own folly.

10.28 For nine days we sailed on, night and day alike, and on the tenth our native land came into sight at last. We were so close that we could see men tending their fires. Then sweet sleep came over me in my weariness, for I had been working the sheet of the ship the whole time and had not handed it to any of my companions, so that we would reach our native land sooner. But my companions talked among themselves and said that I was bringing home gold and silver, gifts from great-hearted Aeolus, son of Hippotas. And one of them would say, glancing at his neighbor, "Unbelievable! How loved and honored this man is by everyone, in whatever people's city and land he arrives!

10.40 He's bringing home plenty of fine treasures from the spoils of Troy, while we, who've made the same journey, are heading home with empty hands. And now Aeolus has given him these as well, doing him a favor out of friendship. Come on, let's take a quick look at what this is, and how much gold and silver is in the bag." So they spoke, and my companions' bad counsel won out. They untied the bag, and all the winds rushed out. At once the storm snatched the men up and carried them, weeping, out to sea, away from their native land. But I woke and pondered in my noble heart whether to throw myself from the ship and perish in the sea, or to endure it in silence and remain among the living.

10.53 But I endured and stayed, and lay in the ship with my head covered. And the ships were carried by the evil blast of wind back to the island of Aeolia, while my companions groaned. There we went ashore and drew water, and my companions quickly took their meal beside the swift ships. But when we had tasted food and drink, I took a herald and one companion with me and went to the famous house of Aeolus. I found him feasting beside his wife and his children. When we came into the house we sat down on the threshold by the doorposts, and they were amazed at heart and questioned us:

10.64 "How is it you're here, Odysseus? What evil god has fallen on you? We sent you off with every care, so that you'd reach your native land and your home, or wherever you pleased." So they

spoke, and I answered them, grieving at heart: "My wicked companions brought me to ruin, and cruel sleep along with them. But set it right, my friends, for you have the power." So I spoke, addressing them with gentle words, and they fell silent. But the father answered: "Get off this island, quickly, most shameful of living men! It isn't right for me to help or send on his way a man who is hated by the blessed gods. Go! You've come here as one hated by the gods."

THE LAESTRYGONIANS

Giant cannibals destroy every ship but Odysseus' own in their harbor.

10.76 So saying, he sent me from his house, groaning heavily. From there we sailed on, grieving at heart. The men's spirits were worn down by the painful rowing, through our own folly, since there was no longer any sign of a wind to take us home. For six days we sailed on, night and day alike, and on the seventh we came to the steep citadel of Lamus, Telepylus in the land of the Laestrygonians, where herdsman hails herdsman as he drives his flock in, and the one driving out answers him. There a man who could do without sleep might earn double wages, one for herding cattle and the other for pasturing white sheep, for the paths of night and day lie close together. When we came there into the famous harbor, around which a sheer cliff rises unbroken on both sides, where two jutting headlands face each other at the mouth and the entrance is narrow, the others all steered their curved ships inside.[1] 10.92 These were moored inside the hollow harbor, close together, for no wave ever swelled within it, great or small, and there was a bright calm all around. But I alone kept my black ship outside, right there at the edge, tying its cables to a rock. Then I climbed to a rugged lookout and stood there. No sign of the work of oxen or of men could be seen; we saw only smoke rising from the land. So I sent companions ahead to go and find out what kind of men lived on

1 The closeness of "the paths of night and day" seems to describe a land of extremely short nights, where the evening herdsman meets the morning one.

this land and ate bread here, choosing two men and sending a herald with them as a third. They went ashore and followed a smooth road, by which wagons brought timber down to the town from the high mountains, and in front of the town they met a girl drawing water, the strong daughter of Antiphates the Laestrygonian. 10.107 She had come down to the fair-flowing spring of Artacia, for that was where they fetched water for the town. They went up to her and spoke to her, and asked who was king of these people and over whom he ruled. She at once pointed out her father's high-roofed house. When they entered the famous house, they found his wife there, as huge as a mountain peak, and they were horrified at her. At once she called the famous Antiphates, her husband, from the place of assembly, and he planned a grim death for them. He immediately seized one of my companions and made his meal of him, but the other two leapt up and fled back to the ships. 10.118 Then he raised a shout through the town, and hearing it the mighty Laestrygonians came thronging from every side, thousands of them, not like men but like Giants. From the cliffs they pelted us with boulders, each a man's full load, and at once a dreadful din rose from the ships, of men being killed and ships being smashed together. Spearing the men like fish, they carried them off for a joyless meal. While they were killing them inside the deep harbor, I drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and cut the cables of my dark-prowed ship with it. At once I urged my companions on and ordered them to throw themselves on the oars, so that we might escape disaster, and they all churned up the sea, in fear of death. Gladly my ship fled from the overhanging cliffs into the open sea, but the other ships were all destroyed there together.

CIRCE'S ISLAND

On Aeaea Circe turns half of Odysseus' men into pigs.

10.133 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart, glad to escape death, though we had lost our dear companions. We came to the

island of Aeaea, where lived Circe of the lovely hair, a dread goddess who speaks with a human voice, own sister of baleful Aeetes. Both were born of Helios, who brings light to mortals, and of their mother Perse, whom Ocean fathered. There we brought our ship in to the shore in silence, into a harbor where ships could shelter, and some god guided us. We disembarked and lay there for two days and two nights together, eating our hearts out with weariness and grief. But when Dawn of the lovely hair brought the third day to its fullness, I took my spear and sharp sword and went quickly up from the ship to a place with a wide view, in the hope of seeing the work of mortals and hearing their voices.[2] 10.148 I climbed to a rugged lookout and stood there, and caught sight of smoke rising from the broad earth, from Circe's halls, through the dense thickets and woods. Then I pondered in my mind and heart whether to go and find out, since I had seen the glowing smoke. And as I thought it over, this seemed the better course: first to go back to the swift ship and the seashore, give my companions a meal, and send them out to find out. But when I was nearing the curved ship on my way, some god took pity on me in my solitude and sent a great high-horned stag right into my path. He was coming down from his pasture in the woods to the river to drink, for the sun's strength weighed heavily on him. 10.161 As he came out, I struck him on the spine in the middle of the back, and the bronze spear went straight through. Down he fell in the dust with a bellow, and his life flew from him. I set my foot on him and drew the bronze spear out of the wound, then laid it down on the ground there and left it. I pulled up brushwood and willow shoots, plaited a rope about a fathom long, well twisted from end to end, and bound together the feet of the huge, fearsome beast. Then I set off for the black ship, carrying him across my neck and leaning on my spear, since there was no way to carry him on my shoulder with one hand: he was a very large beast. I

2 Aeetes was king of Colchis and father of Medea, known from the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece.

threw him down in front of the ship and roused my companions with gentle words, standing beside each man in turn:

10.174 "My friends, for all our grief we won't go down to the house of Hades yet, not before our fated day arrives. Come, while there's food and drink in the swift ship, let's think about eating and not waste away with hunger." So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. They uncovered their faces there by the shore of the barren sea and gazed at the stag, for he was a very large beast. But when they had had their fill of gazing at him with their eyes, they washed their hands and prepared a glorious feast. So then all day long until the sun went down we sat feasting on meat in abundance and sweet wine, and when the sun went down and darkness came on, we lay down to sleep on the shore of the sea. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, I called an assembly and spoke among them all:

10.189 "Listen to what I have to say, companions, for all the hardships you're suffering. My friends, we don't know where the darkness lies or where the dawn, nor where the sun that brings light to mortals goes beneath the earth, nor where it rises. Still, let's quickly consider whether any cunning plan is left to us. I don't think there is. For I climbed to a rugged lookout and saw an island, ringed by the boundless sea. It lies low, and in the middle of it I saw with my own eyes smoke rising through the dense thickets and woods." So I spoke, and their hearts broke within them as they remembered what Antiphates the Laestrygonian had done, and the violence of the great-hearted Cyclops, the eater of men. They wept aloud, shedding big tears, but nothing came of their lamenting.

10.203 Then I counted off all my well-greaved companions into two companies and gave each a leader: I led one, and godlike Eurylochus the other. Quickly we shook lots in a bronze-cheeked helmet, and out leapt the lot of great-hearted Eurylochus. He set off, and with him went twenty-two companions, weeping, and they left us behind, lamenting. In the glades they found Circe's house, built of polished stone, in a place that could be seen from all around. Around it were mountain wolves and

lions, whom she herself had bewitched by giving them evil drugs. They did not attack the men but rose up on their hind legs, fawning around them and wagging their long tails. 10.216 As dogs fawn around their master when he comes from a feast, for he always brings them tidbits to please them, so the strong-clawed wolves and lions fawned around these men. But they were frightened when they saw those dreadful creatures. They stood in the gateway of the goddess with the lovely hair, and inside they heard Circe singing in a lovely voice as she went to and fro at a great immortal loom, weaving the kind of delicate, graceful, splendid work that goddesses make. Polites, a leader of men, the dearest and most trusted to me of my companions, was the first to speak: "My friends, there's someone inside going to and fro at a great loom and singing beautifully, and the whole floor echoes with it—a goddess or a woman. Come, let's call out to her at once."

10.229 So he spoke, and they called out to her. At once she came out, opened the shining doors and invited them in, and they all followed her in their ignorance. But Eurylochus stayed behind, suspecting a trick. She led them in and seated them on chairs and high seats, and for them she stirred cheese, barley meal and pale honey into Pramnian wine; but into the food she mixed baneful drugs, so that they would utterly forget their native land. When she had given it to them and they had drunk it down, she at once struck them with her wand and penned them in the pigsties. They had the heads of pigs, and the voice, the bristles and the body, but their minds remained as steady as before. So they were penned in, weeping, and Circe threw them holm-oak acorns, oak acorns and cornel berries to eat, the kind of food that pigs, who sleep on the ground, always eat.

10.244 Eurylochus came straight back to the swift black ship to bring news of his companions and their bitter fate. Much as he wanted to, he could not utter a single word, his heart stricken with great grief. His eyes filled with tears, and his spirit was bent on wailing. But when we had all questioned him in astonishment, he told us how the rest of our companions had per-

ished: "We went through the thickets as you ordered, glorious Odysseus. In the glades we found a fine house built of polished stone, in a place that could be seen from all around. Someone was going to and fro at a great loom inside, singing clearly—a goddess or a woman—and the men called out to her.

10.256 At once she came out, opened the shining doors and invited them in, and they all followed her in their ignorance. But I stayed behind, suspecting a trick. They vanished, all of them together, and not one of them came out again, though I sat there a long while keeping watch." So he spoke, and I slung my great bronze sword with its silver studs around my shoulders, and my bow as well, and told him to lead me back the same way. But he clasped my knees with both hands and begged me, and lamenting he spoke winged words to me: "Don't take me there against my will, you whom Zeus has nurtured. Leave me here. I know you won't come back yourself, and you won't bring back any of your companions either. No, let's get away quickly with these men here. We could still escape the evil day."

HERMES AND THE MOLY

Protected by Hermes' herb, Odysseus masters Circe, who frees his men and welcomes them all.

10.270 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Eurylochus, you can stay here in this place, eating and drinking beside the hollow black ship. But I will go: a hard necessity is upon me." With that I went up from the ship and the sea. But just as I was going up through the sacred glades and was about to reach the great house of Circe, the mistress of many drugs, Hermes of the golden wand met me on my way to the house, looking like a young man with his first beard, when youth is at its most graceful. He took my hand, and spoke to me, and called me by name:

10.281 "Where are you off to now, poor man, alone across the hilltops, not knowing the country? Your companions there in Circe's house are penned like swine in close-packed sties. Have you come here to free them? I tell you, you won't get back your-

self; you'll stay just where the others are. But come, I will free you from harm and save you. Here, take this good herb and go into Circe's house; it will keep the evil day from your head. And I will tell you all of Circe's deadly wiles. She will mix you a potion and put drugs into the food. 10.291 But even so she won't be able to bewitch you, for the good herb I'll give you will not allow it. I'll tell you everything. When Circe strikes you with her long wand, then draw your sharp sword from beside your thigh and rush at Circe as though you meant to kill her. She will be frightened and bid you go to bed with her. Do not refuse the goddess's bed then any longer, so that she may free your companions and look after you yourself. But bid her swear a great oath by the blessed gods that she will plot no other evil harm against you, so that once you are stripped she does not make you weak and unmanned."

10.302 So speaking, Argeïphontes gave me the herb, pulling it out of the ground, and showed me its nature. At the root it was black, but its flower was like milk. The gods call it moly; it is hard for mortal men to dig up, but the gods can do all things. Then Hermes went off toward lofty Olympus across the wooded island, and I went on to Circe's house, my heart churning hard as I went. I stood at the doors of the goddess of the lovely hair; standing there I shouted, and the goddess heard my voice. At once she came out, opened the shining doors and called me in; and I followed, grieving at heart. 10.314 She led me in and sat me on a silver-studded chair, beautiful and finely wrought, with a footstool under my feet. She mixed the potion for me in a golden cup to drink, and dropped the drug into it, with evil in her heart. But when she had given it to me and I had drunk it down, and it did not bewitch me, she struck me with her wand, and spoke to me and called me by name: "Off to the sty with you now, and lie down with the rest of your companions." So she spoke, and I drew my sharp sword from beside my thigh and rushed at Circe as though I meant to kill her. But she gave a great scream, ducked under it and clasped my knees, and wailing she spoke winged words:

10.325 "Who are you among men, and from where? Where are your city and your parents? I am amazed that you drank these drugs and were not bewitched at all. For no other man has ever withstood these drugs, once he has drunk them and they have passed the barrier of his teeth. You have a mind in your breast that no charm can touch. Surely you are Odysseus of many turns, whom Argeïphontes of the golden wand always told me would come, on his way home from Troy in his swift black ship. But come, put your sword in its sheath, and then let the two of us go up into my bed, so that, joined in bed and love, we may learn to trust each other." So she spoke, and I answered her:

10.337 "Circe, how can you ask me to be gentle with you, when you have turned my companions into swine in your halls, and now you keep me here and with treachery in your heart bid me go into your chamber and up into your bed, so that once I am stripped you may make me weak and unmanned? No, I would not be willing to go up into your bed unless you would bring yourself, goddess, to swear me a great oath that you will plot no other evil harm against me." So I spoke, and at once she swore as I asked. And when she had sworn and finished the oath, then I went up into the beautiful bed of Circe.

10.348 Meanwhile the handmaids were busy in the halls, four of them, who serve her in the house. They are born of springs and groves and of the sacred rivers that flow out into the sea. One of them threw lovely purple covers over the chairs and spread linen underneath; the second drew up silver tables in front of the chairs and set golden baskets on them; the third mixed honey-hearted wine, delicious, in a silver mixing bowl, and handed round golden cups; the fourth brought water and lit a big fire under a great tripod, and the water grew warm. 10.360 And when the water had boiled in the gleaming bronze, she sat me in a bath and washed me with water from the great tripod, mixing it to my liking, pouring it over my head and shoulders, until she had taken the heart-wasting weariness from my limbs. And when she had bathed me and rubbed me richly with olive oil, and thrown a fine cloak and tunic around me, she led me in and

sat me on a silver-studded chair, beautiful and finely wrought, with a footstool under my feet. A maid brought water for washing in a beautiful golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for me to wash my hands, and drew up a polished table beside me. 10.371 The respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before me, adding many dishes and giving freely of what she had. She bade me eat, but my heart had no taste for it; I sat with my thoughts elsewhere, and my heart foresaw evil. When Circe saw me sitting there, not reaching out my hands to the food, gripped by heavy grief, she came and stood close beside me and spoke winged words: "Why do you sit like this, Odysseus, like a man struck dumb, eating out your heart, and touch neither food nor drink? Do you suspect some other trick? You have no need to be afraid; I have already sworn you a mighty oath."

10.382 So she spoke, and I answered her: "Circe, what man with any sense of right could bring himself to taste food and drink before he had freed his companions and seen them with his own eyes? But if you truly, with a willing heart, bid me eat and drink, set them free, so that I may see my trusty companions with my own eyes." So I spoke, and Circe went out through the hall with her wand in her hand, opened the doors of the sty and drove them out, looking like fatted nine-year-old hogs. They stood there facing her, and she went among them and smeared each one with another drug.

10.393 From their limbs the bristles fell away that the deadly drug had made grow, the one queenly Circe had given them, and they became men again, younger than they had been before, and far more handsome and taller to look at. They knew me, and each of them clung to my hands. A yearning lament came over them all, and the house rang dreadfully all around; even the goddess herself felt pity. Then she, bright among goddesses, stood close to me and said: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, go now to your swift ship and the shore of the sea. First of all drag your ship up onto land, and stow your

goods and all the tackle in caves; then come back yourself and bring your trusty companions."

10.406 So she spoke, and my proud heart was persuaded, and I set off for the swift ship and the shore of the sea. There by the swift ship I found my trusty companions wailing piteously and shedding big tears. As when calves on a farm frisk around the herd cows as they come back to the dung-yard after taking their fill of grazing—they all leap together to meet them, the pens no longer hold them, and lowing without pause they run around their mothers: so those men, when they saw me with their own eyes, flocked round me in tears; and their hearts felt as if they had reached their native land and the very city of rugged Ithaca, where they were born and raised. And wailing they spoke winged words:

10.419 "Now that you're back, you whom Zeus has fostered, we are as glad as if we had come to Ithaca, our native land. But come, tell us how the rest of our companions perished." So they spoke, and I addressed them with gentle words: "First of all let's drag the ship up onto land and stow our goods and all the tackle in caves; then bestir yourselves, all of you, and follow me, so that you may see our companions in Circe's sacred house, eating and drinking; they have plenty of everything." So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. Only Eurylochus tried to hold back all my companions, and he raised his voice and spoke winged words to them:

10.431 "Poor fools, where are we going? Why do you long for this misery—to go down into Circe's hall, when she will turn us all into swine or wolves or lions, to guard her great house for her whether we like it or not? It's just what the Cyclops did, when our companions came into his yard and our bold Odysseus went along with them; it was through this man's reckless folly that they too were lost." So he spoke, and I pondered in my mind whether to draw the long-edged sword from beside my sturdy thigh and strike off his head and send it rolling to the ground, close kinsman by marriage though he was. But my companions

held me back with soothing words, one from this side, one from that:[3]

10.443 "You who are sprung from Zeus, we will leave this man here, if you so command, to stay by the ship and guard the ship; but you lead us to Circe's sacred house." So saying they went up from the ship and the sea. Nor was Eurylochus left behind by the hollow ship; he followed, for he dreaded my fierce rebuke. Meanwhile Circe in her house had carefully bathed the rest of my companions and rubbed them richly with olive oil, and thrown thick woolen cloaks and tunics around them; we found them all feasting well in the halls. And when they saw each other and recognized one another face to face, they wept and wailed, and the house groaned all around. Then she, bright among goddesses, stood close to me and said:

10.457 "Stir up no more of this loud lamenting. I know myself all the pains you suffered on the fish-filled sea, and all the harm hostile men did you on land. But come, eat food and drink wine, until you get back the spirit in your breasts that you had when you first left your native land of rugged Ithaca. As it is, you are withered and spiritless, always brooding on your hard wandering, and your hearts are never cheerful, since you have suffered so very much." So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. There, day after day for a full year, we sat feasting on endless meat and sweet wine. But when a year had gone by, and the seasons turned as the months waned, and the long days had come round to their end, then my trusty companions called me aside and said:

ORDERS FOR THE LAND OF THE DEAD

After a year Odysseus asks to leave, and Circe sends him first to consult Tiresias among the dead.

10.472 "What's come over you? Think of your native land now at last, if it is fated for you to be saved and reach your high-roofed

3 Eurylochus was related to Odysseus by marriage; tradition made him the husband of Odysseus' sister.

house and your native land." So they spoke, and my proud heart was persuaded. So for that whole day, until the sun went down, we sat feasting on endless meat and sweet wine; and when the sun had set and darkness came on, they lay down to sleep throughout the shadowy halls. But I went up into Circe's beautiful bed and begged her by her knees, and the goddess heard my voice; and I raised my voice and spoke winged words to her:

10.483 "Circe, keep the promise you made me, to send me home. My heart is eager now, and so are the hearts of my other companions, who wear my spirit away with their lamenting around me whenever you are out of the way." So I spoke, and she, bright among goddesses, answered at once: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, stay no longer in my house against your will. But first you must make another journey, and come to the house of Hades and dread Persephone, to consult the spirit of Theban Tiresias, the blind seer, whose mind is still unshaken; to him even in death Persephone has granted understanding, so that he alone has his wits, while the others flit about as shadows."[4]

10.496 So she spoke, and my heart was broken. I sat on the bed and wept, and my heart no longer wanted to live and see the light of the sun. But when I had had my fill of weeping and writhing, then I answered her and said: "Circe, who will guide us on this journey? No one has ever yet reached Hades in a black ship." So I spoke, and she, bright among goddesses, answered at once: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, don't let the want of a guide by your ship trouble you; set up the mast, spread the white sails and sit still, and the breath of the North Wind will carry her along for you.

10.508 But when you have crossed Ocean in your ship, where there is a low shore and the groves of Persephone, tall poplars and willows that drop their fruit, beach your ship there beside deep-eddying Ocean, and go on yourself into the dank house of Hades. There Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, which is a branch of

4 Tiresias was the legendary blind prophet of Thebes, familiar from the story of Oedipus.

the water of the Styx, flow into Acheron, and there is a rock where the two thundering rivers meet. Go close to it then, hero, as I bid you, and dig a pit about a cubit each way, and around it pour a libation to all the dead: first with milk and honey, next with sweet wine, and third with water; and sprinkle white barley meal over it.[5] 10.521 Then pray earnestly to the strengthless heads of the dead, vowing that when you come to Ithaca you will sacrifice in your halls a barren heifer, the best you have, and heap the pyre with fine offerings, and to Tiresias alone, apart, you will sacrifice a ram that is black all over, the finest among your flocks. And when you have prayed to the glorious tribes of the dead, sacrifice a ram and a black ewe there, turning their heads toward Erebus, while you yourself turn away and face toward the streams of the river; and many spirits of the dead and departed will come there. Then urge your companions on and bid them flay the sheep that lie there slaughtered by the pitiless bronze, and burn them, and pray to the gods, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone; and you yourself draw your sharp sword from beside your thigh and sit there, and do not let the strengthless heads of the dead come near the blood before you have questioned Tiresias. 10.538 Then the seer will come to you at once, leader of men, and he will tell you your way and the measures of your path, and your homecoming, how you will cross the fish-filled sea." So she spoke, and at once golden-throned Dawn arrived. She dressed me in clothes, a cloak and a tunic, and the nymph herself put on a great shining-white robe, fine and graceful, and fastened a beautiful golden belt around her waist, and set a veil on her head. But I went through the house rousing my companions with soothing words, standing beside each man in turn: "No more lying here drowsing in sweet sleep; let's go, for queenly Circe has told me what to do."

10.550 So I spoke, and their proud hearts were persuaded. But not even from there could I lead my companions away unharmed. There was one Elpenor, the youngest, not very brave

5 Acheron, Pyriphlegethon ("Blazing with fire"), Cocytus ("Wailing") and the Styx are rivers of the underworld.

in war nor very sound in his wits, who had lain down apart from his companions in Circe's sacred house, heavy with wine and longing for cool air. Hearing the noise and bustle of his companions as they moved about, he jumped up suddenly and forgot to go to the long ladder and come back down, but fell headlong off the roof; his neck was snapped from the spine, and his spirit went down to Hades. And as the others came along I spoke to them:

10.562 "You think, I suppose, that you are going home to your dear native land; but Circe has marked out another journey for us, to the house of Hades and dread Persephone, to consult the spirit of Theban Tiresias." So I spoke, and their hearts were broken; they sat down right where they were, wailing and tearing their hair. But nothing came of their lamenting. And while we were making our way to the swift ship and the shore of the sea, grieving and shedding big tears, Circe had gone ahead and tied up a ram and a black ewe beside the black ship, slipping past us easily. Who could see a god with his eyes, going this way or that, if the god did not wish it?

Book 11

The dead
Odysseus calls up the spirits: Tiresias' prophecy, his mother, Agamemnon, Achilles.

11.1 But when we had come down to the ship and the sea, first of all we dragged the ship down into the shining sea. We set up the mast and the sails in the black ship, took the sheep and put them aboard, and then went aboard ourselves, grieving and shedding big tears. Behind our dark-prowed ship Circe of the lovely hair, the dread goddess who speaks with a human voice, sent a favoring wind that filled the sail, a good companion. When we had seen to all the tackle throughout the ship, we sat, and the wind and the helmsman kept her on course. All day long her sails were stretched as she crossed the sea. Then the sun set, and all the ways grew dark.

11.13 She came to the boundaries of deep-flowing Ocean. There lie the land and city of the Cimmerians, wrapped in mist and cloud. The shining sun never looks down on them with his rays, neither when he climbs toward the starry sky nor when he turns back again from the sky toward the earth. Instead, deadly night is spread over those wretched mortals. We came there, beached the ship and took the sheep out, and then went along the stream of Ocean ourselves until we reached the place Circe had told us of. There Perimedes and Eurylochus held the victims. I drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and dug a pit about a cubit each way. Around it I poured a libation to all the dead, first with milk and honey, then with sweet wine, and a third time with water, and over it I sprinkled white barley meal.

11.29 Then I made many prayers to the strengthless heads of the dead. I vowed that when I came to Ithaca I would sacrifice a barren heifer in my halls, the best I had, and heap the pyre with fine things, and that to Tiresias alone, apart from the rest, I would offer a ram that was black all over, the finest of our flocks. When I had besought them, the tribes of the dead, with vows and prayers, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the pit, and the dark blood flowed. Up out of Erebus gathered the spirits of the dead who had passed away. There were brides and unmarried young men and old men who had endured much, and tender girls whose hearts were new to grief, and many men wounded by bronze-tipped spears, killed in battle and still wearing their blood-stained armor. They came crowding around the pit from every side with an unearthly cry, and pale fear seized me. 11.44 Then I urged my companions on and told them to flay the sheep that lay there slaughtered by the pitiless bronze, and to burn them and pray to the gods, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone. I myself drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and sat there, and I would not let the strengthless heads of the dead come near the blood before I had questioned Tiresias. The first to come was the spirit of my companion Elpenor, for he had not yet been buried beneath the wide-wayed earth. We had left his body behind in Circe's hall, unwept and unburied, because another task was pressing us. When I saw him I wept, and I pitied him in my heart, and I called out to him and spoke winged words: "Elpenor, how did you come down under the misty darkness? You've come faster on foot than I did in my black ship."

11.59 So I spoke, and he groaned and answered me: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, an evil fate from some god was my ruin, and wine beyond telling. I had lain down to sleep in Circe's hall, and I never thought to go back down by the long ladder. I fell headlong from the roof, my neck snapped at the spine, and my spirit went down to Hades. Now I beg you by those you left behind, who are not here with you: by your wife, and by your father, who reared you when you were

small, and by Telemachus, whom you left alone in your halls. For I know that when you leave here, from the house of Hades, you'll put in at the island of Aeaea with your well-built ship. There, my lord, I ask you to remember me.

11.72 Don't go off and leave me behind unwept and unburied when you turn away, or I may bring the gods' anger down on you. Burn me with all the armor I have, and heap up a mound for me on the shore of the gray sea, the grave of an unlucky man, so that men to come may learn of me. Do this for me, and on the mound plant the oar I rowed with among my companions while I was alive." So he spoke, and I answered him: "All this, poor man, I will accomplish and do." So the two of us sat exchanging grim words, I on one side holding my sword over the blood, while on the other side the phantom of my companion talked on and on.

TIRESIAS' PROPHECY

The seer foretells Odysseus' troubled homecoming, the suitors' deaths, and his own end.

11.84 Then came the spirit of my dead mother, Anticleia, daughter of great-hearted Autolycus, whom I had left alive when I went to sacred Ilium. When I saw her I wept, and I pitied her in my heart. Even so, deeply grieved as I was, I would not let her come near the blood before I had questioned Tiresias. Then came the spirit of Theban Tiresias, holding a golden staff. He knew me and spoke to me: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, why have you left the light of the sun, poor man, and come to see the dead and this joyless place? Now draw back from the pit and hold your sharp sword away, so that I may drink the blood and tell you the truth."

11.97 So he spoke, and I drew back and thrust my silver-studded sword into its sheath. And when he had drunk the dark blood, the blameless seer spoke to me: "You are seeking a homecoming sweet as honey, glorious Odysseus, but a god will make it hard for you. I don't think you will slip past the Earth-shaker, who has

laid up anger against you in his heart, enraged because you blinded his dear son. Yet even so, though you suffer hardship, you may still get home, if you are willing to restrain your own heart and your companions' hearts. When you first bring your well-built ship to the island of Thrinacia, escaping the violet sea, you will find grazing there the cattle and the sturdy sheep of Helios, who sees all things and hears all things.

11.110 If you leave them unharmed and keep your mind on your homecoming, you may still reach Ithaca, though you suffer hardship. But if you harm them, then I foresee destruction for your ship and your companions. And even if you escape yourself, you will come home late and in misery, having lost all your companions, in someone else's ship. You will find troubles in your house: arrogant men who are eating up your livelihood, courting your godlike wife and offering bride-gifts. When you come, though, you will surely make them pay for their violence. But when you have killed the suitors in your halls, whether by a trick or openly with the sharp bronze, then take a well-shaped oar and go on until you come to men who know nothing of the sea and eat no food mixed with salt. They know nothing of ships with crimson cheeks, nor of well-shaped oars, which are wings to ships. 11.126 And I'll tell you a sign, a very clear one, and you won't miss it. When another traveler meets you and says that you have a winnowing fan on your shining shoulder, then fix the well-shaped oar in the ground and make fine sacrifices to lord Poseidon: a ram, a bull, and a boar that mounts sows. Then go off home and offer sacred hecatombs to the immortal gods who hold the wide sky, to all of them in order. And death will come to you yourself from the sea, a death so very gentle, which will take you when you are worn out in a sleek old age, and around you your people will be prosperous. This is the truth I tell you." So he spoke, and I answered him:[1]

11.139 "Tiresias, these things, I suppose, the gods themselves have spun. But come, tell me this and give me a true account. I

1 A winnowing fan is a broad, flat shovel for tossing grain into the wind; a man who mistakes an oar for one has never seen the sea.

see the spirit of my dead mother here. She sits near the blood in silence, and she can't bring herself to look her own son in the face or speak to him. Tell me, lord, how might she know me for who I am?" So I spoke, and he answered me at once: "I'll tell you something simple and put it in your mind. Whichever of the dead who have passed away you let come near the blood will tell you the truth. But anyone you refuse it to will go back again."

ODYSSEUS' MOTHER

Anticleia tells of Ithaca and how she died of longing, and slips three times from her son's arms.

11.150 With these words the spirit of lord Tiresias went back into the house of Hades, now that he had spoken his prophecies. But I stayed there steadily until my mother came and drank the dark blood. At once she knew me, and lamenting she spoke winged words to me: "My child, how did you come down under the misty darkness while you're still alive? It is hard for the living to see these things. In between there are great rivers and dreadful streams, and Ocean first of all, which no one can cross on foot unless he has a well-built ship. Are you only now coming here from Troy, after wandering a long time with your ship and your companions? Haven't you reached Ithaca yet, or seen your wife in your halls?"

11.163 So she spoke, and I answered her: "Mother, need brought me down to Hades, to consult the spirit of Theban Tiresias. I haven't yet come near the land of the Achaeans or set foot on our own country. I have been wandering all the time, bearing misery, ever since I first followed godlike Agamemnon to Ilium of the fine horses, to fight the Trojans. But come, tell me this and give me a true account. What fate of death that lays men low overcame you? Was it a long illness, or did Artemis who showers arrows come upon you with her gentle shafts and kill you?

11.174 And tell me about my father and the son I left behind. Is my royal privilege still in their keeping, or does some other man hold it now, because they say I'll never come home? And tell me

the purpose and mind of my wedded wife. Is she staying with her son and keeping everything secure, or has the best of the Achaeans already married her?" So I spoke, and my lady mother answered at once: "She certainly stays in your halls, with an enduring heart. Her nights and days are always wasting away in misery as she weeps.

11.184 No one holds your fine privilege yet. Telemachus manages your estates undisturbed and dines at the equal feasts that a man who deals out justice ought to share in, for everyone invites him. But your father stays out there in the country and never comes down to the city. He has no bed, no bedding or cloaks or shining blankets. In winter he sleeps in the house where the servants sleep, in the dust by the fire, and he wears poor clothes on his body. But when summer comes, and the rich harvest season, beds of fallen leaves are strewn on the ground for him all over the slope of his vineyard. There he lies grieving, nursing great sorrow in his heart and longing for your homecoming, and hard old age has come upon him. 11.197 That is how I too died and met my fate. It wasn't the keen-sighted goddess who showers arrows who came upon me in my halls with her gentle shafts and killed me, nor did any illness come upon me, the kind that most often takes the life from the limbs with a hateful wasting. No, it was longing for you, glorious Odysseus, and for your counsel and your gentleness, that robbed me of my honey-sweet life." So she spoke. I pondered in my heart, and I longed to take hold of the spirit of my dead mother. Three times I sprang toward her, and my heart urged me to hold her, and three times she flew from my hands like a shadow or a dream. The pain grew ever sharper in my heart, and I called out to her and spoke winged words:

11.210 "Mother, why won't you wait for me when I long to hold you, so that even in Hades we could throw our arms around each other and take our fill of chill lament? Or is this some phantom that noble Persephone has sent me, to make me groan and grieve still more?" So I spoke, and my lady mother answered at once: "Ah, my child, most ill-fated of all men, Persephone,

daughter of Zeus, is not deceiving you at all. This is simply the way of mortals when they die. The sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together. The strong might of blazing fire destroys them as soon as life has left the white bones, and the spirit flits away like a dream and hovers there. But hurry toward the light as fast as you can, and remember all this, so that later you can tell it to your wife."

THE FAMOUS WOMEN

Persephone sends up the wives and daughters of heroes, and Odysseus questions them one by one.

11.225 So the two of us were exchanging words, and then the women came, for noble Persephone sent them, all who had been the wives and daughters of chieftains. They gathered in a throng around the dark blood, and I considered how I might question each one. This seemed to me in my heart the best plan: I drew the long-edged sword from beside my sturdy thigh and would not let them all drink the dark blood at once. So they came up one after another, and each declared her lineage, and I questioned them all. The first I saw there was Tyro, daughter of a noble father. She said she was the offspring of blameless Salmoneus, and said she was the wife of Cretheus, son of Aeolus. She fell in love with a river, the divine Enipeus, by far the most beautiful of the rivers that flow upon the earth, and she used to wander along the lovely streams of Enipeus.[2]

11.241 Taking the river's likeness, the Earth-holder, the Earth-shaker, lay with her at the mouth of the eddying river. A dark-gleaming wave stood around them like a mountain, arched over, and hid the god and the mortal woman. He loosed her maiden girdle and poured sleep over her. And when the god had finished the works of love, he took her hand, and spoke to her and called her by name: "Rejoice in this love, lady. As the year comes round you will bear glorious children, for the beds of the

2 Odysseus now lists famous heroines of legend. This Aeolus is an ancestor of heroic families, not the keeper of the winds in Book 10.

immortals are not fruitless. You must tend them and raise them. Now go home, and keep quiet and name no names. But know that I am Poseidon, the Earth-shaker."

11.253 With these words he plunged beneath the surging sea. She conceived and bore Pelias and Neleus, who both became mighty servants of great Zeus. Pelias, rich in flocks, lived in spacious Iolcus, and the other in sandy Pylos. To Cretheus that queen among women bore other sons: Aeson, and Pheres, and Amythaon who fought from chariots. After her I saw Antiope, daughter of Asopus, who boasted that she had slept in the arms of Zeus himself. She bore two sons, Amphion and Zethus, who first founded the seat of seven-gated Thebes and built its walls, since they could not live in spacious Thebes without walls, strong though they were.

11.266 After her I saw Alcmene, wife of Amphitryon, who lay in the arms of great Zeus and bore Heracles, bold in battle and lion-hearted. I saw Megara too, daughter of high-spirited Creon, whom the son of Amphitryon, forever unwearied in strength, had as his wife. And I saw the mother of Oedipus, lovely Epicaste, who did a monstrous thing in the ignorance of her mind: she married her own son. He had killed his own father, and then married her, and soon the gods made it known among men. He went on ruling the Cadmeans in lovely Thebes, suffering griefs through the deadly designs of the gods. She went down to the house of Hades, the strong gatekeeper, after she had tied a noose high up on a lofty roof-beam, overwhelmed by her grief. To him she left a great many sorrows, all that a mother's Furies bring to pass.[3]

11.281 And I saw Chloris, so very beautiful, whom Neleus once married for her beauty after giving countless bride-gifts. She was the youngest daughter of Amphion son of Iasus, who once ruled in might at Minyan Orchomenus. She was queen of Pylos, and she bore him glorious children, Nestor and Chromius and lordly Periclymenus. After them she bore stately Pero, a wonder

3 Epicaste is the woman later tragedians call Jocasta. The Furies (Erinyes) were avenging spirits who punished wrongs done to kin, especially to a parent.

to mortals, whom all the neighboring peoples courted. But Neleus would not give her to anyone who could not drive the curved-horned, broad-browed cattle of mighty Iphicles away from Phylace, and that was a hard task. Only the blameless seer undertook to drive them off. But a cruel fate from a god held him fast, with painful bonds and the herdsmen of the countryside.[4] 11.294 But when the months and days were being fulfilled as the year came round again, and the seasons returned, mighty Iphicles set him free, after he had spoken all his prophecies; and the will of Zeus was being accomplished. And I saw Leda, the wife of Tyndareus, who bore Tyndareus two strong-minded sons, Castor the horse-tamer and Polydeuces, good with his fists. The life-giving earth holds them both alive. Even beneath the earth they have honor from Zeus: they live on alternate days, now alive, now dead again, and they have been allotted honor equal to the gods.

11.305 After her I saw Iphimedeia, wife of Aloeus, who said she had lain with Poseidon. She bore two sons, but they were short-lived: godlike Otus and far-famed Ephialtes. They were the tallest men the grain-giving earth ever reared, and by far the most handsome after famous Orion. At nine years old they were nine cubits across, and nine fathoms tall. They even threatened the immortals on Olympus that they would raise the din of furious war. They meant to pile Ossa on Olympus, and leaf-shaking Pelion on Ossa, so that they could climb up to heaven. And they would have done it, if they had reached the full measure of youth. But the son of Zeus, whom Leto of the lovely hair bore, destroyed them both before the down had blossomed beneath their temples and covered their chins with a fine growth of beard.[5]

11.321 I saw Phaedra and Procris, and lovely Ariadne, daughter of Minos of the deadly mind, whom Theseus once tried to bring

4 The seer is Melampus, who tried to win Pero for his brother Bias; his story is told again in Book 15.

5 Ossa and Pelion are mountains in Thessaly, near Olympus. The son of Zeus and Leto is Apollo.

from Crete to the hill-country of sacred Athens. But he had no joy of her: before that, Artemis killed her on sea-girt Dia, on the testimony of Dionysus. I saw Maera and Clymene, and hateful Eriphyle, who accepted precious gold as the price of her own husband. But I could not tell or name all the wives and daughters of heroes that I saw, for the immortal night itself would wane before I finished. And it is time to sleep, either at the swift ship with my companions or here. My passage home will be the care of the gods, and of you.[6]

THE TALE RESUMES

Arete and Alcinous urge their guest on, and he tells of meeting the ghost of Agamemnon.

11.333 So he spoke, and they all fell hushed in silence, held spellbound throughout the shadowy hall. Then white-armed Arete began to speak among them: "Phaeacians, how does this man seem to you, in looks and stature, and in the balanced mind within him? He is my guest, though each of you shares in the honor. So don't be in a hurry to send him away, and don't cut short your gifts to a man in such need, for by the favor of the gods you have many possessions stored in your halls." Then the old hero Echeneus also spoke among them. He was the eldest of the Phaeacian men: "Friends, what our wise queen says is not wide of the mark, and not far from what we think. Do as she says. But word and deed here rest with Alcinous." Then Alcinous answered him in turn:

11.348 "That word shall be carried out, as surely as I live and rule over the oar-loving Phaeacians. But however much our guest longs for his homecoming, let him bring himself to stay until tomorrow, so that I can complete the whole gift. His passage home will be the concern of all the men, and of me most of all, since the power in this land is mine." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned among all

6 Eriphyle was bribed with a golden necklace to send her husband Amphiaraus to the war against Thebes, where he died.

peoples, if you told me to stay here even for a year, and then sped my passage home and gave me splendid gifts, I would want that too. It would be far better to reach my own native land with fuller hands. I would be more respected and more loved by all the men who saw me come home to Ithaca."

11.362 Then Alcinous answered him in turn: "Odysseus, when we look at you we don't take you for a cheat or a swindler, like the many men the dark earth breeds, scattered far and wide, who build up lies out of things no one could even see. Your words have grace, and there is a good mind within you. You told your tale with skill, like a bard: the grievous sorrows of all the Argives, and your own. But come, tell me this and recount it truly: did you see any of your godlike companions, who went with you to Ilium and met their fate there?

11.373 This night is very long, beyond telling, and it isn't time yet to sleep in the hall. Go on, tell me of these wondrous deeds. I could hold out until bright dawn, if you could bring yourself to tell your sorrows here in the hall." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned among all peoples, there is a time for many tales, and a time for sleep as well. But if you still long to hear, I wouldn't begrudge you these things, and others more pitiful still: the sorrows of my companions who perished afterward. They escaped the grim war-cry of the Trojans, only to die on their homecoming through the will of an evil woman."

11.385 When holy Persephone had scattered the spirits of the women this way and that, the ghost of Agamemnon son of Atreus came up, grieving. Around him were gathered the others, all who died with him in the house of Aegisthus and met their fate there. He knew me at once, when he had drunk the dark blood. He wept aloud, shedding big tears, and stretched his hands toward me, eager to reach me. But he no longer had his firm strength, or any of the vigor there once was in his supple limbs. When I saw him I wept, and pitied him in my heart, and I spoke to him winged words:

11.397 "Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, what fate of death that lays men low overcame you? Did Poseidon overcome you among your ships, raising a ruthless blast of cruel winds? Or did hostile men cut you down on dry land, as you were driving off their cattle and their fine flocks of sheep, or fighting for their city and their women?" So I spoke, and he answered me at once: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, Poseidon did not overcome me among my ships, raising a ruthless blast of cruel winds, and no hostile men cut me down on dry land. No, it was Aegisthus who contrived my death and doom. With my accursed wife he killed me, after inviting me to his house and giving me dinner, as a man slaughters an ox at its manger.

11.412 So I died a most pitiful death, and around me my other companions were slaughtered relentlessly, like white-tusked boars in the house of a rich and powerful man, killed for a wedding or a dinner where each brings his share or a lavish banquet. You have already seen the slaughter of many men, cut down in single combat and in the thick of battle. But you would have grieved in your heart most of all to see that sight: how we lay around the mixing bowl and the laden tables in the hall, and the whole floor seethed with blood. The most pitiful cry I heard was from Priam's daughter Cassandra, whom treacherous Clytemnestra killed over my body. And I, dying with the sword through me, lifted my hands and beat them on the ground. But that dog-faced woman turned her back, and though I was going down to Hades she would not even bring herself to close my eyes with her hands or shut my mouth. 11.427 So there is nothing more terrible or more shameless than a woman who sets her mind on such deeds as this. Just such a shameful deed did that woman plot, contriving the murder of her wedded husband. I thought, I tell you, that I would come home to a welcome from my children and my servants. But she, with her mind steeped in surpassing wickedness, poured shame on herself and on all women to come, even on one who does good." So he spoke, and I answered him: "Ah, how terribly far-seeing Zeus has hated the

line of Atreus from the beginning, working through the schemes of women! Many of us perished for Helen's sake, and Clytemnestra laid a trick for you while you were far away." So I spoke, and he answered me at once:

11.441 "So you too, then, must never be soft even with your wife, and never tell her the whole of everything you know: tell her part, and keep part hidden. But for you, Odysseus, there will be no murder at your wife's hands. She is very prudent, and has good counsel in her mind, the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope. She was a young bride when we left her as we went off to war, and she had a baby boy at her breast, who now, I suppose, sits among the ranks of men. Fortunate boy! For his dear father will come home and see him, and he will embrace his father, as is right. 11.452 But my wife didn't even let me take my fill of looking at my son: before that she killed me myself. And I'll tell you something else, and you store it in your mind: bring your ship in to your native land in secret, not openly, since there's no trusting women anymore. But come, tell me this and recount it truly: have you heard anything of my son still living, perhaps in Orchomenus or in sandy Pylos, or perhaps with Menelaus in broad Sparta? For godlike Orestes has not yet died on the earth." So he spoke, and I answered him:

ACHILLES AND AJAX

Achilles says he would rather be a poor man's laborer than king of the dead; Ajax will not speak.

11.463 "Son of Atreus, why do you ask me this? I don't know at all whether he is alive or dead, and it's bad to babble empty words." So the two of us stood there exchanging grim words, grieving and shedding big tears. Then up came the ghost of Achilles son of Peleus, and of Patroclus, and of peerless Antilochus, and of Ajax, who was the finest of all the Danaans in looks and build, after the peerless son of Peleus. The ghost of the swift-footed grandson of Aeacus knew me, and lamenting he spoke to me winged words: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of

many wiles, you reckless man, what still greater deed will you plot in your mind? How did you dare to come down to Hades, where the dead dwell without sense, phantoms of mortals whose toil is done?"

11.477 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Achilles, son of Peleus, far the mightiest of the Achaeans, I came because I needed Tiresias, to see if he would give me some counsel on how to reach rugged Ithaca. For I haven't yet come near Achaean land, or set foot on my own country; I've had nothing but troubles. But no man before you, Achilles, was more blessed than you, and none will be hereafter. For while you lived we Argives honored you equal to the gods, and now that you are here you rule mightily among the dead. So don't grieve at all that you are dead, Achilles." So I spoke, and he answered me at once:

11.488 "Don't try to console me for death, glorious Odysseus. I would rather be bound to the soil, working for hire for another man, some landless man without much to live on, than be king over all the perished dead. But come, give me news of my noble son: did he follow me to the war to fight among the foremost, or not? And tell me of peerless Peleus, if you've heard anything. Does he still have honor among the many Myrmidons, or do they slight him throughout Hellas and Phthia, because old age has a grip on his hands and feet? 11.498 For I am not there to help him under the rays of the sun, the man I once was in broad Troy, when I killed the best of the enemy host defending the Argives. If only I could come like that, even for a little while, to my father's house! Then I would make my strength and invincible hands hateful to anyone who does him violence and keeps him from his honor." So he spoke, and I answered him: "Of peerless Peleus, it's true, I've heard nothing. But about your dear son Neoptolemus I'll tell you the whole truth, as you ask me. For I myself brought him from Scyros in a hollow, balanced ship to join the well-greaved Achaeans.

11.510 Whenever we were deliberating around the city of Troy, he always spoke first, and his words never missed the mark: only godlike Nestor and I surpassed him. And whenever we

fought with bronze on the Trojan plain, he never hung back in the mass of men or in the throng, but ran far out in front, yielding to no one in his fury, and he killed many men in the dread conflict. I could not tell or name them all, the whole host he killed defending the Argives. But what a man he slew with the bronze in the son of Telephus, the hero Eurypylus! And many of his companions, the Ceteians, were killed around him, all because of gifts given to a woman. He was the handsomest man I ever saw, after godlike Memnon.[7] 11.523 And when we, the best of the Argives, were climbing down into the horse that Epeius built, and I had been given charge of everything, both to open and to shut our close-packed ambush, then the other leaders and rulers of the Danaans were wiping away tears, and each man's limbs trembled under him. But I never once saw his fair skin go pale, or saw him wipe a tear from his cheeks. No, again and again he begged me to let him out of the horse, and kept gripping his sword hilt and his bronze-heavy spear, set on harm for the Trojans. And when we had sacked Priam's steep city, he went aboard his ship with his share and a noble prize, unscathed: never struck by the sharp bronze, or wounded at close quarters, as so often happens in war, for Ares rages without distinction."

11.538 So I spoke, and the ghost of the swift-footed grandson of Aeacus went off with long strides across the meadow of asphodel, joyful that I had said his son was renowned. The other ghosts of the dead and gone stood there grieving, each asking after those they cared for. Only the ghost of Ajax son of Telamon stood apart, still angry over the victory I won over him when I pleaded my case by the ships for the arms of Achilles. His lady mother had set them as a prize, and the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athena were the judges. How I wish I had never won in such a contest! For because of those arms the earth closed over such a man as Ajax, who in looks and in deeds surpassed all the

7 Eurypylus' mother was bribed with a gift from Priam to send her son to fight for Troy.

other Danaans after the peerless son of Peleus. I addressed him with gentle words:[8]

11.553 "Ajax, son of peerless Telamon, so you weren't going to forget, even in death, your anger at me over those accursed arms? The gods made them a bane for the Argives, for in you they lost such a tower of strength. We Achaeans grieve for you unceasingly, as much as for Achilles son of Peleus himself, now that you have perished. No one else is to blame but Zeus, who hated the army of Danaan spearmen terribly and brought this doom upon you. Come here, my lord, so you can hear my word and what I have to say. Master your fury and your proud spirit." So I spoke, but he answered me nothing, and went off after the other ghosts of the dead and gone into Erebus. There, for all his anger, he would have spoken to me, or I to him; but the heart in my breast wanted to see the ghosts of the other dead.

JUDGES AND SINNERS

Odysseus sees Minos, Orion, Tityos, Tantalus, Sisyphus and Heracles before fear drives him away.

11.568 There I saw Minos, the glorious son of Zeus, holding a golden scepter and seated, giving judgments to the dead, while they sat and stood around the lord through the wide-gated house of Hades, asking him for his verdicts. After him I caught sight of huge Orion, herding together across the meadow of asphodel the wild beasts he himself had killed on the lonely mountains, with a club of solid bronze in his hands, forever unbroken. And I saw Tityos, son of glorious Earth, lying on the ground, stretched over nine acres. Two vultures sat one on either side of him, tearing at his liver and plunging into his bowels, and he could not beat them off with his hands. For he had laid violent hands on Leto, the glorious consort of Zeus, as she was going to Pytho through Panopeus of the lovely dancing-grounds.

11.582 And I saw Tantalus in harsh torment, standing in a pool, with the water lapping at his chin. He strained in his thirst but could not get a drink: every time the old man stooped down, eager to drink, the water would be swallowed up and vanish, and the black earth would show around his feet, for some god dried it up. Tall leafy trees hung their fruit down over his head, pears and pomegranates and apple trees with shining fruit, sweet figs and flourishing olives; but whenever the old man reached out to grasp them with his hands, the wind would toss them up toward the shadowy clouds.

11.593 And I saw Sisyphus in harsh torment, heaving a monstrous stone with both arms. Bracing himself with hands and feet, he kept pushing the stone uphill toward the crest; but whenever he was about to heave it over the top, its sheer weight would turn it back, and the shameless stone would roll down again to the plain. Then he would strain and push it back up again, while the sweat poured from his limbs and the dust rose from his head. After him I caught sight of mighty Heracles—his phantom, that is. He himself is among the immortal gods, delighting in their feasts, with Hebe of the lovely ankles as his wife, daughter of great Zeus and of Hera of the golden sandals.

11.605 Around him rose a clamor of the dead, like birds scattering in terror every way; and he, like dark night, with his bow bared and an arrow on the string, glared about him fearsomely, like a man always about to shoot. Around his chest was a terrifying baldric, a golden strap on which wondrous works were wrought: bears and wild boars and lions with glaring eyes, battles and fights, slaughters and killings of men. May whoever crafted it, whoever put all his art into that strap, never craft anything else. He in turn knew me as soon as his eyes fell on me, and lamenting he spoke to me winged words:

11.617 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, ah, poor wretch, are you too dragging out some evil lot, like the one I bore under the rays of the sun? I was the son of Zeus, son of Cronus, yet my misery had no end, for I was made

8 After losing the contest for Achilles' armor to Odysseus, Ajax killed himself.

subject to a far lesser man, and he laid hard labors on me. Once he even sent me here to fetch the hound, since he could think of no labor harder than this one. But I brought the hound up and led it out of Hades, and Hermes and gray-eyed Athena were my guides."[9]

11.627 So saying, he went back into the house of Hades, but I stayed there and held my ground, in case any more of the heroes who died in earlier days might come. And I might have seen still more men of former times, as I wished to, Theseus and Pirithous, glorious children of the gods. But before that, the countless tribes of the dead came thronging with an unearthly clamor, and pale fear seized me that noble Persephone might send up from Hades the Gorgon's head of that terrible monster. At once I went to the ship and ordered my companions to go aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches. And the swell of the current carried the ship down the river Ocean, first with our rowing, and afterward with a fair wind.

9 The lesser man is Eurystheus, king of Tiryns, who imposed Heracles' labors; the hound is Cerberus, the watchdog of Hades.

Book 12

The Sirens and the cattle of the Sun
Scylla and Charybdis; his men eat the Sun's cattle and are lost.

12.1 But when the ship had left the stream of the river Ocean and come to the waves of the wide-wayed sea and to the island of Aeaea, where early-born Dawn has her house and her dancing-floors and where the Sun rises, we came there and beached the ship on the sand, and we ourselves stepped out onto the shore of the sea. There we fell fast asleep and waited for bright Dawn. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, I sent my companions ahead to Circe's house to fetch the body of the dead Elpenor. We quickly cut logs, and where the headland juts out farthest we buried him, grieving and shedding big tears. And when the body had been burned, and the dead man's armor with it, we heaped up a mound and dragged a pillar onto it, and on the top of the mound we planted his well-fitted oar.

12.16 So we were seeing to each of these things. Nor did Circe fail to notice that we had come back from Hades. She came very quickly, dressed and ready, and with her came her handmaids carrying bread, meat in plenty and sparkling red wine. Then she stood among us and spoke, bright among goddesses: "Rash men, who have gone down alive into the house of Hades—twice-dying, when other men die only once! Come now, eat food and drink wine here all day long, and at the first light of dawn you'll sail. I myself will show you the way and point out each thing, so that you don't come to grief and suffer harm, on sea or on land, through some miserable mischance."

CIRCE'S WARNINGS

Circe tells Odysseus what lies ahead: the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and the cattle of the Sun.

12.28 So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. So then, all day long until the sun went down, we sat feasting on meat beyond measure and sweet wine. And when the sun went down and darkness came on, the men lay down to sleep beside the ship's stern cables. But she took me by the hand, away from my dear companions, made me sit, lay down beside me and asked me about everything, and I told her all of it in due order. And then lady Circe spoke to me: "All that has now been brought to its end. But you listen to what I tell you—and a god himself will remind you of it.

12.39 First you will come to the Sirens, who enchant all men, whoever comes their way. Whoever draws near them unwittingly and hears the Sirens' voice will never have his wife and little children standing at his side when he comes home, nor will they rejoice in him; instead the Sirens enchant him with their clear song as they sit in a meadow, and all around is a great heap of bones of men rotting away, and the skin shrivels on them. Row on past, and knead honey-sweet wax and smear it in your companions' ears, so that none of the others can hear. But if you yourself want to listen, let them bind you in the swift ship hand and foot, upright in the mast-step, with the ropes made fast to the mast itself, so that you can listen with delight to the voice of the two Sirens. 12.53 And if you beg your companions and order them to set you free, they must then tie you with still more bonds. But once your companions have rowed past them, I won't go on to tell you in full which of two ways you are to take; you must decide that for yourself in your heart. But I will describe both. On one side are overhanging rocks, and against them roars the great wave of dark-eyed Amphitrite; the blessed gods call them the Wanderers. Not even winged things get past that way—not even the timid doves that carry ambrosia to father

Zeus—but the sheer rock always snatches away one of them too, and the father sends in another to make up the number.[1] 12.66 No ship of men that has come there has ever yet escaped; the waves of the sea and storms of deadly fire sweep away ships' timbers and men's bodies together. Only one seafaring ship has ever sailed past there, the Argo, known to all, on her voyage back from Aeetes; and even her the waves would quickly have dashed against the great rocks, had Hera not sent her through, since Jason was dear to her. Then there are the two crags. One of them reaches up to the wide sky with its sharp peak, and a dark cloud surrounds it that never clears away; clear sky never holds that peak, not in summer and not at harvest-time.[2]

12.77 No mortal man could climb it or set foot on top, not even if he had twenty hands and twenty feet, for the rock is sheer, as if polished all round. In the middle of the crag is a misty cave, facing the gloom of the west, toward Erebus—the very way you should steer your hollow ship past, glorious Odysseus. Not even a strong young man shooting an arrow from a hollow ship could reach the hollow cave. In it lives Scylla, yelping terribly. Her voice, it's true, is no louder than a newborn puppy's, but she herself is an evil monster. No one would be glad to see her, not even if a god came face to face with her. 12.89 She has twelve feet, all of them dangling, and six very long necks, and on each a frightful head with three rows of teeth, thick and close-set, full of black death. Up to her middle she is sunk inside the hollow cave, but she holds her heads out of the dreadful pit, and there she fishes, groping eagerly around the crag for dolphins and dogfish, or any bigger sea-beast she can catch, of the kind that loud-moaning Amphitrite breeds in their thousands. No sailors can ever yet boast that they fled past her unharmed in their ship; with each of her heads she carries off a man, snatching him from the dark-prowed ship.

12.101 The other crag, Odysseus, you'll see is lower. They lie close to each other—you could shoot an arrow across. On it there

1 Amphitrite is a sea goddess, wife of Poseidon; here she stands for the sea itself.

grows a great fig tree, lush with leaves, and beneath it divine Charybdis sucks down the black water. Three times a day she spews it up and three times she sucks it down, terribly. May you not be there when she sucks it down! Not even the Earth-shaker could rescue you from ruin then. No, keep close in to Scylla's crag and row your ship past quickly; it's far better to mourn six companions in your ship than all of them together." So she spoke, and I answered her: "Come, goddess, tell me this truly: if somehow I could escape deadly Charybdis, could I fight the other one off when she preys on my companions?"

12.115 So I spoke, and at once she answered, bright among goddesses: "Rash man, so once again your mind is on deeds of war and toil! Won't you give way even to the immortal gods? She is no mortal; she is an immortal evil, dreadful, cruel and savage, and not to be fought. There's no defense against her: the best thing is to flee from her. For if you linger by the rock arming yourself, I fear she'll dart out again and reach you with just as many heads and snatch just as many men. No, row with all your might, and call aloud on Crataeis, the mother of Scylla, who bore her to be a bane to mortals; she will stop her from darting out a second time.

12.127 Then you will come to the island of Thrinacia. There graze the many cattle and fat sheep of Helios: seven herds of cattle and as many fine flocks of sheep, fifty in each. They bear no young, and they never die off. Goddesses tend them, nymphs of the lovely hair, Phaethusa and Lampetia, whom bright Neaera bore to Helios Hyperion. When their lady mother had borne and reared them, she settled them far away on the island of Thrinacia, to live there and guard their father's sheep and his crook-horned cattle. If you leave these unharmed and keep your mind on your homecoming, you may yet reach Ithaca, though you suffer hardship. But if you harm them, then I foretell destruction for your ship and your companions; and even if you

2 The Argo carried Jason and the Argonauts home from the land of King Aeetes with the Golden Fleece.

yourself escape, you'll come home late and in misery, having lost all your companions."

12.142 So she spoke, and at once golden-throned Dawn came. Then she went away up the island, bright among goddesses, and I went to the ship and urged my companions to go aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches, and sitting in their rows they struck the gray sea with their oars. And behind our dark-prowed ship Circe of the lovely hair, the dread goddess who speaks with a human voice, sent a favoring wind to fill the sail, a good companion. At once we saw to all the tackle throughout the ship and sat down, and the wind and the helmsman kept her on course. Then I spoke among my companions, grieving at heart:

12.154 "Friends, it isn't right for only one or two to know the prophecies that Circe, bright among goddesses, told me. So I'll tell them to you, so that we may either die knowing them, or avoid death and escape our doom. First she bids us shun the voice of the wondrous Sirens and their flowery meadow. Only I, she said, should listen to their voice. But you must bind me with painful bonds, so that I stay fixed right there, upright in the mast-step, with the ropes made fast to the mast itself. And if I beg you and order you to set me free, then you must squeeze me tighter with still more bonds."

THE SIRENS

Odysseus, bound to the mast, hears the Sirens while his men row past with wax in their ears.

12.165 So I was telling my companions each thing and making it plain, and meanwhile the well-built ship swiftly reached the island of the two Sirens, for a steady fair wind drove her on. Then all at once the wind dropped and there was a windless calm, and some god lulled the waves to sleep. My companions stood up, furled the ship's sails and stowed them in the hollow ship, then sat at the oars and whitened the water with their polished pine blades. I took a great round of wax, cut it into small

pieces with the sharp bronze and kneaded them in my strong hands. The wax soon grew soft, compelled by the great strength and the rays of lord Helios, son of Hyperion, and I smeared it in the ears of all my companions, one after another. 12.178 Then they bound me in the ship hand and foot together, upright in the mast-step, and made the ropes fast to the mast itself; and sitting down themselves they struck the gray sea with their oars. But when we were as far off as a man's shout carries, speeding swiftly along, the swift ship did not escape the Sirens' notice as it rushed close by, and they struck up their clear song: "Come here, much-praised Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans, and stop your ship so you can hear the voice of us two. No one has ever yet rowed past this place in a black ship without hearing the honey-sweet voice from our lips; he goes home delighted, and knowing more. For we know everything that the Argives and Trojans toiled through in broad Troy by the will of the gods, and we know all that happens on the much-nourishing earth."

12.192 So they spoke, sending out their lovely voice, and my heart longed to listen. I ordered my companions to set me free, signaling with my brows, but they leaned to their oars and rowed on. At once Perimedes and Eurylochus stood up, bound me with more bonds and squeezed me tighter. But when they had rowed past the Sirens and we could no longer hear their voice or their song, my trusty companions quickly took out the wax I had smeared in their ears and released me from my bonds. Yet just as we were leaving the island behind, I saw smoke and a great wave, and heard a roar. The men were terrified: the oars flew out of their hands and all splashed down with a crash in the current, and the ship stopped right there, since they were no longer driving her with the tapering oars in their hands. But I went through the ship and urged on my companions with gentle words, standing beside each man:

12.208 "Friends, we are no strangers to trouble, after all. Surely this evil that besets us is no greater than when the Cyclops penned us in his hollow cave by brute force. Yet even from there we escaped through my excellence, my counsel and my wits,

and I think one day you'll remember this too. So come now, let's all do as I say. You men, sit on the benches and beat the deep surf of the sea with your oars, in the hope that Zeus may somehow grant us to escape and avoid this destruction. And you, helmsman, these are my orders—take them to heart, since you handle the steering-oar of the hollow ship: keep the ship clear of that smoke and surge, and hug the crag, so that she doesn't swerve off over there before you know it and throw us into disaster."

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

Passing between the whirlpool and the monster, Odysseus loses six men to Scylla.

12.222 So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. But I said nothing more about Scylla, a trouble nothing could be done about, for fear my companions might take fright, stop rowing, and huddle together down inside the ship. And then I forgot Circe's hard command, since she had told me not to arm myself at all. I put on my glorious armor, took two long spears in my hands, and climbed onto the foredeck of the ship, for I expected Scylla of the rock to show herself first from there, she who was to bring disaster on my companions. But I could not catch sight of her anywhere, and my eyes grew tired as I peered in every direction toward the misty rock.

12.234 So we sailed up the strait, groaning. On one side was Scylla, and on the other divine Charybdis terribly sucked down the salt water of the sea. Whenever she vomited it up, she would seethe and churn all through, like a cauldron over a great fire, and the spray flew high and fell on the tops of both crags. But whenever she sucked down the salt water of the sea, she showed herself all churning within, the rock around her roared terribly, and far below the seabed appeared, dark with sand. Pale fear seized my men. We looked toward her, fearing destruction; and meanwhile Scylla snatched six of my companions out of the hollow ship, the strongest and the best with their hands. 12.247 Turn-

ing to look at the swift ship and at my companions, I saw their feet and hands already above me as they were lifted high in the air; and they cried out to me, calling me by name for that last time, in anguish of heart. As when a fisherman on a jutting rock, with a very long rod, casting bait as a lure for the little fish, lets down into the sea the horn of an ox of the field, and then, catching one, flings it gasping onto the land—so they were lifted gasping up toward the rocks. There at her doorway she devoured them as they shrieked, stretching out their hands to me in that dreadful struggle. That was the most pitiful sight my eyes have seen of all I have suffered searching out the paths of the sea.

THE CATTLE OF THE SUN

Stranded by contrary winds and starving, the men kill the Sun's cattle while Odysseus sleeps.

12.260 But when we had escaped the rocks and dread Charybdis and Scylla, we came straight on to the god's fine island. There were the beautiful broad-browed cattle and the many fat flocks of Helios Hyperion. While I was still out at sea in my black ship, I heard the lowing of cattle being penned for the night and the bleating of sheep; and there came into my mind the words of the blind seer, Tiresias of Thebes, and of Circe of Aeaea, who had strictly charged me to shun the island of Helios, who brings joy to mortals. Then I spoke among my companions, grieved at heart: "Listen to my words, my companions, hard as your sufferings are, so that I can tell you the prophecies of Tiresias and of Circe of Aeaea, who strictly charged me to shun the island of Helios, who brings joy to mortals; for there, she said, the most terrible disaster awaited us. So drive the black ship on past the island."

12.277 So I spoke, and their hearts broke within them. At once Eurylochus answered me with a hateful speech: "You're a hard man, Odysseus. Your strength is beyond anyone's, and your limbs never tire—you must be made entirely of iron, since you won't let your companions, worn out with toil and lack of sleep,

set foot on land, where on this sea-girt island we could make ourselves a good supper again. Instead you order us to wander on as we are through the swift night, driven away from the island over the misty sea. It's out of the night that harsh winds rise, the ruin of ships. How could anyone escape sheer destruction if a sudden blast of wind should come, from the South Wind or the foul-blowing West Wind, which more than any others shatter ships, against the will of the lordly gods?

12.291 No, for now let's give in to black night and make our supper, staying beside the swift ship, and at dawn we'll go aboard and put out onto the broad sea." So Eurylochus spoke, and the other companions agreed. And then I knew that some god was plotting evil, and I spoke winged words to him: "Eurylochus, you really are forcing me, since I stand alone. But come now, all of you, swear me a mighty oath: if we find a herd of cattle or a great flock of sheep, no one is to kill a cow or a sheep in wicked, reckless folly. Eat in peace the food that immortal Circe gave us."

12.303 So I spoke, and at once they swore as I told them. But when they had sworn and completed the oath, we moored the well-built ship in a hollow harbor near fresh water, and my companions disembarked and then skillfully prepared supper. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, they remembered their dear companions whom Scylla had snatched from the hollow ship and eaten, and they wept; and as they wept, sweet sleep came over them. But when it was the last third of the night, and the stars had passed their height, Zeus the cloud-gatherer stirred up a furious wind against us with a prodigious storm, and covered land and sea alike with clouds; and night rushed down from the sky. 12.316 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, we made the ship fast, dragging it into a hollow cave, where the nymphs had their lovely dancing-floors and seats. And then I called an assembly and spoke among them: "Friends, there is food and drink in the swift ship, so let's keep our hands off these cattle, or we may come to harm; for these cattle and fat sheep belong to a dread god, Helios, who sees all things and hears all things." So I spoke, and their proud

hearts were persuaded. But for a whole month the South Wind blew without ceasing, and no other wind arose but the East and the South.

12.327 As long as they had grain and red wine, they kept away from the cattle, eager to save their lives. But when all the supplies in the ship were used up, and they were roaming in search of game, as need drove them—fish and birds, whatever came to their hands—with curved hooks, and hunger gnawed at their bellies, then I went off up the island to pray to the gods, in case one of them might show me a way to get home. When, going across the island, I had got away from my companions, I washed my hands in a place sheltered from the wind and prayed to all the gods who hold Olympus; and they poured sweet sleep upon my eyelids. Meanwhile Eurylochus began to give my companions evil counsel:

12.340 "Listen to my words, companions, hard as your sufferings are. Every death is hateful to wretched mortals, but to die of hunger and meet one's fate that way is the most pitiful of all. Come on, let's drive off the best of Helios' cattle and sacrifice to the immortals who hold broad heaven. And if we reach Ithaca, our native land, we'll at once build a rich temple to Helios Hyperion and set many fine offerings in it. But if, angry over his straight-horned cattle, he chooses to destroy our ship, and the other gods go along with him, I'd rather lose my life once and for all, gulping at a wave, than waste away slowly on a desert island."

12.352 So Eurylochus spoke, and the other companions agreed. At once they drove off the best of Helios' cattle from close by, for the beautiful broad-browed cattle with curving horns were grazing not far from the dark-prowed ship. They stood around them and prayed to the gods, having plucked tender leaves from a high-crested oak, for they had no white barley on board the well-benched ship. But when they had prayed and cut the cattle's throats and flayed them, they cut out the thighbones, wrapped them in a double layer of fat, and laid raw meat on top. They had no wine to pour over the blazing offerings, but made

libations with water and roasted all the innards. But when the thighbones were burned and they had tasted the innards, they cut up the rest and pierced it on spits. 12.366 And then sweet sleep sped from my eyelids, and I set off for the swift ship and the seashore. But when, on my way, I came near the curved ship, the sweet savor of roasting fat drifted around me. I groaned and cried out aloud to the immortal gods: "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, it was truly to my ruin that you lulled me in pitiless sleep, while my companions, left behind, contrived a monstrous deed." Swiftly Lampetie of the trailing robes came as a messenger to Helios Hyperion, to tell him that we had killed his cattle. At once he spoke among the immortals, angry at heart:

12.377 "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, punish the companions of Odysseus, son of Laertes, who in their arrogance have killed my cattle—the cattle I always delighted in, both as I climbed into the starry heaven and when I turned back from heaven toward the earth. If they do not pay me fitting recompense for the cattle, I will go down to Hades and shine among the dead." Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered him: "Helios, keep on shining among the immortals and among mortal men on the grain-giving earth. As for them, I will soon strike their swift ship with a flashing thunderbolt and shatter it to pieces in the middle of the wine-dark sea." This I heard from Calypso of the lovely hair; and she said she herself had heard it from Hermes the guide.

12.391 When I came down to the ship and the sea, I rebuked them, going up to one man after another, but we could find no remedy: the cattle were already dead. And at once the gods began to show them portents: the hides crawled, and the meat bellowed on the spits, roasted and raw alike, and there was a sound like the lowing of cattle. For six days after that my trusty companions feasted on the best of Helios' cattle, which they had driven off; but when Zeus, son of Cronus, brought on the seventh day, then the wind stopped raging in storm, and we went

aboard at once and put out onto the broad sea, setting up the mast and hoisting the white sails.

SHIPWRECK

Zeus destroys the ship; Odysseus alone survives Charybdis and drifts to Calypso's island.

12.403 But when we had left the island and no other land was in sight, only sky and sea, then the son of Cronus set a dark cloud above the hollow ship, and the sea grew dark beneath it. The ship ran on for no very long time, for suddenly the West Wind came shrieking, raging in a great storm. The blast of wind snapped both forestays of the mast; the mast fell backward, and all its tackle tumbled into the bilge. In the stern of the ship it struck the helmsman on the head and smashed all the bones of his skull together; and he plunged from the deck like a diver, and his proud spirit left his bones. 12.415 At the same moment Zeus thundered and hurled a thunderbolt at the ship. Struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus, she spun right around and was filled with sulfur, and my companions fell out of the ship. Like sea crows they were carried on the waves around the black ship, and the god took away their homecoming. But I kept moving through the ship until the surge tore the sides from the keel, and the wave carried the keel along bare and snapped the mast off against it. Now a backstay made of oxhide had been thrown over the mast; with it I lashed the two together, keel and mast, and sitting on them I was carried along by the deadly winds.

12.426 Then the West Wind stopped raging in storm, but the South Wind came swiftly, bringing grief to my heart, so that I would have to measure my way back again to deadly Charybdis. All night long I was carried along, and with the rising sun I came to Scylla's crag and dread Charybdis. She was sucking down the salt water of the sea, but I sprang high up toward the tall fig tree and clung to it like a bat. I had no way to plant my feet firmly or to climb onto it, for its roots were far below and its branches hung far out of reach, long and great, overshadowing

Charybdis. I held on without letting go until she should vomit back out the mast and keel; and they came, as I longed for them, but late: at the hour when a man rises from the assembly for supper, after judging the many quarrels of young men going to law—that was when the timbers reappeared out of Charybdis. 12.442 I let go with hands and feet and dropped from above, and fell with a splash in the middle, beside the long timbers, and sitting on them I rowed with my hands. As for Scylla, the father of men and gods did not let her catch sight of me again, or I would never have escaped sheer destruction. From there I was carried along for nine days, and on the tenth night the gods brought me to the island of Ogygia, where Calypso of the lovely hair lives, a dread goddess with a human voice, who loved me and cared for me. But why should I tell you this story? Only yesterday I told it here in your house to you and your noble wife; and I hate to tell over again a tale already plainly told.[3]

3 Odysseus told Alcinous and Arete of his time with Calypso in Book 7, when Arete asked who he was and where he got his clothes.

Book 13

Return to Ithaca
The Phaeacians carry him home; Athena disguises him as an old beggar.

13.1 So he spoke, and they all fell hushed in silence, held spellbound throughout the shadowy halls. Then Alcinous answered him in turn and said: "Odysseus, since you have come to my high-roofed house with its floor of bronze, I do not think you will be driven off course again before you reach home, however much you have suffered. And to each man among you, all who drink the gleaming wine of the elders in my halls and listen to the bard, I give this charge. The clothes for our guest already lie in a polished chest, with intricately worked gold and all the other gifts that the Phaeacian counselors brought here. But come, let each of us give him a great tripod and a cauldron. We in turn will gather from the people and recover the cost, for it is hard for one man to give so freely without return."[1]

13.16 So Alcinous spoke, and his words pleased them. They went off to sleep, each to his own house. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, they hurried down to the ship and carried the bronze, the glory of men. The sacred might of Alcinous stowed it carefully himself, going through the ship under the benches, so that it would not hinder any of the crew as they rowed, whenever they strained at the oars. Then they went to the house of Alcinous and prepared a feast. For them the sacred might of Alcinous sacrificed an ox to Zeus of the dark clouds,

1 Odysseus' own tale (Books 9–12) ends here, and the poem returns to its narrator. The "wine of the elders" was the wine reserved for the king's councilors.

son of Cronus, who rules over all. They burned the thigh pieces and feasted a glorious feast, taking their pleasure, and among them sang the godlike bard, Demodocus, honored by the people. But Odysseus kept turning his head toward the blazing sun, eager for it to set, for he longed to be on his way.

13.31 As a man longs for his supper when all day long his two wine-dark oxen have dragged the jointed plow across the fallow field, and the light of the sun is welcome to him as it goes down, so that he can go to his supper, and his knees falter as he walks—so welcome to Odysseus was the setting of the sun's light. At once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians, and above all he addressed his words to Alcinous: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned among all peoples, pour your libations and send me on my way unharmed; and farewell to you all. For now everything my heart desired has been accomplished: an escort, and dear gifts—may the gods of heaven make them bring me blessings. When I come home, may I find my flawless wife in my house and my loved ones safe and sound. And may you who stay here bring joy to your wedded wives and children; may the gods grant you excellence of every kind, and may no evil come upon your people."

13.47 So he spoke, and they all approved and urged that the stranger be sent on his way, since he had spoken rightly. Then the might of Alcinous spoke to the herald: "Pontonous, mix a bowl and serve wine to everyone throughout the hall, so that we may pray to father Zeus and send the stranger to his own native land." So he spoke, and Pontonous mixed the honey-hearted wine and served it to them all, going up to each in turn. They poured libations to the blessed gods who hold wide heaven, right there from their seats. And godlike Odysseus stood up, placed the two-handled cup in Arete's hand, and spoke to her winged words:

13.59 "Farewell, my queen, through all your days, until old age and death come, which are the lot of mortals. As for me, I am going; but may you have joy in this house, in your children, your people, and King Alcinous." So saying, godlike Odysseus

stepped over the threshold, and with him the might of Alcinous sent a herald to lead him to the swift ship and the shore of the sea. And Arete sent serving women with him: one carrying a freshly washed cloak and a tunic, a second she sent along to bring the sturdy chest, and the third carried bread and red wine.

THE VOYAGE HOME

The Phaeacians carry Odysseus to Ithaca asleep and leave him on the shore with his gifts.

13.70 But when they had come down to the ship and the sea, the noble escorts at once took these things and stowed them in the hollow ship, all the food and drink. For Odysseus they spread a rug and a linen sheet on the deck of the hollow ship, at the stern, so that he might sleep unwaking. He himself went aboard and lay down in silence, and they sat down on the benches, each in his place, and loosed the cable from the pierced stone. As soon as they leaned back and tossed up the sea with their oar blades, sweet sleep fell upon his eyelids, unwaking, sweetest, most like death. 13.81 And the ship—as on a plain four stallions yoked together spring forward all at once under the lash of the whip and, lifting high, swiftly cover their course—so her stern rose high, and behind her the great dark wave of the loud-roaring sea surged. She ran on steadily and surely; not even the wheeling falcon, swiftest of winged things, could have kept pace with her. So she ran swiftly, cutting through the waves of the sea, carrying a man whose counsels were like the gods', who had before suffered very many pains in his heart, passing through the wars of men and the grievous waves; but now he slept undisturbed, forgetting all that he had suffered. When the brightest star rose, the one that comes above all to herald the light of early-born Dawn, then the seafaring ship drew near to the island.

13.96 There is a harbor of Phorcys, the old man of the sea, in the land of Ithaca. Two headlands jut out there, sheer to seaward but sloping down toward the harbor, and they keep off the great waves raised by harsh winds outside. Within, well-benched

ships stay without mooring once they reach the point of anchorage. At the head of the harbor stands a long-leaved olive tree, and near it a lovely, shadowy cave, sacred to the nymphs who are called Naiads. In it are mixing bowls and two-handled jars of stone, and there the bees store their honey. In it, too, are tall looms of stone, where the nymphs weave sea-purple cloth, a wonder to see; and there are ever-flowing waters. It has two entrances: one, facing the North Wind, is the way down for men; the other, facing the South Wind, is holier. Men do not go in by that one; it is the path of the immortals.

13.113 There they rowed in, for they knew the place from before. The ship ran up on the shore for fully half her length, such was her speed, so hard was she driven by the rowers' hands. They stepped from the well-benched ship onto the land, and first they lifted Odysseus out of the hollow ship, together with the linen and the shining rug, and laid him down on the sand, still overcome by sleep. Then they lifted out the possessions that the noble Phaeacians had given him as he set out for home, thanks to great-hearted Athena. These they set all together by the trunk of the olive tree, away from the path, so that no passerby might come upon them and do them harm before Odysseus woke. Then they themselves went back home again. But the Earth-shaker had not forgotten the threats he had first made against godlike Odysseus, and he sought to learn the will of Zeus:

POSEIDON'S ANGER

Poseidon turns the Phaeacian ship to stone as it comes back into harbor.

13.128 "Father Zeus, I shall no longer be honored among the immortal gods, when mortals pay me no honor at all—the Phaeacians, who are of my own lineage. For I said that Odysseus would come home only after suffering many hardships; I never took his homecoming away from him entirely, since you had first promised it and nodded your assent. But they have carried

him asleep in a swift ship over the sea and set him down in Ithaca, and given him countless gifts, bronze and gold in plenty and woven clothing, a great deal—more than Odysseus would ever have brought away from Troy if he had come home unharmed with his share of the spoils." Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered him:

13.140 "Well now, mighty Earth-shaker, what a thing to say! The gods do not dishonor you at all; it would be hard to assail the eldest and best of us with dishonor. But if some man, giving way to his violence and strength, fails to honor you, vengeance is always yours to take, now and hereafter. Do as you wish and as your heart desires." Then Poseidon the Earth-shaker answered him: "I would have acted at once, god of the dark clouds, as you say; but I always respect your anger and shrink from it. Now, though, I want to smash the beautiful ship of the Phaeacians on the misty sea as it comes back from the escort, so that from now on they will hold off and stop giving men escort—and to cover their city with a great mountain." Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered him:

13.154 "My friend, this is what seems best to my mind: when all the people are watching from the city as she comes rowing in, turn her to stone close to the land, in the likeness of a swift ship, so that all mankind may marvel—and cover their city with a great mountain." When Poseidon the Earth-shaker heard this, he set off for Scheria, where the Phaeacians are born. There he waited. The seafaring ship came very close, speeding swiftly on, and the Earth-shaker came close to her; he turned her to stone and rooted her fast below with a blow of the flat of his hand, and then he went away. And the Phaeacians of the long oars, men famed for their ships, spoke winged words to one another, and thus one would say, looking at his neighbor: "Ah, who has bound the swift ship fast on the sea as she was driving home? Just now she was in full view."

13.170 So one would say; but they did not know how things had come about. Then Alcinous addressed them and spoke among them: "Well now, the prophecy my father spoke long ago has

truly come upon me. He used to say that Poseidon begrudged us, because we give safe escort to all men. He said that one day, as a beautiful ship of the Phaeacians came back from an escort on the misty sea, the god would smash it and cover our city with a great mountain. So the old man said; and now it is all being fulfilled. But come, let us all do as I say. Stop giving escort to mortals, whenever anyone comes to our city; and let us sacrifice twelve choice bulls to Poseidon, in the hope that he may take pity and not cover our city with a towering mountain."

HOME, UNRECOGNIZED

Odysseus wakes without knowing his own land and tells a false tale to Athena, disguised as a shepherd.

13.184 So he spoke, and they were afraid, and made the bulls ready. So the leaders and counselors of the Phaeacian people prayed to lord Poseidon, standing around the altar. Meanwhile godlike Odysseus woke from sleep in his native land, and he did not recognize it, having been away so long; for the goddess Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus, had poured a mist around him, so that she might make him unrecognizable and tell him everything, and so that his wife would not know him, nor his townsmen and friends, until the suitors had paid for all their transgressions. That is why everything looked strange to its lord: the long paths, the harbors with safe anchorage, the sheer rocks and the flourishing trees. He sprang up and stood and looked at his native land; and then he groaned, struck both his thighs with the flats of his hands, and spoke in lament:

13.200 "Oh, misery—whose land have I come to now? Are they insolent and savage and unjust, or kind to strangers, with minds that fear the gods? Where am I to carry all these goods? And where am I to wander myself? If only I had stayed there among the Phaeacians! Then I would have gone to some other mighty king who would have welcomed me kindly and sent me on my way home. As it is, I don't know where to put these things, and I won't leave them here, in case they become plunder for others.

Well now, the leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians weren't so sensible or just after all, since they've brought me off to another land. They said they would take me to clear-skied Ithaca, and they didn't do it. 13.213 May Zeus, god of suppliants, punish them—he watches over all men and punishes whoever does wrong. But come, let me count the goods and see whether they've gone off with anything of mine in their hollow ship." So saying, he counted the beautiful tripods and cauldrons, the gold and the fine woven clothes. Of these he missed nothing; but he wept for his native land, creeping along the shore of the loud-roaring sea, lamenting bitterly. And Athena came close to him in the likeness of a young man, a herdsman of sheep, very delicate, as the sons of princes are, with a well-made cloak folded double around her shoulders. On her shining feet she wore sandals, and in her hand she held a spear.

13.226 Odysseus was glad to see her and went to meet her, and spoke to her winged words: "My friend, since you are the first person I've met in this place, greetings—and may you not meet me with any ill intent. Keep these things safe, and keep me safe; I pray to you as to a god, and I come to your dear knees. And tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: what land is this, what people, what men live here? Is it some clear-skied island, or a shore of the fertile mainland lying sloped into the sea?" Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him:

13.237 "You must be a fool, stranger, or else you have come from far away, if you are really asking about this land. It is not so very nameless. A great many people know it, both those who live toward the dawn and the sun and those who live behind, toward the misty dark. It is rugged, it's true, and no place for driving horses. Yet it is not so very poor, though it isn't broad. Grain grows here beyond telling, and wine too. Rain never fails it, nor the fresh dew. It is good pasture for goats and for cattle, there is timber of every kind, and there are watering places that never run dry. And so, stranger, the name of Ithaca has reached even to Troy, which they say is far from the land of Achaea."

13.250 So she spoke, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus was glad, rejoicing in his native land, as Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, had told him. And he spoke winged words to her. But he did not tell the truth. He turned his story back before it came out, always working a mind full of craft in his breast: "I heard of Ithaca even in broad Crete, far across the sea, and now I have come here myself with these goods. I left as much again for my children, and I am in exile, because I killed the dear son of Idomeneus, swift-footed Orsilochus, who in broad Crete outran all men who live by bread with his swift feet. He wanted to rob me of all my share of the spoils from Troy, for which I had suffered pains at heart, making my way through the wars of men and the cruel waves. It was because I would not do his father a favor and serve as his squire in the land of the Trojans, but led other companions of my own.[2]

13.267 I struck him with my bronze-tipped spear as he came down from the country, lying in wait near the road with a companion. A very dark night covered the sky, and no one saw us. I took his life without being noticed. But once I had killed him with the sharp bronze, I went straight to a ship and begged the proud Phoenicians, and gave them enough of the spoils to satisfy them. I asked them to take me on board and set me ashore at Pylos, or at bright Elis, where the Epeans rule. But the force of the wind drove them away from there, much against their will, for they had no wish to cheat me. Driven off course from there, we came here by night. We rowed hard into the harbor, and none of us gave a thought to supper, though we badly needed to eat. We just went ashore from the ship as we were and all lay down. 13.282 There sweet sleep came over me in my weariness. They took my goods out of the hollow ship and set them down where I myself lay on the sand. Then they went on board and sailed off to well-peopled Sidonia, and I was left behind, grieving at heart." So he spoke, and gray-eyed Athena smiled and stroked him with her hand. Now she looked like a woman, beautiful and tall and skilled in splendid handiwork. And she spoke

2 Idomeneus was king of Crete and led the Cretans at Troy.

winged words to him: "It would take someone crafty and wily to outdo you in every kind of trick, even if it were a god who came up against you. You hard man, subtle-minded, never sated with tricks! So you weren't going to stop your deceptions and lying tales even in your own land—the tales that are dear to you to the very core.

13.296 But come, let's talk of this no more. We both know all about cunning. You are far the best of all mortals in counsel and in speech, and I am famous among all the gods for cunning and craft. And yet you did not recognize Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus, who always stands beside you and guards you in all your labors, and who made you dear to all the Phaeacians. Now I have come here again to weave a plan with you, and to hide the goods that the proud Phaeacians gave you as you set out for home, by my counsel and design, and to tell you all the troubles it is your fate to endure in your well-built house. You must bear them, since you must, and tell no one, no man or woman of them all, that you have come home from your wanderings. Suffer many pains in silence, and submit to the violence of men."

13.311 Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "It is hard, goddess, for a mortal who meets you to know you, however skilled he may be, for you take on every likeness. But this I know well: you were kind to me before, while we sons of the Achaeans were fighting at Troy. But once we had sacked the steep city of Priam and gone on board our ships, and a god had scattered the Achaeans, I never saw you after that, daughter of Zeus, nor noticed you boarding my ship to ward off any pain from me. Instead I wandered on and on with my heart torn within me, until the gods freed me from my misery—except for the time when, in the rich land of the Phaeacians, you cheered me with your words and led me to the city yourself.

13.324 Now I beg you by your father—for I don't think I have come to clear-skied Ithaca; I am roaming some other land, and I think you're telling me this to mock me, to lead my mind astray—tell me whether I have truly come to my own native land." Then gray-eyed Athena answered him: "That is always the way

your mind works in your breast, and that is why I cannot abandon you in your misery: you are sensible, quick-witted, and level-headed. Any other man who came home from his wanderings would gladly hurry to see his children and his wife in his halls. But you don't care yet to learn or ask about anything until you have put your wife to the test—your wife, who sits in your halls just as before, while her nights and days waste away in misery as she weeps.

13.339 As for me, I never doubted it. I knew in my heart that you would come home, after losing all your companions. But, you see, I did not want to fight Poseidon, my father's brother, who laid up anger against you in his heart, enraged because you blinded his dear son. But come, I will show you how Ithaca lies, so that you may believe me. This is the harbor of Phorcys, the old man of the sea, and here at the head of the harbor is the long-leaved olive tree. Near it is the lovely, shadowy cave sacred to the nymphs who are called Naiads. This is the vaulted cavern where you used to offer the nymphs many perfect hecatombs. And this is Mount Neritus, clothed in forest."

13.352 So the goddess spoke and scattered the mist, and the land appeared. Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus was glad, rejoicing in his land, and he kissed the grain-giving earth. At once he prayed to the nymphs, lifting up his hands: "Naiad nymphs, daughters of Zeus, I never thought I would see you again. Now accept my greeting and my loving prayers. And we will give you gifts too, as before, if Zeus's daughter, the bringer of spoil, graciously lets me live and lets my dear son grow to manhood." And gray-eyed Athena spoke to him in turn: "Take heart, don't let these things trouble your mind. Let's put the goods in the inmost part of this wondrous cave right now, so that they stay safe for you; and then let us consider how things may turn out best."

THE PLAN AND THE DISGUISE

Athena and Odysseus plot the suitors' deaths, and she turns him into an old beggar.

13.366 So the goddess spoke and went down into the shadowy cave, searching out its hiding places, and Odysseus brought everything closer, the gold and the stubborn bronze and the well-made clothes the Phaeacians had given him. He stowed them away carefully, and Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, set a stone against the entrance. Then the two of them sat down by the trunk of the sacred olive and planned destruction for the arrogant suitors. Gray-eyed Athena began the talk: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, consider how you will lay hands on the shameless suitors, who for three years now have been lording it in your hall, wooing your godlike wife and offering courtship gifts. And she, always mourning in her heart for your homecoming, gives all of them hope and makes promises to each man, sending them messages, but her mind is set on other things."

13.382 Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Ah, I would surely have died an evil death in my halls, like Agamemnon son of Atreus, if you, goddess, had not told me everything as it is. But come, weave a plan for how I may pay them back. Stand beside me yourself and fill me with daring strength, as when we loosed Troy's shining crown of towers. If you would stand by me as eagerly as that, gray-eyed one, I would fight even three hundred men with you, lady goddess, when you are ready to help me." Then gray-eyed Athena answered him:

13.393 "I will be beside you, all right, and you won't be out of my sight when we set about this work. And I think some of the suitors who devour your livelihood will spatter the vast floor with their blood and brains. But come, I will make you unrecognizable to all mortals. I will shrivel the fine skin on your supple limbs and destroy the fair hair on your head, and clothe you in a rag that anyone would loathe to see a man wearing. And I will

dim your eyes, that were so handsome before, so that you will look wretched to all the suitors, and to your wife and the son you left behind in your halls. 13.404 You yourself must go first of all to the swineherd, who keeps your pigs and who is loyal to you, and who loves your son and prudent Penelope. You will find him sitting by his pigs. They are feeding by Raven's Rock at the spring of Arethusa, eating acorns to their hearts' content and drinking the dark water, the things that make rich fat grow on pigs. Stay there, sit with him, and ask him about everything, while I go to Sparta, land of lovely women, to summon Telemachus, your dear son, Odysseus. He went to spacious Lacedaemon, to Menelaus, to find news of you, whether you were still alive anywhere." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her:

13.417 "Then why didn't you tell him, when you know everything in your mind? Was it so that he too would wander and suffer pains over the barren sea, while others devour his livelihood?" Then gray-eyed Athena answered him: "Don't let him weigh too heavily on your heart. I guided him myself, so that he might win good fame by going there. He is in no trouble at all, but sits at ease in the house of the son of Atreus, with abundance all around him. True, young men are lying in wait for him in a black ship, eager to kill him before he reaches his native land. But I don't think it will happen. Sooner the earth will cover some of the suitors who devour your livelihood."

13.429 So Athena spoke, and touched him with her wand. She shriveled the fine skin on his supple limbs and destroyed the fair hair on his head, and put the skin of an old man on all his limbs, and dimmed his eyes, that had been so handsome before. She threw another wretched rag around him, and a tunic, tattered and filthy, grimed with foul smoke; and over him she put the great hide of a swift deer, rubbed bare of its hair. And she gave him a staff and a shabby pouch, full of holes, with a twisted cord for a strap. When the two had made their plans, they parted, and she went off to bright Lacedaemon to fetch the son of Odysseus.

Book 14

Eumaeus
The loyal swineherd shelters the disguised Odysseus.

14.1 But he went up from the harbor by a rugged path through wooded country over the heights, to the place where Athena had shown him the noble swineherd, who cared most of all for his livelihood among the servants godlike Odysseus had acquired. He found him sitting in the porch, where his high-walled yard had been built in a spot with a wide view all round, a fine, large yard you could walk all the way around. The swineherd had built it for the swine himself while his master was away, without the help of his mistress or old Laertes, out of stones he had hauled there, and he had topped it with wild pear. Outside he had driven stakes the whole way round, this way and that, close-set and many, split from the dark heart of oak.

14.13 Inside the yard he had made twelve sties close by one another, beds for the swine, and in each of them fifty swine that slept on the ground were penned, breeding sows. The boars slept outside, far fewer in number, for the godlike suitors kept thinning them out by eating them, since the swineherd always had to send them the best of all the fatted hogs; there were three hundred and sixty of them. Beside them always slept four dogs like wild beasts, which the swineherd, leader of men, had raised. He himself was fitting sandals to his feet, cutting a well-colored oxhide. The others had gone off, each his own way, with the herded swine, three of them; the fourth he had sent off to the city to take a hog to the arrogant suitors, because he had to, so that they could sacrifice it and satisfy their hearts with meat.

14.29 Suddenly the barking dogs caught sight of Odysseus. They rushed at him, baying, but Odysseus shrewdly sat down, and the staff fell from his hand. There, beside his own farmstead, he might have suffered a shameful hurt; but the swineherd quickly came after them on swift feet and rushed through the gateway, and the leather fell from his hand. Shouting at the dogs, he drove them off in all directions with a shower of stones, and then spoke to his master: "Old man, the dogs very nearly tore you to pieces just now, all of a sudden, and you'd have heaped shame on me. The gods have given me other griefs and sorrows enough. I sit here mourning and grieving for a godlike master, and fatten hogs for other men to eat, while he, longing for food, I suppose, wanders through the land and cities of men who speak another tongue—if he's still alive somewhere and sees the light of the sun.

14.45 But come with me, old man, let's go to the hut, so that you too, once you've had your fill of bread and wine to your heart's content, can tell me where you're from and how many troubles you've endured." So he spoke, and the noble swineherd led the way to the hut. He brought him in and sat him down, heaping thick brushwood underneath and spreading over it the skin of a shaggy wild goat, his own bedding, large and thick. Odysseus was glad that he received him so, and he spoke and addressed him: "My host, may Zeus and the other immortal gods grant you what you want most, since you've welcomed me so kindly." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd:

14.56 "Stranger, it isn't right for me to dishonor a stranger, not even if one worse off than you should come; for all strangers and beggars come from Zeus. A gift from people like us is small, but it's kindly meant; for that's the way it is with servants, always afraid when young masters lord it over them. For surely the gods have blocked the homecoming of the man who loved me dearly and would have given me property of my own—a house and a plot of land and a wife many men would court—the kind of things a kind-hearted master gives a servant who has toiled hard for him and whose work a god prospers, as this work

I keep at prospers for me. 14.67 So my master would have done a great deal for me, if he'd grown old here. But he's dead—I wish Helen's whole tribe had perished, brought to its knees, since she loosened the knees of so many men! For he too went to Ilium of the fine horses for the sake of Agamemnon's honor, to fight the Trojans." So he spoke, and quickly cinched his tunic with his belt and went to the sties, where the herds of young pigs were penned. He picked out two from there, brought them back and slaughtered both, singed them, cut them up and skewered them on spits. When he'd roasted it all, he brought it and set it before Odysseus, hot on the very spits, and sprinkled white barley over it. Then he mixed honey-sweet wine in an ivy-wood bowl, sat down opposite him, and spoke, urging him on:

14.80 "Eat now, stranger, what servants have to hand—piglets. The fatted hogs the suitors eat, with no fear of the gods' vengeance in their minds, and no pity. The blessed gods don't love cruel deeds; they honor justice and the righteous deeds of men. Even hostile and lawless men, who invade another people's land, and Zeus grants them plunder, and they fill their ships and set off for home—even into their hearts falls a strong fear of vengeance. But these men must know something—they've heard some god's voice—about his grim death, since they won't court her properly or go back to their own homes, but at their ease they devour his possessions with arrogance, and spare nothing. 14.93 For of all the nights and days that come from Zeus, there's never one when they sacrifice a single victim, or only two; and they drain the wine and waste it outrageously. For his wealth was beyond telling: no hero had so much, either on the dark mainland or in Ithaca itself; not even twenty men together have riches like that. I'll count it out for you. Twelve herds of cattle on the mainland; as many flocks of sheep, as many droves of swine, as many broad herds of goats, tended by hired strangers and by his own herdsmen. And here, eleven broad herds of goats in all graze at the far end of the island, and good men watch over them. 14.105 Each of these men drives one animal to the suitors every day, whichever of the fatted goats looks best. And I guard

these swine here and protect them, and I choose the best of the swine with care and send it to them." So he spoke, and Odysseus ate the meat with relish and drank the wine greedily, in silence, and sowed the seeds of evil for the suitors. But when he had dined and satisfied his heart with food, the swineherd filled the cup he drank from himself and gave it to him full of wine; and Odysseus took it, glad at heart, and spoke winged words to him:

A BEGGAR'S OATH

The stranger swears that Odysseus will return, and Eumaeus refuses to believe him.

14.115 "My friend, who was it who bought you with his own possessions, a man so very rich and powerful as you say? You say he perished for the sake of Agamemnon's honor. Tell me, in case I might know him, a man like that. Zeus surely knows, and the other immortal gods, whether I might have news of him and have seen him; I've wandered through many lands." Then the swineherd, leader of men, answered him: "Old man, no wanderer who came here with news of him could persuade his wife and his dear son. Vagabonds in need of a living tell lies without a second thought, and they won't tell the truth.

14.126 Whoever comes wandering to the land of Ithaca goes to my mistress and babbles his deceptions. She receives him kindly, makes much of him and questions him on every point, and as she mourns, the tears fall from her eyelids, as is right for a woman when her husband has perished far away. You too, old man, would soon cobble a story together, if someone would give you a cloak and tunic to wear. But by now the dogs and swift birds must have torn the skin from his bones, and the life has left him; or else the fish ate him at sea, and his bones lie on the shore, wrapped in deep sand. 14.137 So he's perished there, and griefs are laid up for the future for all who love him, but most of all for me. For I'll never find another master so kind, wherever I go, not even if I come back again to the house of my father and mother, where I was first born and they raised me. And yet it

isn't for them that I grieve so much now, though I long to see them with my own eyes and be in my native land; it's longing for Odysseus, who is gone, that seizes me. Stranger, even though he isn't here, I hold back from speaking his name, for he loved me deeply and cared for me in his heart; I call him 'my dear master,' though he's far away." Then in turn much-enduring, godlike Odysseus addressed him:

14.149 "My friend, since you deny it utterly and say he won't come any more, and your heart is always unbelieving—well, I won't just say it, I'll swear it on oath: Odysseus is coming home. And let my reward for good news be paid as soon as he arrives and reaches his own house: dress me in a cloak and tunic, fine clothes. Before that, however much I need it, I'd take nothing. For hateful to me as the gates of Hades is the man who gives way to poverty and babbles deceptions. Let Zeus be my witness now, first of the gods, and this table of hospitality, and the hearth of noble Odysseus, to which I've come: all this will surely come to pass as I tell you. 14.161 Within this very year Odysseus will come here. As one month wanes and the next begins, he'll return home and take vengeance on anyone here who dishonors his wife and his glorious son." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd: "Old man, I won't be paying you that reward for good news, and Odysseus won't come home again. Drink in peace, and let's think of other things, and don't remind me of all this; for the heart in my breast aches whenever anyone mentions my good master. As for the oath, let's leave it be—but how I wish Odysseus would come, as I want him to, and Penelope too, and old Laertes, and godlike Telemachus.

14.174 And now again I grieve without end for the son Odysseus fathered, Telemachus. The gods raised him like a young shoot, and I thought he'd be no less among men than his dear father, admirable in build and looks; but some immortal, or some man, has damaged the sound mind within him. He's gone after news of his father to sacred Pylos, and the lordly suitors lie in wait for him on his way home, so that the line of godlike Arceisius may perish from Ithaca and leave no name. But let's leave him be,

whether he's caught or escapes and the son of Cronus holds his hand over him.

THE CRETAN TALE

Odysseus invents a life story: a Cretan raider, a captive in Egypt, betrayed by Phoenicians and Thesprotians.

14.185 But come, old man, tell me about your own troubles, and tell me this truly, so I may know it well: who are you, and where are you from? Where are your city and your parents? What sort of ship did you come on? How did the sailors bring you to Ithaca? Who did they claim to be? For I don't suppose you got here on foot." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Well then, I'll tell you all this quite truthfully. If only the two of us had food and sweet wine enough for a long time, here inside the hut, to feast in quiet while others saw to the work—even then I could easily spend a whole year and still not finish telling the sorrows of my heart, all that I've suffered by the will of the gods.

14.199 I claim my descent from broad Crete, the son of a rich man. Many other sons too were born and raised in his hall, true-born of his wedded wife; but my mother was bought, a concubine. Even so, Castor son of Hylax, whose son I claim to be, honored me equally with his legitimate sons. In those days he was honored like a god by the people of Crete for his prosperity and wealth and his glorious sons. But the fates of death came and carried him off to the house of Hades, and his high-handed sons divided up his estate and cast lots for it, and to me they gave very little, and allotted me a house. I married a wife from people with large estates, thanks to my excellence, since I was no weakling and no shirker in war. But now all that has left me. Still, I think that looking at the stubble you can tell what the crop was; for misery holds me, and plenty of it.[1] 14.216 Courage Ares and Athena gave me, and the strength to break through ranks of men. Whenever I picked the best men for an ambush,

1 The Cretan life story Odysseus tells here is invented, like the one he told the disguised Athena in Book 13.

sowing evil for the enemy, my bold heart never foresaw death; far ahead of all the rest I'd leap out and cut down with my spear any of the enemy who couldn't outrun me. That's how I was in war. Work on the land I never cared for, nor managing a household, which raises splendid children; ships with oars were always what I loved, and wars, and well-polished javelins and arrows—grim things that make others shudder. But I loved what a god, I suppose, put in my heart; for different men delight in different work. 14.229 Before the sons of the Achaeans ever set foot on Troy, nine times I led men and swift-sailing ships against foreign peoples, and a great deal fell into my hands. From it I picked out what pleased me, and much more came to me afterward by lot. My house quickly grew, and after that I was feared and respected among the Cretans. But when wide-seeing Zeus devised that hateful expedition that loosened the knees of so many men, then they ordered me and famous Idomeneus to lead the ships to Ilium; and there was no way to refuse, for the people's talk pressed us hard. There for nine years we sons of the Achaeans made war, and in the tenth we sacked the city of Priam and set off for home with our ships, and a god scattered the Achaeans. 14.243 But for me, poor wretch, Zeus the counselor was plotting trouble. For only a month I stayed, delighting in my children and my wedded wife and my possessions; and then my heart urged me to sail for Egypt, once I'd fitted out ships well, with my godlike companions. Nine ships I fitted out, and the crews gathered quickly. Then for six days my trusty companions feasted, and I supplied many victims for them to sacrifice to the gods and to make a feast for themselves. On the seventh we went aboard and sailed from broad Crete before a fresh, fair North Wind, easily, as if downstream; not one of my ships came to any harm, but we sat there unhurt and free of sickness, and the wind and the helmsmen kept them on course.

14.257 On the fifth day we came to the fair-flowing Aegyptus, and in the river Aegyptus I moored my curved ships. There I ordered my trusty companions to stay right there by the ships and guard them, and I sent scouts up to the lookout points. But

they gave way to their arrogance and followed their own impulse. At once they began to plunder the beautiful fields of the Egyptians. They carried off the women and the little children and killed the men, and the outcry soon reached the city. Hearing the shouting, the people came out at the first light of dawn, and the whole plain filled with foot soldiers and horses and the flash of bronze. Zeus who delights in thunder cast a wretched panic among my companions, and not one of them dared to stand and face the enemy, for evil surrounded us on every side. 14.271 Then they killed many of us with the sharp bronze, and led others away alive to work for them as forced labor. But Zeus himself put this thought into my mind—how I wish I had died and met my fate right there in Egypt, for more misery was still waiting for me! At once I took the well-made helmet from my head and the shield from my shoulders, and let the spear fall from my hand. Then I went straight up to the king's chariot horses, clasped his knees and kissed them. He spared me and took pity on me. He sat me in his chariot and took me, weeping, to his home. Many of his men kept rushing at me with their ash spears, it's true, eager to kill me, for they were furious; but he kept them off, because he dreaded the wrath of Zeus, god of strangers, who above all is angered by evil deeds.

14.285 So I stayed there seven years, and gathered a great deal of wealth among the Egyptians, for they all gave me gifts. But when the eighth year came round, then there came a Phoenician, a man well versed in deceit, a greedy swindler who had already done people much harm. He talked me round with his cunning and took me with him until we reached Phoenicia, where his house and his possessions lay. There I stayed with him for a full year. But when the months and days had run their course, as the year came round again and the seasons returned, he put me aboard a seafaring ship bound for Libya. He had planned his lies—that I was to bring a cargo there along with him—but in fact he meant to sell me there and get an enormous price. 14.298 I went with him on board, suspicious as I was, because I had no choice. The ship ran before a fresh, fair North Wind on a mid-sea course

past Crete; but Zeus was plotting their destruction. When we had left Crete behind, and no other land was in sight, only sky and sea, then the son of Cronus set a dark cloud above the hollow ship, and the sea grew dark beneath it. At the same moment Zeus thundered and hurled a thunderbolt at the ship. Struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus, she spun right around and was filled with sulfur, and everyone fell out of the ship. 14.308 Like sea crows they were carried on the waves around the black ship, and the god took away their homecoming. But as for me, Zeus himself, for all the pain in my heart, put into my hands the huge mast of the dark-prowed ship, so that I might still escape disaster. I wrapped myself around it and was swept along by the deadly winds. For nine days I was swept along, and on the tenth, in the black night, a great rolling wave brought me close to the land of the Thesprotians. There the king of the Thesprotians, the hero Pheidon, took care of me freely, asking no ransom. His dear son had come upon me, overcome by cold air and exhaustion; he raised me up by the hand and led me home until he reached his father's house, and he dressed me in clothes, a cloak and a tunic.

14.321 That was where I heard about Odysseus. The king said he had entertained him and treated him as a friend on his way to his native land, and he showed me all the wealth that Odysseus had gathered—bronze and gold and iron wrought with great labor. It would feed one man after another down to the tenth generation, so much treasure of his lay stored in the king's halls. Odysseus, he said, had gone to Dodona to hear the will of Zeus from the god's high-leafed oak: how he should return to the rich land of Ithaca after being away so long, openly or in secret. And he swore to me in person, as he poured libations in his house, that a ship had been launched and a crew stood ready to take him to his dear native land.[2] 14.334 But he sent me off first, because a ship of Thesprotian men happened to be setting out for Dulichium, rich in wheat. He told them to take me to King Acastus and to treat me kindly; but an evil plan about me

2 Dodona, in northwestern Greece, was an ancient oracle of Zeus, where his will was read from the rustling of a sacred oak.

pleased their minds, so that I might sink still deeper into misery. When the seafaring ship had sailed far from land, they at once set about making that the day I became a slave. They stripped me of my clothes, my cloak and tunic, and threw around me instead this other wretched rag of a cloak and a tunic, all in tatters, as you can see for yourself. In the evening they reached the fields of clear-skied Ithaca. There they tied me up securely in the well-benched ship with a well-twisted rope, and went ashore themselves and hurriedly took their supper along the beach. 14.348 But the gods themselves undid my bonds with ease. I wrapped the rag around my head, slid down the polished gangway and brought my chest to the water; then I struck out with both hands, swimming, and very soon I was out of the sea and clear of them. I climbed up to where there was a thicket of flowering wood, and lay there crouching. They went about loudly lamenting; but since it seemed no use to them to search any further, they went back on board the hollow ship. So the gods themselves hid me with ease, and guided me and brought me to the farmstead of a man of good sense; for it seems it is still my fate to live." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd:

14.361 "Ah, poor stranger, you've truly stirred my heart, telling me all these things, everything you've suffered and all your wanderings. But one part, I think, isn't right, and you won't convince me—what you say about Odysseus. Why should a man in your state tell idle lies? I know well enough myself about my master's homecoming: he was utterly hated by all the gods, since they didn't let him fall among the Trojans, or in the arms of his friends once he had wound up the war. Then the whole Achaean host would have built him a tomb, and he would have won great glory for his son, too, in days to come. But as it is, the storm winds have snatched him away without glory. As for me, I live off by myself with the pigs. I don't even go to the city, unless wise Penelope happens to send for me, when news arrives from somewhere. 14.375 Then they all sit around her and question every detail, both those who grieve for their master, so long gone, and

those who rejoice in eating up his livelihood without paying for it. But I have no wish to inquire and ask, ever since an Aetolian fooled me with his tale. He had killed a man, and after wandering over much of the earth he came to my house, and I made him very welcome. He said he had seen Odysseus among the Cretans, at Idomeneus' house, repairing his ships, which storms had shattered; and he said he would come home by summer or by harvest-time, bringing great wealth, with his godlike companions. So you too, old man of many sorrows, since some god has brought you to me, don't try to win my favor with lies, or to charm me. It's not for that I'll respect you or treat you kindly, but because I fear Zeus, god of strangers, and pity you yourself."

14.390 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "You truly have a mistrustful heart in your breast, if even with an oath I can't win you over or convince you. But come now, let's make a bargain, and let the gods who hold Olympus be witnesses for us both hereafter. If your master comes home to this house, you shall dress me in clothes, a cloak and a tunic, and send me on my way to Dulichium, where my heart has long been set on going. But if your master doesn't come as I say, set your servants on me and have them throw me off a great cliff, so that the next beggar, too, will think twice before he lies." Then the noble swineherd answered him:

14.402 "Stranger, that would be a fine way for me to win good repute and a name for excellence among men, both now and hereafter—if, after bringing you into my hut and giving you guest-gifts, I then killed you and took your dear life! After that I could pray to Zeus, son of Cronus, with a willing heart! But now it's time for supper. I hope my companions will soon be in, so that we can make a tasty supper in the hut." So they spoke such words to each other, and close at hand came the pigs and the men who herded them. They shut the sows in their usual pens to sleep, and an enormous din rose from the pigs as they were penned for the night. But the noble swineherd called to his companions:

14.414 "Bring in the best of the hogs, so that I can sacrifice it for our stranger from far away. We'll get some good from it ourselves, too, who have long had all the toil and trouble of the white-tusked pigs, while others eat up our labor without paying." So he spoke, and split wood with the pitiless bronze, and they brought in a very fat hog, five years old, and stood it by the hearth. Nor did the swineherd forget the immortals, for he had a good heart. As a first offering he threw bristles from the head of the white-tusked hog into the fire, and prayed to all the gods that shrewd Odysseus might come home to his own house.

14.425 Then he raised a billet of oak that he had left over from splitting, and struck; and life left the hog. They cut its throat and singed it, and quickly jointed it. The swineherd laid raw pieces from every limb, as first offerings, on the rich fat, and threw them into the fire, sprinkling them with barley meal. The rest they cut up and pierced on spits, roasted it carefully, drew it all off and threw it together on platters. Then the swineherd stood up to carve, for his mind well knew what was fitting. 14.434 He divided it all into seven portions. One he set aside with a prayer for the nymphs and Hermes, son of Maia, and the rest he handed out, one to each man. Odysseus he honored with the long cuts of the chine of the white-tusked hog, and so he gladdened his master's heart. And resourceful Odysseus spoke to him and said: "Eumaeus, may you be as dear to father Zeus as you are to me, since you honor me with good things, poor as I am." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd: "Eat, good stranger, and enjoy what's here, such as it is. The god will give one thing and withhold another, as his heart wishes; for he can do all things."[3]

14.446 He spoke, and burned the first portions for the gods who live forever. When he had poured a libation of gleaming wine, he put the cup into the hands of Odysseus, sacker of cities, and sat down by his own portion. Mesaulius served them bread, a servant the swineherd had acquired by himself while his master

3 Hermes was a god of herdsmen and flocks; setting aside a share for him and the local nymphs is a herdsman's piety.

was away, without his mistress or old Laertes; he had bought him from the Taphians with his own goods. And they reached out their hands to the good things set ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, Mesaulius cleared away the bread, and they, full of bread and meat, hurried off to bed.

THE STORY OF THE CLOAK

On a cold night Odysseus tells a tale of an ambush at Troy to win a cloak.

14.457 Night came on, foul and moonless. Zeus rained all night long, and the great West Wind, always wet, kept blowing. Odysseus spoke among them, testing the swineherd, to see whether he would take off his own cloak and give it to him, or urge one of his companions to, since he cared for him so much: "Listen now, Eumaeus, and all you others, his companions. I'm going to say something boastful, because the wine bids me—wine, that maddens a man, that sets even the most sensible man singing and laughing softly, and gets him up to dance, and makes him blurt out a word that would have been better left unsaid. But since I've started shouting once, I won't hold it back. I wish I were young, and my strength still firm, as it was when we laid an ambush and led it under Troy.

14.470 Odysseus and Menelaus, son of Atreus, were the leaders, and I was third in command with them, for they asked me themselves. When we came up to the city and its steep wall, we lay all around the town in the thick brush, among the reeds and the marsh, crouching under our armor. Then night came on, foul and freezing, as the North Wind swept down; and snow fell from above like hoarfrost, bitter cold, and ice formed thick around our shields. All the others had cloaks and tunics, and slept at ease with their shields over their shoulders; but I, when I set out, had left my cloak behind with my companions, foolishly, since I hadn't thought I'd be cold at all. I'd come along with nothing but my shield and a shining belt. 14.483 But when it was the

last third of the night, and the stars had passed their height, I spoke to Odysseus, who was lying close by, nudging him with my elbow, and he listened at once: 'Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, I won't be among the living much longer—the cold is killing me. I have no cloak. Some god tricked me into coming in just my tunic, and now there's no escape.' So I spoke, and at once he hit on this plan in his heart—that's the kind of man he was, both at planning and at fighting. In a low voice he said to me, 'Quiet now, or some other Achaean may hear you.' He spoke, and propping his head on his elbow he said:

14.495 'Listen, friends: a dream from the gods came to me in my sleep. We've come too far from the ships. Let someone go and tell Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the people, in case he'll order more men to come out from the ships.' So he spoke, and Thoas, son of Andraemon, sprang up at once, threw off his purple cloak and set off running for the ships; and I lay gladly in his cloak, and golden-throned Dawn shone out. If only I were young like that now, and my strength still firm! Then someone here in the farmstead, one of the swineherds, would give me a cloak, for both reasons—out of kindness and out of respect for a good man. But as it is they slight me, because I've got wretched clothes on my back." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd:

14.508 "Old man, that's an excellent tale you've told, and you haven't yet said a word out of place or to no purpose. So you won't lack clothing or anything else that a suffering suppliant ought to get from those he comes to—for now, at least. In the morning you'll be bundling yourself in your own rags again. We don't have many cloaks here, or spare tunics to change into; each man has just one. But when Odysseus' dear son comes, he'll give you clothes himself, a cloak and a tunic, and send you wherever your heart and spirit bid you." So saying, he sprang up and made a bed for him near the fire, and threw sheepskins and goatskins on it. There Odysseus lay down, and Eumaeus threw over him a cloak, thick and large, which he kept by him as a spare, to wear whenever some terrible storm blew up.

14.523 So Odysseus slept there, and beside him slept the young men. But the swineherd didn't care to make his bed there, to sleep away from his pigs; instead he got ready to go outside, and Odysseus was glad that he took such care of his livelihood while he was away. First he slung a sharp sword over his sturdy shoulders, and wrapped himself in a cloak to keep out the wind, a very thick one; he took up the hide of a big, well-fed goat, and took a sharp javelin to ward off dogs and men. Then he went off to lie down where the white-tusked pigs were sleeping, under a hollow rock, sheltered from the North Wind.

Book 15

Telemachus returns
He leaves Sparta, evades the ambush and lands on Ithaca.

15.1 But Pallas Athena went to Lacedaemon with its broad dancing-floors, to remind the glorious son of great-hearted Odysseus of his homecoming and to urge him to return. She found Telemachus and Nestor's splendid son sleeping in the forecourt of glorious Menelaus. Nestor's son was overcome by soft sleep, but sweet sleep did not take hold of Telemachus: all through the ambrosial night, anxious thoughts of his father kept him wakeful in his heart. Standing close beside him, gray-eyed Athena spoke: "Telemachus, it is no longer right for you to wander far from home, leaving your possessions behind and men in your house who are so arrogant. Take care they don't divide up all your possessions and devour them, and you find you've made this journey for nothing. Come, as quickly as you can, urge Menelaus, good at the war cry, to send you on your way, so that you may still find your excellent mother at home.[1]

15.16 For already her father and her brothers are pressing her to marry Eurymachus, since he outdoes all the suitors with his gifts and keeps raising his bride-price. Take care she doesn't carry some treasure out of the house against your will. You know what sort of heart a woman has in her breast: she wants to build up the house of whoever marries her, and of her former children and the dear husband of her youth she no longer thinks, once he is dead, nor asks after them. So go yourself and

1 The story returns to Telemachus, last seen in Book 4 as the guest of Menelaus and Helen in Sparta (Lacedaemon).

hand everything over to whichever of the maids seems best to you, until the gods show you a glorious wife. And I'll tell you something else; take it to heart. The leaders of the suitors are lying in wait for you on purpose in the strait between Ithaca and rocky Samos, 15.30 eager to kill you before you reach your native land. But I don't think it will happen: before that, the earth will hold more than one of the suitors who are eating up your livelihood. Keep your well-built ship well away from the islands, and sail by night as well; whichever of the immortals guards and protects you will send you a fair wind from behind. And when you reach the first shore of Ithaca, send the ship and all your companions on to the city, and go yourself, first of all, to the swineherd, who keeps watch over your pigs and is as loyal to you as ever. Spend the night there, and send him into the city to bring word to wise Penelope that you are safe and have come back from Pylos."

15.43 So she spoke, and went away to high Olympus. Then Telemachus woke Nestor's son from sweet sleep, nudging him with his heel, and said to him: "Wake up, Pisistratus, son of Nestor! Bring the single-hoofed horses and yoke them to the chariot, so we can be on our way." Then Pisistratus, son of Nestor, answered him in turn: "Telemachus, however eager we are for the road, there's no way we can drive through the dark night; dawn will soon be here. Wait until the hero, Atreus' son, Menelaus famed for his spear, brings gifts and sets them in the chariot, and sends us off with gentle words of farewell. For a guest remembers all his days the host who has shown him kindness."

LEAVING SPARTA

Menelaus and Helen give Telemachus parting gifts, and Helen reads an eagle omen.

15.56 So he spoke, and at once golden-throned Dawn came. Menelaus, good at the war cry, came up close to them, risen from his bed beside Helen of the lovely hair. When the dear son

of Odysseus saw him, he hurried to put his shining tunic on, and the hero threw a great cloak over his sturdy shoulders and went out of the door; and standing beside him, Telemachus, dear son of godlike Odysseus, spoke: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people, send me off now to my dear native land; my heart is longing now to get home." Then Menelaus, good at the war cry, answered him:

15.68 "Telemachus, I certainly won't keep you here a long time when you're eager for your homecoming. I'd blame any other host, too, who goes too far in his welcome or too far in his hostility; everything in due measure is better. It's just as wrong to hurry off a guest who doesn't want to go as to hold back one who's eager to leave. You should make a guest welcome while he's with you, and send him on his way when he wishes. But wait until I bring fine gifts and set them in your chariot, and you see them with your own eyes, and until I tell the women to prepare a meal in the hall from the plenty we have in the house. It does a double good—it brings glory and splendor, and it's a help as well—to dine before setting out over the wide, boundless earth. 15.80 And if you want to make a tour through Hellas and the heart of Argos, I'll come with you myself; I'll yoke horses for you and guide you to the cities of men. No one will send us away empty-handed; each will give us at least one thing to take with us—a tripod of fine bronze or a cauldron, or a pair of mules, or a golden cup." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people, I want to go back now to my own home, for when I left I didn't leave anyone behind to guard my possessions. I don't want to lose my own life searching for my godlike father, or have some fine treasure lost from my halls."

15.92 When Menelaus, good at the war cry, heard this, he at once told his wife and the maids to prepare a meal in the hall from the plenty they had in the house. Eteoneus, son of Boethous, came up close to him, risen from his bed, since he lived not far away; Menelaus, good at the war cry, ordered him to light a fire and roast some meat, and he heard and did not dis-

obey. Menelaus himself went down into the fragrant storeroom, and not alone: Helen went with him, and Megapenthes. When they came to the place where the treasures lay, the son of Atreus took a two-handled cup and told his son Megapenthes to carry a silver mixing bowl; and Helen stood beside the chests that held her robes, richly embroidered, which she had made herself. 15.106 Helen, bright among women, lifted out one of them and carried it—the one that was most beautiful in its embroidery and the largest; it shone like a star, and it lay beneath all the others. Then they went on through the house until they came to Telemachus, and fair-haired Menelaus spoke to him: "Telemachus, may Zeus, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, bring about your homecoming just as your heart longs for it. And of all the gifts that lie stored as treasures in my house, I'll give you the one that is finest and most precious. I'll give you a well-made mixing bowl; it is solid silver, and its rims are finished with gold, the work of Hephaestus. The hero Phaedimus, king of the Sidonians, gave it to me, when his house sheltered me as I came there on my way home; and now I want to give it to you."

15.120 So speaking, the hero son of Atreus put the two-handled cup into his hands; and mighty Megapenthes brought the shining mixing bowl of silver and set it before him. And Helen of the lovely cheeks stood beside him holding the robe in her hands, and she spoke to him and called him by name: "I too give you this gift, dear child, a keepsake from Helen's hands, for your bride to wear on the day of your longed-for wedding. Until then, let it lie in the hall in your dear mother's keeping. And may you reach your well-built house and your native land in happiness."

15.130 So speaking, she put it in his hands, and he took it gladly. The hero Pisistratus received the gifts and laid them in the chariot basket, and gazed at them all with wonder in his heart. Then fair-haired Menelaus led them into the house, and they sat down on chairs and seats. A maid brought water for washing in a fine golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and beside them she drew up a polished

table. The respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, and added many dishes, giving freely from what she had. Beside them the son of Boethous carved the meat and handed out the portions, and the son of glorious Menelaus poured the wine. And they reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. 15.143 But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, then Telemachus and Nestor's splendid son yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot, and drove out through the gateway and the echoing portico. Fair-haired Menelaus, son of Atreus, came after them, holding honey-sweet wine in his right hand in a golden cup, so that they could pour a libation before they set out. He stood in front of the horses and drank to them, and spoke: "Farewell, young men, and give my greetings to Nestor, shepherd of the people; for he was as kind as a father to me while we sons of the Achaeans were fighting at Troy." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn:

15.155 "We certainly will, cherished by Zeus: when we arrive we'll tell him all of this, just as you say. If only, in the same way, when I get back to Ithaca and find Odysseus at home, I could tell him how I come from you after meeting with every kindness, and bring many fine treasures with me!" As he spoke, a bird flew up on the right: an eagle, carrying in its talons a huge white goose, a tame one from the yard, and men and women followed it, shouting. It came close to them and darted off to the right in front of the horses; and when they saw it they rejoiced, and the heart in every breast was warmed. Pisistratus, son of Nestor, was the first to speak: "Think it over, Menelaus, cherished by Zeus, leader of the people: was it to the two of us that the god showed this sign, or to you yourself?"

15.169 So he spoke, and Menelaus, dear to Ares, pondered how he should read it and answer rightly. But Helen of the long robes spoke before him: "Listen to me: I will prophesy as the immortals put it into my heart, and as I think it will come to pass. Just as this eagle came down from the mountain, where its kin are born and its young, and snatched the goose that was being

reared in the house, so Odysseus, after suffering many hardships and wandering far, will come home and take his revenge; or he is already home, and is sowing ruin for all the suitors." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her in turn: "May Zeus, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, bring it about so; then even there I would pray to you as to a goddess."

15.182 He spoke, and laid the whip on the horses, and they sped off very swiftly through the city toward the plain, eager to go. All day long they shook the yoke they bore on either side. The sun set and all the ways grew dark, and they came to Pherae, to the house of Diocles, son of Ortilochus, whom Alpheus fathered. There they spent the night, and he set guest-gifts before them. When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, they yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot, and drove out through the gateway and the echoing portico. He whipped the horses on, and the pair flew forward not unwillingly. Soon after, they reached the steep citadel of Pylos; and then Telemachus spoke to Nestor's son:

15.195 "Son of Nestor, would you promise me something and carry out what I ask? We can claim to be guest-friends of long standing through the friendship of our fathers, and we're the same age too; and this journey will bring us still closer in mind. Don't take me past my ship, cherished by Zeus, but leave me there, so the old man doesn't keep me in his house against my will in his eagerness to show me kindness; I need to get home more quickly." So he spoke, and Nestor's son considered in his heart how he could rightly promise this and carry it out. And as he thought it over, this seemed the better course: he turned the horses toward the swift ship and the seashore, took out the beautiful gifts and set them in the stern of the ship, the clothing and the gold that Menelaus had given him; and urging him on, he spoke winged words:

15.209 "Go aboard quickly now and tell all your companions to do the same, before I get home and give the old man the news. For I know this well in my mind and heart: his spirit is so overbearing that he won't let you go, but will come here himself to

summon you, and I don't think he'll go back without you; he'll be very angry all the same." So speaking, he drove the horses with their beautiful manes back to the city of the Pylians, and quickly reached the house. And Telemachus urged on his companions and gave them orders: "Set the gear in order in the black ship, my companions, and let's go aboard ourselves, so we can be on our way." So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed, and quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches.

THEOCLYMENUS

At Pylos a fugitive seer begs Telemachus for passage, and Telemachus takes him aboard.

15.222 So he was busy with this, praying and sacrificing to Athena by the ship's stern, when a man came up close to him, a stranger from a far country, fleeing from Argos after killing a man—a seer. By birth he was descended from Melampus, who long ago had lived in Pylos, mother of flocks, a rich man with a house that stood out among the Pylians. But then he went to a land of other men, fleeing his native land and great-hearted Neleus, the proudest of men alive, who for a full year held many of his possessions by force. All that time Melampus lay bound in cruel fetters in the halls of Phylacus, suffering harsh pains on account of Neleus' daughter and the heavy blindness that the goddess, the dread Erinys, had put in his mind.[2] 15.235 But he escaped death and drove the loud-lowing cattle from Phylace to Pylos, and took vengeance on godlike Neleus for his shameful deed, and brought the woman home as a wife for his brother. Then he went to a land of other men, to horse-pasturing Argos; for it was fated that he should live there, ruling over many Argives. There he married a wife and built a high-roofed house, and fathered Antiphates and Mantius, two mighty sons. Antiphates fathered great-hearted Oicles, and Oicles fathered Amphiaraus, rouser of armies, whom Zeus who bears the aegis and Apollo loved dearly

2 Melampus' story was first told in Book 11: he was imprisoned while trying to win Neleus' daughter Pero for his brother.

with every kind of love; yet he did not reach the threshold of old age, but died at Thebes because of gifts given to a woman. 15.248 His sons were Alcmaeon and Amphilochus. Mantius, for his part, fathered Polyphides and Clitus; but golden-throned Dawn carried Clitus off for his beauty, so that he might live among the immortals; and Apollo made high-spirited Polyphides a seer, by far the best among mortals, once Amphiaraus was dead. Angry with his father, he moved away to Hyperesia, and living there he prophesied for all mortals. It was his son who now came up, Theoclymenus by name, who then stood close by Telemachus. He found him pouring libations and praying beside the swift black ship, and he addressed him and spoke winged words:

15.260 "Friend, since I find you sacrificing in this place, I beg you by your offerings and by the god, and then by your own life and the lives of the companions who follow you: tell me truly what I ask, and don't hide anything. Who are you among men, and where are you from? Where are your city and your parents?" Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Well then, stranger, I'll tell you exactly. I come from Ithaca by birth, and my father is Odysseus—if ever there was such a man; but by now he has perished by a miserable death. That is why I took my companions and a black ship and came to find out about my father, who has been gone so long." Then godlike Theoclymenus spoke to him in turn:

15.272 "In the same way I too am away from my native land, because I killed a man of my own tribe. He has many brothers and kinsmen throughout horse-pasturing Argos, and they hold great power among the Achaeans. It's to escape death and black fate at their hands that I'm a fugitive, since it is now my portion to wander among men. So take me aboard your ship, since I've come to you as a suppliant in my flight, or they'll kill me—I think they're in pursuit." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Since you want to come, I certainly won't drive you away from my well-balanced ship. Come with us. Back there you'll be made welcome with whatever we have." So he spoke, and took

the bronze spear from him and laid it out on the deck of the curved ship, and he himself went aboard the seafaring ship.

15.285 Then he sat down in the stern and seated Theoclymenus beside him, and the men cast off the stern cables. Telemachus urged his companions on and ordered them to take hold of the tackle, and they eagerly obeyed. They raised the mast of fir, set it in the hollow socket and made it fast with forestays, and hauled up the white sails with ropes of twisted oxhide. Gray-eyed Athena sent them a following wind, rushing strongly through the air, so that the ship might finish its run over the salt water of the sea as fast as possible. They passed Crouni and Chalcis of the lovely streams. The sun set and all the ways grew dark. The ship made for Pheae, driven on by the wind of Zeus, and past bright Elis, where the Epeans rule. From there he steered on toward the sharp-pointed islands, wondering whether he would escape death or be caught.

15.301 Meanwhile the two of them, Odysseus and the noble swineherd, were having supper in the hut, and the other men ate with them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, Odysseus spoke among them, testing the swineherd, to see whether he would go on caring for him kindly and invite him to stay there at the farmstead, or would send him on to the city: "Listen now, Eumaeus, and all you others, his companions. In the morning I'd like to go off to the town to beg, so as not to wear out you and your companions. So give me good advice, and send a good guide along with me to take me there. Once in the city I'll wander about on my own, as I must, in case someone hands me a cup and a crust.

15.313 And I could go to the house of godlike Odysseus and give my news to wise Penelope, and mingle with the arrogant suitors, in case they'd give me a meal, with the countless good things they have. I'd soon do good service among them, whatever they wanted. For I'll tell you plainly, and you mark it and listen: thanks to Hermes the guide, who gives grace and glory to the work of all men, no other mortal could rival me at serving—at building a fire well and splitting dry wood, at carving and roast-

ing meat and pouring wine, all the things that lesser men do in service to their betters." Then, deeply troubled, you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd:

15.326 "Oh no, stranger, why ever did this idea come into your mind? You must be utterly set on perishing there, if you really mean to go into that crowd of suitors, whose arrogance and violence reach the iron sky. Their servants aren't men like you. They're young, well dressed in cloaks and tunics, their heads and handsome faces always sleek with oil—the ones who wait on them; and the polished tables are loaded with bread and meat and wine. No, stay here. Nobody is bothered by your being here, not I nor any of the other companions I have. And when Odysseus' dear son comes, he'll dress you in a cloak and a tunic to wear, and send you wherever your heart and spirit bid you."

15.340 Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus answered him: "Eumaeus, I hope you may be as dear to father Zeus as you are to me, since you've put an end to my wandering and my dreadful misery. There's nothing worse for mortals than roaming; yet for the sake of their cursed belly men endure bitter troubles, whoever wandering and suffering and pain come upon. But now, since you're keeping me here and tell me to wait for him, come, tell me about the mother of godlike Odysseus, and about his father, whom he left behind on the threshold of old age when he went: are they perhaps still alive under the rays of the sun, or already dead and in the house of Hades?" Then the swineherd, leader of men, said to him in turn:

15.352 "Then I'll tell you, stranger, quite truthfully. Laertes is still alive, but he prays to Zeus continually that the life may waste from his limbs in his own house; for he grieves terribly for his son who is gone, and for his wedded wife, wise-hearted, whose death grieved him most of all and brought him into raw old age. She died of grief for her glorious son, a miserable death —may no one die like that who lives here as a friend of mine and treats me kindly! So as long as she was alive, grieving though she was, I liked to ask after her and talk with her, because she herself had brought me up together with long-robed Ctimene,

her strong daughter, the youngest of her children. I was reared alongside her, and her mother honored me only a little less. 15.366 But when we had both reached the lovely prime of youth, they gave her in marriage to a man of Same and received a huge bride-price, while her mother dressed me in a cloak and tunic, very fine clothes, gave me sandals for my feet, and sent me off to the fields; and she loved me all the more at heart. Now I go without all that. But the blessed gods prosper the work I stay at; from it I've eaten and drunk and given to those who deserve respect. From my mistress, though, there's nothing kind to be heard, neither word nor deed, since ruin has fallen on the house —arrogant men. Servants long badly to talk face to face with their mistress and hear all the news, and to eat and drink, and then carry something back with them to the fields too, the sort of thing that always warms a servant's heart."

15.380 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Ah, Eumaeus the swineherd, so you were carried far from your native land and your parents while you were still a little child! But come, tell me this and recount it truly: was the broad-streeted city of men sacked, where your father and lady mother lived? Or were you left alone with the sheep or the cattle when hostile men seized you in their ships and sold you to this man's house, and he paid a fair price?" Then the swineherd, leader of men, said to him in turn:

15.390 "Stranger, since you ask and question me about this, listen now in silence and enjoy yourself, and sit and drink your wine. These nights are endless: there's time for sleeping, and time for listening with pleasure. You needn't go to bed before it's time; too much sleep is a nuisance too. As for the others, anyone whose heart and spirit bids him can go outside and sleep; and at daybreak, after breakfast, let him follow the master's swine. But let the two of us in the hut, drinking and feasting, take pleasure in each other's grievous sorrows as we remember them; for afterward even a man's pains bring him pleasure, a man who has suffered very much and wandered far. So I'll tell you what you ask and question me about.

EUMAEUS' STORY

The swineherd tells how he was born a king's son and sold into slavery by Phoenician traders.

15.403 There's an island called Syria—perhaps you've heard of it—beyond Ortygia, where the turnings of the sun are. It isn't so very populous, but it's good land, good for cattle, good for sheep, full of wine, rich in wheat. Famine never comes upon the people, nor does any other hateful disease fall upon wretched mortals there; but when the generations of men grow old throughout the city, Apollo of the silver bow comes with Artemis, visits them with his gentle arrows, and kills them. There are two cities there, and everything is divided between them; and over both of them my father was king, Ctesius son of Ormenus, like the immortals. To that place came Phoenicians, men famous for ships, sharp dealers, bringing countless trinkets in their black ship.[3]

15.417 Now in my father's house there was a Phoenician woman, beautiful and tall and skilled in fine handiwork; and the crafty Phoenicians led her astray. First, while she was washing clothes, one of them lay with her by the hollow ship in love and in bed—things that lead astray the minds of women, even one who's upright. Then he asked her who she was and where she came from, and she at once told him of her father's high-roofed house: 'I claim to be from Sidon, rich in bronze, and I'm the daughter of Arybas, who was rolling in wealth. But Taphian pirates snatched me away as I was coming in from the fields, and brought me here and sold me to this man's house, and he paid a fair price.'

15.430 Then the man who had been lying with her in secret said to her in turn: 'Then would you come back home with us now, to see the high-roofed house of your father and mother, and them too? They really are still alive, and people call them rich.' Then the woman said to him in turn, in answer: 'That could happen

3 "The turnings of the sun" probably means the place where the sun sets, or turns at the solstice; the location of Syria and Ortygia was already disputed in antiquity.

too, if you sailors would be willing to give me your pledge on oath to bring me home unharmed.' So she spoke, and they all swore as she told them. But when they had sworn and finished the oath, the woman spoke among them again in answer:

15.440 'Quiet now. Let none of your companions speak to me if he meets me, either in the street or perhaps at the spring, in case someone goes to the house and tells the old man, and he grows suspicious and binds me in cruel bonds, and plots destruction for you. Keep the matter in your minds, and hurry on the buying of your homeward cargo. And when the ship is full of goods, let a message come quickly to me at the house; for I'll bring gold too, whatever comes to hand. And I'd gladly give something else as my fare: I'm nursing my good master's son in the halls, such a clever little one, who runs about outside with me. I could bring him aboard, and he'd fetch you a vast price wherever you sell him among men of foreign speech.'

15.454 So she spoke and went off to the beautiful house; and they stayed there among us a whole year, and traded for a great store of goods in their hollow ship. But when the hollow ship was loaded for their return, then they sent a messenger to tell the woman. A cunning man came to my father's house with a golden necklace strung with amber beads. In the hall the maids and my lady mother were handling it and gazing at it, offering a price; and he nodded to her in silence. Once he had nodded he went back to the hollow ship, and she took me by the hand and led me out of the house. 15.466 In the forecourt she found the cups and tables of the banqueters who attended on my father; they had gone out to the council session and the people's assembly. She quickly hid three goblets in the fold of her dress and carried them off; and I followed in my innocence. The sun set and all the ways grew dark. Going quickly, we came to the famous harbor where the swift ship of the Phoenician men lay. They went aboard and sailed off over the watery ways, taking the two of us on board; and Zeus sent a wind behind them. For six days we sailed, night and day alike; but when Zeus, son of Cronus, brought on the seventh day, Artemis the archer struck the

woman, and she dropped with a thud into the bilge like a sea-tern. 15.480 They threw her overboard to become a prey for seals and fish, and I was left behind, grieving at heart. Wind and water carried them on and brought them to Ithaca, where Laertes bought me with his own possessions. That's how I came to set eyes on this land." Then Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, answered him: "Eumaeus, you've truly stirred the heart in my breast, telling me all this, all the pains you've suffered in your heart. But for you, at least, Zeus has set good beside the bad, since after much toil you came to the house of a kind man, who gives you food and drink generously, and you live a good life; while I've come here after wandering through many cities of men."

TELEMACHUS LANDS

Telemachus reaches Ithaca, entrusts Theoclymenus to Piraeus, and sets off for the swineherd's hut.

15.493 So they talked like this with one another, and they slept not for long but only a little while; for soon fair-throned Dawn came. Meanwhile, near the shore, Telemachus' companions loosened the sails and quickly took down the mast, and rowed the ship forward to its mooring. They threw out the anchor-stones and made fast the stern cables, and went ashore themselves on the beach of the sea, and prepared their meal and mixed the gleaming wine. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, thoughtful Telemachus began to speak among them:

15.503 "You row the black ship on to the town now, while I go to the fields and the herdsmen. In the evening, when I've looked over my lands, I'll come down to the town. And in the morning I'll set before you a meal as wages for the voyage, a good feast of meat and sweet wine." Then godlike Theoclymenus said to him in turn: "And where am I to go, dear child? Whose house shall I come to, of the men who rule rocky Ithaca? Or shall I go straight to your mother and your house?" Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him:

15.513 "At another time I'd tell you to come to our house too, since there's no shortage of what a guest needs. But it would be worse for you yourself, since I'll be away, and my mother won't see you; she doesn't often appear before the suitors in the house, but weaves at her loom in the upper room, apart from them. But I'll name another man you could go to: Eurymachus, the splendid son of wise-hearted Polybus, whom the Ithacans now look upon as a god. He's by far the best man, and the most eager to marry my mother and hold Odysseus' honors. But Olympian Zeus, who dwells in the upper air, knows whether before the wedding he'll bring an evil day upon them."

15.525 As he spoke, a bird flew by on the right, a hawk, Apollo's swift messenger. It held a dove in its talons and was plucking it, and it shed the feathers on the ground between the ship and Telemachus himself. Then Theoclymenus called him aside, away from his companions, clasped his hand, and spoke to him, calling him by name: "Telemachus, it's not without a god that this bird flew by on the right; I knew as soon as I looked at it that it was a bird of omen. There is no family in the land of Ithaca more kingly than yours: you will always be the ones in power." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him:[4]

15.536 "Stranger, if only that word might be fulfilled! Then you'd soon know my friendship and many gifts from me, so that anyone who met you would call you blessed." He spoke, and called to Piraeus, his trusted companion: "Piraeus, son of Clytius, you've always obeyed me more than any of my companions who followed me to Pylos. Now too, please take this stranger home to your house, and look after him kindly and honor him until I come." Then Piraeus, famed for his spear, answered him: "Telemachus, even if you were to stay here a long time, I'll look after him, and he won't lack for anything a guest needs."

15.547 So saying, he went aboard the ship, and told his companions to go aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. They quickly went aboard and sat down on the benches. Telemachus

4 A bird appearing on the right was a favorable omen; seers like Theoclymenus read the will of the gods from the flight of birds.

bound his fine sandals on his feet, and took up his strong spear, tipped with sharp bronze, from the deck of the ship; and the men loosed the stern cables. They pushed off and sailed for the city, as Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, had told them; and his feet carried him swiftly as he strode on, until he reached the farmyard where his countless swine were, among whom the swineherd slept, a good man, with kindly thoughts toward his masters.

Book 16

Father and son
Odysseus reveals himself to Telemachus, and they plan their revenge.

16.1 Meanwhile in the hut Odysseus and the noble swineherd had kindled a fire and were getting breakfast ready at dawn, and they had sent the herdsmen out with the droves of pigs. The loud-barking dogs fawned around Telemachus and did not bark as he came up. Godlike Odysseus noticed the dogs fawning, and the sound of two feet reached him. At once he spoke winged words to Eumaeus: "Eumaeus, some companion of yours is surely coming here, or someone else you know, since the dogs aren't barking but fawning around him. And I can hear the tread of feet."

16.11 He had not yet finished speaking when his own dear son stood in the doorway. The swineherd leapt up in amazement, and the vessels he had been busy with, mixing the fiery wine, fell from his hands. He went to meet his master and kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes and both his hands, and a warm tear fell from him. As a father lovingly welcomes his son who comes home from a distant land in the tenth year, his only son, his darling, born late, for whom he has endured many sorrows, so then the noble swineherd clung to godlike Telemachus and kissed him all over, as if he had escaped from death; and weeping he spoke winged words:

16.23 "You've come, Telemachus, sweet light! I thought I'd never see you again, once you'd gone off by ship to Pylos. But come in now, dear child, so I can delight my heart in looking at you, just

back from abroad and here inside again. You don't often come out to the farm or the herdsmen; you stay in town. That's how it pleases your heart, it seems—to keep watching that ruinous crowd of suitors." Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "It shall be so, old friend. It's for your sake I've come here, to see you with my own eyes and hear from you whether my mother still stays in the halls, or whether some other man has married her by now, and Odysseus' bed lies somewhere with no one to sleep in it, covered in ugly cobwebs."[1]

16.36 Then the swineherd, leader of men, spoke to him in turn: "She certainly does stay in your halls, with an enduring heart; and her nights and her days are always wasting away in misery as she weeps." So he spoke, and took the bronze spear from him; and Telemachus went inside and crossed the stone threshold. As he came in, his father Odysseus made way for him from his seat; but Telemachus held him back from the other side and said: "Sit down, stranger. We'll find a seat somewhere else in our farmstead. There's a man here who will set one out."

16.46 So he spoke, and Odysseus went back and sat down again. For Telemachus the swineherd heaped up green brushwood with a fleece on top, and there Odysseus' dear son then sat down. The swineherd set beside them platters of roast meat, which they had left over from eating the day before, and quickly heaped up bread in baskets, and mixed honey-sweet wine in an ivy-wood bowl; and he himself sat down opposite godlike Odysseus. They put out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, then Telemachus spoke to the noble swineherd:

16.57 "Old friend, where has this stranger of yours come from? How did sailors bring him to Ithaca? Who did they claim to be? For I don't suppose he got here on foot." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd: "Well then, child, I'll tell you the whole truth. He claims his family comes from broad Crete, and he says he's been driven around through many cities of men in

1 "Old friend" renders *atta*, an affectionate, respectful word a younger person uses to address an older man, something like "dear father."

his wanderings; that's the lot some god has spun for him. Now he's run away from a ship of Thesprotian men and come to my farmstead, and I'll put him in your hands. Do as you wish; he claims to be your suppliant."

16.68 Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Eumaeus, that's a painful thing you've said. How am I to take the stranger into my house? I'm young myself, and I can't yet trust my hands to fend off a man when someone starts the trouble. And my mother's heart is torn two ways as she ponders: whether to stay here with me and look after the house, respecting her husband's bed and what the people say, or to go off now with whichever of the Achaeans is the best man courting her in the halls and offers the most gifts.

16.78 But as for the stranger, since he has come to your house, I'll dress him in a cloak and tunic, fine clothes, and give him a two-edged sword and sandals for his feet, and send him wherever his heart and spirit bid him. Or if you like, keep him here at the farmstead and look after him; I'll send clothes here, and all the food he needs to eat, so that he won't be a drain on you and your companions. But I wouldn't let him go down there among the suitors, for their arrogance is reckless beyond measure. I'm afraid they would mock him, and that would be a terrible grief to me. It's hard for one man to get anything done among many, however strong he is, since they are far stronger."

16.90 Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus spoke to him in turn: "My friend, since it's right for me too to make some reply, it truly eats at my heart to hear the reckless things you say the suitors are contriving in your halls, against your will, a man like you. Tell me, do you submit to it willingly, or do the people throughout the land hate you, following some god's voice? Or do you have some complaint against your brothers, the ones a man relies on to fight beside him, even when a great quarrel arises? I wish I were as young as you, with this spirit of mine, or were the son of excellent Odysseus, or Odysseus himself! Then let some stranger cut my head from my shoulders on the spot, if I didn't

become a plague to every one of them, once I came into the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes.

16.105 And if they overpowered me by sheer numbers, alone as I am, I would rather be killed in my own halls and lie dead than forever watch these shameful doings: strangers being roughly handled, and men dragging the serving women shamefully through the fine house, and the wine being drawn off, and men eating up the food wantonly, to no purpose, without end, in a business that will never be finished." Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Well then, stranger, I'll tell you exactly how it is. It isn't that the whole people hates me and is hostile to me, nor do I have a complaint against brothers, the ones a man relies on to fight beside him, even when a great quarrel arises. The son of Cronus has made our line a single thread in this way: Arceisius fathered Laertes, an only son; his father in turn fathered Odysseus, an only son; and Odysseus fathered me, an only son, and left me in his halls, and never had any joy of me.

16.121 So now there are countless enemies in the house. All the nobles who hold power in the islands, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus, and all who lord it over rocky Ithaca—that many are courting my mother and wearing out the house. She neither refuses the hateful marriage nor can she bring it to an end; and they are eating up my house and wasting it away, and soon they'll be the ruin of me too. But all this lies on the knees of the gods. Old friend, you go quickly and tell prudent Penelope that I'm safe and have come back from Pylos. I'll stay here, and you come back here once you've told her alone. Don't let any of the other Achaeans hear of it, for there are many plotting evil against me."

16.135 Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd: "I see, I understand; you're giving these orders to a man who knows. But come, tell me this and tell me truly: should I go the same way as a messenger to Laertes too, poor man? Until now, though he grieved greatly for Odysseus, he would keep an eye on the work and eat and drink with the servants in the house whenever the heart in his chest urged him. But now, ever since you went

off by ship to Pylos, they say he hasn't eaten or drunk the way he used to, nor looked over the work; he sits groaning and lamenting, wailing, and the flesh is wasting on his bones." Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn:

16.147 "That's sadder still; but all the same we'll let him be, grieved though we are. For if mortals could somehow have everything for the choosing, we would choose first the day of my father's homecoming. But you deliver your message and come back, and don't go wandering over the fields after him. Tell my mother, though, to send the housekeeper, her attendant, as quickly as she can, in secret; she could take the news to the old man." So he spoke, and sent the swineherd on his way. He took his sandals in his hands, tied them on his feet, and set off for the city. Nor did Athena fail to notice Eumaeus the swineherd leaving the farmstead. She came close, and in form she was like a woman, beautiful and tall and skilled in glorious handiwork.

FATHER AND SON

Athena restores Odysseus' looks, and he reveals himself to Telemachus.

16.159 She stood opposite the doorway of the hut, showing herself to Odysseus. But Telemachus did not see her in front of him or notice her, for the gods do not appear plainly to everyone. Odysseus saw her, though, and so did the dogs; and they did not bark, but fled whimpering in fear to the far side of the farmstead. She signaled with her brows, and godlike Odysseus understood. He went out of the hall, past the great wall of the courtyard, and stood before her; and Athena spoke to him: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, now is the time to tell your son, and hide it from him no longer, so that the two of you, having made ready death and doom for the suitors, may go to the famous city. And I myself won't be far from you for long; I'm eager for the fight."

16.172 She spoke, and Athena touched him with her golden wand. First she put a freshly washed cloak and a tunic about his

chest, and she increased his stature and his youth. His skin turned dark again, his cheeks filled out, and the beard grew dark about his chin. When she had done this, she went away again, and Odysseus went into the hut. His dear son was astonished at him, and in fear turned his eyes away, afraid that he might be a god, and he spoke winged words to him: "You look different to me now, stranger, from before. You have other clothes on, and your skin is no longer the same. Surely you're a god, one of those who hold wide heaven. Be gracious to us, so that we can offer you pleasing sacrifices and golden gifts, finely wrought. Spare us!" Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus answered him:

16.187 "I'm no god. Why do you liken me to the immortals? No, I am your father, the one for whose sake you groan and suffer so many sorrows, putting up with the violence of men." So he spoke, and kissed his son, and let a tear run down his cheeks to the ground; until then he had held them back unceasingly. But Telemachus, since he did not yet believe it was his father, answered him again: "You're not Odysseus, my father. Some god is beguiling me, so that I'll groan and lament even more. No mortal man could contrive these things with his own wits, unless a god himself came to him and, as he pleased, easily made him young or old. Just now you were an old man in shabby clothes; now you look like the gods who hold wide heaven."

16.201 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Telemachus, it isn't right for you to marvel beyond measure or be so astonished at your dear father being here at home. No other Odysseus will ever come here. It's I, just as you see me, who after suffering evils and wandering far have come home to my native land in the twentieth year. This is the work of Athena, bringer of spoil, who makes me whatever she wishes—for she has the power—now like a beggar, and now again like a young man with fine clothes about his body. It's easy for the gods who hold wide heaven both to exalt a mortal man and to bring him low."

16.213 So he spoke and sat down. Telemachus threw his arms around his noble father and wept, shedding tears, and in both of

them rose a longing for lament. They wailed aloud, more shrilly than birds—sea-eagles or vultures with crooked talons whose young the country people have stolen before they could fly. So they let pitiful tears fall from beneath their brows. And the light of the sun would have set on their weeping, had Telemachus not quickly spoken to his father: "What kind of ship, dear father, did sailors bring you here to Ithaca in? Who did they claim to be? For I don't suppose you got here on foot." Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus spoke to him in turn:

16.226 "Well then, child, I'll tell you the truth. The Phaeacians brought me, famous for their ships, who give passage to other men too, whoever comes to them. They carried me over the sea asleep in a swift ship and set me down on Ithaca, and gave me splendid gifts, bronze and gold in plenty and woven clothing. These lie stored in caves by the will of the gods. And now I've come here at Athena's prompting, so that we can plan the slaughter of our enemies. But come, count the suitors over and tell me, so that I know how many there are and what kind of men they are. Then I'll ponder it in my excellent heart and decide whether the two of us will be able to take them on alone, without others, or whether we should look for others too."

PLANNING REVENGE

Odysseus and Telemachus count the suitors and plan to remove the weapons from the hall.

16.240 Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Father, I have always heard of your great fame, that you were a spearman with your hands and wise in counsel. But what you've said is far too much. I'm stunned. Two men could never fight against so many, and strong ones too. The suitors aren't just ten, or even twice ten. There are many more, and you'll soon learn their number here. From Dulichium there are fifty-two young men, all picked, and six attendants follow them. From Same there are twenty-four men, from Zacynthus twenty young Achaeans, and from Ithaca itself twelve, all of them the best. With them are

Medon the herald and the divine bard, and two attendants skilled at carving meat.

16.254 If we take on all of them while they're inside, I'm afraid that, now you've come, you'll avenge their violence at a bitter and terrible cost. So if you can think of some helper, consider who might stand by us with a willing heart." Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus spoke to him in turn: "Then I'll tell you. Take it in and listen to me. Consider whether Athena, with Zeus the father, will be enough for the two of us, or whether I should think of some other helper." Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Those two you name are fine helpers, though they sit high up in the clouds. They rule over other men and over the immortal gods as well." Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus spoke to him in turn:

16.267 "Those two won't keep away from the fierce fighting for long, I tell you, when the might of Ares is put to the test between the suitors and us in my halls. But you, now, go home at daybreak and mix with the arrogant suitors. Later the swineherd will bring me to the city, looking like a wretched beggar and an old man. And if they treat me with dishonor in the house, let the heart in your breast endure it while I suffer harm. Even if they drag me by the feet through the house to the door, or pelt me with missiles, you must look on and bear it. Still, do tell them to stop their folly, coaxing them with gentle words. They won't listen to you at all, for their fated day is already standing beside them. 16.281 And I'll tell you something else, and you lay it to heart. When Athena of many counsels puts it into my mind, I'll nod to you with my head. When you see that, take up all the weapons of war that lie in the halls and put them away in a corner of the high storeroom, every last one. Then put the suitors off with soft words when they miss them and ask you about them: 'I've put them away out of the smoke, since they no longer looked like the ones Odysseus left behind when he went off to Troy. They've been fouled, as far as the breath of the fire reached. And the son of Cronus put this greater worry into my mind as well: that once you're drunk you might start a quarrel

among yourselves, wound one another, and disgrace the feast and your wooing. For iron by itself draws a man on.'

16.295 But leave behind for the two of us alone two swords and two spears and two oxhide shields to take up in our hands, so that we can rush at them and seize them. And then Pallas Athena and Zeus the counselor will bewitch the suitors. And I'll tell you something else, and you lay it to heart. If you are truly mine and of our blood, let no one hear that Odysseus is home. Don't let Laertes know it, or the swineherd, or anyone in the household, or Penelope herself. Let you and me alone find out which way the women lean. We might also test some of the men among the servants, to see who honors us and fears us in his heart, and who pays us no heed and dishonors you, such a man as you are."

16.308 Then his splendid son answered him: "Father, I think you'll come to know my spirit later too. There's no slackness of mind in me. But I don't think this plan will be a gain for us both, and I urge you to think it over. You'll spend a long time going around the farms testing each man, while the suitors sit at their ease in the halls and arrogantly devour our wealth, with no sparing it. No, I do urge you to find out about the women, which of them dishonor you and which are guiltless. As for the men, I wouldn't want us going from farm to farm testing them. Let's deal with that later, if you really know of some sign from Zeus who bears the aegis."

THE SUITORS' PLOT

The suitors plot again to kill Telemachus, and Penelope rebukes Antinous.

16.321 So they talked like this with each other. Meanwhile the well-built ship that had carried Telemachus and all his companions from Pylos was putting in to Ithaca. When they had come inside the deep harbor, they hauled the black ship up on land, and their high-hearted attendants carried off their gear, and they brought the splendid gifts straight to the house of Clytius. Then

they sent a herald ahead to the house of Odysseus to tell wise Penelope that Telemachus was out in the country and had ordered the ship to sail on to the city, so that the noble queen would not be frightened at heart and shed soft tears. The herald and the noble swineherd met, both on the same errand, to give the news to the lady. When they reached the house of the godlike king, the herald spoke out among the maids:[2]

16.337 "Your dear son, my queen, has come home already." But the swineherd stood close beside Penelope and told her everything her dear son had asked him to say. When he had given the whole of his message, he set off to go back to his pigs, and left the courtyard and the hall. The suitors were dismayed and downcast at heart. They went out of the hall, past the great wall of the courtyard, and sat down right there in front of the gates. Eurymachus, son of Polybus, was the first to speak among them: "Friends, Telemachus has brazenly brought off a great deed, this voyage of his. We said he'd never manage it. But come, let's drag a black ship down to the sea, the best there is, and gather seamen to row her, to take word as fast as they can to those men to come home quickly."

16.351 He hadn't finished speaking when Amphinomus, turning in his place, saw a ship inside the deep harbor, and men furling sails and holding oars in their hands. He gave a pleased laugh and spoke among his companions: "Let's not send any message now. They're in already. Either some god told them, or they saw the ship go by themselves and couldn't catch it." So he spoke, and they rose and went to the shore of the sea. Quickly they hauled the black ship up on land, and their high-hearted attendants carried off their gear. The suitors themselves went in a body to the place of assembly, and let no one else, young or old, sit with them. Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them:

16.364 "Ah, look how the gods have rescued this man from harm! All day long lookouts sat on the windy heights, one after another. And at sunset we never spent the night on land but

2 Clytius was the father of Piraeus, the companion to whom Telemachus entrusted his guest-gifts on landing.

cruised in our swift ship on the open sea, waiting for bright Dawn, lying in wait for Telemachus, to catch him and kill him. But in the meantime some god has brought him home. So let's devise a grim death for Telemachus here, and not let him slip away from us. For I don't think this business of ours will ever succeed while he's alive. He himself is skilled in counsel and in mind, and the people no longer show us any favor at all. 16.376 Come on, then, before he gathers the Achaeans in assembly—for I don't think he'll let it go. He'll rage at us, and stand up and tell them all how we plotted his sheer destruction and failed to catch him, and when they hear of these evil deeds they won't approve. They might do us some harm and drive us out of our own country, and we'd have to go to a land of strangers. No, let's get in first and catch him in the country, away from the town, or on the road. Then we can have his livelihood and possessions ourselves, sharing them out fairly among us, and give the house to his mother to keep, and to whoever marries her. But if this proposal displeases you, and you'd rather he lived and kept all his father's goods, then let's not gather here any longer and devour his heart-pleasing wealth in such plenty. Let each man woo her from his own hall and seek her with bride-gifts. Then she would marry the one who offers the most and who comes as her destined husband."

16.393 So he spoke, and they all fell silent, saying nothing. Then Amphinomus addressed them and spoke out. He was the splendid son of lord Nisus, son of Aretias, and he led the suitors from Dulichium, rich in wheat and grassy, and pleased Penelope most of all with his words, for he had a good mind. With good intent he addressed them and spoke out: "Friends, I for one wouldn't want to kill Telemachus. It's a terrible thing to kill one of royal blood. Let's first ask the will of the gods. If the oracles of great Zeus approve, I'll kill him myself and urge all the rest of you on. But if the gods turn us away, I tell you to stop." So Amphinomus spoke, and his words pleased them. At once they rose and went to the house of Odysseus, and when they arrived they sat down on the polished chairs.

16.409 Then wise Penelope had a different thought: to show herself to the suitors in their overbearing arrogance. She had heard of the death that was being plotted in the halls against her son. Medon the herald, who had overheard their plans, had told her. She set off for the hall with her attending women. When she, bright among women, reached the suitors, she stood beside the pillar of the solidly built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks. She rebuked Antinous, spoke to him, and called him by name: "Antinous, you arrogant schemer of evil! They say that in the land of Ithaca you're the best of your generation in counsel and speech. But you were never that sort of man after all.

16.421 Madman, why are you stitching together death and doom for Telemachus, with no regard for suppliants, whose witness is Zeus? It isn't holy to stitch together evils against one another. Don't you know how your father once came here as a fugitive, terrified of the people? They were furious with him, because he had joined Taphian pirates and harmed the Thesprotians, who were our allies. They wanted to kill him, to tear out his heart, and to devour his great and abundant livelihood. But Odysseus held them back and restrained them, eager as they were. And now it's his house you devour without paying, his wife you woo, his son you try to kill, and me you grieve terribly. I tell you to stop, and to order the others to stop too."

16.434 Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered her in turn: "Daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, take heart. Don't let these things trouble your mind. There is no such man, nor will there be, nor ever could be, who will lay hands on Telemachus your son while I'm alive and see the light upon the earth. For I'll tell you plainly, and it will surely be done: his dark blood will gush out at once around my spear. For Odysseus, sacker of cities, often sat me too on his knees, put roast meat in my hands, and held red wine to my lips. So Telemachus is by far the dearest to me of all men, and I tell him not to fear death—not from the suitors, at least. Death from the gods there's no escaping."

16.448 So he spoke to reassure her, but he himself was plotting the young man's death. She went up to her shining upper rooms

and there wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep on her eyelids. In the evening the noble swineherd came back to Odysseus and his son. They were busy preparing supper, having slaughtered a yearling pig. But Athena came and stood close by Odysseus, son of Laertes, struck him with her wand and made him an old man again, and put shabby clothes about his body, so that the swineherd would not recognize him when he saw him face to face and go off to tell the news to prudent Penelope instead of keeping it in his heart. Telemachus was the first to speak to him:

16.461 "You're back, noble Eumaeus. What's the news in town? Are the overbearing suitors home from their ambush already, or are they still lying in wait for me on my way home?" Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd: "I didn't care to go asking and inquiring about that as I went down through the town. My heart urged me to give my message and come back here as fast as I could. But a swift messenger from your companions fell in with me, a herald, and he was the very first to tell the news to your mother. And there's something else I know, because I saw it with my own eyes.

16.471 I was already above the city on my way back, where the hill of Hermes is, when I saw a swift ship coming down into our harbor. There were many men in her, and she was laden with shields and double-pointed spears. I thought it was them, but I don't know for sure." So he spoke, and Telemachus in his sacred strength smiled, glancing at his father, but he kept clear of the swineherd's eye. When they had finished their work and prepared the meal, they feasted, and no one's heart went without a fair share of the feast. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, they remembered their beds and took the gift of sleep.

Book 17

The beggar in the palace
The old dog Argos; the suitors abuse the stranger.

17.1 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, bound his fine sandals under his feet and took up his strong spear, which fitted his grip. He was eager to be off to the town, and he said to his swineherd: "Old friend, I'm going to the city now so that my mother can see me. I don't think she'll stop her hateful weeping and tearful lamenting until she sees me in person. But here's what I want you to do. Take this wretched stranger to the city, so he can beg his meals there. Whoever wants to will give him a crust and a cup. I can't possibly put up with everyone, burdened as I am with sorrows in my heart. If the stranger is very angry at this, so much the worse for him. I like to speak the truth."

17.16 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "My friend, I have no wish to be kept here myself. A beggar does better to beg his meals in the town than in the country. Whoever wants to will give to me. I'm no longer of an age to stay on at a farmstead and obey a master in everything he orders. Go on, then. This man you've given the order to will take me, as soon as I've warmed myself at the fire and the sun has grown warm. These clothes I have are dreadfully poor, and I'm afraid the morning frost may get the better of me. And you say the town is a long way off." So he spoke, and Telemachus strode out through the farmstead, stepping out briskly and planting trouble for the suitors. When he reached the well-appointed house, he carried his spear in and

stood it against a tall pillar, and went in himself, crossing the stone threshold.

TELEMACHUS COMES HOME

Eurycleia and Penelope welcome Telemachus back, and he goes to fetch his guest Theoclymenus.

17.31 The nurse Eurycleia was the very first to see him, as she was spreading fleeces on the finely made chairs. Bursting into tears she came straight to him, and the other maids of steadfast Odysseus gathered around him, kissing his head and shoulders in welcome. Then out of her chamber came wise Penelope, like Artemis or golden Aphrodite. Weeping, she threw her arms around her dear son and kissed his head and both his lovely eyes, and sobbing she spoke winged words: "You've come, Telemachus, sweet light! I thought I would never see you again, once you'd gone off by ship to Pylos—secretly, against my will—to hear news of your dear father. Come now, tell me: what did you manage to see of him?"

17.45 Thoughtful Telemachus answered her in turn: "Mother, don't stir up my grief or set the heart pounding in my chest, when I've only just escaped sheer destruction. Instead, wash and put clean clothes on, go up to the upper rooms with your women attendants, and vow to all the gods to offer perfect hecatombs, in the hope that Zeus may one day bring about revenge. As for me, I'll go to the place of assembly to fetch a stranger who came with me from over there on my way here. I sent him on ahead with my godlike companions, and I told Piraeus to take him home and look after him kindly and do him honor until I came."[1]

17.57 So he spoke, and she kept her words unwinged. She washed and put clean clothes on, and vowed to all the gods to offer perfect hecatombs, in the hope that Zeus might one day bring about revenge. Telemachus then strode out through the

1 The stranger is Theoclymenus, a seer in exile whom Telemachus took aboard at Pylos (Book 15); Piraeus is one of Telemachus' crew.

hall holding his spear, and two swift dogs went with him. Athena poured a wondrous grace over him, and all the people gazed at him as he came along. The overbearing suitors gathered around him, speaking fair words while deep in their hearts they plotted evil. But he avoided their great throng, and went and sat down where Mentor sat, and Antiphus and Halitherses, who had been his father's companions from the beginning; and they questioned him about everything.

17.71 Then Piraeus, famous with the spear, came up close to them, bringing the stranger through the town to the assembly; and Telemachus did not keep away from the stranger for long, but went to stand beside him. Piraeus spoke to him first: "Telemachus, send some women to my house quickly, so I can send over to you the gifts Menelaus gave you." Thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "Piraeus, we don't know how these things will turn out. If the overbearing suitors kill me secretly in my halls and divide all my father's goods among themselves, I'd rather you kept them and enjoyed them yourself than any of these men. But if I plant death and doom among them, then bring them to me at my house—you'll be glad to, and I'll be glad to have them."

17.84 With these words he led the long-suffering stranger to the house. When they reached the well-appointed house, they laid their cloaks on the chairs and seats, and stepped into the polished baths and bathed. When the maids had bathed them and anointed them with oil, and put woolly cloaks and tunics around them, they stepped out of the baths and sat down on chairs. A maid brought water for their hands in a fine golden jug and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash, and drew up a polished table beside them. And the respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, adding many dishes, giving freely from what she had. 17.96 His mother sat opposite, by the doorpost of the hall, leaning back in a chair and spinning fine yarn. They reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. But when they had put away their desire for food and drink, wise Penelope began to speak among them:

"Telemachus, I'll go up to the upper room and lie down on my bed, which has become a bed of groaning for me, always stained with my tears, ever since Odysseus went off to Ilium with the sons of Atreus. And you couldn't bring yourself, before the overbearing suitors come into this house, to tell me plainly about your father's homecoming, if you've heard anything anywhere." Thoughtful Telemachus answered her in turn:

17.108 "Then I'll tell you the truth, mother. We went to Pylos and to Nestor, shepherd of the people. He received me in his lofty house and looked after me kindly, as a father would his own son just come home from abroad after a long time away. That's how kindly he cared for me, he and his glorious sons. But about steadfast Odysseus, living or dead, he said he had never heard a word from anyone on earth. Instead he sent me on to the son of Atreus, Menelaus famous with the spear, with horses and a jointed chariot. There I saw Argive Helen, for whose sake Argives and Trojans endured so much by the will of the gods. Menelaus, good at the war cry, asked me at once what need had brought me to bright Lacedaemon, and I told him the whole truth. Then he answered me with these words:

17.124 'Shame on them! So they wanted to lie in the bed of a brave-hearted man, cowards that they are themselves! As when a doe has laid her newborn, suckling fawns to sleep in the lair of a mighty lion, and goes off to range over the mountain spurs and grassy glens, grazing, and then the lion comes back to his lair and lets loose an ugly fate on them both—so Odysseus will let loose an ugly fate on those men. Father Zeus, Athena and Apollo, if only he were the man he was once in well-built Lesbos, when he stood up to wrestle Philomeleides in a match and threw him hard, and all the Achaeans cheered—if only Odysseus, being such a man, would meet the suitors: they would all find a swift death and a bitter wedding.[2] 17.138 'But as for what you ask and beg of me, I won't swerve aside and talk of other things, nor will I deceive you. Of what the unerring Old Man of the Sea told me, I

2 Philomeleides was a king of Lesbos said to challenge visitors to wrestle with him.

won't hide or keep back a single word. He said he'd seen him on an island, suffering hard griefs, in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him there by force; and he can't reach his native land, for he has no ships with oars at hand, and no companions, to carry him over the broad back of the sea.' So spoke the son of Atreus, Menelaus famous with the spear. When I'd done all this, I came home; and the immortals gave me a fair wind and quickly brought me to my dear native land."

THEOCLYMENUS' PROPHECY

The seer swears to Penelope that Odysseus is already on Ithaca, plotting against the suitors.

17.150 So he spoke, and stirred the heart in her breast. And godlike Theoclymenus also spoke among them: "Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, he doesn't know for certain. But listen to what I say, for I'll prophesy to you truly and hide nothing. Let Zeus be my witness now, first of the gods, and this table of hospitality, and the hearth of flawless Odysseus to which I have come: Odysseus is already in his native land, resting or on the move, learning of these evil deeds, and he is sowing evil for all the suitors. Such was the bird-omen I saw as I sat on the well-benched ship, and I declared it to Telemachus." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn:

17.163 "Stranger, if only this word of yours might come true! Then you'd soon know my kindness, and many gifts from me, so that anyone who met you would call you blessed." So they talked with one another. Meanwhile the suitors, in front of Odysseus' hall, were amusing themselves throwing the discus and javelins on the leveled ground, where they had always indulged their arrogance. But when it was time for dinner, and the flocks came in from the fields on every side, driven by the men who usually brought them, Medon spoke to them; for he was the herald they liked best, and he attended at their feasts: "Young men, now that you've all had your fill of fun from the games, come into the

house so that we can prepare dinner. There's nothing wrong with taking one's dinner in good time."

17.177 So he spoke, and they got up and went, persuaded by his words. When they reached the well-appointed house, they laid their cloaks on the chairs and seats, and slaughtered great rams and fat goats, slaughtered fattened hogs and a cow from the herd, preparing the feast. Meanwhile Odysseus and the noble swineherd were getting ready to go from the country to the town. The swineherd, leader of men, was the first to speak: "Stranger, since you're set on going to the town today, as my master ordered—though I myself would rather leave you here to guard the farmstead; but I respect him and I'm afraid he may scold me afterwards, and masters' rebukes are harsh—come now, let's go. Most of the day's already gone, and toward evening you'll soon find it colder."

17.192 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "I know, I understand; you're telling a man who already has it in mind. Let's go, and you lead the way the whole way. But give me a stick to lean on, if you have one cut, since you say the path is very slippery." With that he slung his shabby bag over his shoulders, full of holes, with a twisted cord for a strap; and Eumaeus gave him a staff to his liking. The two of them set off, while the dogs and the herdsmen stayed behind to guard the farmstead. And he led his master to the town looking like a miserable beggar and an old man, leaning on a staff; and the clothes he wore on his body were wretched.

MELANTHIUS ON THE ROAD

On the way to town the goatherd Melanthius insults the disguised Odysseus and kicks him.

17.204 But when, going along the rugged road, they were near the town and had come to the spring, a built fountain of lovely flowing water where the townspeople drew their water (Ithacus had made it, with Neritus and Polyctor, and around it was a grove of poplars that thrive by water, encircling it on every side; cold

water flowed down from the rock above, and on top an altar of the nymphs had been built, where all passers-by made offerings), there Melanthius, son of Dolius, came upon them, driving goats, the best in all the flocks, for the suitors' dinner, and two herdsmen went along with him. When he saw them he abused them, speaking out and calling them names, outrageous and ugly; and he stirred Odysseus' heart:

17.217 "Well, here's a real case of the vile leading the vile—the way the god always brings like to like! Where are you taking this greedy wretch, you miserable swineherd, this pest of a beggar, this licker of plates at feasts? He'll stand by many a doorpost and rub his shoulders on it, begging for scraps, not for swords or cauldrons. If you gave him to me to guard the farmstead and sweep out the pens and carry fresh greens to the kids, he could drink whey and put some bulk on his thighs. But since he's learned nothing but bad ways, he won't want to put his hand to work; he'd rather go cringing through the land begging, to feed that bottomless belly of his. 17.229 But I'll tell you this plainly, and it will surely be done: if he goes to the house of godlike Odysseus, his ribs will wear out many a footstool flung at his head by men's hands as he's pelted through the house." So he spoke, and as he passed, in his folly, he kicked him on the hip. But he didn't knock him off the path; he stood firm. And Odysseus pondered whether to spring at him and take his life with his club, or lift him off his feet and dash his head against the ground. But he endured it, and held himself in check. The swineherd looked the man in the face and rebuked him, and lifting up his hands he prayed aloud:

17.240 "Nymphs of the spring, daughters of Zeus, if Odysseus ever burned thigh-pieces for you, wrapped in rich fat, of lambs or kids, grant me this wish: that that man may come home, and some god may bring him. Then he'd scatter all those fine airs you put on now in your arrogance, forever loafing around the town, while bad herdsmen ruin the flocks." Then Melanthius, the goatherd, said to him in turn: "Well, well, listen to what the dog says, with his head full of mischief! One day I'll take him on

a black, well-benched ship far from Ithaca, so he can fetch me a good price. I wish Apollo of the silver bow would shoot Telemachus today in the halls, or the suitors would bring him down—as surely as Odysseus, far away, has lost the day of his homecoming."

17.254 With these words he left them there, walking slowly, while he went on and very quickly reached his master's house. He went straight in and sat down among the suitors, opposite Eurymachus, for he liked him best. Those who were serving set a portion of meat beside him, and the respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before him to eat. Odysseus and the noble swineherd came up close and halted, and around them rose the sound of the hollow lyre, for Phemius was striking up a song for them. Then Odysseus took the swineherd by the hand and said to him:

17.264 "Eumaeus, this must surely be the fine house of Odysseus. It's easy to pick out, even among many. One building leads into another, the courtyard is fitted with a wall and coping, and the double doors are strongly made; no man could overpower it. And I can tell that many men are feasting in it, since the smell of roasting meat rises up, and a lyre is sounding there, which the gods made to be the companion of the feast." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd: "You recognized it easily, since you're no fool in other things either. But come, let's think how this business will go.

17.275 Either you go first into the well-appointed house and join the suitors, while I stay behind here; or, if you prefer, wait here and I'll go ahead. But don't you linger long, in case someone sees you outside and throws something at you or strikes you. I'd advise you to think about that." Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus answered him: "I know, I understand; you're telling a man who already has it in mind. Go on ahead, and I'll stay behind here. I'm no stranger to blows and things thrown at me. My heart can bear it, since I've suffered many hardships on the waves and in war; let this be added to them. But there's no way to hide a ravenous belly, the accursed thing, which brings so

many troubles on men. For its sake, too, strong-benched ships are fitted out to sail the barren sea, bringing trouble to enemies."

THE DOG ARGOS

Odysseus' old hound, neglected on a dung heap, knows his master and dies.

17.290 So they talked with one another. And a dog lying there raised his head and ears—Argos, the dog of steadfast Odysseus, whom he himself had raised long ago but had no joy of, for before that he went off to sacred Ilium. In the past young men used to take him out after wild goats and deer and hares; but now, with his master gone, he lay neglected on the deep heap of dung from mules and cattle that was piled in plenty before the doors, until Odysseus' servants should carry it off to manure his great estate. There lay the dog Argos, covered in dog-ticks. 17.301 Now, when he became aware of Odysseus near him, he wagged his tail and dropped both his ears, but he no longer had the strength to come closer to his master. And Odysseus, looking away, wiped away a tear, easily keeping it from Eumaeus, and at once asked him: "Eumaeus, this is a real wonder, this dog lying here in the dung. He has a fine build, but I can't tell for certain whether he was also swift at running to match these looks, or just like the table-dogs men keep, which their masters tend for show." Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd:

17.312 "Yes, this is the dog of a man who died far away. If he were what he was in body and in deeds when Odysseus left him and went to Troy, you would soon marvel at his speed and strength. No creature he chased in the depths of the thick forest ever escaped him, and he was keen at tracking too. But now he is in a bad way. His master has died far from his native land, and the women are careless and don't look after him. Servants, once their masters no longer have the upper hand, stop wanting to do their proper work. For wide-seeing Zeus takes away half a man's excellence on the day that slavery seizes him."

17.324 So saying, he went into the well-appointed house and made straight through the hall to the lordly suitors. As for Argos, the fate of black death seized him as soon as he had seen Odysseus, in the twentieth year. Godlike Telemachus was by far the first to see the swineherd coming through the house, and he quickly nodded and called him to his side. The swineherd looked around and took a stool that stood where the carver used to sit when he carved the meat, plenty of it, for the suitors feasting in the house. He carried it to Telemachus' table, set it down opposite him and sat on it himself. The herald took a portion of meat and set it before him, and lifted bread out of a basket for him.

BEGGING IN THE HALL

Odysseus begs from the suitors; Antinous refuses and hits him with a footstool.

17.336 Close behind him Odysseus entered the house, looking like a wretched beggar and an old man, leaning on a staff, with miserable clothes on his body. He sat down on the ashwood threshold inside the doorway and leaned against the cypress doorpost, which a carpenter had once planed with skill and made true to the line. Telemachus called the swineherd over and spoke to him, taking a whole loaf from the beautiful basket and as much meat as his hands could hold: "Take these and give them to the stranger, and tell him to go around all the suitors, one after another, and beg. Shame is no good companion for a man in need."

17.348 So he spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard the word. Standing near, he spoke winged words: "Telemachus gives you these, stranger, and tells you to go around all the suitors, one after another, and beg. He says shame is no good thing for a beggar." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Lord Zeus, grant that Telemachus be blessed among men, and that he have everything his heart desires." He spoke, took the food in both hands and set it down right there at his feet on his shabby bag,

and he ate while the bard sang in the hall. Just as he finished his meal, the divine bard stopped singing.

17.360 The suitors raised a din throughout the hall. But Athena came and stood close by Odysseus son of Laertes and urged him to go around among the suitors gathering scraps of bread, and to find out which of them were decent and which were lawless. Even so, she was not going to save a single one of them from destruction. He set off to beg from each man in turn, going from left to right, stretching out his hand on every side as though he had been a beggar for years. They pitied him and gave, and they wondered at him, and asked one another who he was and where he had come from. Then Melanthius the goatherd spoke among them:

17.370 "Listen to me, suitors of the glorious queen, about this stranger, for I've seen him before. It was the swineherd, I can tell you, who led him here; but of the man himself I don't know for certain what stock he claims to come from." So he spoke, and Antinous turned on the swineherd with words of reproach: "You famous swineherd, why did you bring this man to the city? Don't we have enough vagrants already, tiresome beggars, spoilers of feasts? Or isn't it enough for you that people gather here and eat up your master's livelihood, that you had to invite this one too?" Then you answered him, Eumaeus the swineherd:

17.381 "Antinous, noble as you are, what you say isn't right. Who goes out himself and invites a stranger from elsewhere, unless he is one of those who work for the public—a seer, or a healer of illness, or a worker in wood, or else an inspired bard, who gives delight with his singing? Those are the men who are invited all over the boundless earth. But no one would invite a beggar to eat him out of house and home. You, though, are always harsher than all the other suitors to Odysseus' servants, and to me most of all. But I don't care, so long as prudent Penelope is alive in the hall, and godlike Telemachus." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn:

17.393 "Quiet. Don't answer him at such length for my sake. Antinous is always in the habit of provoking people nastily with

harsh words, and he urges the others on as well." He spoke, and spoke winged words to Antinous: "Antinous, how nicely you look after me, like a father caring for his son, when you tell me to drive the stranger from the hall with a harsh command! May the god never bring that about. Take something and give it to him. I don't begrudge it—I'm telling you to. Don't hold back out of regard for my mother, or for any of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. But no, there's no such thought in your breast. You would much rather eat yourself than give to someone else."

17.405 Then Antinous answered him in turn: "Telemachus, you big talker with your unchecked temper, what a thing to say! If all the suitors handed him as much as I will, he'd be kept far from this house for three months." So he spoke, and he grabbed the footstool that lay under the table, where he rested his shining feet as he feasted, and brought it into view. All the others gave, and filled his bag with bread and meat. And soon Odysseus was about to go back to the threshold and enjoy the Achaeans' free gifts; but he stopped beside Antinous and spoke to him: "Give, friend. You don't seem to me the worst of the Achaeans, but the best, since you look like a king.

17.417 So you ought to give me a better share of bread than the others, and I would spread your fame across the boundless earth. For I too once lived among men in a house of my own, a rich house, and I was prosperous, and I often gave to a wanderer, whoever he was and whatever need had brought him. I had servants beyond counting, and plenty of everything else that men need to live well and be called rich. But Zeus son of Cronus shattered it all—I suppose it was his will—when he sent me off with roving pirates to go to Egypt, a long voyage, so that I would be ruined. I moored my curved ships in the river of Egypt. There I ordered my trusty companions to stay right there by the ships and guard them, and I sent out scouts to the lookout points. 17.431 But they gave way to outrage and followed their own fury. At once they began plundering the beautiful fields of the Egyptians, carried off the women and little children, and killed

the men; and soon the outcry reached the city. The people there heard the shouting and came at the break of dawn, and the whole plain was filled with foot soldiers and horses and the flash of bronze. Zeus who delights in thunder cast a wretched panic among my companions, and not one of them dared to stand and face the enemy, for evils surrounded us on every side. Then they killed many of us with the sharp bronze, and led others away alive to work for them by force. But me they gave to a stranger who met them, to take to Cyprus—Dmetor son of Iasus, who ruled Cyprus with a strong hand. From there I have now come here, suffering miseries."

17.445 Then Antinous answered him and said: "What god has brought this plague here, this pest of the feast? Stand out there in the middle, away from my table, or you'll soon find yourself in a bitter Egypt and a bitter Cyprus! What a bold, shameless beggar you are. You go and stand by everyone in turn, and they give without a thought, since there's no restraint and no scruple about being generous with other people's goods when each of them has plenty in front of him." Then resourceful Odysseus drew back and answered him: "Well, well! So your wits don't match your looks. You wouldn't give so much as salt from your own house to someone standing at your side, you who now sit at another man's table and can't bring yourself to take some bread and give it to me—and there's plenty here."

17.458 So he spoke, and Antinous grew angrier still at heart, and glaring at him from under his brows he spoke winged words: "Now I don't think you'll make it back through the hall in fine style, since you're even throwing insults." So he spoke, and he seized the footstool and threw it, and struck him on the right shoulder, where it joins the back. But he stood firm as a rock, and the missile of Antinous did not make him stagger; he only shook his head in silence, brooding on evil deep within. He went back to the threshold and sat down, set down his well-filled bag, and spoke among the suitors:

17.468 "Listen to me, suitors of the glorious queen, so that I can say what the heart in my breast bids me. There's no pain in a

man's mind, no grief at all, when he is struck while fighting for his own possessions, for his cattle or his white sheep. But Antinous struck me because of my wretched belly, that accursed thing which brings so many evils on men. Well, if beggars have gods and Furies anywhere, may the end of death overtake Antinous before his marriage." Then Antinous son of Eupeithes said to him: "Sit quietly and eat, stranger, or go somewhere else, or for the things you say the young men will drag you through the house by the foot or the hand and strip the skin off you all over."

17.481 So he spoke, but they were all indignant beyond measure, and this is the kind of thing one of the overbearing young men would say: "Antinous, you did wrong to strike the poor vagrant—you're a doomed man, if there is some god in heaven. The gods do take the likeness of strangers from foreign lands, assuming every kind of shape, and travel through cities, watching over men's outrage and their lawfulness." So the suitors spoke, but he paid no heed to their words. And in his heart Telemachus nursed a great grief for the man who had been struck, yet he let no tear fall from his eyelids to the ground; he only shook his head in silence, brooding on evil deep within.

17.492 When wise Penelope heard of the man being struck in the hall, she spoke among her maids: "I wish Apollo of the famous bow would strike you, yourself, the same way!" Then Eurynome the housekeeper said to her: "If only our prayers could come true! Not one of these men would live to see Dawn on her lovely throne." Then wise Penelope said to her in turn: "Dear nurse, they're all hateful, since they're plotting evil; but Antinous above all is like black doom itself. Some poor stranger wanders through the house begging from the men, because want drives him to it; and there all the others filled his bag and gave, but this one hit him with a footstool, at the base of his right shoulder."

17.505 So she spoke among her women servants, sitting in her chamber, while godlike Odysseus ate his meal. Then she called the noble swineherd to her and said: "Go, noble Eumaeus, and tell the stranger to come, so that I can greet him and ask whether he has heard anything of steadfast Odysseus or seen

him with his own eyes. He looks like a man who has wandered far." Then you answered her, Eumaeus the swineherd: "If only the Achaeans would be quiet, my queen! The way he tells his stories, he would charm your very heart. Three nights I had him, three days I kept him in my hut, since I was the first he came to when he ran away from a ship; and still he hasn't finished telling the tale of his miseries.

17.518 As when a man gazes at a bard who has learned from the gods to sing words that fill mortals with longing, and they are endlessly eager to hear him whenever he sings—so that man charmed me as he sat beside me in my house. He says he is a guest-friend of Odysseus from his father's time, and lives in Crete, where the race of Minos is. From there he has now come here, suffering miseries, driven on and on; and he insists that he has heard of Odysseus, close at hand in the rich land of the Thesprotians, and alive, and that he is bringing many treasures home to his house." Then wise Penelope spoke to him in turn:

17.529 "Go, call him here, so that he can tell me himself, face to face. As for these men, let them sit at the doors and amuse themselves, or here in the house, since their spirits are so merry. Their own possessions lie untouched at home, the bread and the sweet wine, and only their servants eat them; while they themselves haunt our house day after day, slaughtering oxen and sheep and fat goats, feasting and drinking the sparkling wine without a thought, and so much is wasted. For there is no man here like Odysseus to keep ruin from the house. But if Odysseus were to come and reach his native land, he and his son would soon make these men pay for their violence."

17.541 So she spoke, and Telemachus sneezed loudly, and the house all around rang with a fearful echo. Penelope laughed, and at once she spoke winged words to Eumaeus: "Go, please, and call the stranger here before me. Don't you see how my son sneezed at everything I said? That means death will not fail to come to the suitors, to every last one of them, and not one will escape death and doom. And I'll tell you something else, and

you take it to heart: if I find that he is telling the whole truth, I'll clothe him in a cloak and tunic, fine clothes."[3]

17.551 So she spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard the word. Standing near, he spoke winged words: "Stranger, father, wise Penelope is calling you, Telemachus' mother. Her heart bids her ask you something about her husband, sorrows though she has suffered. And if she finds that you're telling the whole truth, she'll clothe you in a cloak and tunic, which is what you need most of all. As for bread, you can beg for it through the land and feed your belly; whoever wants to will give to you." Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus said to him in turn:

17.561 "Eumaeus, I would gladly tell the whole truth right away to the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, for I know all about him, and we have endured the same misery. But I'm afraid of the crowd of harsh suitors, whose outrage and violence reach the iron sky. Just now, when this man struck me and hurt me as I went through the house doing no harm, neither Telemachus nor anyone else protected me. So tell Penelope now to wait in the hall, eager though she is, until the sun goes down. Then let her ask me about her husband's day of homecoming, seating me closer to the fire; for the clothes I have are wretched—you know that yourself, since you were the first I came to as a suppliant."

17.574 So he spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard the word. As he stepped over the threshold, Penelope spoke to him: "You're not bringing him, Eumaeus? What does the vagrant mean by this? Is he unduly afraid of someone, or is he shy in the house for some other reason? A shy vagrant makes a poor one." Then you answered her, Eumaeus the swineherd: "He speaks sensibly, as anyone else would think too, wanting to avoid the outrage of overbearing men. He asks you to wait until the sun goes down. And it's far better for you this way yourself, my queen, to speak to the stranger alone and hear what he has to say." Then wise Penelope spoke to him in turn:

17.586 "The stranger is no fool; he sees how things might well turn out. Nowhere, surely, among mortal men are there any who

3 A sneeze was taken as an omen confirming what had just been said.

in their outrage devise such reckless deeds as these." So she spoke, and the noble swineherd went off into the crowd of suitors, once he had told her everything. At once he spoke winged words to Telemachus, holding his head close so that the others wouldn't hear: "My friend, I'm going off to guard the pigs and everything out there, your livelihood and mine; everything here must be your concern. Keep yourself safe first of all, and be careful in your heart that nothing happens to you. Many of the Achaeans are plotting evil—may Zeus destroy them before they bring harm on us!"

17.598 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn: "So it shall be, father. Go when you've had your evening meal, and in the morning come and bring fine animals for sacrifice. All this here will be my concern, and the immortals'." So he spoke, and the swineherd sat down again on the polished stool. When he had filled his heart with food and drink he went off to the pigs, leaving the courtyard and the hall full of feasters; and they were enjoying themselves with dancing and song, for evening had now come on.

Book 18

Irus

Odysseus fights the beggar Irus; Penelope appears before the suitors.

18.1 Then a public beggar came up, who used to go begging through the town of Ithaca. He was known for his ravenous belly, eating and drinking without end; he had no strength and no force, though he was very big to look at. Arnaeus was his name, for his lady mother had given it to him at birth, but all the young men called him Irus, because he would go and carry messages whenever anyone told him to. He came now and tried to chase Odysseus out of his own house, and abusing him he spoke winged words: "Get away from the doorway, old man, before you're dragged off by the foot, and soon. Don't you see how they're all winking at me and telling me to drag you out? Still, I'm ashamed to, all the same. Come on, get up, before our quarrel comes to blows."[1]

18.14 Then, looking at him from under his brows, resourceful Odysseus spoke to him: "Fellow, I'm doing you no harm and saying none, and I don't begrudge anyone giving you something, even if they give you plenty. This threshold will hold us both, and you've no call to begrudge what belongs to others. You seem to me to be a vagabond like me; it's the gods who are going to grant prosperity. Don't go too far challenging me with your fists, or you'll make me angry, and old as I am, I may smear your chest and lips with blood. Then I'd have more peace and quiet

1 The nickname Irus is a masculine form of Iris, the messenger of the gods.

still tomorrow, for I don't think you'd come back a second time to the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes." Then Irus the vagabond spoke to him in anger:

18.26 "Well now, how glibly the glutton rattles on, like an old woman at the oven! I could do him some harm, hitting him with both fists, and knock all the teeth out of his jaws onto the ground, like a sow's that eats up the crops. Tuck up your clothes now, so that all these men can watch us fight too. But how could you fight a younger man?" So the two of them, in front of the high doors, on the polished threshold, were working each other up with all their hearts. And the sacred might of Antinous heard the pair, and with a hearty laugh he spoke among the suitors: "Friends, nothing like this has ever happened before—such entertainment the god has brought into this house! The stranger and Irus are challenging each other to come to blows. Come on, let's set them at it, and quickly."

THE FIGHT WITH IRUS

The suitors offer a prize, and Odysseus knocks down the beggar Irus with one blow.

18.40 So he spoke, and they all sprang up laughing and gathered around the ragged beggars. And Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them: "Listen to me, overbearing suitors, so I can say something. Here are goats' bellies lying on the fire, which we set there for supper, stuffed with fat and blood. Whichever of the two wins and proves the stronger, let him get up and pick out whichever of these he wants himself. And from now on he'll always dine with us, and we won't let any other beggar come in among us to beg." So Antinous spoke, and his words pleased them. Then, with crafty mind, resourceful Odysseus spoke among them:

18.52 "Friends, there's no way an old man, worn down by misery, can fight a younger one; but my belly, that mischief-maker, drives me on, to be beaten down with blows. Come now, all of you, swear me a mighty oath that no one, to do Irus a

favor, will strike me with a heavy hand in reckless folly and beat me down by force for his sake." So he spoke, and they all swore not to, as he asked. But when they had sworn and completed the oath, the sacred strength of Telemachus spoke among them in turn: "Stranger, if your heart and your proud spirit urge you to fend this man off, don't fear any of the other Achaeans, since whoever hits you will have more than one to fight. I am your host, and the lords agree, Antinous and Eurymachus, both thoughtful men."

18.66 So he spoke, and they all approved. Then Odysseus tucked his rags up around his loins and showed his thighs, fine and big, and his broad shoulders came into view, his chest and his brawny arms; and Athena, standing close by, filled out the limbs of the shepherd of the people. All the suitors were amazed beyond measure, and one would look at the man beside him and say: "Soon Irus will be Un-Irus and get the trouble he brought on himself—what a thigh the old man shows from under his rags!" So they spoke, and Irus' heart was badly shaken. Even so, the servants tucked up his clothes and brought him on by force, terrified, and the flesh quivered on his limbs. And Antinous rebuked him, and spoke a word and called him by name:[2]

18.79 "Better you weren't alive now, you great ox, and had never been born, if you tremble at this man and are so terribly afraid—an old man worn down by the misery that has come upon him. But I'll tell you plainly, and it will surely be done: if this man beats you and proves the stronger, I'll throw you into a black ship and send you to the mainland, to King Echetus, the maimer of all mortals, who'll cut off your nose and ears with the pitiless bronze, and tear off your genitals and give them raw to the dogs to eat." So he spoke, and a trembling seized Irus' limbs still more. They brought him into the middle, and both men put up their fists. Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus pondered

2 "Irus Un-Irus" renders a pun in the Greek (Iros Airos): Irus will no longer be Irus, the man who runs errands.

whether to hit him so that his life would leave him where he fell, or to hit him lightly and stretch him on the ground.[3]

18.93 And as he thought it over, this seemed the better way: to hit him lightly, so the Achaeans wouldn't grow suspicious of him. Then they put up their fists, and Irus hit him on the right shoulder, but Odysseus struck his neck under the ear and smashed the bones inside. At once red blood came pouring out of his mouth, and he fell bellowing in the dust, his teeth ground together, kicking the earth with his feet. But the lordly suitors threw up their hands and died with laughter. Then Odysseus took him by the foot and dragged him through the doorway until he reached the courtyard and the doors of the portico; he propped him against the courtyard wall and sat him there, put a staff in his hand, and spoke winged words to him:

18.105 "Sit there now and keep off the pigs and dogs, and don't you try to lord it over strangers and beggars, wretch that you are, or you may get something even worse." With that he threw his miserable bag over his shoulders, full of holes, with a twisted cord for a strap. He went back to the threshold and sat down; and the others went inside, laughing merrily, and greeted him with these words: "May Zeus and the other immortal gods give you, stranger, whatever you want most and is dearest to your heart, since you've stopped this insatiable creature from begging around the land; for soon we'll ship him off to the mainland, to King Echetus, the maimer of all mortals."

A WARNING TO AMPHINOMUS

Odysseus warns the kindest of the suitors to go home before the master returns.

18.117 So they spoke, and godlike Odysseus rejoiced at the omen in their words. Antinous set beside him a great belly stuffed with fat and blood, and Amphinomus took two loaves from the basket and set them before him, pledged him in a golden cup, and said:

3 Echetus was a legendary cruel king on the mainland opposite Ithaca, used as a bogeyman.

"Good health, father stranger! May happiness be yours hereafter —though now you're in the grip of many troubles." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Amphinomus, you strike me as a really thoughtful man, and so was your father—I've heard of his good name, Nisus of Dulichium, a good man and a rich one. They say you're his son, and you seem a man of sense.

18.129 So I'll tell you something; take it to heart and listen to me. Nothing feebler does the earth nourish than man, of all the things that breathe and creep upon the earth. For he thinks he'll never suffer harm in time to come, so long as the gods grant him success and his knees are nimble; but when the blessed gods bring sorrows to pass, these too he bears against his will, with an enduring heart. For the mind of men on earth is just like the day the father of men and gods brings upon them. I too was once set to be prosperous among men, and I did many reckless things, giving way to my violence and strength, relying on my father and my brothers. 18.141 So let no man ever be lawless in any way, but let him keep in silence whatever gifts the gods may give. Such are the reckless things I see the suitors devising, wasting the property and dishonoring the wife of a man who, I tell you, won't be away from his friends and his native land much longer—he is very near. But may some god take you quietly off home, and may you not meet him when he comes home to his own native land; for I don't think the suitors and he will part without bloodshed once he comes under his roof." So he spoke, and pouring a libation he drank the honey-sweet wine, and put the cup back in the hands of the marshal of the people.

PENELOPE BEFORE THE SUITORS

Athena makes Penelope beautiful, and she shows herself to the suitors and draws gifts from them.

18.153 But he went off through the house with a grieving heart, shaking his head, for his spirit foresaw trouble. Yet even so he did not escape his doom: Athena had bound him too, to be

brought down by force under the hands and spear of Telemachus. He sat down again on the chair from which he had risen. Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, put it in the mind of the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, to show herself to the suitors, so as to flutter the suitors' hearts as much as she could and to be held in greater honor by her husband and her son than before. Penelope gave an idle laugh, and spoke a word and called the housekeeper by name:

18.164 "Eurynome, my heart longs, as it never did before, to show myself to the suitors, hateful though they are. And I'd like to say a word to my son that would be for his good: not to keep company all the time with the arrogant suitors, who speak fair words but mean harm behind his back." Then Eurynome the housekeeper said to her in reply: "Yes, child, all you've said is right and fitting. Go, then, and speak your word to your son, and don't hide it; but wash your body first and anoint your cheeks. Don't go like this, your face all stained with tears, for it's worse to grieve endlessly, without ceasing. Your son is of an age now—the son you prayed to the immortals above all to see with a beard."

18.177 Then wise Penelope answered her: "Eurynome, don't try to coax me, though you mean it kindly, to wash my body and anoint myself with oil; for the gods who hold Olympus destroyed my beauty from the day he went away in the hollow ships. But tell Autonoe and Hippodameia to come to me, so they can stand beside me in the hall. I won't go among the men alone; I'd be ashamed." So she spoke, and the old woman went off through the hall to tell the women and send them along.

18.187 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought. She poured sweet sleep over the daughter of Icarius, and she fell asleep leaning back, and all her limbs went slack, there on the couch. Meanwhile the one bright among goddesses gave her immortal gifts, so that the Achaeans would marvel at her. First she cleansed her lovely face with an ambrosial beauty, the kind Cytherea of the fair garland anoints herself with when she goes to the lovely dance of the Graces; and she made her

taller and fuller to look at, and made her whiter than sawn ivory. When she had done this, the one bright among goddesses went away, and the white-armed maids came from the hall with a sound of voices as they came; sweet sleep released her, and she wiped her cheeks with her hands and said:[4]

18.201 "Ah, a soft sleep has wrapped me round, wretched as I am. If only holy Artemis would give me a death as soft as this, right now, so that I'd no longer waste my life away grieving in my heart, longing for my dear husband's excellence of every kind, for he was the finest of the Achaeans." So saying, she came down from the shining upper rooms, not alone: two maids went with her. And when she, bright among women, reached the suitors, she stood by the pillar of the close-built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks, and a trusty maid stood on either side of her. Then and there the suitors' knees went weak, their hearts were bewitched with desire, and they all prayed to lie beside her in bed. But she spoke to Telemachus, her dear son:

18.215 "Telemachus, your mind and your judgment are no longer steady. When you were still a child you used to turn over shrewd thoughts in your mind far more. But now that you are grown tall and have reached the full measure of youth, and a stranger looking at your height and your good looks would say you were the son of a fortunate man, now your mind and your judgment are no longer what they should be. What a thing this is that has been done in these halls, that you let the stranger be so shamefully treated! How would it be now, if a stranger sitting in our house like this were to come to harm from such painful rough handling? Disgrace and dishonor would be yours among men."

18.226 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her in turn: "Mother, I don't blame you for being angry at this. But I understand things in my heart now and know each of them, the good and the worse; before, I was still a child. Even so, I can't think of everything wisely, for these men sitting around me, one here, one there, with evil in their minds, drive me out of my wits, and

4 The Graces were goddesses of charm who attended Aphrodite.

I have no one to help me. Still, this fight between the stranger and Irus did not turn out as the suitors wanted: he was the stronger of the two.

18.235 Oh, father Zeus and Athena and Apollo, if only the suitors in our house were hanging their heads right now, beaten, some in the courtyard and some inside the house, and the limbs of every one of them were loosened, just as Irus there now sits by the courtyard gates with his head lolling, like a drunken man, and can't stand upright on his feet or go home, wherever his home may be, since his limbs are loosened." So they talked with one another. And Eurymachus addressed Penelope: "Daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, if all the Achaeans throughout Iasian Argos could see you, there would be still more suitors feasting in your house from dawn on, since you surpass all women in looks and stature and in the balanced mind within you."[5]

18.250 Then wise Penelope answered him: "Eurymachus, my excellence, my looks and my figure the immortals destroyed when the Argives embarked for Ilium, and my husband Odysseus went with them. If he were to come back and take care of my life, my fame would be greater and finer that way. But as it is I grieve, so many evils has some god sent rushing upon me. When he went away and left his native land, he took my right hand by the wrist and said to me:

18.259 'Wife, I don't think the well-greaved Achaeans will all come back from Troy safe and unharmed. For they say the Trojans are fighting men, spearmen and archers, and drivers of swift-footed horses, the kind who are quickest to decide the great strife of evenly matched war. So I don't know whether the god will bring me home, or whether I'll be killed there at Troy. Let everything here be your concern. Remember my father and mother in the halls as you do now, or even more while I am far away. But when you see our son grown a beard, marry whomever you wish, and leave your house.'

18.271 That is what he told me, and now it is all coming to pass. There will come a night when a hateful marriage will befall me,

cursed as I am, whose happiness Zeus has taken away. But this dreadful grief comes over my heart and spirit: this was not the way of suitors in the past. Men who want to court a good woman, the daughter of a wealthy man, and compete with one another for her, bring cattle and fat sheep of their own, a feast for the bride's friends, and give splendid gifts; they don't eat up another man's livelihood without paying for it." So she spoke, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus was glad, because she was drawing gifts out of them and charming their hearts with gentle words, while her mind was set on other things. Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, answered her:[6]

18.285 "Daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, accept the gifts from whichever of the Achaeans wishes to bring them here, since it isn't fine to refuse a gift. But we will not go back to our lands, or anywhere else, until you marry whichever of the Achaeans is best." So Antinous spoke, and his words pleased them, and each of them sent off a herald to fetch gifts. For Antinous the herald brought a great robe, very beautiful and richly worked, and on it were twelve brooches, all of gold, fitted with well-bent clasps. For Eurymachus he at once brought an intricately made necklace of gold, strung with amber beads, like the sun. For Eurydamas two attendants brought earrings with three drops, clustered like mulberries, and great grace shone from them.

18.299 From the house of lord Peisander, son of Polyctor, an attendant brought a choker, a very beautiful ornament. And each of the other Achaeans brought a different fine gift. Then she, bright among women, went up to her upper rooms, and her attendants carried the beautiful gifts up with her. But the suitors turned to dancing and lovely song and took their pleasure, and waited for evening to come. And as they took their pleasure, dark evening came upon them. At once they set up three braziers in the hall to give light, and around them they piled fire-

5 "Iasian Argos" probably means the Peloponnese as a whole, named after Iasus, an early king of Argos.

6 A suitor customarily brought livestock and gifts to the bride's family to win her hand.

wood, long dried and well seasoned, freshly split with bronze, and they mixed in torches; and the maids of steadfast Odysseus took turns keeping the flames alight. Then resourceful Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, spoke to them himself:

MELANTHO AND EURYMACHUS

The maid Melantho and the suitor Eurymachus mock the beggar, and Eurymachus throws a footstool.

18.313 "Maids of Odysseus, your master who has been gone so long, go to the rooms where your honored queen is. Turn your spindles beside her and cheer her as you sit in the chamber, or card wool with your hands. I'll provide light for all these men. Even if they want to stay up till fair-throned Dawn, they won't outlast me; I can endure a great deal." So he spoke, and they laughed and looked at one another. And fair-cheeked Melantho rebuked him shamefully. Dolius was her father, but Penelope had raised her and cared for her like her own child, and given her playthings to her heart's content; yet even so she felt no grief in her heart for Penelope, but slept with Eurymachus and was his lover. She rebuked Odysseus with taunting words:[7]

18.327 "You wretched stranger, you must be knocked clean out of your wits. You don't want to go and sleep in a smithy, or in the common lodging-hall somewhere, but here you are talking on and on, boldly, among a crowd of men, with no fear at all in your heart. Wine must have hold of your mind, or else your mind is always like this, and that's why you babble such nonsense. Are you beside yourself because you beat Irus the vagrant? Watch out that someone better than Irus doesn't soon stand up to you, who will pound you about the head with his heavy fists and send you out of the house, smeared with plenty of blood." Then resourceful Odysseus, glaring at her from under his brows, spoke to her:

18.338 "I'll go over there right now, you dog, and tell Telemachus what you're saying, so that he can cut you limb from limb on the

spot." So saying, he scattered the women in fright with his words. They went off through the house, and every one of them went weak in the knees with fear, for they thought he was telling the truth. But he stood by the burning braziers, keeping them alight and watching all the men, while the heart in his breast pondered other things, which did not go unfulfilled. Yet Athena would not let the overbearing suitors hold back altogether from heart-wounding insults, so that pain might sink still deeper into the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes. Among them Eurymachus, son of Polybus, began to speak, mocking Odysseus and raising a laugh among his companions:

18.351 "Listen to me, suitors of the glorious queen, so that I can say what the heart in my breast bids me. Not without some god's will has this man come to the house of Odysseus. At any rate, it seems to me the glare of the torches comes from him—from his head, since there isn't a hair on it, not even a few." He spoke, and at the same time addressed Odysseus, sacker of cities: "Stranger, would you be willing to work for hire, if I took you on, out at the edge of my farm—you'll get decent pay—gathering stones for walls and planting tall trees? There I would supply you with food all year round, and dress you in clothes and give you shoes for your feet. But since all you've learned is mischief, you won't want to set about any work; you'd rather go cringing around the country, begging to feed that insatiable belly of yours."

18.365 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Eurymachus, I wish there could be a contest of work between the two of us in springtime, when the days are long, in the meadow, and I had a well-curved sickle and you had one like it, so we could test each other's work without food until full dark, with grass enough for us. Or again, if there were oxen to drive, the best there are, tawny and big, both well fed with grass, of the same age and equal at hauling, with strength that is far from feeble, and a field of four acres, with the soil giving way before the plow: then you'd see whether I could cut a straight, unbroken furrow.

7 Melantho's father Dolius is an old servant of the family; her brother is the goatherd Melanthius.

18.376 Or again, if the son of Cronus were to stir up war from somewhere today, and I had a shield and two spears and a helmet all of bronze, fitted to my temples, then you'd see me in among the foremost fighters, and you wouldn't be taunting me about my belly. But you're very arrogant, and your mind is harsh. I suppose you think you're someone great and strong, because you keep company with few men, and those not good ones. But if Odysseus should come and reach his native land, those doors, wide as they are, would quickly prove too narrow for you as you ran out through the porch." So he spoke, and Eurymachus grew all the angrier in his heart, and glaring at him from under his brows he spoke winged words:

18.389 "You wretch, I'll soon do you some harm for the things you say, boldly, among a crowd of men, with no fear at all in your heart. Wine must have hold of your mind, or else your mind is always like this, and that's why you babble such nonsense. Are you beside yourself because you beat Irus the vagrant?" So saying, he grabbed a footstool; but Odysseus sat down at the knees of Amphinomus of Dulichium, in fear of Eurymachus, and Eurymachus hit the wine-steward on the right hand. The jug fell to the ground with a clang, and the steward groaned and fell on his back in the dust. The suitors broke into uproar throughout the shadowy hall, and one would say, looking at his neighbor:

18.401 "If only the stranger had died wandering somewhere else before he came here; then he wouldn't have caused such an uproar. Now we're quarreling over beggars, and there'll be no pleasure in a good feast, since the worse things win out." Then the sacred strength of Telemachus spoke among them too: "You strange men, you're out of your minds, and you can no longer hide what you've eaten and drunk; some god must be stirring you up. Come, now that you've feasted well, go home and lie down, whenever your heart bids you. I'm not driving anyone out." So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachus, because he spoke so boldly. Then Amphinomus

addressed them and spoke among them, the glorious son of Nisus, who was son of lord Aretias:

18.414 "Friends, no one should take offense at something justly said and lash out with hostile words. Don't mistreat the stranger, or any of the other servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. Come, let the wine-steward pour the first drops into the cups, so that we can pour libations and go home to lie down. As for the stranger, let's leave him in the halls of Odysseus for Telemachus to look after, since it was his house that he came to." So he spoke, and the words he said pleased them all. The hero Mulius, a herald from Dulichium, who was Amphinomus' attendant, mixed a bowl of wine for them, and served it to them all, going to each in turn; and they poured libations to the blessed gods and drank the honey-sweet wine. But when they had poured libations and drunk as much as their hearts desired, they went off to lie down, each to his own house.

Book 19

Penelope and the scar
Odysseus talks with Penelope; the old nurse Eurycleia knows him by his scar.

19.1 But godlike Odysseus was left behind in the hall, pondering with Athena's help the slaughter of the suitors. At once he spoke winged words to Telemachus: "Telemachus, we must put the weapons of war away inside, every one of them. And put the suitors off with soft words when they miss them and ask you about them: 'I've put them away out of the smoke, since they no longer looked like the ones Odysseus left behind long ago when he went to Troy. They've been ruined, as far as the breath of the fire reached. And besides, a god has put this greater fear into my mind: that you might get drunk, start a quarrel among yourselves, wound one another, and disgrace the feast and the courtship. For iron by itself draws a man to it.'" So he spoke, and Telemachus obeyed his dear father. He called out the nurse Eurycleia and said to her:

19.16 "Nurse, come now, keep the women shut in their quarters for me while I put my father's fine weapons away in the storeroom. They've been lying about the house uncared for, and the smoke is tarnishing them, ever since my father went away; I was still a child then. Now I want to store them where the breath of the fire won't reach." Then his dear nurse Eurycleia answered him in turn: "If only, child, you would someday take the thought to care for the house and guard all its possessions! But come, who will go with you and carry a light for you? You wouldn't let the maids go ahead, who could have lit your way." Then thought-

ful Telemachus spoke to her in reply: "This stranger here. I won't stand for a man being idle who eats from my measure of grain, even if he's come from far away."

19.29 So he spoke, and she kept her words unwinged. She locked the doors of the well-appointed hall. Then the two of them sprang up, Odysseus and his glorious son, and began carrying in the helmets and bossed shields and sharp-pointed spears; and before them Pallas Athena, holding a golden lamp, made a beautiful light. Then at once Telemachus spoke to his father: "Father, this is a great wonder I'm seeing with my eyes! The walls of the hall, the fine beams between the pillars, the rafters of fir and the pillars rising high all shine before my eyes as if with blazing fire. Surely some god is inside, one of those who hold the wide heaven."

19.41 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Hush! Keep your thoughts to yourself and ask no questions. This is the way of the gods who hold Olympus. But you go and lie down, and I'll stay behind here, so that I can go on stirring up the maids and your mother; and she in her grief will ask me about everything, one thing after another." So he spoke, and Telemachus went out through the hall by the light of blazing torches to lie down in his chamber, where he used to sleep before whenever sweet sleep came over him. There he lay down that night too and waited for bright Dawn. But godlike Odysseus was left behind in the hall, pondering with Athena's help the slaughter of the suitors.

PENELOPE AND THE STRANGER

Penelope questions the beggar, who tells her a false tale of meeting Odysseus in Crete.

19.53 Then wise Penelope came out of her chamber, looking like Artemis or golden Aphrodite. They set a chair for her by the fire, where she used to sit, inlaid with spirals of ivory and silver. The craftsman Icmalius had made it long ago, and had fitted a footstool beneath it for her feet, joined to the chair itself, and over it a great fleece was thrown. There wise Penelope sat down. Then

the white-armed maids came from the hall. They began clearing away the heaps of food, the tables and the cups from which the overbearing men had been drinking; they tipped the embers from the braziers onto the floor and piled fresh wood on them, plenty of it, to give light and warmth. And Melantho rebuked Odysseus a second time:

19.66 "Stranger, are you still going to be a nuisance here even now, all night long, prowling around the house and spying on the women? Get outside, you wretch, and be glad of the meal you've had—or you'll soon be going out the door with a firebrand thrown after you." Then resourceful Odysseus, glaring at her from under his brows, spoke to her: "My good woman, why do you lay into me like this, with such spite in your heart? Is it because I'm dirty, and wear wretched clothes on my body, and go begging through the town? Necessity drives me. That's what beggars and wanderers are like. I too once lived in a rich house among men, a prosperous man, and I often gave to a wanderer, whoever he was and whatever he needed when he came. I had servants beyond counting, and plenty of the other things by which men live well and are called rich.

19.80 But Zeus son of Cronus destroyed it all—I suppose it was his will. So now, woman, take care that you too don't someday lose all the splendor by which you now outshine the other maids; that your mistress doesn't grow angry and turn harsh with you, or that Odysseus doesn't come home—for there is still some portion of hope. And even if he has perished, as it seems, and will never come home, yet his son, by Apollo's grace, is already such a man as he was—Telemachus. None of the women in the halls escapes his notice in her reckless folly, since he's no longer so young." So he spoke, and wise Penelope heard him. She rebuked the maid, and spoke to her and called her by name:

19.91 "You bold, shameless dog, make no mistake: you don't fool me about this monstrous thing you're doing, and you'll pay for it with your own head. You knew it all perfectly well, because you heard it from me myself, that I meant to question the stranger in my halls about my husband, since I am sorely grieved." She

spoke, and said to Eurynome the housekeeper: "Eurynome, bring a chair and a fleece on it, so that the stranger can sit and speak to me and hear what I have to say. I want to question him." So she spoke, and very quickly she brought a well-polished chair and set it down, and threw a fleece over it. There much-enduring, godlike Odysseus sat down. And wise Penelope was the first to speak among them:

19.104 "Stranger, I'll ask you this first myself: who are you among men, and where are you from? Where are your city and your parents?" Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Lady, no mortal on the boundless earth could find fault with you, for your fame reaches the wide heaven, like the fame of some flawless king who fears the gods, who rules over many strong men and upholds justice; and the black earth bears wheat and barley, the trees are heavy with fruit, the flocks bear young unfailingly, and the sea provides fish, all from his good leadership, and the people prosper under him.

19.115 So ask me now about anything else here in your house, but don't ask about my family and my native land, or you'll fill my heart still more with pain as I remember. I am a man of many sorrows, and I shouldn't sit weeping and wailing in someone else's house; it's a bad thing to grieve without end, forever. One of the maids might blame me, or you yourself, and say I was swimming in tears because my mind was heavy with wine." Then wise Penelope answered him:

19.124 "Stranger, my excellence, my looks and my figure the immortals destroyed when the Argives embarked for Ilium, and my husband Odysseus went with them. If he were to come back and take care of my life, my fame would be greater and finer that way. But as it is I grieve, so many evils has some god sent rushing upon me. For all the noblest men who hold sway over the islands—Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus—and those who live around clear-skied Ithaca itself, all of them are courting me against my will and wearing out the house. So I pay no heed to strangers or suppliants, or to heralds, who serve the people; instead I pine away in my heart, longing for Odysseus.

19.137 They press for the marriage, and I spin out tricks. First a god breathed the idea of a shroud into my mind. I set up a great loom in the halls and began weaving, a fine web and very wide, and at once I told them: 'Young men, my suitors, since godlike Odysseus is dead, wait, eager though you are for my marriage, until I finish this shroud, so that my yarn won't be wasted and lost. It is a burial shroud for the hero Laertes, for the time when the deadly fate of grievous death lays him low. I don't want any of the Achaean women in the land to blame me if he lies without a shroud, a man who won such great possessions.' So I spoke, and their proud hearts were persuaded. Then by day I would weave at the great loom, but at night I would unravel it, with torches set beside me.

19.151 So for three years I kept my trick hidden and deceived the Achaeans. But when the fourth year came and the seasons rolled round, as the months waned and many days were completed, then, thanks to my maids—careless dogs—they came in and caught me, and rebuked me loudly. So I finished it, against my will, because I had to. And now I can neither escape the marriage nor find any other plan. My parents are pressing me hard to marry, and my son is distressed as they eat up his livelihood, for he understands; he's a man now, well able to care for a house, and Zeus grants him glory. But even so, tell me your family, where you come from. You didn't spring from an oak of old story, or from a rock."[1]

19.164 Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, will you never stop asking about my lineage? Well, I'll tell you. You'll surely hand me over to more sorrows than already have hold of me; that's the way of things when a man has been away from his own country as long as I have now, wandering through many cities of men and suffering hardships. Still, I'll tell you what you ask and inquire. There's a land called Crete in the middle of the wine-dark sea, beautiful and rich, with water all around it; and in it are many people,

1 A proverbial phrase drawn from old tales of people born from oaks and rocks; she means he must have a human family like anyone else.

more than can be counted, and ninety cities. Their languages are mixed one with another. There are Achaeans, there are great-hearted Eteocretans, there are Cydonians, Dorians in their three divisions, and noble Pelasgians.

19.178 Among them is Cnossus, a great city, where Minos ruled in nine-year spans, the familiar companion of great Zeus. He was the father of my father, great-hearted Deucalion; and Deucalion fathered me and lord Idomeneus. But Idomeneus went off to Ilium in his beaked ships with the sons of Atreus, while my famous name is Aethon; I'm the younger by birth, and he was the elder and the better man. It was there that I saw Odysseus and gave him guest-gifts. The force of the wind had brought him down to Crete as he was making for Troy, driving him off course past Malea; and he put in at Amnisus, where the cave of Eileithyia is, in a difficult harbor, and only barely escaped the storms.[2] 19.190 At once he went up to the town and asked for Idomeneus, for he said he was his guest-friend, dear and respected. But it was already the tenth or eleventh dawn since Idomeneus had gone with his beaked ships to Ilium. So I took Odysseus to my house and entertained him well, treating him kindly, since there was plenty in the house; and for the rest of his companions who followed him I collected barley meal from the people and gave it to them, and gleaming wine, and cattle to sacrifice, so they could have their fill. The noble Achaeans stayed there twelve days, for a great north wind penned them in and wouldn't let a man stand upright even on land—some harsh god had roused it. On the thirteenth day the wind dropped, and they put out to sea."

19.203 Many lies he told, making them seem like the truth; and as she listened her tears flowed and her flesh melted. As snow melts on the high mountains, snow the West Wind has heaped there and the East Wind thaws, and as it melts the rivers fill and run—so her lovely cheeks melted as she shed tears, weeping for her husband, who was sitting beside her. And Odysseus pitied

2 Minos was the legendary king of Crete, and Idomeneus led the Cretans at Troy; Eileithyia is the goddess of childbirth.

his wife in his heart as she mourned, but his eyes stood as still as horn or iron within their lids; by guile he hid his tears. And when she had had her fill of tearful mourning, she spoke to him again in answer:

19.215 "Now, stranger, I think I'll put you to the test, to see whether it's true that you entertained my husband there in your halls with his godlike companions, as you say. Tell me what kind of clothes he wore on his body, and what he himself was like, and the companions who followed him." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Lady, it's hard to say, after being apart for so long. It's now the twentieth year since he went from there and left my country. Still, I'll tell you as my heart pictures it to me.

19.225 Godlike Odysseus had a purple cloak of thick wool, a double one, and the brooch on it was made of gold, with twin clasps, and on its front was a work of skill: a hound held a dappled fawn in its forepaws, gripping it as it struggled. Everyone marveled at it—how, though they were made of gold, the hound gripped the fawn and throttled it, while the fawn, desperate to escape, struggled with its feet. And I noticed the tunic on his body, gleaming like the skin of a dried onion, so soft it was, and bright as the sun. Many women, I tell you, gazed at it in wonder. 19.236 And I'll tell you something else, and you take it to heart. I don't know whether Odysseus wore these clothes from home, or whether one of his companions gave them to him as he boarded his swift ship, or perhaps some guest-friend, for Odysseus was a friend to many; few of the Achaeans were his equal. I myself gave him a bronze sword and a fine double purple cloak and a fringed tunic, and sent him off with honor on his well-benched ship. And a herald went with him, a little older than he was; I'll tell you what he was like, too. He was round-shouldered, dark-skinned, curly-haired, and his name was Eurybates; and Odysseus honored him above all his other companions, because the two of them thought alike."

19.249 So he spoke, and stirred in her still more the desire for weeping, as she recognized the sure signs Odysseus had given.

And when she had had her fill of tearful mourning, then she answered him and said: "Now, stranger, though you were pitied before, you'll be dear and respected in my halls. It was I myself who gave him those clothes you describe. I folded them and brought them from the storeroom, and I put the shining brooch on them to be his ornament. But I will never welcome him again, coming home to his own native land. So it was with an evil fate that Odysseus went off in his hollow ship to see Evil-Ilium, never to be named." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her:

19.262 "Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, don't ruin your lovely skin any longer, or waste your heart away mourning your husband. Not that I blame you at all: any woman mourns when she has lost her wedded husband, whose children she has borne in love—even one quite unlike Odysseus, who they say is like the gods. But stop your weeping and listen to what I say, for I'll tell you truly and hide nothing. I have heard lately about Odysseus' homecoming: he is near, in the rich land of the Thesprotians, and alive; and he is bringing many fine treasures, which he's been asking for through the land. But he lost his loyal companions and his hollow ship on the wine-dark sea as he came from the island of Thrinacia; for Zeus and Helios were angry with him, because his companions had killed the Sun's cattle. 19.277 They all perished in the surging sea; but the wave cast him, on the keel of his ship, onto the shore, into the land of the Phaeacians, who are close kin to the gods. They honored him with all their hearts as if he were a god, and gave him many gifts, and were willing to escort him home themselves unharmed. And Odysseus would have been here long ago; but it seemed more profitable to his mind to gather wealth by traveling over much of the earth. So well does Odysseus know profitable ways, beyond all mortal men; no other mortal could rival him. 19.287 So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me. And he swore to me in person, pouring libations in his house, that a ship had been dragged down to the sea and companions were ready who would take him to his own native land. But he sent

me off first, because a ship of Thesprotian men happened to be going to Dulichium, rich in wheat. And he showed me the possessions Odysseus had gathered; they would feed another man and his heirs to the tenth generation, so many treasures lay stored for him in the king's halls. He said Odysseus had gone to Dodona to hear the will of Zeus from the god's high-leafed oak: how he should return to his own native land after being away so long, openly or in secret. 19.300 So he is safe, and he'll soon be coming, very near now; he won't be far from his friends and his native land much longer. All the same, I'll give you an oath. Let Zeus be my witness now, first and highest and best of gods, and the hearth of flawless Odysseus to which I have come: all these things will surely be fulfilled as I say. Within this very year Odysseus will come here, as this month wanes and the next begins." Then wise Penelope answered him: "Stranger, if only this word of yours might come true! Then you'd soon know my kindness, and many gifts from me, so that anyone who met you would call you blessed.

19.312 But this is how my heart forebodes it, and so it will be: Odysseus will never come home again, and you won't get your escort from here, since there are no masters in the house like Odysseus was among men—if he ever was—to send respected strangers on their way and to welcome them. But, maids, wash him and make up a bed for him—a bedstead, cloaks and shining blankets—so that he can keep warm and comfortable until golden-throned Dawn comes. And early in the morning bathe him and anoint him, so that he can sit inside beside Telemachus in the hall and turn his mind to his meal. And so much the worse for any of those men who torments him, spiteful as he is; he'll get nothing more done here, however terribly angry he may be. 19.325 For how will you learn, stranger, whether I surpass other women at all in mind and prudent cunning, if you dine in my halls unwashed and badly clothed? Human beings live only a short time. Whoever is harsh himself and knows harsh ways, all mortals pray for sufferings to fall on him in time to come while he lives, and when he is dead they all mock him; but whoever is

blameless himself and knows blameless ways, strangers carry his fame far and wide among all people, and many call him good." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her:

THE FOOTBATH

The stranger will let only an old servant wash his feet, and Penelope calls Eurycleia.

19.336 "Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, cloaks and shining blankets have been hateful to me ever since I first left the snowy mountains of Crete behind me and set out on a long-oared ship. I'll lie down as I used to before, when I spent sleepless nights. Many a night I have passed on a miserable bed, waiting for bright Dawn on her lovely throne. Foot-baths give my heart no pleasure either. No woman shall touch my foot, of all those who serve in your house, unless there is some old woman, aged and loyal-hearted, who has suffered in her heart as much as I have. I wouldn't begrudge her touching my feet." Then wise Penelope spoke to him in turn:

19.350 "Dear stranger, of all the welcome guests from far-off lands who have come to my house, never has there been one so thoughtful, so wise and well-spoken is everything you say. I have an old woman with a shrewd mind, who nursed and raised that unlucky man with care. She took him in her arms when his mother first bore him. She will wash your feet, frail as she is. Come now, wise Eurycleia, get up and wash this man, who is your master's age. Odysseus too, I suppose, has feet like these by now, and hands like these; for in hardship mortals grow old quickly." So she spoke, and the old woman hid her face in her hands, shed hot tears, and spoke words of lament:

19.363 "Oh, my child, there's nothing I can do for you! Surely Zeus hated you above all men, god-fearing though your heart was. No mortal ever burned so many rich thigh-pieces or such choice hecatombs to Zeus who delights in thunder as you gave him, praying that you might reach a sleek old age and raise your glorious son. And now from you alone he has taken away the

day of homecoming altogether. I suppose the women in some far-off land of strangers mocked him too, whenever he came to someone's famous house, just as all these dogs here mock you; and it's to avoid their insults and their many shameful taunts that you won't let them wash you. But the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, has asked me, and I'm not unwilling. 19.376 So I will wash your feet, both for Penelope's own sake and for yours, since the heart within me is stirred with grief. But come now, listen to what I say. Many travel-worn strangers have come here, but never yet, I tell you, have I seen anyone so like Odysseus as you are, in build, in voice, and in feet." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Old woman, that's what everyone says who has seen the two of us with their own eyes—that we are very like each other, just as you have noticed and say yourself."

THE SCAR

Eurycleia knows the scar from a boar hunt in Odysseus' youth, and he silences her.

19.386 So he spoke, and the old woman took the gleaming basin she used for washing feet, poured in plenty of cold water, and then added hot. But Odysseus sat at the hearth and quickly turned toward the dark; for at once it occurred to him that when she took hold of him she might notice the scar, and everything would come out. She came close and began to wash her master, and at once she knew the scar. A boar had once gashed him with its white tusk when he went to Parnassus to visit Autolycus and his sons—his mother's noble father, who surpassed all men in thieving and in oaths. A god himself had given him this gift, Hermes; for he used to burn pleasing thigh-pieces of lambs and kids to him, and the god went with him and favored him. 19.399 Autolycus had once come to the rich land of Ithaca and found his daughter's son newly born. Eurycleia set the child on his knees as he was finishing his supper, and spoke to him and said: "Autolycus, find a name yourself now to give your child's dear child; he was much prayed for." Then Autolycus answered her and

said: "My son-in-law and daughter, give him the name I tell you. I have come here as one who has been angry with many, men and women alike across the nourishing earth; so let his name be Odysseus, after that. And when he is grown and comes to his mother's family's great house at Parnassus, where my possessions are, I will give him some of them and send him home rejoicing."[3]

19.413 That was why Odysseus had come, so that Autolycus might give him splendid gifts. Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus welcomed him, clasping his hands and speaking gentle words; and his mother's mother Amphithea threw her arms around Odysseus and kissed his head and both his fine eyes. Autolycus called to his glorious sons to make ready a meal, and they heard his bidding and at once led in a five-year-old bull. They flayed it and dressed it and cut it all up, sliced it skillfully and spitted it, roasted it with care, and shared out the portions. So all day long until sunset they feasted, and no one's heart lacked a share of the equal feast. And when the sun set and darkness came on, they lay down to rest and took the gift of sleep.

19.428 When early-born Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, they set out for the hunt, the hounds and the sons of Autolycus themselves, and godlike Odysseus went with them. They climbed the steep mountain of Parnassus, clothed in forest, and soon reached its windy folds. The sun was just striking the fields, rising out of gently flowing, deep-streaming Ocean, when the beaters came into a glen. Ahead of them went the hounds, searching out the tracks, and behind came the sons of Autolycus, and godlike Odysseus went with them, close behind the hounds, brandishing a long-shadowed spear. 19.439 There in a dense thicket lay a great boar. Neither the damp force of the blowing winds pierced it, nor did the shining sun strike into it with his rays, nor could the rain soak through it, so thick it was; and inside lay a huge heap of fallen leaves. The tramp of men's and hounds' feet came around him as they pressed on in the

3 Autolycus is punning: "Odysseus" is made to echo *odyssamenos*, "having been angry" or "having been the object of anger."

chase, and out of his lair he came to meet them, the bristles of his neck raised high and fire flashing from his eyes, and stood close before them. Odysseus was the very first to rush at him, holding the long spear raised in his strong hand, eager to wound him; but the boar was quicker and struck him above the knee, lunging sideways and tearing away much flesh with his tusk, though he did not reach the man's bone. 19.452 Odysseus struck and wounded him in the right shoulder, and the point of the bright spear went clean through. He fell in the dust with a scream, and his life flew from him. The dear sons of Autolycus busied themselves with the carcass, and they bound up the wound of noble, godlike Odysseus skillfully, stopped the dark blood with a charm, and quickly went back to their dear father's house. Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus healed him well, gave him splendid gifts, and quickly sent him home rejoicing to his native land, to Ithaca. His father and his lady mother rejoiced at his return and asked about everything, and how he had come by the scar; and he told them the whole story well, how a boar had gashed him with its white tusk while he was hunting, when he had gone to Parnassus with the sons of Autolycus.

19.467 This was the scar the old woman felt as she held his leg in the flat of her hands, and she knew it, and let the foot fall. His shin dropped into the basin, the bronze rang out, and the basin tipped over to one side, and the water spilled out on the ground. Joy and grief seized her heart at once, her eyes filled with tears, and her strong voice was choked. She touched Odysseus' chin and said to him: "You really are Odysseus, dear child! And I didn't know you until I had touched my master all over." With that she looked toward Penelope, wanting to show her that her dear husband was in the house. But Penelope could neither meet her eyes nor notice, for Athena had turned her mind away. Odysseus felt for the old woman's throat and seized it with his right hand, and with the other drew her closer to him and said:

19.482 "Nurse, why do you want to destroy me? You yourself fed me at your own breast. And now, after suffering many hard-

ships, I have come in the twentieth year to my native land. But since you have recognized me and a god has put it into your heart, be silent, so that no one else in the hall finds out. For I tell you this, and it will surely be done: if a god lets me overpower the proud suitors, I will not spare even you, though you nursed me, when I kill the other serving women in my halls." Then wise Eurycleia spoke to him in turn:

19.492 "My child, what a word has escaped the barrier of your teeth! You know how steadfast my spirit is, and unyielding; I'll hold firm like solid stone or iron. And I'll tell you something else, and you take it to heart: if a god lets you overpower the proud suitors, then I'll name for you the women in the halls, those who dishonor you and those who are blameless." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Nurse, why should you tell me about them? There's no need at all. I'll mark them well myself and get to know each one. Just keep what you know to yourself in silence, and leave the rest to the gods."

PENELOPE'S DREAM

Penelope tells of an eagle killing her geese and decides to hold the contest of the bow.

19.503 So he spoke, and the old woman went out through the hall to fetch water for his feet, since all the first had been spilled. And when she had washed him and rubbed him richly with oil, Odysseus drew his stool closer to the fire again to warm himself, and hid the scar under his rags. Then wise Penelope began to speak to them: "Stranger, there is still a little more I want to ask you myself; for soon it will be time for pleasant rest, for anyone whom sweet sleep can take, troubled though he is. But to me some god has given grief beyond measure. By day I take my comfort in weeping and lamenting as I see to my own work and that of the maids in the house; but when night comes and sleep takes everyone, I lie on my bed, and sharp cares crowd thick around my pounding heart and torment me as I mourn.

19.518 As when the daughter of Pandareus, the nightingale of the greenwood, sings beautifully when spring has just begun, perched among the thick leaves of the trees, and with many a change of note pours out her rippling voice, mourning her dear child Itylus, the son of lord Zethus, whom she once killed with the bronze in her folly—so my heart too is stirred and divided, this way and that: whether to stay with my son and keep everything secure, my property, my servants, and this great high-roofed house, respecting my husband's bed and what the people say, or now at last to go with whoever is the best of the Achaeans who woos me in these halls and offers countless bridal gifts.[4] 19.530 As long as my son was still a child and simple-minded, he would not let me marry and leave my husband's house; but now that he is grown and has reached the full measure of youth, he even begs me to leave the house, vexed over his property, which the Achaeans are devouring. But come, interpret this dream for me, and listen. I have twenty geese in the house that eat wheat out of the water, and I love to watch them. But a great eagle with a hooked beak came down from the mountain and broke all their necks and killed them; and they lay in a heap in the halls, while he soared up into the bright sky. 19.541 But I wept and wailed, though it was only a dream, and the Achaean women with lovely hair gathered around me as I lamented piteously that the eagle had killed my geese. But he came back and settled on a jutting roof-beam, and with a human voice he stopped my weeping and said: 'Take heart, daughter of far-famed Icarius! This is no dream but a true and waking vision of good, which will be fulfilled for you. The geese are the suitors, and I, who was an eagle before, have now come back as your husband, and I will bring a shameful doom on all the suitors.' So he spoke, and honey-sweet sleep released me; and looking around I saw the geese in the halls, pecking at the wheat beside the trough, just as before." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her:

4 In the myth, Pandareus' daughter killed her own son Itylus by mistake and was turned into a nightingale, forever singing her lament.

19.555 "Lady, there is no way to interpret the dream by twisting it some other way, since Odysseus himself has shown you how he will bring it to pass. Destruction is plain to see for the suitors, every one of them, and not one will escape death and doom." Then wise Penelope spoke to him in turn: "Stranger, dreams are baffling and hard to read, and not all of them come true for people. There are two gates for fleeting dreams: one is made of horn, and the other of ivory. Those that come through the sawn ivory deceive us, bringing words that come to nothing; but those that come out through the polished horn bring true things to pass, whenever a mortal sees them.[5]

19.568 But I don't think my strange dream came from there; how welcome that would be to me and my son! And I'll tell you something else, and you take it to heart. This dawn that is coming will be an accursed one, for it will cut me off from the house of Odysseus. Now I shall set a contest: the axes that he used to set up in his halls in a row, like the props that hold a ship's keel, twelve in all; and he would stand far off and shoot an arrow through them. Now I shall set this contest for the suitors; and whoever strings the bow most easily in his hands and shoots an arrow through all twelve axes, I will go with him and leave this house of my marriage, so beautiful and so full of good living. I think I'll remember it even in my dreams."[6]

19.582 Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, don't put off this contest in the house any longer; for resourceful Odysseus will be here before these men, fumbling with this polished bow, can string it and shoot through the iron." Then wise Penelope spoke to him in turn: "If you were willing, stranger, to sit beside me in the hall and give me pleasure, sleep would never be shed upon my eyelids. But there's no way for people to go sleepless forever; for the

5 The Greek puns here: "ivory" (*elephas*) echoes "deceive" (*elephairomai*), and "horn" (*keras*) echoes "fulfill" (*krainō*).

6 The axe heads were apparently set upright in a line so that an arrow could pass through their holes; the exact arrangement is uncertain.

immortals have given mortals a due portion of everything on the grain-giving earth.

19.594 So I shall go up to my upper room and lie down on my bed, which has become a bed of groaning for me, always stained with my tears, ever since Odysseus went off to see Evil-Ilium, never to be named. There I'll lie down; but you lie down here in the house, either spreading something on the floor for yourself, or let them set up a bed for you." So saying, she went up to her shining upper rooms, not alone, for her maids went with her too. And when she had gone up to the upper rooms with the serving women, she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Book 20

The day before
Omens, and the suitors' last feast.

20.1 But godlike Odysseus bedded down in the forecourt. He spread an untanned oxhide on the ground, and on top of it many fleeces of the sheep the Achaeans kept sacrificing; and Eurynome threw a cloak over him once he had lain down. There Odysseus lay awake, plotting evil for the suitors in his heart. Then the women came out of the hall, the ones who had been sleeping with the suitors all along, offering one another laughter and good cheer. And the spirit was stirred in his breast, and he pondered long in his mind and in his heart whether to rush after them and deal death to every one, or to let them lie with the arrogant suitors one last and final time; and his heart growled within him. As a mother dog standing over her tender pups growls at a man she doesn't know and is eager to fight, so his heart growled within him, indignant at their wicked deeds. And he struck his chest and rebuked his heart with a word:

20.18 "Endure, my heart: you once endured something more doglike still, on the day when the Cyclops, unstoppable in his fury, was eating my strong companions. You held out then, until cunning led you out of the cave when you thought you were going to die." So he spoke, rebuking the dear heart in his breast; and his heart stayed firmly obedient and endured without flinching. But he himself kept tossing this way and that. As when a man beside a great blazing fire turns a paunch stuffed with fat and blood this way and that, eager to have it roasted quickly, so he tossed this way and that, pondering how he could

lay his hands on the shameless suitors, one man alone against many. Then Athena came close to him, having come down from heaven, in the likeness of a woman; she stood above his head and spoke to him:

20.33 "Why are you awake again, most ill-fated of all men? This is your house, and here in the house is your wife, and a son such as any man might wish his son to be." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Yes, goddess, all this you have spoken rightly. But the spirit in my breast is pondering this: how I am to lay my hands on the shameless suitors, alone as I am, while they are always in there together in a crowd. And on top of that I ponder something greater still: even if I were to kill them, by the will of Zeus and of you, where could I escape to afterward? I ask you to think about that."

20.44 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him in turn: "Stubborn man! People trust even a lesser comrade, one who is mortal and doesn't know so many plans; but I am a god, who guard you constantly in all your labors. And I'll tell you plainly: even if fifty companies of mortal men were to stand around the two of us, eager to kill us in battle, you would still drive off their cattle and their sturdy sheep. But let sleep take you too. It's wearisome to keep watch awake all night, and soon you will come up out from under your troubles." So she spoke, and poured sleep upon his eyelids, and she herself, bright among goddesses, went back to Olympus.

20.56 While sleep was seizing him, loosening the cares of his heart, sleep that loosens the limbs, his devoted wife awoke and wept, sitting up in her soft bed. But when she had had her fill of weeping in her heart, she, bright among women, prayed first of all to Artemis: "Artemis, lady goddess, daughter of Zeus, I wish you would shoot an arrow into my breast and take my life away right now, this very moment; or else that a storm-wind would snatch me up and carry me off along the misty paths, and cast me down at the mouths of backward-flowing Ocean—as when the storm-winds carried off the daughters of Pandareus. The gods had destroyed their parents, and they were left orphans in

the hall; and bright Aphrodite nourished them with cheese and sweet honey and pleasant wine. Hera gave them beauty and good sense above all women, pure Artemis gave them stature, and Athena taught them to do glorious handiwork.

20.73 But when bright Aphrodite went up to high Olympus to ask for the girls the fulfillment of flourishing marriage—to Zeus who delights in thunder, for he knows all things well, what is allotted to mortal men and what is not—in the meantime the Harpies snatched the girls away and gave them to the hateful Furies to serve. So may those who have their homes on Olympus blot me out, or may Artemis of the lovely hair strike me down, so that I may go beneath the hateful earth with Odysseus before my eyes, and never gladden the mind of a lesser man. Yet even this evil can be borne, when someone weeps by day, grieving sorely at heart, but at night sleep holds him—for sleep makes one forget everything, good and bad alike, once it has covered the eyelids. But on me some god has sent evil dreams as well.[1]

OMENS AT DAWN

Odysseus prays for a sign; Zeus thunders, and a woman at the mill curses the suitors.

20.88 For this very night again someone lay beside me who looked like him, just as he was when he went off with the army; and my heart was glad, because I thought it was no dream but waking truth at last." So she spoke, and at once golden-throned Dawn arrived. Godlike Odysseus caught the sound of her voice as she wept; and then he pondered, and it seemed to him in his heart that she already knew him and was standing by his head. He gathered up the cloak and the fleeces he had slept in and laid them on a chair in the hall, and carried the oxhide out of doors and set it down; and he raised his hands and prayed to Zeus:

20.98 "Father Zeus, if you gods willingly brought me over dry land and sea to my own country, after making me suffer so much, let someone among the people waking up inside speak a

1 The Harpies ("Snatchers") are storm-spirits who carry people off.

word of omen for me, and outside let another sign from Zeus appear." So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus the counselor heard him. At once he thundered from gleaming Olympus, from high up out of the clouds, and godlike Odysseus rejoiced. And a woman grinding grain sent out a word of omen from inside the house, close by, where the mills of the shepherd of the people stood. At these mills twelve women in all toiled, making barley meal and wheat flour, the marrow of men. The others were asleep, since they had ground their wheat, but this one alone had not yet stopped, for she was the weakest of them. She stopped her mill and spoke a word, a sign for her master:

20.112 "Father Zeus, who rule over gods and men, you have thundered loudly from the starry sky, and yet there's no cloud anywhere: you must be showing this sign to someone. Fulfill for me too, poor wretch that I am, the word I am going to speak. May the suitors, on this day, take their last and final pleasant meal in the halls of Odysseus. They have loosened my knees with heart-wrenching toil as I make their barley meal: may they dine now for the last time!" So she spoke, and godlike Odysseus rejoiced at the omen and at the thunder of Zeus, for he thought he would take vengeance on the wrongdoers.

20.122 The other maids gathered throughout the beautiful house of Odysseus and kindled the tireless fire on the hearth. Telemachus, a man equal to the gods, got up from his bed and put on his clothes; he slung his sharp sword around his shoulder, bound his fine sandals beneath his shining feet, and took up his strong spear, tipped with sharp bronze. He went and stood at the threshold and spoke to Eurycleia: "Dear nurse, did you all honor the stranger in the house with a bed and food, or is he lying there just as he is, uncared for? That's how my mother is, wise as she is: on impulse she honors one mortal man, the worse one, and sends the better one away dishonored." Then wise Eurycleia spoke to him in turn:

20.135 "Don't blame her now, child; she's not to blame. He sat and drank wine as long as he liked, and he said he was no longer hungry for food—she did ask him. And when he began to think

of bed and sleep, she told the maids to spread a bed for him; but he, like a man utterly miserable and ill-starred, refused to sleep in a bed and blankets, and slept in the forecourt on an untanned oxhide and the fleeces of sheep; and we threw a cloak over him." So she spoke, and Telemachus went out through the hall holding his spear, and two swift dogs went with him. He went on his way to the place of assembly, to join the well-greaved Achaeans. And Eurycleia, bright among women, daughter of Ops son of Peisenor, called to the maids:

20.149 "Come on, some of you, get busy sweeping the house and sprinkling it, and throw the purple coverings over the well-made chairs; you others, wipe all the tables down with sponges, and clean the mixing bowls and the well-wrought double cups; and the rest of you go to the spring for water and bring it back quickly. The suitors won't be away from the hall for long; they'll be here very early, since today is a feast day for everyone." So she spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. Twenty of them went to the spring of dark water, and the others worked skillfully there in the house.

20.160 In came the serving men of the Achaeans. They split the firewood well and skillfully, and the women came back from the spring. After them came the swineherd, driving three fatted hogs, the best of all he had. These he let feed in the fine courtyard, and he himself spoke to Odysseus with gentle words: "Stranger, do the Achaeans look on you with any more respect now, or do they still treat you with contempt in the hall, as before?" Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "If only, Eumaeus, the gods would punish the outrage these men commit in their arrogance, plotting reckless deeds in another man's house, without a shred of shame!"

20.172 So they talked with one another; and Melanthius the goatherd came near them, bringing goats that stood out among all the herds, as a dinner for the suitors, and two herdsmen came with him. He tethered the goats under the echoing portico, and himself spoke to Odysseus with taunting words: "Stranger, are you still going to pester people here in the house with your beg-

ging, and not get yourself out the door? I don't think the two of us will part at all until we've had a taste of each other's fists, since the way you beg isn't decent. There are other feasts of the Achaeans, you know." So he spoke, and resourceful Odysseus said nothing to him, but silently shook his head, brooding on evil deep within.

20.185 Third after them came Philoetius, a leader of men, bringing the suitors a barren heifer and fat goats. Ferrymen had brought them across, the ones who carry other people too, whoever comes to them. He tethered the animals carefully under the echoing portico, and then went up close to the swineherd and asked him: "Who is this stranger, swineherd, who has newly come to our house? What people does he claim to come from? Where are his family and his native land? Poor man—he really does look like a king and lord in his build. But the gods plunge wandering men into misery, whenever they spin out sorrow even for kings." He spoke, and standing beside Odysseus he greeted him with his right hand, and lifting his voice he spoke winged words to him:[2]

20.199 "Greetings, stranger, father! May happiness be yours in days to come, though for now you are in the grip of many troubles. Father Zeus, no other god is more destructive than you: you have no pity for men, though you begot them yourself, but plunge them into misery and grievous pains. I broke into a sweat when I noticed you, and my eyes filled with tears as I remembered Odysseus, because I think he too is wandering among men dressed in rags like these, if he is still alive somewhere and sees the light of the sun. But if he is already dead and in the house of Hades, then alas for blameless Odysseus, who set me over his cattle in the land of the Cephallenians when I was still a boy. 20.211 And now they are past counting; no man could have his breed of broad-browed cattle shoot up more richly. But other men order me to drive them in for themselves to eat; they care nothing for the son in the house, and do not tremble at the watchful anger of the gods, for they are eager now to divide up

2 Philoetius is Odysseus' cowherd, here appearing for the first time.

the possessions of a lord long gone. As for me, the heart in my breast keeps turning this over and over. It's a very bad thing, while the son is alive, to go off to another people's land, cattle and all, among foreign men; but it's worse to stay here and suffer hardships, sitting by cattle that have been handed over to others. And long ago I would have fled to some other mighty king, for things here are no longer bearable; but I still think of that unhappy man, and hope he may come from somewhere and scatter the suitors through the house."

20.226 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Cowherd, since you seem neither a bad man nor a foolish one, and I can see for myself that understanding has come to your mind, I'll tell you this and swear a great oath to it. Let Zeus be my witness now, first of the gods, and this table of hospitality, and the hearth of flawless Odysseus to which I have come: while you are still here, Odysseus will come home, and you will see with your own eyes, if you wish, the suitors being killed who lord it here." Then the man who tended the cattle spoke to him in turn: "If only the son of Cronus would bring that word to pass, stranger! Then you would see what strength is mine, and how my hands would back it up." And in the same way Eumaeus prayed to all the gods that shrewd Odysseus might return to his own house.

20.240 So they talked with one another; but the suitors were plotting death and doom for Telemachus. Then a bird came to them on their left, a high-flying eagle, clutching a trembling dove. And Amphinomus addressed them and said among them: "Friends, this plan of ours won't run its course, the murder of Telemachus. Let's think about our feast instead." So Amphinomus spoke, and his words pleased them. They went into the house of godlike Odysseus and laid their cloaks on the chairs and seats, and they slaughtered big sheep and fat goats, and slaughtered fatted hogs and a heifer from the herd. They roasted the innards and handed them around, and mixed wine in the mixing bowls; and the swineherd handed out the cups.

20.254 Philoetius, a leader of men, handed out bread to them in beautiful baskets, and Melanthius poured the wine. And they

reached out their hands to the good things lying ready before them. Telemachus, with a shrewd purpose, seated Odysseus within the well-built hall, by the stone threshold, setting down a shabby stool and a small table for him. He put portions of the innards beside him and poured wine into a golden cup, and spoke to him: "Sit here now among the men and drink your wine. I myself will keep the insults and the hands of all the suitors off you, since this is no public house but the house of Odysseus, and he acquired it for me. And you suitors, keep your hearts from abuse and from blows, so that no quarrel or strife breaks out."

20.268 So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachus, at how boldly he spoke. Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them: "Hard as it is, Achaeans, let's accept what Telemachus says; he speaks to us with heavy threats. Zeus son of Cronus did not allow it—otherwise we'd have stopped him in the hall by now, clear-voiced speaker though he is." So Antinous spoke; but he paid no attention to his words. Meanwhile heralds were leading a holy hecatomb for the gods through the town, and the long-haired Achaeans gathered beneath the shady grove of Apollo who shoots from afar.

CTESIPPUS' HOOF

A suitor throws a cow's hoof at Odysseus, and Telemachus rebukes them all.

20.279 When they had roasted the outer meat and drawn it off the spits, they divided up the portions and feasted on a glorious feast. And those who served set beside Odysseus a portion equal to the one they themselves received; for so Telemachus had ordered, the dear son of godlike Odysseus. But Athena would not let the overbearing suitors hold back entirely from heart-wrenching outrage, so that pain might sink still deeper into the heart of Odysseus son of Laertes. Now there was among the suitors a man whose mind was set on lawlessness—Ctesippus was his name, and he made his home in Same—who, trusting in his

vast wealth, was wooing the wife of Odysseus, so long gone. He now spoke among the arrogant suitors:

20.292 "Listen to me, overbearing suitors, so I can say something. The stranger has long had his portion, an equal one, as is fitting; for it's neither fine nor just to treat the guests of Telemachus unfairly, whoever comes to this house. But come, let me give him a guest-gift too, so that he in turn can give a present to the bath-woman or to one of the other servants in the house of godlike Odysseus." So saying, he hurled a cow's foot with his heavy hand, taking it from the basket where it lay. But Odysseus dodged it, gently turning his head aside, and in his heart he smiled a grim, sardonic smile; and it struck the well-built wall. Then Telemachus rebuked Ctesippus with a word: "Ctesippus, this turned out far better for you: you didn't hit the stranger. He dodged the missile himself.

20.306 Otherwise I would have struck you through the middle with my sharp spear, and instead of a wedding your father would have been busy with a funeral for you here. So let no one show me any unseemly behavior in my house; for now I notice and understand everything, the good and the worse—before, I was still a child. Even so, we put up with watching these things, the sheep being slaughtered and the wine and the bread being consumed, for it is hard for one man to restrain many. But come, stop doing me harm in your hostility. And if you are already eager to kill me myself with bronze, I would even want that, and it would be far better to be dead than to keep watching these shameful deeds forever: strangers being knocked about, and men dragging the maids about shamefully through the beautiful house."

20.320 So he spoke, and they all fell silent and still. At last Agelaus son of Damastor spoke among them: "Friends, no one should take offense at something justly said and lash out with hostile words. Don't mistreat the stranger, or any of the other servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. But I would offer Telemachus and his mother a gentle word, if it might please the hearts of both of them. As long as the spirit in your breasts still

hoped that shrewd Odysseus would return to his own house, there was no blame in waiting and holding the suitors off in the house; that was the better course, in case Odysseus did come home and return to his house. But by now this much is plain: he is never coming home.

20.334 So come, sit down with your mother and tell her this: to marry whoever is the best man and offers the most gifts, so that you can enjoy all your father's estate in happiness, eating and drinking, and she can look after another man's house." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him face to face: "No, by Zeus, Agelaus, and by the sufferings of my father, who has either perished or is wandering somewhere far from Ithaca, I am not delaying my mother's marriage at all; I urge her to marry whomever she wants, and I offer gifts past counting besides. But I'm ashamed to drive her from the hall against her will with a word of compulsion. May the god never bring that about!"

THEOCLYMENUS' VISION

The seer sees the hall running with blood and the suitors wrapped in night.

20.345 So Telemachus spoke; and among the suitors Pallas Athena stirred up unquenchable laughter and knocked their wits astray. And now they were laughing with jaws that seemed not their own, and the meat they were eating was spattered with blood; their eyes filled with tears, and their hearts were set on lamentation. Then godlike Theoclymenus spoke among them: "Ah, poor wretches, what evil is this you're suffering? Your heads and faces and the knees beneath you are shrouded in night; wailing has blazed up, your cheeks are wet with tears, and the walls and the beautiful beams are spattered with blood. The porch is full of phantoms, and the courtyard full too, phantoms hurrying down into the darkness of Erebus; the sun has perished out of the sky, and an evil mist has spread over everything."

20.358 So he spoke, and they all laughed merrily at him. Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, began to speak among them: "This

stranger who's just come from somewhere else is out of his mind. Quick, young men, send him out of the house and off to the place of assembly, since he thinks it's night in here." Then godlike Theoclymenus spoke to him in turn: "Eurymachus, I'm not asking you to give me escorts. I have eyes and ears and both my feet, and a mind in my breast that's not badly made at all. With these I'll go out of doors, because I see evil coming upon you which not one of you suitors will escape or avoid—you who commit outrage against men in the house of godlike Odysseus and plot reckless deeds."

20.371 So saying, he went out of the well-appointed house and came to Piraeus, who received him gladly. Then all the suitors, looking at one another, tried to provoke Telemachus by laughing at his guests. And this is the sort of thing one of the arrogant young men would say: "Telemachus, nobody is unluckier in his guests than you. Look at this one you've got, a vagabond you went and picked up, hungry for bread and wine, no use at any work or with any strength, but just a burden on the earth. And then that other one stood up to play the prophet. If you'd listen to me, it would be far better: let's throw these strangers aboard a ship with many oarlocks and send them off to the Sicilians, where they'd fetch you a good price."

20.384 So the suitors spoke; but he paid no attention to their words, and silently watched his father, always waiting for the moment when he would lay his hands on the shameless suitors. And the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, had set her beautiful chair facing them and was listening to the words of each man in the hall. For they had prepared their dinner amid laughter, sweet and satisfying, since they had slaughtered a great many beasts; but no supper could be more graceless than the one a goddess and a mighty man were soon to set before them; for they had been the first to plot shameful deeds.

Book 21

The bow
Penelope sets the contest; only the beggar can string the bow.

21.1 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, put it into the mind of the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, to set the bow and the gray iron before the suitors in the halls of Odysseus, as a contest and the beginning of slaughter. She climbed the high stairway of her house and took in her firm hand the well-curved key, a beautiful thing of bronze with an ivory handle. Then she went with her waiting-women to the innermost storeroom, where her lord's treasures lay: bronze and gold and iron wrought with much labor. There lay the back-bent bow, and the quiver that holds arrows, with many groan-bringing arrows in it. They were gifts that a guest-friend had given him when they met in Lacedaemon: Iphitus, son of Eurytus, a man like the immortals. 21.15 The two had met in Messene, in the house of wise Ortilochus. Odysseus had gone there to collect a debt that the whole people owed him, for men of Messene had carried off three hundred sheep from Ithaca in their many-benched ships, and the shepherds with them. Because of them Odysseus had made a long journey on an embassy while still a boy, for his father and the other elders had sent him. Iphitus, for his part, had come in search of horses he had lost: twelve mares, with hard-working mules still at the teat. Later these became his death and his doom, when he came to the stout-hearted son of Zeus, the hero Heracles, master of mighty deeds. Heracles killed him in his own house, though he was his guest. He was a cruel man, with no regard for the watchful eye of the gods or for the table he had

set before him: he feasted his guest and then killed him, and kept the strong-hoofed horses for himself in his halls. 21.31 It was while he was looking for these that he met Odysseus. He gave him the bow that great Eurytus used to carry, and had left to his son when he died in his lofty house. Odysseus gave him a sharp sword and a strong spear, the beginning of a warm friendship as guest and host; but they never came to know each other at table, because before that the son of Zeus killed Iphitus, son of Eurytus, a man like the immortals, who had given him the bow. That bow godlike Odysseus never took with him when he went off to war in the black ships. It lay at home in his halls as a memorial of a dear guest-friend, and he carried it only in his own land.

21.42 Long ago a carpenter had planed the oak threshold of that storeroom with skill and made it straight to the line, fitting the doorposts into it and hanging the shining doors. When she, bright among women, came to the storeroom and stepped onto that threshold, she quickly loosed the strap from its hook and put in the key. Aiming straight, she shot back the bolts of the doors, and they roared like a bull grazing in a meadow. So loudly the beautiful doors roared, struck by the key, and they swiftly flew open before her. She stepped up onto the high platform where the chests stood, with fragrant clothes laid away in them. Reaching up from there, she took the bow from its peg, together with the shining case that was around it. 21.55 Then she sat down right there and laid it on her knees, and she wept aloud as she took her lord's bow out of its case. And when she had had her fill of tearful lament, she went to the hall, to the lordly suitors, holding in her hand the back-bent bow and the quiver that holds arrows, with many groan-bringing arrows in it. Her maids carried a chest along with her, in which lay much iron and bronze, the gear for her lord's contests. When she, bright among women, came to the suitors, she stood beside a pillar of the close-built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks, with a trusty maid standing on either side of her. At once she spoke out to the suitors and said:

21.68 "Listen to me, you overbearing suitors. You have descended on this house to eat and drink, endlessly, day after day, while its master has been gone a long time. And you could find no other excuse for your talk except that you want to marry me and make me your wife. Come then, suitors, since your prize is here before you. I will set out the great bow of godlike Odysseus. Whoever strings the bow most easily in his hands and shoots an arrow through all twelve axes, I will go with him and leave this house of my marriage, so beautiful and so full of good living. I think I'll remember it even in my dreams."

21.80 So she spoke, and told Eumaeus, the noble swineherd, to set the bow and the gray iron before the suitors. Eumaeus wept as he took them and laid them down, and the cowherd wept where he stood when he saw his lord's bow. But Antinous rebuked them and spoke out, addressing them: "Foolish yokels, whose thoughts don't reach past today! Wretches, why are you shedding tears and stirring up the heart in this woman's breast? Her heart lies in pain enough already, now that she has lost her dear husband. Sit and eat in silence, or else go outside to do your weeping, and leave the bow here. It's a contest for the suitors, and no light one, for I don't think this polished bow will be easy to string.

21.93 There's no man among all of us here like Odysseus was. I saw him myself, and I remember him, though I was still a little child." So he spoke, but in his heart he was hoping to string the bow and shoot through the iron. Yet he was to be the first to taste an arrow from the hands of noble Odysseus, whom he was dishonoring then as he sat in the hall, urging on all his companions. Then the sacred might of Telemachus spoke among them too: "Ah! Zeus, son of Cronus, has surely made me lose my wits. My dear mother, sensible as she is, says she'll go off with another man and leave this house, and here I am, laughing and enjoying myself, like a fool.

21.106 But come, suitors, since your prize is here before you, a woman whose like does not exist anywhere in the Achaean land today: not in sacred Pylos, nor in Argos, nor in Mycenae, nor in

Ithaca itself, nor on the dark mainland. You know that yourselves; why should I sing my mother's praises? So come, don't put it off with excuses, and don't shy away from stringing the bow any longer. Let's see. I might even try the bow myself. If I string it and shoot through the iron, then it won't grieve me that my lady mother leaves this house and goes off with another man, since I'll be left behind a man already able to win my father's fine prizes."

21.118 He spoke, and springing upright he took the crimson cloak from his shoulders and took off the sharp sword as well. First he set up the axes. He dug one long trench for them all, made it straight to the line, and stamped the earth down around them. Everyone who watched was amazed at how neatly he set them up, though he had never seen it done before. Then he went and stood on the threshold and tried the bow. Three times he made it quiver in his eagerness to draw it, and three times he let up on his effort, though he still hoped in his heart to string it and shoot through the iron. And now, pulling it up a fourth time, he would have strung it by main strength, but Odysseus shook his head and checked him, eager as he was. Then the sacred might of Telemachus spoke among them again:

21.131 "Ah! So I'll be a coward and a weakling from now on, or else I'm too young and can't yet trust my hands to defend me against a man when someone picks a fight with me. But come, you who are stronger than I am, try the bow, and let's finish the contest." So he spoke, and set the bow down on the ground away from him, leaning it against the close-fitted, well-polished boards of the door, and leaned the swift arrow there against the fine tip of the bow; then he sat back down on the chair from which he had risen. Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them: "Get up in turn, all you companions, from left to right, starting from the place where the wine is poured."

THE SUITORS FAIL

Leodes and the other suitors warm and grease the bow but cannot string it.

21.143 So Antinous spoke, and his words pleased them. The first to rise was Leodes, son of Oenops. He was their soothsayer, and he always sat in the farthest corner beside the fine mixing bowl. He alone hated reckless folly, and all the suitors offended him. He was the first then to take the bow and the swift arrow. He went and stood on the threshold and tried the bow, but he could not string it. Before he could, his hands grew tired from pulling, his soft hands that had never known work. And he spoke among the suitors: "Friends, I can't string it; let someone else take it. This bow will rob many of our best men of their spirit and their life, since it is far better to die than to live on and fail to win what we're always gathered here for, waiting day after day.

21.157 Right now any one of us may hope in his heart and long to marry Penelope, the wife of Odysseus. But once he has tried the bow and seen what it is, let him go and court some other of the Achaean women in their fine robes, and seek her with bridal gifts; and then Penelope can marry whoever offers most and comes as her fated husband." So he spoke, and set the bow down away from him, leaning it against the close-fitted, well-polished boards of the door, and leaned the swift arrow there against the fine tip of the bow; then he sat back down on the chair from which he had risen. But Antinous rebuked him and spoke out, addressing him:

21.168 "Leodes, what a thing has slipped past the barrier of your teeth, dreadful and grievous! It angers me to hear it. So this bow will rob our best men of their spirit and their life, just because you can't string it? Your lady mother didn't bear you to be the kind of man who draws bows and shoots arrows. But other lordly suitors will string it soon enough." So he spoke, and gave orders to Melanthius, the goatherd: "Come on, Melanthius, light a fire in the hall, and set a big stool beside it with a fleece on it,

and bring out a big round cake of the fat that's in the storeroom, so that we young men can warm the bow and rub it with grease, and then try it and finish the contest."

ODYSSEUS AND THE HERDSMEN

Outside, Odysseus shows the swineherd and the cowherd his scar and gives them orders.

21.181 So he spoke, and at once Melanthius kindled a tireless fire. He brought a stool and set it beside the fire with a fleece on it, and brought out a big round cake of the fat that was in the storeroom. With it the young men warmed the bow and tried it, but they could not string it; they fell far short in strength. Antinous was still holding back, and godlike Eurymachus, the leaders of the suitors and by far the best of them in excellence. Meanwhile the cowherd and the swineherd of godlike Odysseus had both gone out of the house together, and after them godlike Odysseus himself came out of the house. And when they were outside the gates and the courtyard, he spoke to them and addressed them with gentle words:

21.193 "Cowherd, and you, swineherd, shall I tell you something, or keep it to myself? My heart urges me to speak. What sort of men would you be in fighting for Odysseus, if he came back from somewhere, quite suddenly, like this, and some god brought him? Would you fight for the suitors or for Odysseus? Tell me what your heart and spirit bid you." Then the man who tended the cattle spoke to him in turn: "Father Zeus, if only you would grant this wish, that that man would come, and some god would lead him home! Then you would see what strength is mine, and how my hands would back it up." And in the same way Eumaeus prayed to all the gods that shrewd Odysseus might return to his own house.

21.205 But when he knew their minds for certain, he answered them in turn and said: "Here I am, at home, I myself. After suffering many hardships I have come back in the twentieth year to my native land. I can see that you two alone among the servants

have longed for my coming; of the others I haven't heard a single one pray that I would return home again. So to you two I will tell the truth of how things will be. If a god lets me bring down the lordly suitors, I will find wives for you both and give you property and houses built close to mine, and from then on you will be companions and brothers to Telemachus in my eyes.

21.217 Come, I'll show you another clear sign as well, so that you'll know me for certain and trust me in your hearts: the scar that a boar once gave me with its white tusk, when I went to Parnassus with the sons of Autolycus." So he spoke, and drew the rags back from the great scar. And when the two had looked at it and taken careful note of every detail, they wept, and threw their arms around wise-hearted Odysseus, and kissed his head and shoulders in welcome; and in the same way Odysseus kissed their heads and hands. And now the light of the sun would have gone down on their weeping, if Odysseus himself had not stopped them and said:

21.228 "Stop your weeping and wailing, or someone may come out of the hall and see us, and then tell them inside as well. Go in one after the other, not all together, I first and you after. And let this be the signal. All the others, the lordly suitors, will not allow the bow and quiver to be given to me. But you, noble Eumaeus, carry the bow through the house and put it in my hands, and tell the women to lock the close-fitted doors of the hall. If any of them hears groaning or the din of men inside our walls, she must not go out at all, but stay where she is, quietly at her work. And you, noble Philoetius, I charge with locking the gates of the courtyard with the bolt and quickly lashing them fast."

21.242 So he spoke, and went into the well-appointed house. Then he went and sat on the stool from which he had risen, and the two servants of godlike Odysseus went in too. Eurymachus was already handling the bow, warming it on this side and that in the blaze of the fire. Even so he could not string it, and his proud heart groaned deeply. Deeply vexed, he spoke out and addressed them: "Ah, I'm grieved for myself and for all of us. It

isn't the marriage I lament so much, though I'm sorry about that too. There are plenty of other Achaean women, some here in sea-girt Ithaca itself, some in other cities. But if we really fall so far short of godlike Odysseus in strength that we can't string his bow—that's a disgrace, even for men yet to come to hear of."

21.256 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to him in turn: "Eurymachus, it won't be so, and you know it yourself. Today throughout the land is the feast of the god, a holy day. Who would bend bows on it? No, lay it down and take your ease. As for the axes, what if we let them all stand? I don't think anyone will come into the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes, and carry them off. Come, let the wine-steward pour the first drops into the cups, so that we can pour libations and put the curved bow aside. And at dawn tell Melanthius the goatherd to bring goats, the very best of all his herds, so that we can lay thigh-pieces on the altar for Apollo, famed for the bow, and then try the bow and finish the contest."[1]

THE BEGGAR ASKS FOR THE BOW

Antinous threatens the stranger, Penelope defends him, and Telemachus sends her upstairs.

21.269 So spoke Antinous, and his words pleased them. Heralds poured water over their hands, and young men filled the mixing bowls to the brim with drink and served it to all, first pouring a few drops into each cup. And when they had poured libations and drunk as much as their hearts desired, resourceful Odysseus, with cunning in his mind, spoke among them: "Listen to me, suitors of the glorious queen, so that I can say what the heart in my breast bids me. Eurymachus above all, and godlike Antinous, I beg—since he has spoken rightly in this—stop with the bow for now and leave the matter to the gods. At dawn the god will give victory to whomever he wishes."

21.281 "But come, give me the polished bow, so that here among you I can test my hands and my strength, and see whether I still

have the power that was once in my supple limbs, or whether my wandering and neglect have destroyed it by now." So he spoke, and they were all indignant beyond measure, afraid that he might string the polished bow. Antinous rebuked him, spoke out and addressed him: "You wretched stranger, there isn't a scrap of sense in you. Aren't you content to dine at your ease among us lordly men, without being cheated of any share of the feast, and to listen to our talk and our speeches? No other stranger and beggar gets to listen to our talk."

21.293 "It's the honey-sweet wine that's hurting you, as it harms others too who gulp it down and don't drink in measure. It was wine that led astray even the Centaur, famous Eurytion, in the hall of great-hearted Pirithous, when he came to the Lapiths. Once he had clouded his wits with wine, he went mad and did evil things in the house of Pirithous. Grief seized the heroes; they sprang up and dragged him through the porch and out of doors, and sheared off his ears and nose with the pitiless bronze. And he, his mind clouded, went off carrying his ruin in his witless heart. From that came the feud between the Centaurs and men; but he was the first to find evil for himself, heavy with wine."[2] 21.305 "So I promise you great trouble too if you string that bow. You'll meet with no kindness from anyone in our land; we'll send you straight off in a black ship to King Echetus, the maimer of all mortals, and from there you won't come out alive. So drink at your ease, and don't compete with men younger than you." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn: "Antinous, it is neither fine nor just to treat the guests of Telemachus unfairly, whoever comes to this house. Do you imagine that if the stranger strings the great bow of Odysseus, trusting in his hands and his strength, he will take me home and make me his wife?"

21.317 "He himself, I'm sure, has no such hope in his heart. Let none of you sit feasting here with a heart grieved on that

1 The god is Apollo the archer, whose festival was being celebrated across Ithaca on this day.

2 At the wedding of Pirithous, king of the Lapiths of Thessaly, the drunken Centaur Eurytion tried to carry off the bride, setting off the famous war of Lapiths and Centaurs.

account, since that would not be fitting at all." Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered her: "Daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, we don't imagine he'll take you away; that wouldn't be fitting. But we're ashamed of the talk of men and women, that some baser Achaean might one day say: 'Far weaker men are courting the wife of a peerless man, and can't even string his polished bow. But someone else, a beggar who came wandering in, strung the bow with ease and shot through the iron.' That's what they'll say, and it would be a disgrace for us." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn:

21.331 "Eurymachus, there's no way men can have a good name in the land when they dishonor and devour the household of a noble man. Why do you count this a disgrace? This stranger is very tall and well built, and he claims to be the son of a good father by birth. Come, give him the polished bow, so we can see. For I tell you this, and it will surely be done: if he strings it and Apollo grants him glory, I will clothe him in a cloak and tunic, fine clothes, and give him a sharp javelin to ward off dogs and men, and a two-edged sword. I'll give him sandals for his feet, and send him wherever his heart and spirit bid him."

21.343 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mother, as for the bow, no Achaean has more right than I do to give it or refuse it to whomever I wish—none of those who lord it over rocky Ithaca, nor any in the islands toward Elis, where horses graze. Not one of them will force me against my will, even if I choose to give this bow to the stranger outright, to take away with him. Go to your quarters and attend to your own work, the loom and the distaff, and tell your maids to get on with their tasks. The bow will be the business of men, all of them, and mine most of all; for mine is the authority in this house."

21.354 She was astonished and went back to her quarters, for she laid her son's thoughtful words to heart. She went up to the upper rooms with her serving women and wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids. Meanwhile the noble swineherd had taken up the curved bow and was carrying it, and all the suitors shouted at

him in the halls, and one of the overbearing young men would say: "Where are you taking the curved bow, you miserable swineherd, you crazy vagabond? Soon the swift dogs you reared yourself will devour you among your pigs, alone and far from men—if Apollo and the other immortal gods are gracious to us."

21.366 So they spoke, and he set it down where he stood, frightened because so many were shouting at him in the halls. But Telemachus, from the other side, called out threateningly: "Old friend, carry the bow on—you'll soon find it doesn't pay to obey everyone—or I may chase you out to the fields with a hail of stones, young as I am; I'm the stronger. I only wish I were that much stronger in hands and might than all the suitors in the house! I'd soon send some of them packing miserably from our house, since they're plotting evil."

21.376 So he spoke, and all the suitors laughed merrily at him and let go of their bitter anger against Telemachus. The swineherd carried the bow through the house, went up to wise-hearted Odysseus and put it in his hands. Then he called the nurse Eurycleia out and said to her: "Telemachus orders you, wise Eurycleia, to lock the close-fitted doors of the hall. If anyone hears groaning or the din of men inside our walls, she must not go out at all, but stay where she is, quietly at her work." So he spoke, and she kept her words unwinged, and locked the doors of the well-appointed hall.

21.388 Silently Philoetius slipped out of the house and locked the gates of the well-fenced courtyard. Under the portico lay a papyrus cable from a curved ship, and with it he lashed the gates fast, then went back in himself. Then he went and sat on the stool from which he had risen, watching Odysseus. He was already handling the bow, turning it every way and testing it here and there, in case worms had eaten into the horn while its master was away. And one would say, looking at his neighbor: "Here's a real connoisseur of bows, and a sly one! Maybe he has bows like this lying at home himself, or else he's eager to make one, the way he turns it this way and that in his hands, this vagabond schooled in mischief."

THE BOW STRUNG

Odysseus strings the bow as easily as a bard strings a lyre and shoots through the axes.

21.401 And another of the overbearing young men would say: "I hope he gets as much good out of life as he'll ever manage to string that thing." So the suitors spoke. But resourceful Odysseus, as soon as he had lifted the great bow and looked it over on every side—as when a man skilled at the lyre and at song easily stretches a string around a new peg, fastening the well-twisted sheep-gut at both ends—so without any effort Odysseus strung the great bow. Then, taking it in his right hand, he tested the string, and it sang out beautifully under his touch, like a swallow in voice.

21.412 Great grief came over the suitors, and the color left all their faces. Zeus thundered loudly, showing his signs, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus rejoiced that the son of crooked-counseling Cronus had sent him an omen. He picked up a swift arrow that lay bare beside him on the table; the others were stored inside the hollow quiver, and the Achaeans were soon to taste them. Laying it on the grip of the bow, he drew back the string and the notched end of the arrow, right from the stool where he sat, and let the arrow fly, aiming straight ahead. He missed not one of the axes, from the first handle-hole on, but the bronze-weighted arrow went clean through and out at the end. Then he said to Telemachus:

21.424 "Telemachus, the stranger sitting in your halls brings you no shame. I didn't miss the mark at all, nor did I toil long at stringing the bow. My strength is still firm, not as the suitors say in their contempt for me. Now it's time for supper to be made ready for the Achaeans while it's still light, and after that for other entertainment, with song and the lyre; for those are the crowning delights of a feast." He spoke and nodded with his brows; and Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, girded on his sharp sword, closed his hand around his spear,

and stood close beside him by the chair, armed in gleaming bronze.

Book 22

The killing of the suitors
Odysseus and Telemachus take their revenge in the hall.

22.1 But resourceful Odysseus stripped off his rags and sprang onto the great threshold, holding the bow and the quiver full of arrows. He poured the swift arrows out right there before his feet, and spoke among the suitors: "This contest, no light one, is over and done. Now I'll go after another target, one that no man has ever yet hit, to see whether I can strike it and Apollo will grant me glory." He spoke, and aimed a bitter arrow at Antinous. Antinous was just about to lift a fine goblet, golden and two-handled. He already had it moving in his hands, to drink some wine, and slaughter was far from his mind. For who would think that, among men at a feast, one man alone among many, however strong he might be, would bring evil death and black doom upon him?

22.15 Odysseus took aim and struck him in the throat with an arrow, and the point went clean through the soft neck. He slumped to one side, and the cup fell from his hand as he was hit. At once a thick jet of human blood came up through his nostrils. Quickly he thrust the table away from him with a kick of his foot and spilled the food onto the floor, and the bread and roasted meat were fouled. The suitors raised an uproar throughout the house when they saw the man fall. They sprang up from their chairs and rushed in a panic about the hall, peering everywhere along the well-built walls, but there was no shield anywhere, and no stout spear to take. They berated Odysseus with angry words:

22.27 "Stranger, you'll pay for shooting at men. You'll take part in no more contests. Now your sheer destruction is certain. You've just killed the man who was by far the best of the young men in Ithaca, and for that the vultures will eat you here." So each of them spoke, since they really thought he had killed the man by accident. The fools did not see that the cords of destruction had been made fast on them all. Then, glaring at them from under his brows, resourceful Odysseus spoke: "You dogs, you thought I would never come home from the land of the Trojans. So you stripped my house bare, forced the slave women to sleep with you, and courted my wife while I was still alive, fearing neither the gods who hold the wide heaven nor any blame from men in times to come. Now the cords of destruction have been made fast on you all."

EURYMACHUS PLEADS

Eurymachus blames Antinous and offers payment; Odysseus refuses and kills him.

22.42 So he spoke, and pale fear seized them all, and each man looked about for a way to escape sheer destruction. Eurymachus alone answered him: "If you really are Odysseus of Ithaca come home, what you say is just—all the things the Achaeans have done, much reckless folly in the halls and much out in the fields. But the man who was to blame for all of it already lies dead: Antinous. He was the one who set these deeds going, and it wasn't so much that he wanted or needed the marriage. He had other things in mind, which the son of Cronus did not bring to pass for him: to be king himself in the land of well-built Ithaca, and to ambush and kill your son.

22.54 Now he has been slain, as was his due, so spare your people. Afterward we will raise amends among the people for all that has been drunk and eaten in your halls. Each of us will bring you recompense worth twenty oxen, and we'll pay you bronze and gold until your heart is warmed. Until then no one can blame you for being angry." Then, glaring at him from

under his brows, resourceful Odysseus spoke: "Eurymachus, not even if you gave me all your fathers' wealth, all that you have now, and added more from somewhere else, not even then would I hold my hands back from slaughter until the suitors had paid for all their transgression. Now the choice lies before you: fight face to face, or run, any of you who may escape death and doom. But I don't think any of you will escape sheer destruction."

22.68 So he spoke, and their knees went slack where they stood, and their hearts too. Then Eurymachus spoke to them a second time: "Friends, this man won't hold back his unconquerable hands. Now that he's got hold of the polished bow and the quiver, he'll shoot from the smooth threshold until he has killed us all. So let's turn our minds to battle. Draw your swords and hold up the tables against the arrows that bring swift death. Let's all rush at him together and see if we can drive him off the threshold and out of the doorway, then get into the town and raise the alarm as fast as we can. Then this man would soon have shot his last."

22.79 With these words he drew his sharp sword, bronze and honed on both edges, and sprang at him with a terrible yell. At the same moment godlike Odysseus let fly an arrow and struck him in the chest beside the nipple, driving the swift shaft into his liver. The sword dropped from his hand to the ground. He doubled over and tumbled sprawling across the table, spilling the food onto the floor along with the two-handled cup. He beat the ground with his forehead in agony of spirit, and kicking with both feet he shook the chair, and a mist poured down over his eyes.

22.89 Amphinomus went for glorious Odysseus, rushing straight at him with his sharp sword drawn, hoping somehow to make him give way from the doors. But Telemachus got there first. He struck him from behind with a bronze-tipped spear between the shoulders and drove it through his chest. He fell with a thud and struck the ground full with his forehead. Telemachus sprang back, leaving the long-shadowed spear right

there in Amphinomus, for he was very much afraid that, while he was pulling out the long-shadowed spear, one of the Achaeans might rush at him and stab him with a sword or cut him down as he stooped. He set off at a run and very quickly reached his dear father, and standing close by he spoke winged words:

22.101 "Father, I'll bring you a shield right now, and two spears, and a helmet all of bronze that fits close on your temples. I'll arm myself when I go, and I'll give more armor to the swineherd and the cowherd here. It's better to be armed." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Run and bring them, while I still have arrows to defend myself, so they don't force me away from the doors while I'm on my own." So he spoke, and Telemachus obeyed his dear father and went to the storeroom where the famous armor lay. From there he took out four shields, eight spears, and four bronze helmets with thick horsehair plumes, and set off carrying them, and very quickly reached his dear father. He himself put the bronze on his body first, and in the same way the two servants put on the fine armor, and they took their stand around Odysseus, shrewd and subtle-minded.

22.116 As for Odysseus, as long as he had arrows to defend himself, he kept on aiming and hitting the suitors in his house one at a time, and they fell thick and fast. But when the arrows gave out on their master as he shot, he leaned the bow against the doorpost of the well-built hall, to stand against the gleaming side-wall. He put a shield of four layers on his shoulders and set a well-made helmet on his mighty head, with a horsehair crest, and the plume nodded terribly above it. He took two sturdy spears tipped with bronze. Now there was a postern door in the well-built wall, and at the very edge of the threshold of the well-built hall there was a way out into a passage, closed off by well-fitted boards.

MELANTHIUS BRINGS ARMOR

The goatherd arms the suitors until Eumaeus and Philoetius catch him and string him up.

22.129 Odysseus told the noble swineherd to guard it, standing close beside it, for there was only one way to reach it. Then Agelaus spoke among them, addressing his words to all: "Friends, won't someone climb up through the postern door and tell the people, and raise the alarm as fast as can be? Then this man would soon have shot his last." Then Melanthius the goatherd answered him: "There's no way, Agelaus, nurtured by Zeus. The fine doors to the courtyard are terribly close, and the mouth of the passage is hard to get through. A single man could hold us all back, if he were a brave one. But come, let me bring you armor from the storeroom to arm yourselves. It's in there, I think, and nowhere else, that Odysseus and his glorious son have put the armor away."

22.142 With these words Melanthius the goatherd climbed up through the openings of the hall into the storerooms of Odysseus. From there he took out twelve shields, as many spears, and as many bronze helmets with thick horsehair plumes, and set off, and very quickly brought them and gave them to the suitors. And then Odysseus' knees went slack, and his heart too, when he saw them putting on armor and brandishing long spears in their hands; the task before him looked enormous. At once he spoke winged words to Telemachus: "Telemachus, surely one of the women in the halls is stirring up a vicious fight against us—or else it's Melanthius." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him in turn:

22.154 "Father, this mistake was mine—no one else is to blame. I left the close-fitting door of the storeroom ajar, and their lookout was sharper than ours. But go, noble Eumaeus, shut the door of the storeroom, and find out whether it's one of the women doing this, or the son of Dolius, Melanthius, as I suspect." So they talked with one another, and Melanthius the goatherd went back

again to the storeroom to bring more fine armor. But the noble swineherd noticed, and at once said to Odysseus, who was close by: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, there goes that destructive man, the one we suspected, into the storeroom again. Tell me truly: shall I kill him, if I prove the stronger, or bring him here to you, so he can pay for the many transgressions he has devised in your house?"

22.170 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Telemachus and I will keep the lordly suitors penned inside the hall, however furious they are. You two twist his feet and hands behind him, throw him into the storeroom, and lash boards behind him. Then tie a twisted rope to him and haul him up a tall pillar until he's close to the rafters, so that he stays alive a long while and suffers cruel pains." So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. They went to the storeroom, and he did not notice them, since he was inside. He was hunting for armor in the far corner of the storeroom, while the two of them took their stand on either side of the doorposts and waited.

22.182 Just as Melanthius the goatherd was stepping over the threshold, he was carrying a fine helmet in one hand and in the other a broad old shield, speckled with mildew, the one the hero Laertes used to carry in his youth. It had been lying there a long time now, and the stitching of its straps had come undone. The two of them sprang on him and seized him, dragged him inside by the hair, and threw him down on the floor, grieving at heart. They bound his feet and hands together in painful bonds, twisting them hard behind his back, as the son of Laertes, much-enduring, godlike Odysseus, had ordered. Then they tied a twisted rope to him and hauled him up a tall pillar until he was close to the rafters. And you mocked him, Eumaeus the swineherd, and said:

22.195 "Now, Melanthius, you'll keep watch the whole night through, lying in a soft bed, as suits you. And you won't miss early-born Dawn, golden-throned, as she rises from the streams of Ocean, at the hour when you drive your goats to the suitors to make their feast in the house." So he was left there, stretched

tight in the cruel bond. The two of them put on their armor, shut the shining door, and went to Odysseus, shrewd and subtle-minded. There they stood breathing fury, four of them on the threshold, while those inside the house were many and brave. Then Athena, daughter of Zeus, came close to them, looking like Mentor in build and voice. Odysseus was glad when he saw her, and said: "Mentor, ward off ruin, and remember your dear companion, who used to do you good. You and I are the same age."

22.210 So he spoke, though he suspected it was Athena, rouser of armies. On the other side the suitors shouted threats throughout the hall, and first Agelaus son of Damastor rebuked her: "Mentor, don't let Odysseus talk you into fighting the suitors and defending him. For this, I think, is how our purpose will be fulfilled: when we have killed these two, father and son, then you'll be slain among them for what you mean to do in the halls—you'll pay for it with your own head. And when we've stripped you of your strength with the bronze, everything you own, inside and outside your house, we'll throw in with Odysseus' goods. We won't let your sons live on in your halls, or your daughters, and your faithful wife won't go about in the town of Ithaca."

22.224 So he spoke, and Athena grew angrier still at heart, and she berated Odysseus with angry words: "Odysseus, you no longer have the steady strength or the courage you had when you fought the Trojans for nine years over white-armed Helen, daughter of a noble father, relentlessly, without rest, and killed many men in dreadful battle, and by your plan the wide-streeted city of Priam was taken. How is it that now, when you've come home to your own house and your own possessions, you hang back whimpering instead of being brave against the suitors? Come here, my friend, stand beside me and watch my work, so you can see what sort of man Mentor son of Alcimus is at repaying kindness among enemy men."

22.236 She spoke, but she did not yet grant them outright the victory that turns the tide. She was still testing the strength and courage of Odysseus and his glorious son. She herself darted up

and perched on a roof-beam of the smoky hall, looking just like a swallow. The suitors were urged on by Agelaus son of Damastor, Eurynomus and Amphimedon and Demoptolemus, Pisander son of Polyctor, and shrewd Polybus. These were by far the most excellent of the suitors who were still alive and fighting for their lives; the rest had already been brought down by the bow and the swarm of arrows. Agelaus spoke among them, addressing his words to all:

22.248 "Friends, this man will soon hold back his unconquerable hands. Mentor has already gone, after his empty boasts, and they are left alone at the front doors. So now don't all throw your long spears at once. Come, you six throw first, in the hope that Zeus may somehow grant that Odysseus is hit and we win glory. The others won't matter, once this one has fallen." So he spoke, and they all threw as he urged, with all their might; but Athena made every throw go to waste. One of them hit the doorpost of the well-built hall, another the close-fitted door, and another's ash spear, heavy with bronze, struck the wall.

22.260 But when they had dodged the suitors' spears, much-enduring, godlike Odysseus began to speak among them: "Friends, now I'd say it's our turn to throw into the crowd of suitors, who are eager to kill us and strip us of our armor, on top of all their earlier wrongs." So he spoke, and they all threw their sharp spears, aiming straight ahead. Odysseus killed Demoptolemus, Telemachus killed Euryades, the swineherd Elatus, and the man who tended the cattle killed Pisander. These all bit the vast floor together, and the suitors fell back into the far end of the hall; and the others rushed forward and pulled their spears from the dead.

22.272 Again the suitors threw their sharp spears with all their might; but Athena made many of their throws go to waste. One of them hit the doorpost of the well-built hall, another the close-fitted door, and another's ash spear, heavy with bronze, struck the wall. But Amphimedon hit Telemachus on the hand at the wrist, a grazing blow, and the bronze tore the surface of the skin. And Ctesippus, with his long spear, scratched Eumaeus'

shoulder above his shield; the spear flew on over him and fell to the ground. Then those around Odysseus, shrewd and subtle-minded, threw their sharp spears into the crowd of suitors. This time Odysseus, sacker of cities, struck Eurydamas, Telemachus struck Amphimedon, and the swineherd Polybus; and then the man who tended the cattle struck Ctesippus in the chest, and spoke over him in triumph:

22.287 "Son of Polytherses, you lover of mockery, never again give way to your folly and talk big. Leave the talking to the gods, since they are far stronger. This is your guest-gift in return for the hoof you once gave godlike Odysseus as he went begging through the house." So spoke the man who tended the curved-horned cattle. And Odysseus stabbed the son of Damastor at close quarters with his long spear, and Telemachus stabbed Leocritus son of Evenor with his spear full in the flank and drove the bronze clean through; he fell forward on his face and struck the ground with his whole forehead. Then Athena held up the man-destroying aegis from high in the roof, and the suitors' minds were struck with panic. They fled through the hall like a herd of cattle that the darting gadfly sets upon and drives wild in the springtime, when the days grow long.[1]

LEODES, PHEMIUS AND MEDON

Odysseus kills the suitors' soothsayer but spares the bard and the herald.

22.302 And the others were like vultures with crooked talons and hooked beaks that come down from the mountains and swoop on smaller birds: these fly low over the plain, cowering away from the clouds, and the vultures leap on them and kill them, and there is no defense and no escape, and men delight in the chase. So these men rushed through the house at the suitors and struck them down, turning this way and that; an ugly groaning

1 In Book 20 Ctesippus had hurled a cow's hoof at the disguised Odysseus, calling it a "guest-gift." The aegis is Athena's terrifying goatskin shield-cloak, which spreads panic.

rose as heads were struck, and the whole floor ran with blood. But Leodes rushed forward and seized Odysseus by the knees, and in supplication spoke winged words: "I clasp your knees, Odysseus. Respect me and have pity on me. I tell you, I never said or did anything reckless to any of the women in the halls. No, I used to try to stop the other suitors too, whenever any of them did such things.

22.316 But they wouldn't listen to me and keep their hands from evil, and so through their reckless folly they have met a shameful fate. And I, their soothsayer, who have done nothing, will lie among them—so true it is that there's no gratitude afterward for good deeds." Then, glaring at him from under his brows, resourceful Odysseus said to him: "If you claim to have been their soothsayer, then you must often have prayed in the halls that the fulfillment of my sweet homecoming would be far away, and that my dear wife would go off with you and bear you children. So you won't escape a grim death." So speaking, he picked up in his stout hand a sword that lay where Agelaus had let it fall to the ground as he was killed, and with it he struck him full on the neck; and while he was still speaking, his head rolled in the dust.

22.330 The son of Terpius, the bard, was still trying to escape black death—Phemius, who sang among the suitors because he was forced to. He stood holding his clear-toned lyre close by the postern door, and his mind was torn two ways: whether to slip out of the hall and sit at the well-built altar of great Zeus of the Courtyard, where Laertes and Odysseus had burned many thigh-pieces of oxen, or to rush forward and beg Odysseus, clasping his knees. As he pondered, this seemed the better course: to clasp the knees of Odysseus, son of Laertes. So he laid the hollow lyre on the ground between the mixing bowl and the silver-studded chair, and he himself rushed forward and seized Odysseus by the knees, and in supplication spoke winged words:[2]

2 The altar of Zeus of the Courtyard (Zeus Herkeios) stood in the house's courtyard; a suppliant who sat at an altar placed himself under the god's protection.

22.344 "I clasp your knees, Odysseus. Respect me and have pity on me. You yourself will grieve for it afterward if you kill a bard —I who sing for gods and men. I am self-taught, and a god has planted in my mind songs of every kind; I'm fit to sing before you as before a god. So don't be eager to cut my throat. Telemachus too, your dear son, could tell you this: that it wasn't of my own will or because I wanted to that I kept coming to your house to sing for the suitors at their feasts. They were far more numerous and stronger, and they brought me by force." So he spoke, and the sacred might of Telemachus heard him, and at once he spoke to his father, who was close by:

22.356 "Stop! Don't strike this man with the bronze; he's done nothing wrong. And let's save the herald Medon too, who always looked after me in our house when I was a child—if Philoetius or the swineherd hasn't already killed him, or he hasn't run into you as you stormed through the house." So he spoke, and Medon, a man of good sense, heard him; for he lay cowering under a chair, wrapped in the freshly flayed hide of an ox, trying to escape black death. At once he got up from under the chair and quickly threw off the oxhide; then he rushed to Telemachus and seized him by the knees, and in supplication spoke winged words:

22.367 "My friend, here I am! Hold off, and tell your father not to harm me with the sharp bronze in the fullness of his strength, in his anger at the suitors, who were wasting his possessions in the halls and, fools that they were, paid you no honor." Then, smiling, resourceful Odysseus said to him: "Take heart, since this man has protected and saved you, so that you may know in your heart, and tell others too, how much better doing good is than doing evil. But go out of the hall and sit outside in the courtyard, away from the slaughter, you and the bard of many songs, while I do in the house what I must."

22.378 So he spoke, and the two went out of the hall and sat down by the altar of great Zeus, peering all around, expecting death at every moment. And Odysseus peered all through his house, to see if any man was still alive and hiding, trying to

escape black death. But he saw them all, every one, fallen in the blood and the dust, heaps of them, like fish that fishermen have drawn out of the gray sea onto the curving beach in a net with many meshes: they all lie heaped on the sand, longing for the waves of the sea, and the blazing Sun takes away their life. So now the suitors lay heaped on one another. Then resourceful Odysseus said to Telemachus: "Telemachus, come, call the nurse Eurycleia for me, so that I can tell her something that's on my mind."

22.393 So he spoke, and Telemachus obeyed his dear father. He pushed open the door and called to the nurse Eurycleia: "Get up and come here, old woman born long ago, you who keep watch over the women servants in our halls. Come—my father is calling you, to tell you something." So he spoke, and she kept her words unwinged. She opened the doors of the well-appointed hall and came, and Telemachus led the way before her. Then she found Odysseus among the bodies of the slain, spattered with blood and gore like a lion that comes from feeding on an ox of the fields: its whole chest and its cheeks on both sides are bloody, and it is terrible to look in the face. So Odysseus was spattered, his feet and his hands above.

THE DISLOYAL MAIDS

Eurycleia names the twelve disloyal maids, who are hanged; Melanthius is mutilated.

22.407 When she saw the bodies and the endless blood, she began to raise a cry of triumph, seeing so great a deed done; but Odysseus checked her and held her back, eager as she was, and spoke to her winged words: "Rejoice in your heart, old woman, but hold back and don't cry out in triumph. It is unholy to exult over slain men. These men were brought down by the fate the gods sent and by their own cruel deeds; for they honored no one among men on earth, bad or good, whoever came to them. And so through their reckless folly they have met a shameful fate.

But come, tell me about the women in the halls: which of them dishonor me, and which are guiltless."

22.419 Then the dear nurse Eurycleia spoke to him in turn: "Well then, my child, I'll tell you the truth. You have fifty women servants in the halls, whom we have taught to do their work, to card wool and to bear their slavery. Of these, twelve in all have taken the path of shamelessness, with no respect for me or for Penelope herself. Telemachus was only just growing up, and his mother wouldn't let him give orders to the women servants. But come, let me go up to the bright upper rooms and tell your wife, on whom some god has sent sleep." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Don't wake her yet. But tell the women to come here—the ones who were plotting shameful things before."

22.433 So he spoke, and the old woman went off through the hall to give the women the message and urge them to come. And he called Telemachus, the cowherd and the swineherd to him and spoke winged words: "Start carrying out the bodies now, and give the women their orders; and after that, clean the beautiful chairs and the tables with water and porous sponges. And when you have set the whole house in order, lead the maids out of the well-built hall to the space between the round-house and the fine wall of the courtyard, and strike them with your long-edged swords until you have taken the life from all of them and they forget the Aphrodite they enjoyed beneath the suitors when they slept with them in secret." So he spoke, and the women came all together in a crowd, wailing terribly and shedding big tears.[3]

22.448 First they carried out the dead and laid them under the portico of the well-walled courtyard, propping them against one another. Odysseus himself gave the orders and hurried them on, and they carried the bodies out because they had to. Then they cleaned the beautiful chairs and the tables with water and porous sponges. Telemachus, the cowherd and the swineherd scraped the floor of the well-built house with hoes, and the maids carried the scrapings off and put them outside the door.

3 The round-house (θόλος) was a circular building in the courtyard; its exact purpose is uncertain.

And when they had set the whole hall in order, they led the maids out of the well-built hall to the space between the round-house and the fine wall of the courtyard, and penned them in a narrow place from which there was no escape. Then thoughtful Telemachus began to speak among them: "I won't take the life of these women by a clean death—these who have heaped shame on my head and on my mother, and slept with the suitors."

22.465 So he spoke, and he tied the cable of a dark-prowed ship to a great pillar and threw it around the round-house, stretching it high, so that none of them could reach the ground with her feet. As when long-winged thrushes or doves fly into a net set in a thicket as they make for their roost, and a hateful bed receives them, so the women held their heads in a row, with nooses around all their necks, so that they might die most pitiably. Their feet twitched for a little while, but not for long. Then they brought Melanthius out through the forecourt and the courtyard. They cut off his nose and ears with the pitiless bronze, tore out his genitals for the dogs to eat raw, and cut off his hands and feet in their furious anger.

22.478 Then they washed their hands and feet and went into the house to Odysseus, and the work was done. And he said to his dear nurse Eurycleia: "Bring sulfur, old woman, the cure for foulness, and bring me fire, so that I can purify the hall with sulfur. And you, tell Penelope to come here with her waiting-women, and urge all the maids in the house to come." Then the dear nurse Eurycleia spoke to him in turn: "Yes, my child, all that you've said is right. But come, let me bring you clothes, a cloak and a tunic. Don't stand in the halls like this with your broad shoulders wrapped in rags; people would find it shameful."[4]

22.490 Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "First of all, let there be a fire in the hall." So he spoke, and the dear nurse Eurycleia did not disobey. She brought fire and sulfur, and Odysseus thoroughly purified the hall, the house and the courtyard. The old woman went back through the fine house of Odysseus to

4 Burning sulfur was used to purify a place polluted by bloodshed.

give the women the message and urge them to come; and they came out of their hall with torches in their hands. They thronged around Odysseus and welcomed him, lovingly kissing his head and shoulders and taking his hands; and a sweet longing to weep and lament seized him, for in his heart he recognized every one of them.

Book 23

Penelope
The test of the bed: husband and wife reunited.

23.1 The old woman went up to the upper rooms, laughing aloud for joy, to tell her mistress that her dear husband was home. Her knees moved briskly, and her feet stumbled in their haste. She stood above Penelope's head and spoke to her: "Wake up, Penelope, my dear child, and see with your own eyes what you've longed for all your days. Odysseus has come, he's home, late as it is. And he has killed the overbearing suitors who were tormenting his house, eating up his property and bullying his son." Then wise Penelope said to her in turn: "Dear nurse, the gods have driven you mad. They can make even a very sensible person senseless, and they set the feeble-minded on the path to good sense. They're the ones who have damaged your wits. Until now you were sound of mind.

23.15 Why do you mock me, when my heart is so full of grief, telling me these wild tales? And why wake me from the sweet sleep that had bound me fast and covered my eyelids? I haven't slept like that since Odysseus went off to see Evil-Ilium, never to be named. Come now, go back down and return to the hall. If any of the other women I have had come and told me this and woken me from sleep, I'd soon have sent her back to the hall, and harshly too. But this time your old age will save you." Then Eurycleia, the dear nurse, said to her in turn:

23.26 "I'm not mocking you, dear child. It's true: Odysseus has come, he's home, just as I say. He's the stranger, the one they all treated with contempt in the hall. Telemachus knew long ago

that he was in the house, but he had the good sense to keep his father's plans hidden, so that he could make those overbearing men pay for their violence." So she spoke, and Penelope was overjoyed. She leapt from her bed, threw her arms around the old woman, let the tears fall from her eyelids, and spoke winged words to her: "Come, dear nurse, tell me the truth. If he really has come home, as you say, how did he lay hands on the shameless suitors, all alone as he was, when they always stayed in the house in a crowd?" Then Eurycleia, the dear nurse, said to her in turn:

23.40 "I didn't see it, and I didn't ask. I only heard the groans of men being killed. We women sat terrified in a corner of the well-built rooms, with the close-fitted doors shut tight on us, until your son Telemachus called me from the hall, because his father had sent him to call me. Then I found Odysseus standing among the bodies of the dead. All around him they lay on the hard-packed floor, one on top of another. If you'd seen it, it would have warmed your heart. Now they're all heaped together by the courtyard gates, and he has lit a great fire and is purifying the beautiful house with sulfur. He sent me to call you. Come with me, so that the two of you can set your dear hearts on the road to happiness, both of you, since you've suffered so much. 23.54 Now at last this long-held wish has come true. He has come home alive to his own hearth, and he has found you and his son in the hall. As for the suitors who did him such harm, he has paid them all back in his own house." Then wise Penelope said to her in turn: "Dear nurse, don't boast so loudly yet, laughing for joy. You know how welcome he would be if he appeared in the hall: welcome to everyone, but most of all to me and to the son we had together. But this story isn't true, not the way you tell it. No, one of the immortals killed the proud suitors, outraged at their heartbreaking arrogance and their evil deeds. They honored no one among men on earth, bad or good, whoever came their way, and so it is through their own reckless folly that they've come to grief. But Odysseus, far away, has lost his homecoming to the land of Achaea, and lost his own life."

23.69 Then Eurycleia, the dear nurse, answered her: "My child, what a word has escaped the barrier of your teeth! Your husband is in the house, by the hearth, and you say he'll never come home. Your heart is always distrustful. But come, I'll tell you another sign, a clear one: the scar the boar once gave him with its white tusk. I noticed it while I was washing him, and I wanted to tell you myself, but he grabbed me by the mouth with his hands and wouldn't let me speak, in the great shrewdness of his mind. Come with me. I'll stake my own life on it: if I'm deceiving you, kill me by the most pitiful death." Then wise Penelope answered her:

PENELOPE DOUBTS

Penelope comes down to the hall but cannot believe the stranger is her husband.

23.81 "Dear nurse, it's hard for you to fathom the counsels of the gods who live forever, however wise you are. Still, let's go to my son, so that I can see the suitors dead, and the man who killed them." So saying, she went down from the upper rooms, and her heart was much in doubt: should she keep her distance and question her dear husband, or go up to him and take his head and hands and kiss them? When she had come in and crossed the stone threshold, she sat down facing Odysseus in the firelight, by the opposite wall. He sat by a tall pillar, looking down, waiting to see whether his stately wife would say anything to him, now that she saw him with her own eyes.

23.93 She sat a long while in silence, and amazement came over her heart. At one moment she would look him full in the face, and at another she would fail to know him, in the wretched clothes he wore. Then Telemachus rebuked her, and spoke, and called her by name: "Mother, cruel mother, with that hard heart of yours, why do you keep away from my father like this? Why don't you sit beside him and talk to him and ask him questions? No other woman would harden her heart like this and keep apart from her husband, when after all his hardships he had

come back to her in the twentieth year, to his native land. But your heart is always harder than stone." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn:

23.105 "My child, the heart in my breast is stunned. I can't say a word to him, or ask him anything, or look him straight in the face. But if he really is Odysseus come home, then the two of us will surely know each other, and better than anyone; for we have signs that only we two know, hidden from everyone else." So she spoke, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus smiled, and at once he spoke winged words to Telemachus: "Telemachus, let your mother test me here in the hall. She'll soon know better. Right now, because I'm filthy and wearing wretched clothes, she treats me with contempt and won't yet say I'm the man.

23.117 But as for us, let's think how things can turn out best. Anyone who has killed just one man in his community, a man with few to take revenge for him afterward, goes into exile, leaving his kinsmen and his native land. But we have killed the mainstay of the city, by far the best of the young men in Ithaca. I want you to think this over." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "You see to this yourself, dear father. They say your cunning is the best among men, and that no other mortal man could rival you. We'll follow you eagerly, and I tell you we won't fall short in courage, as far as our strength allows."

A WEDDING DANCE

Odysseus has the household dance so that passers-by will think a wedding is under way.

23.129 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Then I'll tell you what seems best to me. First, wash and put on tunics, and tell the maids in the hall to choose their clothes. Then let the godlike bard take his clear-toned lyre and lead us in a playful dance, so that anyone hearing it from outside, someone walking along the road or one of the neighbors, would say there was a wedding. That way the news of the suitors' slaughter won't spread through the town before we get out to our farm with its many trees.

There we'll consider what advantage the Olympian may put into our hands."

23.141 So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. First they washed and put on tunics, and the women dressed themselves up. The godlike bard took up his hollow lyre and stirred in them a longing for sweet song and flawless dancing, and the great house echoed all around with the feet of men at play and of women with lovely sashes. And someone outside the house, hearing it, would say: "Well, someone has married the much-courted queen at last. Heartless woman! She couldn't bear to keep her wedded husband's great house safe to the end, until he came back."

23.152 So someone would say, but they did not know how things really stood. Meanwhile, in his own house, the housekeeper Eurynome bathed great-hearted Odysseus and rubbed him with olive oil, and put a fine cloak and tunic around him. And Athena poured great beauty over him from the head down, making him taller to look at and broader, and from his head she made his hair flow down in curls, like the hyacinth flower. As when a skilled craftsman, whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught every kind of art, lays gold over silver and brings graceful work to completion, so she poured grace over his head and shoulders. He stepped out of the bath like the immortals in form, and sat down again on the chair he had risen from, facing his wife, and spoke to her:

THE TEST OF THE BED

Penelope orders the bed moved, and Odysseus angrily describes the bed he built around an olive tree.

23.166 "Strange woman! Beyond all womankind, the gods who have their homes on Olympus have given you an unyielding heart. No other woman would harden her heart like this and keep apart from her husband, when after all his hardships he had come back to her in the twentieth year, to his native land. Come, nurse, make up a bed for me, so that I can lie down by

myself. This woman has a heart of iron in her breast." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn: "Strange man, I'm not being proud, or scornful, or too bewildered either. I know very well what you looked like when you sailed from Ithaca on your long-oared ship. Come, Eurycleia, make up the sturdy bed for him outside the well-built bedchamber, the one he built himself. Set the sturdy bed out there for him and put bedding on it: fleeces and cloaks and shining blankets."

23.181 So she spoke, testing her husband. But Odysseus, angered, spoke to his loyal-minded wife: "Wife, that's a painful thing you've said. Who has moved my bed somewhere else? It would be hard even for a very skilled man, unless a god came in person and set it elsewhere, which he could easily do if he chose. But no man alive, no mortal, however young and strong, could easily shift it, since there's a great sign built into that intricate bed. I made it myself, and no one else. A long-leaved olive tree was growing inside the courtyard, full-grown and flourishing, thick as a pillar.

23.192 Around it I built my bedchamber with close-set stones until I had finished it, roofed it over well, and fitted it with jointed doors that closed tight. Then I cut away the leafy crown of the long-leaved olive, trimmed the trunk from the root up, smoothed it all around with the bronze, well and skillfully, and made it straight to the line. I shaped it into a bedpost and bored it all through with an auger. Starting from that, I worked at the bed until I had finished it, inlaying it with gold and silver and ivory, and I stretched straps of oxhide across it, bright with purple. That is the sign I'm telling you. But I don't know, wife, whether my bed still stands firm, or whether some man has already moved it elsewhere, cutting through the olive's trunk at its base."

23.205 So he spoke, and her knees and her heart went slack where she sat, as she recognized the signs Odysseus had told her so exactly. Then, in tears, she ran straight to him, threw her arms around Odysseus' neck, kissed his head and said: "Don't be angry with me, Odysseus. In everything else you were always

the most understanding of men. It was the gods who gave us sorrow; they begrudged us staying together to enjoy our youth and reach the threshold of old age. So don't be angry with me now, or blame me, because I didn't welcome you lovingly like this as soon as I saw you. The heart in my breast was always shuddering for fear some man would come and deceive me with his words. There are many who plot wicked schemes.

23.218 Even Argive Helen, daughter of Zeus, would never have lain in love with a man from a foreign land, if she had known that the warlike sons of the Achaeans would bring her home again to her native land. It was a god who stirred her to that shameful deed; before that, she had never taken into her heart that grievous blindness, from which sorrow first came to us as well. But now you've told me the clear signs of our bed, which no other mortal has ever seen, only you and I and one single maid, Actoris, whom my father gave me when I came here, and who kept the doors of our sturdy bedchamber for us. You've won over my heart, unyielding as it is."

23.231 So she spoke, and stirred in him a still greater longing to weep, and he wept, holding the wife he loved, his loyal-minded wife. As when land appears, welcome, to swimmers whose sturdy ship Poseidon has shattered at sea, driven on by wind and heavy waves, and only a few have escaped from the gray sea to the shore by swimming, their skin thick-crusted with brine, and gladly they set foot on land, escaped from disaster: so welcome was her husband to her as she gazed at him, and she would not let her white arms go from his neck at all. And rosy-fingered Dawn would have found them still weeping, if the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had not thought of something else.

THE LAST TRIAL

Odysseus tells Penelope of the journey Tiresias foretold; at last they go to bed.

23.243 She held the long night back at the end of its course, and kept golden-throned Dawn waiting at the edge of Ocean, and

would not let her yoke her swift-footed horses that bring light to men, Lampus and Phaethon, the colts that draw Dawn. Then resourceful Odysseus said to his wife: "Wife, we haven't yet come to the end of all our trials. Hereafter there will still be measureless toil, long and hard, and I must accomplish all of it. That is what the spirit of Tiresias prophesied to me on the day I went down into the house of Hades, seeking a homecoming for my companions and myself. But come, wife, let's go to bed, so that now at last we can lie down together and take our pleasure in sweet sleep." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn:

23.257 "Your bed will be ready whenever your heart desires, now that the gods have brought you back to your well-built house and your native land. But since you've thought of it and a god has put it in your heart, come, tell me about this trial. I expect I'll hear of it later anyway, and it's no worse to know right away." Then resourceful Odysseus answered her: "Strange woman, why do you press me so hard to tell you? Well, I'll tell you, and hide nothing. Your heart won't be glad of it, and I'm not glad myself. He told me to travel to a great many cities of men, carrying a well-shaped oar in my hands, until I come to men who know nothing of the sea and don't eat food mixed with salt. They know nothing of ships with crimson cheeks, nor of well-shaped oars, which are wings for ships.

23.273 And he gave me this sign, a very clear one, and I won't hide it from you. When another traveler meets me and says I'm carrying a winnowing fan on my shining shoulder, then, he told me, I must plant the oar in the ground and make fine sacrifices to lord Poseidon—a ram, a bull, and a boar that mounts the sows—and then go home and offer holy hecatombs to the immortal gods who hold the wide sky, to all of them in turn. And death will come to me from the sea, a death as gentle as can be, to take me when I am worn out by a sleek old age, and around me my

people will be prosperous. All this, he said, would come true." Then wise Penelope said to him in turn:[1]

23.286 "If the gods are going to grant you a better old age, then there's hope that you'll find an escape from your troubles." So they talked with one another. Meanwhile Eurynome and the nurse were making up the bed with soft coverings by the light of blazing torches. When they had busily spread the sturdy bed, the old woman went back to her own room to lie down, and Eurynome, the chambermaid, led them on their way to bed with a torch in her hands. She brought them to the bedchamber and went back. And gladly they came to the rite of their old bed. Then Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd stopped their feet from dancing, and stopped the women, and lay down to sleep themselves in the shadowy hall.

23.300 When the two of them had taken their pleasure in lovely lovemaking, they took pleasure in talk, telling each other everything. She, bright among women, told all she had endured in the hall, watching the destructive throng of suitors, who for her sake slaughtered so many cattle and fat sheep, and drew off so much wine from the jars. And Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, told all the sorrows he had brought on men, and all the hardships he himself had endured in his misery. She delighted in listening, and sleep did not fall on her eyelids until he had told it all. He began with how he first overcame the Cicones, and then came to the rich land of the Lotus-eaters; and all that the Cyclops did, and how he made him pay for his mighty companions, whom the Cyclops ate without pity;

23.314 and how he came to Aeolus, who received him kindly and sent him on his way, but it was not yet his fate to reach his native land, and a storm snatched him up again and carried him, groaning heavily, over the fish-filled sea; and how he reached Laestrygonian Telepylus, where the people destroyed his ships and all his well-greaved companions, and Odysseus alone

1 A winnowing fan, used to toss threshed grain so the wind carries off the chaff, looked much like an oar; only someone who had never seen the sea would mistake one for the other.

escaped in his black ship. He told of Circe's trickery and her many wiles, and how he went in his many-benched ship to the dank house of Hades to consult the spirit of Theban Tiresias, and saw all his companions, and the mother who bore him and nursed him when he was small; and how he heard the voice of the full-throated Sirens, and how he came to the Wandering Rocks and terrible Charybdis, and Scylla, whom no men have ever escaped unharmed; and how his companions killed the cattle of Helios; 23.330 and how Zeus, who thunders on high, struck his swift ship with a smoking thunderbolt, and all his good companions perished together, while he alone escaped an evil doom; and how he came to the island of Ogygia and the nymph Calypso, who kept him there in her hollow caves, longing for him to be her husband, and cared for him, and said she would make him immortal and ageless all his days, but she could never persuade the heart in his breast; and how after many hardships he came to the Phaeacians, who honored him with all their hearts as if he were a god, and sent him in a ship to his native land, giving him bronze and gold and clothing in plenty. This was the last thing he told, when sweet sleep came over him, loosening his limbs and releasing the cares of his heart.

23.344 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, thought of something else. When she judged in her heart that Odysseus had had his fill of love in his wife's bed, and of sleep, at once she roused golden-throned, early-born Dawn from Ocean, to bring light to men. Odysseus rose from the soft bed and gave his wife instructions: "Wife, we've both had our fill of trials by now: you here, weeping over my troubled homecoming, while Zeus and the other gods kept me bound in pain far from my native land, for all my longing. Now that we've both come to the bed we longed for, you must look after the possessions I have in the hall. As for the flocks the arrogant suitors have ravaged, I'll take many back myself by raiding, and the Achaeans will give me others, until they fill all my folds.

23.359 But now I'm going out to our farm with its many trees, to see my good father, who grieves for me constantly. And to you, wife, wise as you are, I give these instructions. As soon as the sun rises, word will get around about the suitors I killed in the hall. Go up to the upper rooms with your maids and sit there. Don't look at anyone, and don't ask any questions." So he spoke, and put his fine armor on around his shoulders, and roused Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd, and told them all to take weapons of war in their hands. They did not disobey him. They armed themselves in bronze, opened the doors and went out, and Odysseus led them. By now there was light over the earth, but Athena hid them in darkness and quickly led them out of the city.

Book 24

Peace
The suitors' souls go down to Hades; Odysseus meets Laertes;
Athena ends the feud.

24.1 Now Cyllenian Hermes called forth the spirits of the suitors. In his hands he held his wand, beautiful and golden, with which he charms the eyes of whatever men he wishes, and wakes others again from sleep. With it he stirred them and led them on, and they followed, gibbering. As bats in the depths of a wondrous cave flit about gibbering when one of them has dropped from the cluster on the rock, and they cling to one another, so the spirits went along together, gibbering, and Hermes the helper led them down the dank ways. They passed the streams of Ocean and the White Rock, and went past the gates of the Sun and the land of dreams. Soon they came to the meadow of asphodel, where the spirits dwell, phantoms of the dead whose labors are done.[1] 24.15 They found the spirit of Achilles, son of Peleus, and of Patroclus, and of flawless Antilochus, and of Ajax, who was the finest in looks and build of all the Danaans after the flawless son of Peleus. So these were thronging around Achilles. Then the spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, came near, grieving. Around him were gathered all the others who had died with him in the house of Aegisthus and met their fate. The spirit of the son of Peleus spoke to him first: "Son of Atreus, we used to think that you, beyond all other heroes, were dear to Zeus who delights in thunder all your days, because you were lord over

1 Hermes is called Cyllenian after Mount Cyllene in Arcadia, where he was born.

many strong men in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaeans suffered so much.[2]

24.28 And yet deadly fate was to stand beside you too, and early —the fate no one born can escape. How I wish you had met your death and your doom in the land of the Trojans while you still enjoyed the honor you held as lord! Then the whole Achaean army would have built you a burial mound, and you would have won great glory for your son as well in time to come. But as it is, you were fated to be caught by a most pitiful death." Then the spirit of the son of Atreus addressed him in turn: "Fortunate son of Peleus, godlike Achilles, you who died at Troy, far from Argos! Around you others were killed, the best sons of the Trojans and the Achaeans, fighting over you, while you lay in the whirling dust, mighty and mightily fallen, forgetful of your horsemanship.

24.41 All day long we fought, and we would never have stopped the battle at all if Zeus had not stopped it with a storm. But when we had carried you out of the fighting to the ships, we laid you on a bier and washed your fair skin with warm water and oil. Around you the Danaans shed many hot tears and cut off their hair. Your mother came out of the sea with the immortal sea-nymphs when she heard the news, and a wondrous cry rose over the sea, and trembling seized all the Achaeans. They would have leapt up and run to the hollow ships, if a man who knew many things of old had not held them back—Nestor, whose counsel had proved best before as well. With good intent he spoke out among them and said:

24.54 'Hold back, Argives! Don't run, young men of the Achaeans! That is his mother coming out of the sea with the immortal sea-nymphs, to meet her dead son.' So he spoke, and the great-hearted Achaeans held back from flight. Around you stood the daughters of the Old Man of the Sea, wailing piteously, and they clothed you in immortal garments. And the Muses, all nine of them, answering one another with lovely voices, sang the lament. You would not have seen a single Argive without tears

2 This Ajax is the son of Telamon.

there, so piercingly did the clear-voiced Muse stir them. For seventeen days, nights and days alike, we wept for you, immortal gods and mortal men; on the eighteenth we gave you to the fire, and around you we slaughtered many fat sheep and cattle with curving horns.[3]

24.67 You were burned in the garments of the gods, with plenty of oil and sweet honey, and many Achaean heroes moved in their armor around the pyre as you burned, men on foot and men in chariots, and a great din arose. But when the flame of Hephaestus had finished you, at dawn we gathered your white bones, Achilles, in unmixed wine and oil. Your mother gave a golden two-handled jar; she said it was a gift of Dionysus and the work of famous Hephaestus. In it lie your white bones, shining Achilles, mingled with those of dead Patroclus, son of Menoetius, and apart from them those of Antilochus, whom you honored above all your other companions after Patroclus was dead. 24.80 Then over them we, the sacred army of Argive spearmen, heaped up a great and flawless mound on a jutting headland by the broad Hellespont, so that it might be seen far out from the sea by men, both those who are born now and those who will come after. Your mother asked the gods for magnificent prizes and set them in the middle of the arena for the best of the Achaeans. You have been at the funerals of many heroes before now, when at a king's death the young men gird themselves and make ready for the games; but you would have marveled most in your heart at the sight of those magnificent prizes the goddess, silver-footed Thetis, set out in your honor, for you were very dear to the gods.

AMPHIMEDON'S STORY

In Hades a dead suitor tells Agamemnon how they died, and Agamemnon praises Penelope.

24.93 So not even in death did you lose your name: noble glory will always be yours among all men, Achilles. But what pleasure

did I get from this, when I had brought the war to its end? For on my homecoming Zeus devised a grim destruction for me at the hands of Aegisthus and my accursed wife." So they talked with one another. Then the guide Argeïphontes came near them, leading down the spirits of the suitors whom Odysseus had killed, and the two went straight toward them in amazement when they saw them. The spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, recognized the dear son of Melaneus, famous Amphimedon, for he was his guest-friend, with his home in Ithaca. The spirit of the son of Atreus spoke to him first:

24.106 "Amphimedon, what happened to you, that you have all gone down beneath the dark earth, all picked men and of an age? One could not pick the best men in a city any other way. Did Poseidon overpower you on your ships, rousing cruel winds and tall waves? Or did enemies cut you down on land while you were rounding up their cattle and fine flocks of sheep, or while you fought for a city and its women? Tell me, since I ask; I claim to be your guest-friend. Don't you remember when I came down there to your house with godlike Menelaus, to urge Odysseus to come with us to Ilium on the well-benched ships? It took us a whole month to cross the wide sea, having barely won over Odysseus, sacker of cities." Then the spirit of Amphimedon addressed him in turn:

24.121 "Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, I remember all this, Zeus-nurtured one, just as you say, and I will tell you everything well and truly—the evil end of our death, how it came about. We were wooing the wife of Odysseus, who had been gone so long. She neither refused the hateful marriage nor brought it to pass, but was plotting death and black doom for us. Instead she devised this further trick in her mind: she set up a great loom in the hall and began to weave, a fine, wide web, and at once she said to us: 'Young men, my suitors, since godlike Odysseus is dead, wait, eager though you are for my marriage, until I finish this shroud, so that my yarn won't be wasted and

3 The Old Man of the Sea here is Nereus, whose daughters, the Nereids, include Achilles' mother Thetis.

lost. It is a burial shroud for the hero Laertes, for the time when the deadly fate of grievous death lays him low. I don't want any of the Achaean women in the land to blame me if he lies without a shroud, a man who won such great possessions.'

24.138 So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. Then by day she would weave at the great loom, but at night she would unravel it, with torches set beside her. So for three years she kept her trick hidden and deceived the Achaeans. But when the fourth year came and the seasons rolled round, as the months waned and many days were completed, then at last one of her women who knew it well told us, and we caught her unraveling the splendid web. So she finished it, though against her will, because she had to.

24.147 When she had woven the great web and washed it, and showed us the shroud, gleaming like the sun or the moon, then some evil god brought Odysseus from somewhere to the edge of the farmland, where the swineherd had his house. There too came the dear son of godlike Odysseus, back from sandy Pylos in a black ship. The two of them, after plotting an evil death for the suitors, came to the famous city—Odysseus later, while Telemachus led the way ahead. The swineherd brought him, in wretched clothes, looking like a miserable beggar and an old man, leaning on a staff, and those wretched clothes hung about his body. And none of us could recognize who he was when he suddenly appeared, not even the older men among us, but we attacked him with insults and with missiles. 24.162 For a time he endured it in his own halls, being pelted and abused, with a steadfast heart. But when the mind of Zeus who bears the aegis roused him, with Telemachus he took up the beautiful armor, stored it in the storeroom and shot the bolts. Then, with all his cunning, he told his wife to set out the bow and the gray iron for the suitors, as a contest for us ill-fated men and the beginning of slaughter. None of us could stretch the string of that mighty bow; we fell far short. But when the great bow came into the hands of Odysseus, we all shouted out together not to give him the bow, however much he might talk. Telemachus alone urged

him on and told him to take it. 24.176 Then much-enduring, godlike Odysseus took it in his hand, easily strung the bow, and shot through the iron. Then he went and stood on the threshold, poured out the swift arrows, glaring terribly around him, and struck lord Antinous. After that he let fly his deadly shafts at the others, aiming straight at them, and they fell thick and fast. It was plain that some god was helping them, for at once they swept through the house in their fury, killing men on every side, and an ugly groaning rose as heads were struck, and the whole floor seethed with blood. That is how we died, Agamemnon, and even now our bodies lie uncared for in the halls of Odysseus; for our kin in each man's house do not yet know—those who would wash the black blood from our wounds and lay us out and mourn us, for that is the due of the dead."

24.191 Then the spirit of the son of Atreus addressed him in turn: "Fortunate son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, truly you won a wife of great excellence! How good was the mind of flawless Penelope, daughter of Icarius! How well she remembered Odysseus, her wedded husband! So the fame of her excellence will never perish, and the immortals will make a lovely song for those on earth in honor of prudent Penelope. Not so the daughter of Tyndareus, who devised evil deeds and killed her wedded husband: hers will be a hateful song among men, and she will give a bad name to all womankind, even to the woman who does what is right." So they talked with one another, standing in the house of Hades beneath the depths of the earth.[4]

LAERTES IN THE ORCHARD

Odysseus finds his father digging in his vineyard and tests him with a false tale.

24.205 The others, when they had gone down from the city, soon came to the fine, well-tended farm of Laertes, which Laertes himself had won long ago after much toil. His house was there, and all around it ran a row of sheds, where the slaves bound to

4 The daughter of Tyndareus is Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife.

his service, who did the work he wished, ate and sat and slept. In the house was an old Sicilian woman who took devoted care of the old man there on the farm, far from the city. There Odysseus spoke to the servants and his son: "You go into the well-built house now, and quickly sacrifice the best of the pigs for dinner. I will test my father, to see whether he will recognize me and know me by sight, or fail to know me, since I have been away so long."

24.219 So saying, he gave the servants his weapons of war. They went quickly to the house, while Odysseus went up close to the fruitful vineyard, searching. He did not find Dolius as he went down into the great orchard, nor any of the servants or Dolius' sons; they had gone off to gather stones to make a wall for the vineyard, and the old man led them on the way. He found his father alone in the well-tended vineyard, digging around a plant. He wore a dirty tunic, patched and shabby, and around his shins he had tied patched oxhide leggings to ward off scratches, and he had gloves on his hands because of the thorns; and on his head he wore a goatskin cap, nursing his grief. 24.232 When much-enduring, godlike Odysseus saw him, worn down by old age and with great grief in his heart, he stood under a tall pear tree and shed tears. Then he pondered in his mind and heart whether to kiss and embrace his father and tell him everything, how he had come back and reached his native land, or first to question him and test him on every point. As he thought it over, this seemed the better course: first to test him with mocking words. With this in mind godlike Odysseus went straight up to him. The old man was keeping his head down, digging around a plant, and his glorious son came and stood beside him and spoke to him:

24.244 "Old man, you're no novice at tending an orchard. Your care is good, and there's nothing at all—no plant, no fig, no vine, no olive, no pear, no garden bed—that goes without care in your plot. But I'll tell you something else, and don't take it to heart in anger: you yourself aren't well cared for. You carry a miserable old age, and you're shamefully unwashed and dressed in shabby

clothes. It can't be for laziness that your master doesn't look after you, and there's nothing slavish to be seen in your looks and your stature: you look like a king. 24.254 You look like the kind of man who, once he has bathed and eaten, should sleep softly; for that is the way of old men. But come, tell me this and give me a true account: whose servant are you? Whose orchard do you tend? And tell me this truly, so that I may know well: is this really Ithaca we've come to, as that man told me just now, whom I met on my way here? He wasn't very sensible, since he couldn't bring himself to tell me everything or listen to what I had to say, when I asked about a guest-friend of mine, whether he is still alive or already dead and in the house of Hades. 24.265 I'll tell you plainly, and you mark it and listen to me. Once, in my own native land, I entertained a man who came to our home, and no other stranger from far away who came to my house was ever dearer to me. He claimed to come of a family from Ithaca, and he said his father was Laertes, son of Arcesius. I brought him to my house and entertained him well, with a warm welcome, from the plenty that was in the house, and gave him guest-gifts, as was fitting. 24.274 I gave him seven talents of well-wrought gold, and I gave him a mixing bowl all of silver, embossed with flowers, and twelve single-fold cloaks and as many rugs, as many fine mantles and as many tunics besides, and, apart from these, women skilled in flawless handiwork, four comely ones, whom he chose himself." Then his father answered him, shedding tears: "Stranger, you have come to the land you ask about, but outrageous and reckless men hold it now. Those gifts you gave, countless as they were, were given in vain; for if you had found him alive in the land of Ithaca, he would have sent you on your way repaying you well with gifts and good hospitality, for that is right, when someone has shown kindness first.

24.287 But come, tell me this and give me a true account: how many years is it now since you entertained that guest of yours, that unhappy man—my son, if ever I had one—ill-fated as he is? Somewhere far from his friends and his native land the fish have eaten him in the sea, or on land he has become the prey of

beasts and birds. His mother did not lay him out and weep for him, nor his father—we who gave him life—nor did his richly dowered wife, prudent Penelope, wail for her husband on his bier, as was fitting, and close his eyes; for that is the due of the dead. And tell me this truly, so that I may know well: who are you among men, and where are you from? Where are your city and your parents? Where is the swift ship moored that brought you and your godlike companions here? Or did you come as a passenger on someone else's ship, and they put you ashore and went on their way?"

24.302 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Well then, I will tell you everything quite truthfully. I am from Alybas, where I live in a famous house, the son of Apheidas, a lord, son of Polypemon; and my own name is Eperitus. But some god drove me off course from Sicania and brought me here against my will, and my ship is standing over there by the fields, away from the town. As for Odysseus, this is now the fifth year since he went away from there and left my country, ill-fated man. And yet the birds were good for him as he went, on the right. I was glad of them as I sent him off, and he was glad as he went, and our hearts still hoped that we would meet again as host and guest and give each other glorious gifts."[5]

LAERTES KNOWS HIS SON

Odysseus reveals himself and proves it with the scar and the trees his father gave him.

24.315 So he spoke, and a black cloud of grief covered Laertes. He took up the sooty dust in both hands and poured it over his gray head, groaning without cease. Odysseus' heart was stirred, and a sharp pang now shot up through his nostrils as he looked at his dear father. He sprang at him, threw his arms around him, kissed him and said: "I am that man, father, the very one you are asking about. I have come back in the twentieth year to my nat-

5 Odysseus' invented names appear to be puns: Alybas suggests "wandering," Apheidas "unsparing," Polypemon "much suffering," and Eperitus "strife."

ive land. But stop your weeping and your tearful lament. I'll tell you plainly, though we must hurry all the same: I have killed the suitors in our house, and paid them back for their heart-wounding outrage and their evil deeds." Then Laertes answered him in turn and said: "If it really is you, Odysseus, my son, who have come here, tell me some clear sign now, so that I can be sure."

24.330 Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "First, look with your own eyes at this scar. A boar gave it to me with its white tusk on Parnassus when I went there. You and my lady mother sent me to Autolycus, my mother's dear father, to collect the gifts he had promised me and nodded his assent to when he came here. And come, let me tell you, too, the trees in the well-laid orchard that you gave me once. I asked you for each one when I was a little boy, following you through the garden. We were walking among them, and you named each one and told me about it. You gave me thirteen pear trees and ten apple trees and forty fig trees, and you promised me fifty rows of vines, just as I say, each one ripening at its own time. There are clusters of every kind on them, whenever the seasons of Zeus weigh them down from above."

24.345 So he spoke, and Laertes' knees and his heart went slack where he stood, as he recognized the signs that Odysseus had given him so surely. He threw his arms around his dear son, and much-enduring, godlike Odysseus caught him to himself as he fainted. But when he had got his breath back and his spirit had gathered in his breast again, he answered once more and said: "Father Zeus, you gods do still exist on high Olympus, if the suitors have truly paid for their reckless outrage. But now I am terribly afraid in my heart that all the men of Ithaca will soon come here against us and send messages everywhere to the cities of the Cephallenians." Then resourceful Odysseus answered him:

24.357 "Take heart, don't let these things trouble your mind. Let's go to the house that lies near the orchard. I sent Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd ahead there to get a meal ready as quickly as they can." So the two of them spoke, and went to the beautiful house. When they reached the

well-appointed house, they found Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd carving plenty of meat and mixing sparkling wine. Meanwhile, in his house, the Sicilian maid bathed great-hearted Laertes and anointed him with oil, and put a fine cloak around him; and Athena came and stood close by and filled out the limbs of the shepherd of the people, and made him taller and sturdier to look at than before.

24.370 He stepped out of the bath, and his dear son marveled at him when he saw him face to face, looking like the immortal gods. And he spoke to him winged words: "Father, surely one of the gods who live forever has made you finer to look at, in looks and in stature." Then thoughtful Laertes answered him: "If only, by father Zeus and Athena and Apollo, I were the man I was when I took Nericus, the well-built citadel on the coast of the mainland, as lord of the Cephallenians! If only I had been that man yesterday in our house, with armor on my shoulders, to stand by you and beat back the suitors! Then I would have loosened the knees of many of them in the hall, and you would have been glad in your heart."

24.383 So they talked with one another. And when they had finished their work and made the meal ready, they sat down in order on chairs and seats. Then, as they were setting their hands to the meal, old Dolius came up, and with him the old man's sons, tired from their work, for their mother, the old Sicilian woman, had gone out and called them. She was the one who raised them, and she looked after the old man devotedly, now that old age had laid hold of him. When they saw Odysseus and knew him in their hearts, they stood in the hall astounded. But Odysseus addressed them with gentle words: "Old man, sit down to the meal, and all of you, forget your astonishment. We've been waiting in the hall a long time, eager to set our hands to the food, and expecting you all the while."

24.397 So he spoke, and Dolius went straight up to him with both arms outstretched, took Odysseus' hand and kissed it at the wrist, and spoke to him winged words: "Dear friend, since you've come home to us, who longed for you so much but no

longer expected it, and the gods themselves have brought you back, health to you, and great joy, and may the gods grant you prosperity. And tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: does wise Penelope already know for certain that you've come home, or should we send her a messenger?" Then resourceful Odysseus answered him: "Old man, she already knows. Why should you trouble yourself with that?" So he spoke, and Dolius sat down again on his polished stool. And in the same way the sons of Dolius gathered around glorious Odysseus, greeting him and clasping his hands, and then sat down in order beside Dolius, their father.

THE FAMILIES' REVENGE

Eupeithes rouses the suitors' kin to avenge their sons despite warnings from Medon and Halitherses.

24.412 So they busied themselves with the meal in the hall. Meanwhile Rumor the messenger went swiftly all through the city, telling of the hateful death and doom of the suitors. As the people heard it, they came from every side, moaning and lamenting, in front of Odysseus' house. They carried the dead out of the house and buried each his own; those from other cities they sent home, each to his own, putting them on swift ships for fishermen to carry. Then they themselves went all together to the place of assembly, grieving at heart. And when they had gathered and were all assembled, Eupeithes stood up and spoke among them, for an unforgettable grief for his son lay on his heart: Antinous, the first man godlike Odysseus had killed. Shedding tears for him, he addressed the assembly and said:

24.426 "Friends, this man has devised a monstrous thing against the Achaeans. Some, many and brave, he led away with his ships, and he lost the hollow ships and lost the men; and others, when he came back, he killed, by far the best of the Cephallenians. Come, then, before he gets away quickly to Pylos or to bright Elis, where the Epeians rule, let us go. Or else we'll be shamed forever after. This is a disgrace, even for men to come to

hear of, if we don't take vengeance on the murderers of our sons and brothers. For my part, there would be no sweetness in my heart in living; I would rather die at once and be among the dead. Let us go, before they cross over and get away from us."

24.438 So he spoke, shedding tears, and pity took hold of all the Achaeans. Then Medon and the godlike bard came near them from Odysseus' hall, since sleep had released them, and they stood in the middle of the crowd, and amazement took hold of every man. Medon, a man of good sense, spoke among them: "Listen to me now, men of Ithaca. Odysseus did not devise these deeds without the will of the immortal gods. I myself saw an immortal god who stood close beside Odysseus, looking just like Mentor. The immortal god appeared now in front of Odysseus, urging him on, and now rushed through the hall, throwing the suitors into panic; and they fell thick and fast."[6]

24.450 So he spoke, and pale fear seized them all. Then the old hero Halitherses, son of Mastor, spoke among them, for he alone could see before and after. With good will toward them he addressed the assembly and said: "Listen to me now, men of Ithaca, to what I have to say. It's through your own wickedness, friends, that these things have happened. You wouldn't listen to me, or to Mentor, shepherd of the people, and put a stop to your sons' senselessness. They did a monstrous thing in their wicked, reckless folly, devouring the property of a noble man and dishonoring his wife, saying he would never return. Now let it go like this: do as I tell you. Let's not go, in case someone finds an evil he has brought on himself."

24.463 So he spoke, and more than half of them sprang up with a great shout, while the rest stayed where they were, all together. For the speech did not please them in their hearts; they listened to Eupeithes instead, and at once they rushed for their armor. When they had put the gleaming bronze about their bodies, they gathered together in front of the spacious town. Eupeithes led them in his folly. He said he would avenge the murder of his

6 The herald Medon and the bard Phemius were the two men Odysseus spared in the slaughter of the suitors in Book 22.

son, but he was not to come back again; he was to meet his doom there. But Athena spoke to Zeus, son of Cronus: "Our father, son of Cronus, highest of all who rule, tell me what I ask: what is your mind hiding within? Will you bring about more evil war and dreadful fighting, or will you set friendship between the two sides?"

24.477 Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered her: "My child, why do you question me and ask about this? Didn't you yourself devise this plan, that Odysseus should come home and take vengeance on those men? Do as you wish, but I'll tell you what is fitting. Now that godlike Odysseus has taken vengeance on the suitors, let them swear solemn oaths, and let him be king forever; and let us bring about a forgetting of the slaughter of sons and brothers. Let them love one another as before, and let there be wealth and peace in plenty." So saying, he urged on Athena, who was eager already, and she went darting down from the peaks of Olympus.

PEACE

Laertes kills Eupeithes, and Athena stops the fighting and sets oaths between the two sides.

24.489 But when they had put away their desire for honey-sweet food, much-enduring, godlike Odysseus began to speak among them: "Someone go out and see whether they're coming near already." So he spoke, and a son of Dolius went out as he told him. He went and stood on the threshold and saw them all close by, and at once he spoke winged words to Odysseus: "Here they are, close by! Let's arm ourselves, quickly." So he spoke, and they rose and put on their armor, four around Odysseus and the six sons of Dolius; and among them Laertes and Dolius put on armor too, gray-haired as they were, warriors by necessity.

24.500 When they had put the gleaming bronze about their bodies, they opened the doors and went out, and Odysseus led them. And Athena, daughter of Zeus, came near them, looking like Mentor in build and voice. Much-enduring, godlike Odys-

seus was glad when he saw her, and at once he said to Telemachus, his dear son: "Telemachus, now that you've come yourself to the place where men fight and the best are told apart, you'll know this already: not to bring shame on the race of your fathers, for we have always excelled in strength and courage all over the earth."

24.510 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "You'll see, if you like, dear father, that with the heart I have now I'll bring no shame on your race, as you say." So he spoke, and Laertes rejoiced and said: "What a day this is for me, dear gods! I'm truly glad: my son and my grandson are vying with each other in excellence." Then gray-eyed Athena came up beside him and said: "Son of Arceisius, dearest by far of all my comrades, pray to the gray-eyed maiden and to father Zeus, then swing back your long-shadowing spear at once and let it fly."

24.520 So she spoke, and Pallas Athena breathed great strength into him. Then he prayed to the daughter of great Zeus, and at once swung back his long-shadowing spear and let it fly, and struck Eupeithes through his bronze-cheeked helmet. The helmet did not stop the spear: the bronze went straight through, and he fell with a thud, and his armor clattered about him. Then Odysseus and his glorious son fell upon the front ranks and struck at them with swords and two-edged spears. And now they would have killed them all and cut them off from ever returning home, had not Athena, daughter of Zeus who bears the aegis, raised her voice in a shout and held back the whole host: "Hold back from grievous war, men of Ithaca, so that you may part as quickly as possible without bloodshed."

24.533 So Athena spoke, and pale fear seized them. In their terror the weapons flew from their hands and all fell to the ground as the goddess's voice rang out, and they turned toward the city, eager to save their lives. Much-enduring, godlike Odysseus gave a terrible shout, gathered himself and swooped like a high-flying eagle. And then the son of Cronus let fly a smoking thunderbolt, and it fell in front of the gray-eyed daughter of the mighty father. Then gray-eyed Athena spoke to Odysseus: "Son of

Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many wiles, hold back! Stop this strife of war that falls on all alike, or the son of Cronus, wide-seeing Zeus, may grow angry with you." So Athena spoke, and he obeyed, glad in his heart. And afterward Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who bears the aegis, set oaths between the two sides, looking like Mentor in build and voice.