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The Odyssey

Ὀδύσσεια

Homer
c. 8th century BC

Poetry · Epic

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Translated from the Greek by Ether Library

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An epic in twenty-four books, composed in Greek hexameters, probably in the eighth or seventh century BC.

A Note on the Translation

This is a complete translation of the *Odyssey*, made directly from the Greek. The source is the text printed by A. T. Murray in the Loeb Classical Library (1919), in the digital transcription of the Perseus Digital Library. Murray's English was not used. Samuel Butler's public-domain prose version of 1900 was consulted only where the Greek is in doubt, and none of its wording is kept.

Homer composed in verse; this translation is prose, meant to be read the way a novel is read. It keeps what prose can keep. Every one of Murray's 1,186 paragraphs appears here as one paragraph, and each opens with the number of the Greek line where it begins, so that a reader can find any passage in a Greek text or another translation. Nothing is summarized or left out: every scene, speech, simile, and name is here.

The fixed epithets and repeated lines are the music of Homer's style, and the English keeps them fixed. Athena is always "gray-eyed," Dawn is always "rose-fingered," the sea is "wine-dark," and a line that the Greek repeats is repeated here in the same words. Where Homer's narrator turns to speak to the swineherd Eumaeus as "you," the English does so too. In Books 9 to 12 Odysseus tells his own story to the Phaeacians, and that long tale is printed as his narration rather than inside quotation marks.

Names are given in their familiar English forms (Telemachus, Achilles, Ithaca), and the gods always by their Greek names. The nineteen notes are the translator's. They explain a title, a custom, or a play on words that the English cannot carry, and offer no commentary.

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Book 1

1 Tell me, Muse, of the man of many turns, who wandered far and long after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. He saw the cities of many men and came to know their minds, and on the sea he suffered many pains in his heart, struggling to save his own life and to bring his companions home. Even so he could not save his companions, much as he longed to; they perished by their own reckless folly. Fools. They ate the cattle of Helios Hyperion, the Sun, and he took from them the day of their return. Of these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, beginning where you will, tell us too.

11 By then all the others, as many as had escaped sheer destruction, were at home, safe from the war and from the sea. Only he, longing for his return and for his wife, was held back by the nymph, the lady Calypso, bright among goddesses, in her hollow caves, for she wanted him for her husband. But when, as the seasons rolled round, the year came in which the gods had spun for him his journey home to Ithaca, not even there was he free of trials, even among his own people. All the gods pitied him except Poseidon, who raged without ceasing against godlike Odysseus until he came to his own land.

22 But Poseidon had gone to visit the Ethiopians far away, the Ethiopians who are divided in two, the farthest of men, some where Hyperion sets and some where he rises, to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams. There he sat at the feast and took his pleasure; but the other gods were gathered together in the halls of Olympian Zeus. Among them the father of men and gods was the

first to speak, for in his heart he was thinking of excellent Aegisthus, whom far-famed Orestes, son of Agamemnon, had killed. With him in mind, he spoke among the immortals:

32 "Ah! See how mortals blame the gods! They say that their evils come from us, but they themselves, by their own reckless folly, have sorrows beyond what is fated. So now Aegisthus, beyond what was fated, married the wedded wife of the son of Atreus and killed him when he came home, though he knew it meant sheer destruction, since we had warned him beforehand. We sent Hermes, the keen-sighted slayer of Argus,[1] and told him not to kill the man and not to court his wife, for vengeance for the son of Atreus would come from Orestes, once he grew to manhood and longed for his own land. So Hermes spoke, but for all his good intent he could not persuade the heart of Aegisthus; and now he has paid for it all at once."

44 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Our father, son of Cronus, highest of all who rule, that man surely lies in a death he well deserved; so may any other perish who does such things. But my heart is torn for wise Odysseus, the ill-fated man, who has long been suffering far from his friends on a sea-washed island, where the navel of the sea is. It is a wooded island, and a goddess has her home there, the daughter of baleful-minded Atlas, who knows the depths of every sea and himself holds up the tall pillars that keep earth and sky apart. His daughter keeps the unhappy man there in his grief, and always, with soft and coaxing words, she charms him, so that he will forget Ithaca. But Odysseus, longing to see even the smoke leaping up from his own land, wishes he could die. And still your heart does not turn to him, Olympian. Did Odysseus not please you with sacrifices beside the ships of the Argives[2] in wide Troy? Why are you so angry with him, Zeus?"

63 Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered her: "My child, what a word has escaped the fence of your teeth! How could I forget godlike Odysseus, who surpasses all mortals in mind and has given more offerings than any to the immortal gods who hold the wide sky? No, it is Poseidon the earth-holder who is stubborn and unending in his anger, because of the Cyclops whom Odysseus blinded, godlike Polyphemus, whose strength is the greatest among all the Cyclopes. The nymph Thoosa bore him, daughter of Phorcys who rules over the barren sea, after she lay with Poseidon in the hollow caves. Since then Poseidon the Earth-shaker does not kill Odysseus, but drives him wandering far from his native land. But come, let all of us here take thought for his return, how he may get home. Poseidon will let go of his anger. He will not be able to stand against all the immortals, alone and against the will of the gods."

80 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Our father, son of Cronus, highest of all who rule, if it is now the pleasure of the blessed gods that wise-hearted Odysseus should return to his own home, then let us send Hermes, the guide, slayer of Argus, to the island of Ogygia, so that he may tell the lovely-haired nymph with all speed our unfailing decision: the return of steadfast Odysseus, so that he may go home. 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 are forever slaughtering his thronging sheep and his shambling cattle with curving horns. And I will send him to Sparta and to sandy Pylos to ask about his dear father's return, in case he may hear something, and so that a good name may be his among men."

96 So she spoke, and she bound on her feet her beautiful sandals, immortal, golden, which carried her over the water and over the boundless earth as swift as the gusts of the wind. She took up

her strong spear, tipped with sharp bronze, heavy, huge, and thick, with which she breaks 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 the gateway of Odysseus, on the threshold of the courtyard, with the bronze spear in her hand, in the likeness of a stranger, Mentes, leader of the Taphians. There she found the proud suitors. They were amusing themselves at a game of counters in front of the doors, sitting on the hides of oxen they had slaughtered themselves. Heralds and busy attendants were at work for them, some mixing wine and water in the mixing bowls, others wiping the tables with porous sponges and setting them out, and others carving meat in plenty.

113 Telemachus, godlike in looks, was the first by far to see her, for he was sitting among the suitors, sad at heart, picturing his noble father in his mind: if only he might come from somewhere and scatter the suitors through the house, and win back his honor and be master of his own house. Thinking these thoughts as he sat among the suitors, he caught sight of Athena. He went straight to the gateway, ashamed in his heart that a stranger should stand so long at the doors. He came up close, took her by the right hand, and received the bronze spear from her, and he spoke to her, and his words had wings:

123 "Welcome, stranger. Among us you will be made a friend, and then, when you have tasted dinner, you will tell us what you need."

125 So he spoke and led the way, and Pallas Athena followed. When they were inside the high house, he carried the spear and stood it against a tall pillar, inside a polished spear rack, where many other spears of steadfast Odysseus stood. He led her and seated her on a chair, spreading a linen cloth over it, a beautiful thing, finely worked, and there was a footstool for her feet. Beside

her he set an inlaid seat for himself, apart from the suitors, so that the stranger, troubled by the din, would not lose his taste for the meal among overbearing men, and so that he could ask him about his absent father. A maid brought water in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and drew up a polished table beside them. The revered housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, and many dishes besides, giving freely of what she had. A carver lifted up platters of every kind of meat and set them beside them, and placed golden cups by them, and a herald went back and forth to them again and again, pouring the wine.

144 The proud suitors came in. They sat down in rows on the seats and chairs, and heralds poured water over their hands, and serving women heaped bread beside them in baskets, and the young men filled the mixing bowls to the brim with drink; and they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, the suitors' minds turned to other things, to song and dance, for these are the crown of a feast. A herald put a very beautiful lyre into the hands of Phemius, who sang among the suitors because he was forced to. He struck the strings and began a lovely song.

156 But Telemachus spoke to gray-eyed Athena, holding his head close to hers so that the others would not hear: "Dear stranger, will you be angry with me for what I say? These men care for such things, the lyre and song, and it is easy for them, since they eat up another man's livelihood without paying for it, a man whose white bones lie rotting in the rain somewhere on the mainland, or the waves roll them in the salt sea. If they saw him come home to Ithaca, they would all pray to be swifter of foot rather than richer in gold and clothing. But now he has perished like this, by an evil fate, and there is no comfort for us, even if someone among men on earth says that he will come. The day of his return

is lost. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: Who are you, and where are you from? Where is your city, and where are your parents? What kind of ship did you come on? How did sailors bring you to Ithaca, and who did they say they were? For I hardly think you came here on foot. And tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: are you new here, or are you a guest-friend of my father's? For many other men came to our house, since he too went about much among men."

178 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "Then I will tell you everything truly. I declare that I am Mentes, son of wise Anchialus, and I am lord of the oar-loving Taphians. I have put in here just now with my ship and my companions, sailing over the wine-dark sea to men of foreign speech, to Temese, for copper, and I carry gleaming iron. My ship lies over there, by the fields away from the town, in the harbor of Rheithron, below wooded Neion. We are guest-friends[3] from long ago, through our fathers, as you may learn if you go and ask the old man, the hero Laertes. They say he no longer comes to the town, but suffers his troubles far off in the fields 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. Now I have come, because they said he was here among his people, your father. But the gods are hindering him on his way. For noble Odysseus is not yet dead upon the earth. He is still alive somewhere, held back on the wide sea, on a sea-washed island, and hard men keep him, savage men, who hold him there against his will. But now I will prophesy to you, as the immortals put it into my heart and as I think it will come to pass, though I am no prophet and have no sure knowledge of birds. He will not be away much longer from his dear native land, not even if bonds of iron hold him. He will find a way to come home, for he is resourceful. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: are you, grown as tall as you are, the son of Odysseus

himself? You are wonderfully like him about the head and in your fine eyes, for we used to meet often like this, before he went off to Troy, where the other best men of the Argives went in their hollow ships. Since then I have not seen Odysseus, and he has not seen me."

213 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Then I will tell you everything truly, stranger. My mother says that I am his son, but I myself do not know; no one has ever known his own father by himself. I wish I had been the son of some fortunate man whom old age overtook among his own possessions. But as it is, the most ill-starred of mortal men is the one they say I was born from, since you ask me this."

221 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "The gods have not made your family nameless for the days to come, since Penelope bore such a son as you. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: what feast is this, and what crowd? What need do you have of it? Is it a banquet or a wedding? It is surely not a meal where each man brings his share, for these men seem to me to be feasting through the house with overbearing insolence. Any man with sense who came among them would be outraged to see so many shameful things."

230 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Stranger, since you ask and question me about this: this house was once, it may be, rich and excellent, while that man was still among his people. But now the gods have willed otherwise, with evil in their minds. They have made him vanish from sight as they have no other man. I would not grieve for him so much even if he were dead, if he had fallen among his companions in the land of the Trojans, or in the arms of his friends after he had wound up the war. Then all the Achaeans would have built him a burial mound, and he would have won great glory for his son too in days to come. But now the Harpies have snatched him away without glory. He is

gone, unseen, unheard of, and he has left me pain and weeping. And it is not for him alone that I mourn and groan, since the gods have made other bitter troubles for me. All the best men who rule over the islands, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus, and all who are lords in rocky Ithaca, all of them 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 my house away. Soon they will tear me to pieces too."

252 Then Pallas Athena spoke to him in indignation: "Oh, for shame! How sorely you miss Odysseus, who is gone, who would lay his hands on the shameless suitors. If only he would come now and stand at the outer doors of the house with helmet and shield and two spears, such as he was when I first saw him in our house, drinking and taking his pleasure, on his way back from Ephyra, from Ilus son of Mermerus—for Odysseus had gone there too in his swift ship, looking for a man-killing poison to smear on his bronze-tipped arrows; but Ilus would not give it to him, for he dreaded the anger of the gods who live forever, but my father gave it to him, for he loved him dearly—if Odysseus, such as he was then, were to come among the suitors, they would all find a swift death and a bitter wedding. But these things lie on the knees of the gods, whether he will come home and take vengeance in his halls, or not. As for you, I urge you to think how you will drive the suitors out of the hall. Come now, listen and heed my words. Tomorrow call the Achaean heroes to an assembly and declare your word to all, and let the gods be your witnesses. Order the suitors to scatter, each to his own; and your mother, if her heart urges her to marry, let her go back to the hall of her father, a man of great power, and they will arrange a marriage and make ready the bride-gifts,[4] very many, as many as should go with a dear daughter. And for yourself I have shrewd advice, if you will take it. Fit out a ship with twenty oarsmen, the best there is, and go and

ask about your father, who has been gone so long, in case some mortal can tell you, or you hear a rumor from Zeus, which most of all brings news to men. First go to Pylos and question noble Nestor, and from there to Sparta, to red-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 endure for a year. But if you hear that he is dead and no longer living, then come home to your dear native land and heap up a mound for him and make funeral offerings, very many, as is fitting, and give your mother to a husband. And when you have finished and done all this, then consider in your mind and in your heart how you may kill the suitors in your halls, by trickery or openly. You must not cling to childish ways, since you are no longer of that age. Or have you not heard what glory noble Orestes won among all men when he killed his father's murderer, guileful Aegisthus, who had killed his famous father? You too, my friend, for I see that you are handsome and tall, be brave, so that men yet to be born may speak well of you. But now I will go down to my swift ship and to my companions, who must be growing impatient waiting for me. See to this yourself, and heed my words."

306 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Stranger, you speak to me with a friend's kindness, as a father speaks to his son, and I will never forget it. But come now, stay a while, eager though you are for your journey, so that you may bathe and refresh your heart, and then go to your ship with a gift, glad at heart, a precious gift and very beautiful, which will be a treasure for you from me, such as dear guest-friends give to their guests."

314 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Do not keep me any longer now, for I am eager to be on my way. Whatever gift your heart bids you give me, give it to me when I

come back again, for me to carry home. Choose a very beautiful one, and you will get its worth in return."

319 So spoke gray-eyed Athena and went away, and like a bird she flew up out of sight. In his heart she put strength and courage, and made him think of his father even more than before. He took note of it in his mind and was amazed in his heart, for he believed it was a god. At once he went among the suitors, a man equal to the gods.

325 The renowned bard was singing to them, and they sat listening in silence. He sang of the bitter homecoming of the Achaeans, which Pallas Athena had laid on them from Troy. In her upper room the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, heard his inspired song and took it to heart, and she came down the tall staircase of her house, not alone: two maids went with her. When she, noble among women, reached the suitors, she stood beside a pillar of the well-built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks, and a loyal maid stood on either side of her. Then, weeping, she spoke to the godlike bard:

337 "Phemius, you know many other songs to charm mortals, deeds of men and gods that bards make famous. Sit there and sing them one of those, and let them drink their wine in silence. But stop this sad song, which always wears down the heart in my breast, since unforgettable grief has come upon me above all others. Such a man I long for, and I remember him always, my husband, whose fame spreads wide through Hellas and the heart of Argos."

345 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mother, why do you begrudge the faithful bard giving pleasure in whatever way his mind moves him? It is not the bards who are to blame. Zeus, surely, is to blame, who gives to men who eat bread, to each one, as he wishes. There is nothing wrong in this man singing of the evil fate of the Danaans, for men praise most the song that comes

newest to their ears. Let your heart and spirit be strong enough to listen. Odysseus was not the only one who lost the day of his return at Troy; many other men perished too. Go to your rooms and see to your own work, the loom and the distaff, and tell your maids to go about their work. Speaking will be the concern of men, of all men, and of me most of all; for the power in this house is mine."

360 She went back to her rooms, amazed, for she laid her son's thoughtful words to heart. She went up to the upper rooms with her serving women, and she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

365 The suitors broke into uproar through the shadowy halls, and every one of them prayed to lie beside her in bed. Thoughtful Telemachus was the first to speak among them:

368 "Suitors of my mother, insolent beyond measure, let us feast now and enjoy ourselves, and let there be no shouting, for it is a fine thing to listen to a bard such as this one, like the gods in his voice. In the morning let us all go to the assembly and take our seats, so that I may tell you plainly to leave my halls. Find other feasts. Eat your own goods, and take turns from house to house. But if this seems better and more profitable to you, that one man's livelihood should be destroyed without payment, then go on and devour it. I will call on the gods who live forever, in the hope that Zeus may grant that such deeds be paid back. Then you would perish inside this house, and there would be no payment for you."

381 So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachus, how boldly he spoke.

383 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to him: "Telemachus, the gods themselves must be teaching you to be a lofty speaker and to talk boldly. May the son of Cronus never make you king in sea-girt Ithaca, though it is your birthright from your father."

388 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, will you be angry with me for what I say? I would gladly take that too, if Zeus should grant it. Or do you think it the worst thing that can befall a man? It is no bad thing to be a king: his house soon grows rich, and he himself is held in greater honor. But there are many other kings of the Achaeans in sea-girt Ithaca, young and old. One of them may hold this, since noble Odysseus is dead. But I will be master of our own house and of the slaves that noble Odysseus won for me in war."

399 Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him: "Telemachus, these things lie on the knees of the gods, which man of the Achaeans will be king in sea-girt Ithaca. But you yourself keep your possessions and be master in your own house. May the man never come who will tear your possessions from you by force, against your will, while there are still men living in Ithaca. 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 the fields of his fathers? Does he bring some news that your father is coming, or has he come here on some business of his own? How he jumped up and was gone at once, and did not wait for us to know him! Yet he did not have the face of a low-born man."

412 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Eurymachus, my father's return is lost, beyond doubt. I no longer trust any news, if it comes from anywhere, and I pay no heed to any prophecy my mother may ask of some seer she has called into the hall. This stranger is a guest-friend of my father's, from Taphos. He says he is Mentes, son of wise Anchialus, and he is lord of the oar-loving Taphians."

420 So Telemachus spoke, but in his heart he knew the immortal goddess. 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 on. Then they went home to rest, each to his own house. Telemachus went to bed where his chamber had been built, high up in the beautiful courtyard, in a place with a view all around, pondering many things in his mind. With him, carrying blazing torches, went Eurycleia, loyal of heart, daughter of Ops son of Peisenor. Laertes had bought her long ago with his own wealth when she was still in her first youth, and he gave twenty oxen for her. He honored her in his halls as much as his loyal wife, but he never lay with her in bed, for he shunned his wife's anger. She was the one who carried the blazing torches with him, and she loved him most of all the slave women, and she had nursed him when he was small. He opened the doors of the well-built chamber, sat down on the bed, took off his soft tunic, and put it in 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 room. She pulled the door shut by its silver handle and drew the bolt home with its strap. There all night long, wrapped in the finest wool of sheep, he pondered in his mind the journey Athena had shown him.

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1. *Slayer of Argus* (Greek *Argeiphontes*): a standing title of Hermes, messenger of the gods, traditionally explained as the killer of Argus, the many-eyed watchman set by Hera over Io.

2. *Argives*, *Achaeans*, and *Danaans*: Homer's three names, used interchangeably, for the Greeks who fought at Troy.

3. *Guest-friends*: men bound by guest-friendship (*xenia*), the sacred tie of hospitality between host and guest, protected by Zeus. It passed from father to son and was sealed by gifts.

4. *Bride-gifts* (*hedna*): the gifts exchanged at a marriage. Usually they are the suitor's gifts to the bride's father; here, as at 2.196, they seem to be what her family sends with her.

Book 2

1 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, the dear son of Odysseus rose from his bed and put on his clothes. He slung his sharp sword over his shoulder, bound his beautiful sandals on his shining feet, and went out of his chamber, like a god to look upon. At once he ordered the clear-voiced heralds to summon the long-haired Achaeans to the assembly. The heralds made the summons, and the men gathered very quickly. When they had gathered and were all assembled, he went to the assembly with a bronze spear in his hand, not alone: two swift dogs went with him. Athena shed a wonderful grace upon him, and all the people gazed at him as he came. He sat down in his father's seat, and the elders made way. Then the hero Aegyptius was the first to speak among them. He was bent with age and knew things beyond counting. His dear son, the spearman Antiphus, had gone with godlike Odysseus in the hollow ships to Ilion,[1] land of fine horses; but the savage Cyclops had killed him in his hollow cave and made him the last meal he ate there. 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 that one, but mourned and grieved for him. Weeping for him, he spoke out before the assembly:

25 "Hear me now, men of Ithaca, what I have to say. We have had no assembly and no session since noble Odysseus went away in the hollow ships. Who has called us together now like this? What great need has come upon him, whether he is one of the

young men or one of the elders? Has he heard some news of the army coming home, which he could tell us plainly, since he learned it first? Or is there some other public matter he will set before us and speak about? He seems to me a good man, and may he prosper. May Zeus bring about for him whatever good thing he has in mind."

35 So he spoke, and the dear son of Odysseus was glad at the words of good omen. He did not sit still for long, but was eager to speak, and he stood up in the middle of the assembly. The herald Peisenor, wise in counsel, put the staff into his hand. Then he spoke, addressing the old man first:

40 "Old man, that man is not far away, and you will soon know him yourself: it is I who called the people together, for grief has come upon me above all. I have heard no news of the army coming home that I could tell you plainly, since I had learned it first, and there is no other public matter that I will set before you and speak about. It is my own need, the evil that 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 gentle as a father. And now there is a far greater evil, which will soon break up my whole house completely and destroy all my livelihood. 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 give his daughter in marriage, and give her to whomever he wished, the man who found favor with him. Instead they haunt our house day after day, slaughtering oxen and sheep and fat goats, feasting and drinking the sparkling wine recklessly, and so much is wasted. For there is no man here like Odysseus to keep ruin from the house. We are not the men to keep it off; even if we tried, we would prove pitiful and unskilled in fighting. I would defend myself, if only I had the strength. For deeds past bearing have been done, and my house has been destroyed beyond all

decency. You should be indignant yourselves, and feel shame before your neighbors, the people who live around us; and fear the wrath of the gods, in case they turn against you in anger at your evil deeds. I beg you, by Olympian Zeus and by Themis, who dissolves and gathers the assemblies of men: hold back, friends, and leave me alone to waste away in bitter grief, unless it was my noble father Odysseus who in hatred did harm to the well-greaved Achaeans, and now you take your revenge on me in your hatred, urging these men on. It would be better for me if you yourselves were eating up my treasures and my flocks. If you were eating them, there might soon be some repayment: we would go about the town pressing you with words, asking for our goods back, until everything had been returned. But now you are filling my heart with pain I can do nothing about."

80 So he spoke in anger, and he dashed the staff to the ground, bursting into tears, and pity seized all the people. Then all the others were silent, and no one dared to answer Telemachus with harsh words. Antinous alone answered him and said:

85 "Telemachus, lofty speaker, unchecked in your fury, what a thing you have said to shame us! You would like to fasten blame on us. But it is not the Achaean suitors who are to blame for you; it is your own dear mother, who is crafty beyond all others. It is now the third year, and soon it will be the fourth, that she has been cheating the hearts in the breasts of the Achaeans. She gives hope to all and makes promises to each man, sending him messages, but her mind is set on other things. And she devised this further trick in her heart: she set up a great loom in the halls and began to weave a web, fine and very wide, and at once she said to us:

96 "'Young men, my suitors, since noble Odysseus is dead, wait, eager as you are for my marriage, until I finish this mantle, so that my spinning may not be wasted and come to nothing. It is a shroud for the hero Laertes, against the time when the deadly fate

of death that lays men out at length shall take him, so that none of the Achaean women in the land may blame me if he, who won so much, should lie without a shroud.'

103 "So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. Then by day she would weave at the great loom, but by night she would unravel it, with torches set beside her. So for three years she deceived the Achaeans with her trick and kept them persuaded. But when the fourth year came and the seasons came round, then one of her women, who knew it well, told us, and we caught her unraveling the splendid web. So she finished it, against her will, because she was forced to. Now this is the suitors' answer to you, so that you may know it in your own heart and all the Achaeans may know it: send your mother away, and order her to marry whichever man her father bids and she herself is pleased with. But she may go on tormenting the sons of the Achaeans for a long time yet, with her mind set on the gifts that Athena has given her above all women, to know beautiful handiwork and to have a good mind and cunning, such as we have never heard of in any woman, even among those of old, the lovely-haired Achaean women who lived before, Tyro and Alcmene and Mycene of the fair crown. Not one of them had such thoughts as Penelope. Yet this at least she has not thought out rightly. For they will go on eating up your livelihood and your possessions as long as she keeps to the mind that the gods have now put in her breast. She wins great fame for herself, but for you the loss of much livelihood. And we will not go back to our own lands or anywhere else until she marries whichever of the Achaeans she chooses."

129 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, I cannot drive out of the house against her will the woman who bore me and raised me. My father is somewhere else in the world, alive or dead. And it would be hard for me to pay back so much to Icarius, if I myself send my mother away of my own accord. I will

suffer evil from her father, and the god will send me more, for my mother will call down the hateful Erinyes[2] as she leaves the house, and I will be blamed by men. So I will never say that word. If your own hearts are indignant at this, then get out of my halls. Find other feasts, eat your own goods, and take turns from house to house. But if this seems better and more profitable to you, that one man's livelihood should be destroyed without payment, then go on and devour it. I will call on the gods who live forever, in the hope that Zeus may grant that such deeds be paid back. Then you would perish inside this house, and there would be no payment for you."

146 So Telemachus spoke, and for him far-seeing Zeus sent two eagles flying from high on a mountain peak. For a while they flew on the breath of the wind, close beside each other, their wings spread wide. But when they reached the middle of the assembly of many voices, they wheeled about there and beat their wings thick and fast, and they looked down on the heads of all, and their eyes foretold destruction. Then they tore each other's cheeks and necks with their talons and darted away to the right, over the houses and the city of the people. The men were amazed at the birds when they saw them with their eyes, and they wondered in their hearts what was to come to pass. Then the old hero Halitherses, son of Mastor, spoke among them, for he alone surpassed the men of his age in knowing birds and in declaring what was fated. With good will toward them he spoke out before the assembly:

161 "Hear me now, men of Ithaca, what I have to say; and it is to the suitors most of all that I declare it, for a great disaster is rolling toward them. Odysseus will not be away from his friends for long. Already, I think, he is near, sowing murder and doom for all these men; and to many others of us who live in clear-seen Ithaca there will be evil too. Long before that, let us think how we may stop

them; or let them stop of their own accord, for that is far better for them, and at once. I do not prophesy without experience, but with sure knowledge. For him, too, I say that everything has been fulfilled as I told him when the Argives went up to Ilion and Odysseus of many wiles went with them. I said that after suffering many evils and losing all his companions, unknown to all, in the twentieth year, he would come home. And now all this is being fulfilled."

177 Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him: "Old man, come now, go home and prophesy to your children, so that they may not suffer some harm in days to come. In these matters I am a far better prophet than you. Many birds fly to and fro under the rays of the sun, and not all of them are birds of fate. Odysseus has perished far away, and how I wish you had perished with him. Then you would not be uttering so many prophecies, or stirring up Telemachus in his anger like this, hoping for some gift for your house, if he will give it. But I will tell you plainly, and it will come to pass: if you, who know many things of old, lead on a younger man with your talk and urge him to rage, it will first be the worse for him, and he will get nothing done for all that; and on you, old man, we will lay a fine that it will grieve your heart to pay, and your pain will be hard to bear. And to Telemachus I myself will give this advice before you all: let him order his mother to go back to her father's house, and they will arrange a marriage and make ready the bride-gifts, very many, as many as should go with a dear daughter. For I do not think the sons of the Achaeans will give up their hard courtship before then, since in any case we fear no one, certainly not Telemachus, for all his many words, and we care nothing for the prophecy you utter, old man, which will never come true, and you make yourself hated all the more. And his goods will be devoured miserably, and there will never be any amends, as long as she puts off the Achaeans in this matter of her

marriage. And we, waiting here day after day, compete for her excellence, and do not go after other women whom each of us might fitly marry."

208 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Eurymachus, and all the rest of you who are lordly suitors, I will not plead with you about this any longer or speak of it, for the gods and all the Achaeans know it already. But come, give me a swift ship and twenty companions who can make the journey for me there and back. I am going to Sparta and to sandy Pylos to ask about the return of my father, who has been gone so long, in case some mortal can tell me, or I hear a rumor from Zeus, which most of all brings news to men. If I hear that my father is alive and on his way home, then, worn down as I am, I could still endure 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 and heap up a mound for him and make funeral offerings, very many, as is fitting, and give my mother to a husband."

224 So he spoke and sat down, and among them rose Mentor, who was a companion of excellent Odysseus. When Odysseus went away in the ships, he had entrusted his whole household to him, that they should obey the old man and that he should keep everything safe. With good will toward them he spoke out before the assembly:

229 "Hear me now, men of Ithaca, what I have to say. Let no sceptered king ever again be eager to be gentle and kind, or have justice at heart; let him always be harsh and do what is wicked, since no one remembers godlike Odysseus among the people he ruled, though he was as gentle with them as a father. I do not grudge the proud suitors their deeds of violence, done in the wickedness of their minds; for they stake their own heads when they violently devour the house of Odysseus, and they say he will never come back. It is the rest of the people I am indignant with,

the way you all sit there in silence and do not rebuke them with a word and restrain the suitors, though they are few and you are many."

242 Then Leocritus, son of Euenor, answered him: "Mentor, you mischief-maker, out of your wits, what a thing you have said, urging them to restrain us! It is hard to fight with men who outnumber you, and over a feast. Even if Odysseus of Ithaca himself were to come and set his heart on driving the lordly suitors out of the hall as they feast in his house, his wife would have no joy in his coming, much as she longs for him; he would meet a shameful death right there, if he fought against so many. What you have said is not right. But come, people, scatter, each of you to your own work. Mentor and Halitherses will speed this boy on his way, since they have been his father's companions from the beginning. But I think he will sit a long time in Ithaca waiting for news, and he will never make this journey."

257 So he spoke, and quickly broke up the assembly. They scattered, each to his own house, and the suitors went to the house of godlike Odysseus.

260 But Telemachus went off alone to the shore of the sea, and after washing his hands in the gray sea he prayed to Athena: "Hear me, you god who came yesterday to our house and told me to go in a ship over the misty sea to ask about the return of my father, who has been gone so long. All this the Achaeans are putting off and hindering, and above all the suitors, in their evil arrogance."

267 So he spoke in prayer, and Athena came near him, in the likeness of Mentor, in form and in voice, and she spoke to him, and her words had wings:

270 "Telemachus, you will be no coward and no fool from now on, if your father's good strength has been instilled in you, such a man as he was to make good both deed and word. Then this journey of yours will not 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 are like their fathers; most are worse, and few are better than their fathers. But since you will be no coward and no fool from now on, and the cunning of Odysseus has not altogether failed you, there is hope that you will bring this work to its end. So now let the plans and purposes of the suitors be, for they are senseless; they have neither sense nor justice. They know nothing of the death and black doom that is close upon them, to perish all in a single day. The journey you have in mind will not 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 with you myself. But you go to the house and keep company with the suitors. Get the provisions ready and pack everything in vessels, wine in jars and barley meal, the marrow of men, in close-sewn skins; and I will quickly gather volunteers among the people. There are many ships in sea-girt Ithaca, new and old. I will look them over and choose the best for you, and we will quickly rig her and launch her on the wide sea."

296 So spoke Athena, daughter of Zeus, and Telemachus did not linger long after he had heard the voice of the god. He went to the house, sad at heart, and found the proud suitors in the halls, skinning goats and singeing hogs in the courtyard. Antinous came straight up to Telemachus with a laugh, clasped his hand, and spoke to him, calling him by name:

303 "Telemachus, lofty speaker, unchecked in your fury, let no other evil deed or word concern your heart, but eat and drink with me just as before. The Achaeans will see to all this for you, a ship and picked oarsmen, so that you may come all the sooner to holy Pylos, to hear news of your noble father."

309 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Antinous, there is no way I can feast in silence among you overbearing men and enjoy myself at ease. Is it not enough that in the past you suit-

ors wasted my many fine possessions, while I was still a child? But now that I am grown and learn the truth by hearing others speak, and the spirit within me is rising, I will try to let loose evil doom upon you, whether I go to Pylos or stay here in this land. I will go, and the journey I speak of will not be in vain, though I go as a passenger, since I have no ship or oarsmen of my own. That is what you must have thought best."

321 He spoke, and he drew his hand lightly out of the hand of Antinous. The suitors were busy with the feast throughout the house. They mocked him and taunted him with words, and one of the arrogant young men would say:

325 "Telemachus is surely plotting our murder. He will bring men from sandy Pylos to help him, or even from Sparta, since he is so terribly eager. Or else he means to go to Ephyra, that rich land, to bring back deadly poisons from there, and throw them into the mixing bowl and destroy us all."

331 And another of the arrogant young men would say: "Who knows whether he too may not go off in the hollow ship and perish far from his friends, wandering like Odysseus? Then he would make even more work for us, for we would have to divide all his possessions, and give the house to his mother to keep, and to whoever marries her."

337 So they spoke, but he went down into his father's high-roofed storeroom, a wide room, where gold and bronze lay piled, and clothing in chests, and plenty of fragrant olive oil. Jars of old wine, sweet to drink, stood there, holding the pure, divine drink inside, ranged in order along the wall, in case Odysseus should ever come home, even after many hardships. The close-fitted doors were shut, double doors, and a woman was in charge there night and day as housekeeper, who guarded everything with the great wisdom of her mind: Eurycleia, daughter of Ops son of Peisenor. Telemachus called her to the storeroom and said to her:

349 "Nurse, come, draw off wine for me in jars, sweet wine, the finest after the one you are keeping in hope of that unhappy man, in case Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, should come from somewhere, escaping death and doom. Fill twelve and fit them all with lids. And pour barley meal for me into well-stitched skins; let there be twenty measures of ground barley meal. You alone must know of this. Have it all ready together, for I will take it in the evening, when my mother has gone up to her room and is thinking of bed. I am going to Sparta and to sandy Pylos to ask about my dear father's return, in case I may hear something."

361 So he spoke, and the dear nurse Eurycleia cried out, and wailing she spoke to him, and her words had wings: "Why, dear child, has this thought come into your mind? Where do you want to go, over so much of the earth, you, an only son, so dearly loved? He has perished far from his country, Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, in a land of strangers. And these men, as soon as you are gone, will plot evil against you, so that you may die by trickery, and they will divide all this among themselves. No, stay here and sit among your own things. There is no need for you to suffer evils on the barren sea or to go wandering."

371 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Take heart, nurse, for this plan is not without a god. But swear that you will not tell my dear mother of this until the eleventh or twelfth day has come, or until she misses me herself and hears that I am gone, so that she may not weep and mar her lovely skin."

377 So he spoke, and the old woman swore the great oath of the gods that she would not. When she had sworn and finished the oath, she at once drew off the wine for him in jars and poured the barley meal into well-stitched skins, and Telemachus went to the house and kept company with the suitors.

382 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought. In the likeness of Telemachus she went all through the city, and

standing beside each man she spoke her word and told them to gather in the evening at the swift ship. And she asked Noemon, the shining son of Phronius, for a swift ship, and he promised it gladly.

388 The sun set, and all the ways grew dark. 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 crowd, and the goddess spurred on each of them.

393 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought. She went to the house of godlike Odysseus, and there she poured sweet sleep over the suitors. She dazed them as they drank and knocked the cups from their hands, and they rose to go to sleep throughout the city; they did not sit there long, for sleep was falling on their eyelids. But gray-eyed Athena called Telemachus out of the well-built halls and spoke to him, in the likeness of Mentor, in form and in voice:

402 "Telemachus, your well-greaved companions are already sitting at the oars, waiting for you to set out. Come, let us go, and not delay our journey long."

405 So speaking, Pallas Athena led the way quickly, and he followed in the footsteps of the god. When they had come down to the ship and the sea, they found the long-haired companions on the shore, and the sacred strength of Telemachus spoke among them:

410 "Come, friends, let us bring the provisions. Everything is already gathered in the hall. My mother knows nothing of it, nor do the other women servants; only one has heard of it."

413 So speaking, he led the way, and they went with him. They brought everything and stowed it in the well-benched ship, as the dear son of Odysseus told them. Telemachus went aboard the ship, and Athena went before him and sat down in the stern of the ship, and Telemachus sat down close beside her. The men cast off the

stern cables, went aboard themselves, and sat down at the oar-locks. Gray-eyed Athena sent them a favoring breeze, a fresh West Wind, singing over the wine-dark sea. Telemachus called to his companions and told them to lay hold of the tackle, and they listened to his call. They raised the mast of fir, set it in the hollow box amidships, made it fast with the forestays, and hoisted the white sail with well-twisted ropes of oxhide. The wind filled the belly of the sail, and the dark wave sang loud around the stem as the ship went on. She ran over the waves, making her way. When they had made the tackle fast throughout the swift black ship, they set out mixing bowls brimming with wine and poured offerings to the immortal gods who are forever, and above all to the gray-eyed daughter of Zeus. All night long and into the dawn the ship cut her way.

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1. *Ilion*: another name for Troy.

2. *Erinyes*: avenging spirits who pursue those who wrong a parent, a guest, or a suppliant; a mother wronged by her son could call them down upon him.

Book 3

1 The sun leapt up, leaving the lovely waters, into the bronze sky, to give light to the immortals and to mortal men on the grain-giving land; and they came to Pylos, the well-built citadel of Neleus. There on the seashore the people were offering sacrifice, bulls all black, to the dark-haired Earth-shaker. There were nine companies, and five hundred men sat in each, and in each they held nine bulls ready. They had tasted the inner parts and were burning the thigh bones[1] for the god when the newcomers put straight in to shore. They furled the sail of the balanced ship and hauled it up, moored her, and stepped out themselves. Telemachus stepped out of the ship, and Athena led the way. The goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke to him first:

14 "Telemachus, you must not be shy now, not in the least. This is why you sailed over the sea, to ask about your father, where the earth hides him and what fate he met. So come now, go straight to Nestor, tamer of horses. Let us see what counsel he keeps hidden in his breast. Beg him yourself to tell you the truth. He will not tell a lie, for he is very wise."

21 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mentor, how shall I go? How shall I greet him? I have no practice yet in subtle speech, and a young man is shy of questioning an older one."

25 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "Telemachus, some things you will think of yourself in your own mind, and others a god will put into it. For I do not think you were born and raised without the favor of the gods."

29 So speaking, Pallas Athena led the way quickly, and he followed in the footsteps of the god. They came to the gathering and the seats of the men of Pylos, where Nestor sat with his sons, and around him his companions were preparing the feast, roasting meat and putting more on the spits. When they saw the strangers, they all came crowding round, greeted them with their hands, and asked them to sit down. Nestor's son Peisistratus came up first, took both of them by the hand, and seated them at the feast on soft fleeces on the sand of the shore, beside his brother Thrasymedes and his father. He gave them portions of the inner parts and poured wine into a golden cup, and, raising it in greeting, he spoke to Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis:[2]

43 "Pray now, stranger, to the lord Poseidon, for his is the feast you have come upon in coming here. And when you have poured your offering and prayed, as is right, then give this man the cup of honey-sweet wine to pour his offering too, since I think he also prays to the immortals; all men have need of the gods. But he is younger, of my own age, so I will give the golden goblet to you first."

51 So speaking, he put the cup of sweet wine in her hand, and Athena was glad at the man's good sense and justice, because he had given the golden goblet to her first. At once she prayed earnestly to the lord Poseidon:

55 "Hear me, Poseidon, earth-holder, and do not grudge us, who pray to you, the fulfillment of these things. First of all, grant glory to Nestor and his sons, and then give the others, all the men of Pylos, a gracious return for their glorious hecatomb. And grant also that Telemachus and I may go home with that accomplished for which we came here in our swift black ship."

62 So she prayed, and she herself was bringing it all to pass. She gave Telemachus the beautiful two-handled cup, and the dear son

of Odysseus prayed in the same way. When they had roasted the outer meat and drawn it off the spits, they divided the portions and feasted a glorious feast. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, was the first to speak among them:

69 "Now it is better to ask and question the strangers who they are, since they have 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 wander at random over the sea like pirates, who roam about risking their own lives and bringing evil to men of other lands?"

75 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him, taking courage, for Athena herself put courage in his heart, so that he would ask about his absent father and so that a good name might be his among men:

79 "Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans, you ask where we are from, and I will tell you. We have come from Ithaca, under Mount Neion. This business I speak of is my own, not the people's. I am following the wide report of my father, in case I may hear something, of noble, steadfast Odysseus, who once, they say, fought at your side and sacked the city of the Trojans. Of all the others who fought against the Trojans we have heard where each one perished by a bitter death, but of him the son of Cronus has made even the death unknown. No one can say clearly where he perished, whether he was overcome by enemies on the mainland or 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 bitter death, whether you saw it with your own eyes or heard the story from some other wanderer; for his mother bore him to sorrow beyond all men. Do not soften anything out of respect for me or out of pity, but tell me plainly how you came to see it. I beg you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, promised you a word or a

deed and fulfilled it in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaeans suffered woes, remember it now for me, and tell me the truth."

102 Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, answered him: "My friend, since you have reminded me of the misery we endured in that land, we sons of the Achaeans, unchecked in our fury, all that we suffered wandering in our ships over the misty sea after plunder, wherever Achilles led, and all our fighting around the great city of lord Priam: there all our best were killed. There lies warlike Ajax, there Achilles, there Patroclus, a counselor equal to the gods, and there my own dear son, strong and excellent, Antilochus, surpassing all in speed of foot and as a fighter. And we suffered many other evils besides these; what mortal man could tell them all? Not even if you stayed here five or six years asking about all the evils the noble Achaeans suffered there could you hear them; you would grow weary first and go home to your native land. For nine years we were busy stitching together evil for them with every kind of trick, and the son of Cronus hardly brought it to an end. There no one ever wished to match himself with him in cunning, for noble Odysseus far surpassed them all in every kind of trick, your father, if you really are his son. Awe holds me as I look at you. Your words are like his, and you would never think that a younger man could speak so like him. All that time, noble Odysseus and I never spoke on different sides, either in the assembly or in council. We had one mind, and with thought and wise counsel we planned how things might go best for the Argives. But when we had sacked the steep city of Priam and gone away in our ships, and a god scattered the Achaeans, then Zeus planned in his mind a bitter homecoming for the Argives, since not all of them were sensible or just. So many of them met an evil fate through the deadly wrath of the gray-eyed daughter of the mighty father, who set strife between the two sons of Atreus. They 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 the two of them told why they had gathered the army. Then Menelaus urged all the Achaeans to think of their return 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 appease the dread anger of Athena. Fool, he did not know that she would not 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 an unearthly din, and they were split between two counsels. That night we rested, each side pondering hard thoughts against the other, for Zeus was preparing a disaster of evil for us. At dawn some of us dragged our ships down to the bright sea and put our goods aboard, and the deep-girdled women. But half of the army held back and stayed there beside the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, and half of us went aboard and rowed away. The ships sailed very swiftly, for a god smoothed the vast sea. We came to Tenedos and made sacrifices to the gods, eager for home. But Zeus did not yet intend our return, cruel god, who stirred up evil strife a second time. Some turned their curved ships back and went with lord Odysseus, wise and crafty-minded, to do a favor once more to Agamemnon, son of Atreus. But I fled with all the ships that followed me, for I knew that the god was planning evil. The warlike son of Tydeus fled too and urged on his companions. Later red-haired Menelaus came after us and overtook us in Lesbos, as we were debating the long voyage, whether we should sail above rugged Chios, by the island of Psyria, keeping it on our left, or below Chios, past windy Mimas. We asked the god to show us a sign, and he showed it to us and told us to cut across the middle of the sea to Euboea, so as to escape from harm as quickly as possible. A whistling wind rose and blew, and the ships ran 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, now that we had crossed the great sea. It was the fourth day when the companions of Diomedes, son of Tydeus, tamer of horses, beached their balanced ships in Argos. But I held on for Pylos, and the wind never once died away, from the time the god first sent it to blow.

184 "So I came home, dear child, without news, and I know nothing of them, which of the Achaeans were saved and which perished. But all that I have heard, sitting in my halls, you shall learn, as is right, and I will not hide it from you. They say the Myrmidons, famed with the spear, came home safely, led by the shining son of great-hearted Achilles, and safely too Philoctetes, the glorious son of Poias. Idomeneus brought all his companions to Crete, those who escaped from the war, and the sea took none of them from him. The son of Atreus you yourselves have heard of, far away as you are, how he came home and how Aegisthus devised his bitter death. But he paid for it terribly. So good a thing it is that a son should be left behind when a man is killed, since that son took vengeance on his father's murderer, guileful Aegisthus, who had killed his famous father. You too, my friend, for I see that you are handsome and tall, be brave, so that men yet to be born may speak well of you."

201 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans, yes, that son took vengeance indeed, and the Achaeans will spread his fame far and wide, for men to come to hear of. If only the gods would clothe me with such strength, to take vengeance on the suitors for their grievous transgression, who in their insolence are plotting reckless deeds against me. But the gods have not spun such happiness for me, for my father and for me. Now, in spite of everything, I must endure."

210 Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, answered him: "My friend, since you have reminded me of this and spoken of it, they say that many suitors, for your mother's sake, are plotting evil in

your halls against your will. Tell me, do you submit willingly, or do the people throughout the land hate you, following the voice of a god? Who knows whether Odysseus will come one day and pay them back for their violence, either he alone or all the Achaeans together? If only gray-eyed Athena were willing to love you as she cared for glorious Odysseus then, in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaeans suffered woes—for I have never seen the gods show love so openly as Pallas Athena openly stood by him—if she were willing to love you so and care for you in her heart, then some of those men would forget all about marriage."

225 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Old man, I do not think that word will ever come to pass. What you have said is too great; amazement holds me. It would not happen for me, hope as I might, not even if the gods should will it so."

229 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "Telemachus, what a word has escaped the fence of your teeth! A god who wishes it can easily bring a man safe home, even from far away. I would rather suffer many hardships and then come home and see the day of my return, than come home and perish at my own hearth, as Agamemnon perished by the treachery of Aegisthus and of 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 death that lays men out at length shall take him."

239 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mentor, let us speak of this no more, grieved as we are. For him there is no real return any longer; the immortals have already planned his death and black doom. But now I want to ask Nestor about something else and question him, since he knows beyond others what is just and wise. They say he has been king through three generations of men, and to look at him he seems 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 death did

guileful Aegisthus devise for him, that he killed a man far better than himself? Was Menelaus not in Achaean Argos, but wandering somewhere else among men, so that Aegisthus took courage and killed his brother?"

253 Then Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, answered him: "Then I will tell you the whole truth, child. You can guess yourself how it would have turned out if the son of Atreus, red-haired Menelaus, coming home from Troy, had found Aegisthus alive in the halls. Then they would not even have heaped earth over him in death; the dogs and the birds would have torn him to pieces 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 devised. For we were sitting there at Troy, finishing our many labors, while he, at his ease in the heart of horse-pasturing Argos, kept trying to charm the wife of Agamemnon with words. At first noble Clytemnestra refused the shameful deed, for she had a good heart. And there was a bard with her too, whom the son of Atreus, when he left for Troy, had strictly charged to watch over his wife. But when the fate of the gods bound her and she was overcome, then Aegisthus took the bard to a desert island and left him there to be the prey and plunder of birds, and her, willing as he was willing, he led away to his own house. He burned many thighs on the holy altars of the gods and hung up many offerings, woven work and gold, for he had accomplished a great deed that he had never hoped for in his heart.

276 "For we were sailing together on our way from Troy, the son of Atreus and I, with friendship between us. But when we came to holy Sunium, the headland of Athens, there Phoebus Apollo assailed the helmsman of Menelaus with his gentle arrows and killed him as he held the steering oar of the running ship in his hands: Phrontis, son of Onetor, who surpassed all the tribes of men in steering a ship when storm winds were raging. So

Menelaus was held back there, eager as he was for the journey, to bury his companion and give him funeral honors. But when he too, going on over the wine-dark sea in his hollow ships, came running to the steep headland of Malea, then far-seeing Zeus planned a hateful voyage for him and poured on him the blast of whistling winds, and the waves swelled huge, like mountains. Then Zeus split the fleet, and some ships he drove to Crete, where the Cydonians lived about the streams of the Iardanus. There is a smooth rock, sheer to the sea, at the edge of Gortyn 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. Some of the ships came there, and the men barely escaped destruction, but the waves smashed the ships against the reefs. But the other five dark-prowed ships the wind and the water carried on and brought to Egypt. So Menelaus was wandering there with his ships among men of foreign speech, gathering much livelihood and gold; and meanwhile Aegisthus devised these bitter deeds at home. For seven years he ruled over Mycenae, rich in gold, after he killed the son of Atreus, and the people were subdued under him. But in the eighth year noble Orestes came back from Athens to be his bane, and he killed his father's murderer, guileful Aegisthus, who had killed his famous 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 same day Menelaus, good at the war cry, came to him, bringing many treasures, as much as his ships could carry.

313 "And you, my friend, do not wander long and far from home, leaving your possessions behind and such overbearing men in your house, in case they divide your possessions and eat them all up, and you have made a useless journey. But I urge you and bid you to go to Menelaus. He has only lately come home from abroad, from people from whom no one would hope in his heart to return, once

the storm winds had driven him off course into so great a sea, a sea so vast and terrible that not even birds come back from it within a year. Go now with your ship and your companions. Or if you want to go by land, there is a chariot and horses here for you, and my sons are here, who will be your guides to bright Lacedaemon, where red-haired Menelaus lives. Beg him yourself to tell you the truth. He will not tell a lie, for he is very wise."

329 So he spoke, and the sun went down and darkness came on. Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, spoke among them: "Old man, all that you have told us is right and fitting. But come, cut out the tongues and mix the wine, so that when we have poured our offerings to Poseidon and the other immortals we may think of bed, for it is time. The light has already gone down into the dark, and it is not fitting to sit long at the feast of the gods; we should go."

337 So spoke the daughter of Zeus, and they listened to her voice. Heralds poured water over their hands, and the young men filled the mixing bowls to the brim with drink and served it out to all, first pouring a few drops into each cup for the gods. They threw the tongues into the fire, and standing up they poured their offerings over them. But when they had poured their offerings and drunk as much as their hearts desired, then Athena and Telemachus, godlike in looks, were both eager to go back to the hollow ship. But Nestor held them back, rebuking them:

346 "May Zeus forbid it, and the other immortal gods, that you should go away from me to your swift ship, as if from someone utterly without clothes, some poor man who has no cloaks and blankets in plenty in his house for himself and his guests to sleep softly in. But I have cloaks and beautiful blankets. Surely the dear son of this man, Odysseus, will not lie down on the deck of a ship while I am alive, and while my sons are left in my halls after me to entertain strangers, whoever comes to my house."

356 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "You have spoken well, dear old man, and it is right for Telemachus to do as you say, since this is far better. He will go with you now, to sleep in your halls. But I will go to the black ship, to cheer our companions and tell them everything. I am the only older man among them; the others are younger men who follow out of friendship, all of an age with great-hearted Telemachus. There I will lie down tonight beside the hollow black ship. But at dawn I will go to the great-hearted Caucones, where a debt is owed to me, not a new one and not small. As for this man, since he has come to your house, send him on with a chariot and with your son, and give him horses, the swiftest you have and the best in strength."

371 So speaking, gray-eyed Athena went away in the likeness of a sea eagle, and amazement seized all who saw it. The old man marveled when he saw it with his eyes. He took Telemachus by the hand and spoke to him, calling him by name:

375 "My friend, I do not think you will be a coward or a weakling, if, young as you are, the gods go with you like this as your guides. For this was none other of those who have their homes on Olympus but the daughter of Zeus, most glorious Tritogeneia,[3] who honored your noble father too among the Argives. But be gracious, queen, and grant me a good name, to me and my sons and my revered wife. And I will sacrifice to you a yearling heifer, broad of brow, unbroken, that no man has yet led under the yoke. I will sacrifice her to you and cover her horns with gold."

385 So he prayed, and Pallas Athena heard him. Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, led them, his sons and his sons-in-law, to his own beautiful house. When they came to the glorious house of the lord, they sat down in rows on the seats and chairs, and when they had come, the old man mixed a bowl for them of sweet wine, which the housekeeper had opened in its eleventh year, loosening its seal. The old man mixed a bowl of this, and as he poured his

offering he prayed earnestly to Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis.

395 But when they had poured their offerings and drunk as much as their hearts desired, they went home to rest, each to his own house. But Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, had Telemachus sleep there, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, on a corded bed under the echoing portico, and beside him Peisistratus of the good ash spear, leader of men, who was the only son still unmarried in his halls. He himself slept in the inner room of the high house, and his wife, the lady of the house, made up the bed for him.

404 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, rose from his bed, went out, and sat down on the polished stones that stood before his high doors, white and glistening as if with oil. On them Neleus used to sit, a counselor equal to the gods; but he had long since been overcome by his fate and had gone to the house of Hades. Now Gerenian Nestor sat on them in his turn, the warden of the Achaeans, holding the scepter. His sons came out of their chambers and gathered around him: Echephron and Stratius, Perseus and Aretus, and godlike Thrasymedes; and then the hero Peisistratus came as the sixth, and they brought Telemachus, like the gods in looks, and seated him beside them. Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, was the first to speak among them:

418 "Quickly, my dear children, fulfill my wish, so that first of all the gods I may win the favor of Athena, who came to me plainly to be seen at the rich feast of the god. Come, let one of you go to the plain for a heifer, so that she may come as quickly as possible, and let the cowherd drive her. Let another go to the black ship of great-hearted Telemachus and bring all his companions, leaving only two. And let another tell the goldsmith Laerceus to come here, to cover the heifer's horns with gold. The rest of you stay here together, and tell the serving women inside to prepare a feast

throughout the glorious house, and to bring seats and wood to put round the altar, and fresh water."

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 with 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 gave the gold, and the smith worked it and covered the heifer's horns with it, so that the goddess might rejoice to see the offering. Stratius and noble Echephron led the heifer by the horns. Aretus came from the storeroom carrying water for their hands in a basin worked with flowers, and in his other hand he held barley grains in a basket. Thrasymedes, staunch in battle, stood by holding a sharp axe in his hand, ready to strike the heifer. Perseus held the bowl for the blood. The old horseman Nestor began the rite with the water for the hands and the barley grains, and prayed earnestly to Athena as he began, throwing hairs from the victim's head into the fire.

447 When they had prayed and scattered the barley grains, at once Nestor's son, high-spirited Thrasymedes, came close and struck. The axe cut through the sinews of the neck and loosed the heifer's strength, and the women raised the sacred cry, the daughters and the sons' wives and the revered wife of Nestor, Eurydice, eldest of the daughters of Clymenus. Then they lifted the heifer from the earth with its wide ways and held her, and Peisistratus, leader of men, cut her throat. When the black blood had flowed out of her and the life had left the bones, they quickly cut her up; at once they cut out the thigh bones, all in due order, and wrapped them in a double layer of fat and laid raw strips of meat on them. The old man burned them on split wood and poured sparkling wine over them, and the young men beside him held five-pronged

forks in their hands. When the thigh bones were burned and they had tasted the inner parts, they cut up the rest and spitted it, and roasted it, holding the pointed spits in their hands.

464 Meanwhile lovely Polycaste, youngest daughter of Nestor son of Neleus, bathed Telemachus. When she had bathed him and rubbed him with oil and put a fine mantle and a tunic about him, he stepped out of the bath looking like the immortals, and he went and sat down beside Nestor, shepherd of the people.

470 When they had roasted the outer meat and drawn it off the spits, they sat down and feasted, and good men stood up and poured wine into golden cups. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, was the first to speak among them:

475 "My sons, come, yoke horses with lovely manes to a chariot for Telemachus, so that he may be on his way."

477 So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed, and quickly yoked the swift horses to the chariot. The housekeeper put in bread and wine and delicacies, such as Zeus-nurtured kings eat. Telemachus stepped up into the beautiful chariot, and beside him Nestor's son Peisistratus, leader of men, stepped into the chariot and took the reins in his hands. He touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew willingly toward the plain and left the steep citadel of Pylos behind, and all day long they shook the yoke they bore between them.

487 The sun set, and all the ways grew dark. They came to Pherae, to the house of Diocles, son of Ortilochus, whom Alpheus fathered. There they spent the night, and he set before them the gifts due to guests.

491 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, they yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot, and drove out of the gateway and the echoing portico. Peisistratus touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew willingly.

They came to the wheat-bearing plain, and from there they pressed on to the end of their journey, so well did the swift horses carry them. The sun set, and all the ways grew dark.

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1. *Thigh bones*: in Homeric sacrifice the thigh bones were cut out, wrapped in fat, and burned for the gods, whose share was the savor of the smoke; the men then tasted the inner parts and feasted on the meat.

2. *Aegis*: the terrible goatskin shield or cape of Zeus, which Athena also bears; when shaken it strikes enemies with panic.

3. *Tritogeneia*: an ancient title of Athena of uncertain meaning, often explained as “born at Lake Triton” or “born from the head.”

Book 4

1 They came to hollow Lacedaemon with its many ravines and drove to the house of glorious Menelaus. They found him giving a wedding feast for many kinsmen in his house, for his son and for his excellent daughter. The daughter he was sending to the son of Achilles, breaker of men, for he had first promised and pledged at Troy to give her, and now the gods were bringing about the marriage. He was sending her off with horses and chariots to the renowned city of the Myrmidons, over whom her bridegroom ruled. For his son he was bringing home from Sparta the daughter of Alector, for his late-born son, strong Megapenthes, whom a slave woman had borne him; for to Helen the gods granted no more children after she had first borne her lovely daughter, Hermione, who had the beauty of golden Aphrodite. So the neighbors and kinsmen of glorious Menelaus were feasting throughout the great high-roofed house and making merry, and among them the godlike bard sang to the lyre, and two tumblers whirled in the middle of the crowd as he led the song.

20 The two of them, the hero Telemachus and the splendid son of Nestor, halted themselves and their horses at the gateway of the house. Lord Eteoneus, the busy attendant of glorious Menelaus, came out and saw them, and he went through the house to tell the shepherd of the people. He stood close beside him and spoke to him, and his words had wings:

26 "There are two strangers here, Zeus-nurtured Menelaus, two men who look like the race of great Zeus. Tell me, shall we

unyoke their swift horses, or send them on to someone else who will make them welcome?"

30 Deeply troubled, red-haired Menelaus said to him: "You were no fool before, Eteoneus, son of Boethous, but now you are babbling foolishness like a child. Surely we two ate at many strangers' tables before we came here, hoping that Zeus would someday give us rest from our misery. Unyoke the strangers' horses, and bring the men themselves inside to feast."

37 So he spoke, and Eteoneus hurried through the hall and called the other busy attendants to follow him. They unyoked the sweating horses from under the yoke and tied them at the horses' mangers, and threw down spelt before them and mixed in white barley, and they leaned the chariots against the shining walls of the gateway and led the men into the divine house. They marveled as they looked about the house of the Zeus-nurtured king, for there was a gleam as of the sun or the moon throughout the high-roofed house of glorious Menelaus. When they had gazed their fill, they stepped into the polished baths and bathed. When the maids had bathed them and rubbed them with oil and put woolly cloaks and tunics about them, they sat down on chairs beside Menelaus, son of Atreus. A maid brought water in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and drew up a polished table beside them. The revered housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, and many dishes besides, giving freely of what she had. A carver lifted up platters of every kind of meat and set them beside them, and placed golden cups by them. Then red-haired Menelaus greeted the two of them and said:

60 "Take some food and welcome. Then, when you have eaten dinner, we will ask who among men you are. The line of your parents is not lost in you; you are of the race of Zeus-nurtured kings who bear the scepter, for base men could not father sons like you."

65 So he spoke, and he took in his hands the fat roast chine of beef that had been set before him as his own portion of honor and set it before them. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, Telemachus spoke to the son of Nestor, holding his head close so that the others would not hear:

71 "Look, son of Nestor, dear to my heart, at the flash of bronze throughout the echoing halls, and of gold and electrum and silver and ivory. The courtyard of Olympian Zeus must be like this inside, such endless riches are here. Awe holds me as I look."

76 Red-haired Menelaus heard what he was saying, and he spoke to them, and his words had wings:

78 "Dear children, no mortal could rival Zeus, for his halls and his possessions are immortal. But among men, there may be one who could rival me in possessions, or there may not. For I suffered much and wandered much before 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, and I came to the Ethiopians and the Sidonians and the Erembi, and to Libya, where lambs grow horns as soon as they are born, for the ewes bear lambs three times in the full year. There neither lord nor shepherd lacks for cheese or meat or sweet milk; the ewes give milk for sucking all year long. While I wandered in those lands, gathering great livelihood, another man killed my brother by stealth, unawares, through the treachery of his accursed wife. So I take no joy in being lord of these riches. You must have heard all this from your fathers, whoever they are, for I suffered very much and lost a house that was well lived in and held many fine things. I wish I lived in my halls with only a third part of this wealth, and the men were safe who perished then in wide Troy, far from horse-pasturing Argos. And yet, though I mourn and grieve for them all, often as I sit in my halls, sometimes I satisfy my heart with weeping, and

sometimes I stop again, for men soon have their fill of chill lament. But for all of them I do not mourn so much, grieved as I am, as for one, who makes sleep and food hateful to me when I think of him, since none of the Achaeans toiled as much as Odysseus toiled and took on himself. For him it was fated that there should be sorrows, and for me a grief for him that is never forgotten, since he has been gone so long, and we do not know whether he is alive or dead. The old man Laertes must be mourning him, and sensible Penelope, and Telemachus, whom he left a newborn child in his house."

113 So he spoke, and he stirred in Telemachus a longing to weep for his father. Hearing of his father, he let a tear fall from his eyes to the ground, holding up his purple cloak before his eyes with both hands. Menelaus noticed him, and he pondered in his mind and in his heart whether to let him speak of his father himself, or to question him first and test him on every point.

120 While he was pondering this in his mind and in his heart, Helen came out of her fragrant, high-roofed chamber, like Artemis of the golden distaff. With her came Adreste, who set a well-made chair for her, and Alcippe brought a rug of soft wool, and Phylo brought a silver workbasket, which Alcandre, the wife of Polybus, had given her. Polybus lived in Egyptian Thebes, where the greatest riches lie stored in the houses, and he had given Menelaus two silver baths, two tripods, and ten talents[1] of gold. And besides, his wife gave Helen beautiful gifts of her own: a golden distaff, and a workbasket that ran on wheels, made of silver, its rims finished with gold. This the maid Phylo brought and set beside her, filled with finely spun yarn, and across it lay the distaff with violet-dark wool. Helen sat down on the chair, and there was a footstool for her feet. At once she questioned her husband on every point:

138 "Do we know, Zeus-nurtured Menelaus, who these men declare themselves to be, who have come to our house? Am I mis-

taken, or am I right? My heart bids me speak. I tell you, I have never seen anyone so like another, man or woman (awe holds me as I look), as this man is like the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachus, whom that man left a newborn child in his house when for my sake, shameless that I was, you Achaeans came to Troy with bold war in your hearts."

147 Red-haired Menelaus answered her: "I see it now too, wife, as you compare them. His feet were like these, and his hands, and the glance of his eyes, and his head and the hair above. And just now, as I was remembering Odysseus and telling how much he toiled and suffered for my sake, this young man shed a bitter tear from under his brows, holding up his purple cloak before his eyes."

155 Then Nestor's son Peisistratus answered him: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured, leader of the people, he is truly that man's son, as you say. But he is modest, and in his heart he thinks it unseemly, coming here for the first time, to make a show of hasty talk before you, whose voice we two delight in as if it were a god's. Gerenian Nestor, the horseman, sent me with him to be his guide, for he longed to see you, so that you might give him some word of advice or some help. A son has many sorrows in his halls when his father is gone and there are no others to help him, as it is now with Telemachus. His father is gone, and there are no others among the people who could keep harm from him."

168 Red-haired Menelaus answered him: "Ah! So the son of a man I dearly loved has come to my house, a man who for my sake endured many trials. I thought that if he came home I would love him above all the other Argives, if Olympian Zeus, the far-seeing, had granted the two of us a homecoming over the sea in our swift ships. I would have given him a city in Argos to live in and built him a house, bringing him from Ithaca with his possessions and his son and all his people, emptying one of the cities that lie around here, that are ruled by me. Then, living here, we would often have been

together, and nothing would have parted us in our love and delight until the black cloud of death enfolded us. But a god himself must have begrudged us this, the god who made that unhappy man alone fail to return."

183 So he spoke, and he stirred in them all a longing to weep. Argive Helen wept, born of Zeus; Telemachus wept, and Menelaus, son of Atreus; and the son of Nestor could not keep his eyes from tears, for in his heart he remembered excellent Antilochus, whom the glorious son of shining Dawn had killed. Remembering him, he spoke, and his words had wings:

190 "Son of Atreus, old Nestor always said that you were wise beyond all mortals, whenever we spoke of you in his halls and questioned one another. So now, if it may be, listen to me. I take no pleasure in weeping after supper; there will be early-born Dawn tomorrow. Not that I think it wrong to weep for any mortal who has died and met his fate. This is the only honor we give to wretched mortals, to cut our hair and let a tear fall from our cheeks. For I too lost a brother, by no means the worst of the Argives. You must have known him. I never met him or saw him, but they say that Antilochus was beyond all others, surpassing in speed of foot and as a fighter."

203 Red-haired Menelaus answered him: "My friend, you have said all that a wise man would say and do, even one older than you. You are the son of such a father, and so you speak wisely. Easily known is the son of a man for whom the son of Cronus spins good fortune at his marriage and his birth, as now he has granted Nestor all his days, without end, to grow old in comfort in his halls, and his sons to be wise and the best with the spear. So let us leave the weeping that came before, and think once more of supper, and let them pour water over our hands. In the morning too there will be stories for Telemachus and me to tell each other."

216 So he spoke, and Asphalion poured water over their hands, the busy attendant of glorious Menelaus. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.

219 Then Helen, born of Zeus, had another thought. At once she cast a drug into the wine they were drinking, a drug against grief and anger, that made one forget every evil. Whoever swallowed it, once it was mixed in the bowl, would not let a tear fall from his cheeks all that day, not even if his mother and father lay dead, not even if before his eyes men killed his brother or his dear son with the bronze, and he saw it with his own eyes. Such cunning drugs the daughter of Zeus had, good drugs, which Polydamna, wife of Thon, had given her, a woman of Egypt, where the grain-giving land bears the most drugs, many good and many deadly, mixed together. There every man is a physician, skilled beyond all men, for they are of the race of Paeon. When she had put the drug in and told them to pour the wine, she spoke again and said:

235 "Menelaus, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured, and you here, sons of noble men: the god Zeus gives good and evil, now to one and now to another, for he can do all things. So now sit and feast in the halls and take pleasure in stories, for I will tell you something fitting. I could not tell or name all the labors of steadfast Odysseus, but here is the kind of thing that strong man did and dared in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaeans suffered woes. He marked himself with shameful blows, threw wretched rags over his shoulders, like a servant, and slipped into the city of wide streets of his enemies. Hiding himself, he made himself look like another man, a beggar, though at the ships of the Achaeans he was nothing of the kind. In this likeness he slipped into the city of the Trojans, and none of them knew him. I alone recognized him for what he was, and I questioned him, but in his cunning he kept avoiding me. But when I had bathed him and rubbed him with oil and put clothes on him, and sworn a mighty oath not to reveal

Odysseus among the Trojans 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 and brought back much knowledge of the enemy. Then the other Trojan women wailed aloud, but my heart was glad, for already my heart had turned to going back home, and I grieved for the madness that Aphrodite gave me when she led me there from my dear native land, leaving my child and my bridal chamber and my husband, a man who lacked nothing, neither in mind nor in looks."

265 Red-haired Menelaus answered her: "Yes, wife, all that you have said is right and fitting. 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 eyes such a man as steadfast Odysseus was in his heart. Here is the kind of thing that strong man did and dared in the polished horse, where all we best of the Argives sat, bringing murder and doom to the Trojans. Then you came there; some god must have bidden you, who wished to give glory to the Trojans, and godlike Deiphobus followed you as you went. Three times you walked around the hollow ambush, feeling it all over, and you called the best of the Danaans by name, making your voice like the voice of each man's wife. And I and the son of Tydeus and noble Odysseus, sitting in the middle, heard you calling. We two started up, eager 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 were silent, but Anticlus alone wanted to answer you. But Odysseus pressed his mouth shut with his strong hands, never letting go, and saved all the Achaeans. He held him so until Pallas Athena led you away."

290 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured, leader of the people, that makes it

all the more painful. None of this kept bitter death away from him, not even if the heart inside him had been made of iron. But come, send us to bed, so that we may lie down now and take our pleasure in sweet sleep."

296 So he spoke, and Argive Helen told the serving women to set beds under the portico and to lay fine purple blankets on them and spread rugs over them, 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 a herald led the guests out. So they slept there in the forecourt of the house, the hero Telemachus and the splendid son of Nestor, and the son of Atreus slept in the inner room of the high house, and beside him lay long-robed Helen, noble among women.

306 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, Menelaus, good at the war cry, rose from his bed and put on his clothes. He slung his sharp sword over his shoulder, bound his beautiful sandals on his shining feet, and went out of his chamber, like a god to look upon. He sat down beside Telemachus and spoke to him, calling him by name:

312 "What need has brought you here, hero Telemachus, to bright Lacedaemon, over the broad back of the sea? Is it the people's business or your own? Tell me this truly."

315 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured, leader of the people, I have come in case you can tell me some news of my father. My house is being eaten up, my rich lands are ruined, and the house is full of hostile men, who are forever slaughtering my thronging sheep and my shambling cattle with curving horns, the suitors of my mother, insolent beyond measure. That is why I have come now to your knees, in case you are willing to tell me of his bitter death, whether you saw it with your own eyes or heard the story from some other wanderer; for his mother bore him to sorrow beyond all men. Do not

soften anything out of respect for me or out of pity, but tell me plainly how you came to see it. I beg you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, promised you a word or a deed and fulfilled it in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaeans suffered woes, remember it now for me, and tell me the truth."

332 Deeply troubled, red-haired Menelaus said to him: "Oh, for shame! So they want to lie in the bed of a strong-hearted man, cowards that they are! As when a doe has laid her newborn, suckling fawns to sleep in the lair of a mighty lion, and goes out to range over the spurs and the grassy glens, grazing, and then the lion comes back to his lair and lets loose a shameful death on both of them, so Odysseus will let loose a shameful death on those men. Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, if only Odysseus would come among the suitors such as he was once in well-built Lesbos, when he stood up to wrestle Philomeleides in a contest and threw him hard, and all the Achaeans rejoiced; if he came among the suitors such as he was then, they would all find a swift death and a bitter wedding. But as for what you ask and beg of me, I will not turn aside and speak of other things, nor will I deceive you. Of all that the unerring old man of the sea told me, I will not hide a single word from you or keep it back.

351 "In Egypt the gods still held me back, eager as I was to come home, because I had not offered them perfect hecatombs; and the gods always wished men to remember their commands. Now there is an island in the surging sea, in front of Egypt, which men call Pharos, as far off as a hollow ship can travel in a whole day with a whistling wind blowing behind her. In it is a harbor with good anchorage, from which men launch their balanced ships into the sea after drawing black water. There the gods kept me twenty days, and no winds ever appeared blowing seaward, the winds that speed ships over the broad back of the sea. And now all our provisions would have been spent, and the strength of the men, if one

of the gods had not pitied me and saved me, Eidothea, daughter of mighty Proteus, the old man of the sea; for I had moved her heart most of all. She met me as I wandered alone, away from my companions, for they were always roaming around the island, fishing with bent hooks, and hunger was gnawing at their bellies. She came and stood close to me and spoke to me:

371 "'Are you such a fool, stranger, so very simple-minded? Or are you letting things go of your own will, and do you enjoy suffering pain? You have been held on this island so long, and you can find no way out, and the heart of your companions is failing.'

375 "So she spoke, and I answered her: 'I will tell you plainly, whichever of the goddesses you are, that I am not held here of my own will. I must have sinned against the immortals who hold the wide sky. But tell me, since the gods know all things, which of the immortals is fettering me and has bound me from my journey, and tell me of my return, how I may go over the fish-filled sea.'

382 "So I spoke, and at once she, bright among goddesses, answered: 'Then I will tell you everything truly, stranger. An old man of the sea, unerring, haunts this place, immortal Proteus of Egypt, who knows the depths of every sea, the servant of Poseidon. They say that he is my father, who begot me. If you could somehow lie in wait and catch him, he would tell you the way and the stages of your journey, and your return, how you may go over the fish-filled sea. And he will tell you, Zeus-nurtured, if you wish, whatever evil and good has been done in your halls while you have been gone on your long and painful journey.'

394 "So she spoke, and I answered her: 'You yourself must devise an ambush for the divine old man, in case he sees me first, or knows beforehand, and escapes me. It is hard for a mortal man to master a god.'

398 "So I spoke, and at once she, bright among goddesses, answered: 'Then I will tell you everything truly, stranger. When the

sun has climbed to the middle of the sky, then the unerring old man of the sea comes out of the salt water under the breath of the West Wind, hidden in the dark ripple, and when he has come out he lies down to sleep in the hollow caves. Around him the seals, the brood of the lovely sea-born one, sleep in a herd, having come up out of the gray sea, breathing out the bitter smell of the deep salt sea. There I will take you at the break of dawn and lay you down in a row. You must choose well three companions, the best you have beside your well-benched ships. And I will tell you all the old man's tricks. First he will count the seals and go over them; and when he has counted them all by fives and looked at them, he will lie down in the middle of them like a shepherd among his flocks of sheep. As soon as you see him lying asleep, then set your minds on strength and force, and hold him there, however he strives and struggles to escape. He will try you by turning into all the creatures that move upon the earth, and into water, and into fierce-blazing fire; but you must hold him unflinchingly and press him all the harder. But when at last he speaks to you himself and questions you, in the same shape you saw him in when he lay down to sleep, then, hero, stop your force and let the old man go, and ask him which of the gods is angry with you, and about your return, how you may go over the fish-filled sea.' So speaking, she plunged into the surging sea. And I went to the ships where they stood on the sand, and as I went my heart was troubled with many thoughts. When I had come down to the ship and the sea, we made our supper ready, and immortal night came on. Then we lay down to sleep on the shore where the waves break. When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, I went along the shore of the wide-wayed sea, praying earnestly to the gods, and I took with me three companions whom I trusted most for every venture.

435 "Meanwhile she had plunged into the broad bosom of the sea and brought up out of it the skins of four seals, all newly

flayed, for she was devising a trick against her father. She scooped out beds in the sand of the shore and sat waiting, and we came 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 dreadful ambush, for the deadly stench of the sea-bred seals distressed us terribly; who would lie down beside a beast of the sea? But she herself saved us and thought of a great help. She brought ambrosia and put it under each man's nose, with a very sweet fragrance, and it killed the stench of the beast. All morning long we waited with steadfast hearts, and the seals came up out of the sea in a herd and lay down in rows along the shore where the waves break. At noon the old man came out of the sea and found the well-fed seals, and he went over all of them and counted their number. He counted us first among the beasts, and never suspected in his heart that there was a trick. Then he lay down himself. With a shout we rushed upon him and threw our arms around him, and the old man did not forget his crafty art. First he became a lion with a great mane, and then a serpent and a leopard and a huge boar; he became flowing water and a tree with lofty leaves. But we held on unflinchingly with steadfast hearts. And when the old man, skilled in tricks, grew weary at last, then he questioned me and said:

462 "'Son of Atreus, which of the gods planned this with you, so that you might lie in wait and take me against my will? What do you need?'

464 "So he spoke, and I answered him: 'You know, old man. Why do you ask me this, trying to put me off? I have been held on this island so long, and I can find no way out, and my heart is failing within me. But tell me, since the gods know all things, which of the immortals is fettering me and has bound me from my journey, and tell me of my return, how I may go over the fish-filled sea.'

471 "So I spoke, and at once he answered me: 'You should have offered fine sacrifices to Zeus and the other gods before you went

aboard, so that you might reach your country as quickly as possible, sailing over the wine-dark sea. For it is not your fate to see your friends and reach your well-built house and your native land until you have gone once more to the waters of Egypt, the heaven-fed river, and offered sacred hecatombs to the immortal gods who hold the wide sky. Then at last the gods will grant you the journey you long for.'

481 "So he spoke, and my heart was broken within me, because he bade me go back again over the misty sea to Egypt, a long and painful journey. But even so I answered him and said:

485 "'All this I will do, old man, as you bid me. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: did all the Achaeans come home unharmed with their ships, all whom Nestor and I left behind as we set out from Troy, or did any of them perish by a cruel death on board his ship, or in the arms of his friends, after he had wound up the war?'

491 "So I spoke, and at once he answered me: 'Son of Atreus, why do you ask me this? There is no need for you to know or to learn my mind. I tell you, you will not be without tears for long once you have heard it all. Many of them were killed, and many were left. But only two leaders of the bronze-clad Achaeans perished on the way home; as for the fighting, you were there yourself. And one is still alive, held back somewhere on the wide sea.

499 "'Ajax was lost among 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 uttered an overbearing word and been greatly blinded. He said that he had escaped the great gulf of the sea in spite of the gods. Poseidon heard him boasting loudly, and at once he took his trident in his strong hands and struck the rock of Gyrae and split it apart. Part of it stayed where it was, but the broken piece fell into the sea, the piece on which Ajax had sat at first when he was so greatly blinded, and it bore him away over the

boundless, surging sea. So he perished there, when he had drunk the salt water.

512 "'Your brother escaped the doom and evaded it in his hollow ships, for lady Hera saved him. But when he was about to reach the steep headland of Malea, a storm wind caught him up and carried him over the fish-filled sea, groaning heavily, to the edge of the land where Thyestes once had his house, and where Aegisthus, son of Thyestes, lived then. But when from there too a safe return appeared, and the gods turned the wind back and they reached home, then he set foot on his native land rejoicing, and he touched his land and kissed it, and many warm tears streamed from him, for he was glad to see his land. But a watchman saw him from a lookout, a man whom guileful Aegisthus had taken and posted there, and promised him two talents of gold as his wage. He had been keeping watch for a year, so that Agamemnon would not pass by unseen and remember his furious valor. He went to the house to tell the shepherd of the people, and at once Aegisthus devised a treacherous trick. He chose 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, with shameful thoughts in his mind. He led him up, unaware of his death, and when he had feasted him, he killed him, as a man kills an ox at the manger. Not one of the companions of the son of Atreus who followed him was left, and not one of the men of Aegisthus; they were all killed in the halls.'

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:

543 "'Son of Atreus, weep no longer so long and so endlessly, for we will find no remedy in it. Try instead as quickly as you can to reach your native land. Either you will find him still alive, or Orestes will have killed him before you, and you may come in time for the funeral.'

548 "So he spoke, and my heart and proud spirit were warmed again in my breast, grieved as I was, and I spoke to him, and my words had wings:

551 "'These two I know now. But name the third man, who is still alive and held back on the wide sea, or else dead. I want to hear, grieved as I am.'

554 "So I spoke, and at once he answered me: 'It is 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; and 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. But for you, Zeus-nurtured Menelaus, it is not ordained to die and meet your fate in horse-pasturing Argos. The immortals will send you to the Elysian Field[2] at the ends of the earth, where red-haired Rhadamanthys is, where life is easiest for men. There is no snow there, no long winter, and never any rain, but Ocean always sends up the breezes of the West Wind, blowing shrill, to refresh men; because you have Helen as your wife, and in their eyes you are the son-in-law of Zeus.' So speaking, he plunged into the surging sea. And I went to the ships with my godlike companions, and as I went my heart was troubled with many thoughts. When we had come down to the ship and the sea, we made our supper ready, and immortal night came on. Then we lay down to sleep on the shore where the waves break. When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, first of all we dragged the ships down into the bright sea and set up the masts and sails in the balanced ships. Quickly we went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks, and

sitting in order we struck the gray sea with our oars. Back to the waters of Egypt, the heaven-fed river, I brought my ships, and there I offered perfect hecatombs. When I had appeased 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 this, I set out for home, and the immortals gave me a wind and sent me quickly to my dear native land. But come now, stay in my halls until the eleventh or twelfth day has come. Then I will send you off well, and I will give you glorious gifts, three horses and a polished chariot; and then I will give you a beautiful goblet, so that you may pour offerings to the immortal gods and remember me all your days."

593 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Son of Atreus, do not keep me here a long time. I could be content to sit here beside you for a year, and no longing for home or for my parents would seize me, for I take wonderful pleasure in listening to your stories and your words. But already my companions are growing impatient in holy Pylos, and you are keeping me here a long time. And whatever gift you would give me, let it be a treasure. I will not take horses to Ithaca, but I will leave them here for you yourself, to be your delight, for you rule over a wide plain, in which there is plenty of clover and galingale, and wheat and spelt and broad-eared white barley. But in Ithaca there are no wide courses and no meadow at all. It is a land for goats, and more lovely than a land for horses. None of the islands that slope down to the sea is good for driving horses or rich in meadows, and Ithaca least of all."

609 So he spoke, and Menelaus, good at the war cry, smiled, and he stroked him with his hand and spoke to him, calling him by name:

611 "You are of good blood, dear child, to speak as you do. Then I will change these gifts for you, for I can. Of all the gifts that lie stored as treasures in my house, I will give you the one that is

most beautiful and most precious. I will give you a mixing bowl, finely wrought. It is all of 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 home that way; and I want to give it to you."

620 So they spoke with one another, and the banqueters came to the house of the divine king. They drove in sheep and brought wine that gives men strength, and their wives with lovely veils sent them bread. So they were busy preparing the meal in the halls. Meanwhile the suitors, in front of the hall of Odysseus, were amusing themselves throwing the discus and the javelin on the leveled ground, where they had done so before, insolent as ever. Antinous and Eurymachus, godlike in looks, were sitting there, the leaders of the suitors, and by far the best of them in prowess. Noemon, son of Phronius, came up to them and questioned Antinous, saying:

632 "Antinous, do we know in our minds or not when Telemachus will come back from sandy Pylos? He has gone off with a ship of mine, and I need it to cross over to spacious Elis, where I have twelve mares, and under them hardworking mules, unbroken. I would like to drive one of them off and break it in."

638 So he spoke, and they were astonished in their hearts, for they had not thought that he had gone to Pylos of Neleus, but that he was somewhere there in the country, among the flocks or with the swineherd.

641 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to him: "Tell me truly, when did he go, and what young men went with him? Were they picked young men of Ithaca, or his own hired men and slaves? He could have done that too. And tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: did he take the black ship from you by force, against your will, or did you give it to him willingly, when he spoke to you and asked for it?"

648 Then Noemon, son of Phronius, answered him: "I gave it to him willingly myself. What would anyone else have done, when such a man, with sorrows in his heart, asked for it? Hard to refuse. The young men who are best in the land after us went with him. And I saw Mentor going aboard as their leader, or else a god, for he was like Mentor in every way. But this is what I wonder at: I saw noble Mentor here yesterday at dawn, yet at that time he went aboard the ship for Pylos."

657 So speaking, he went away to his father's house, but the proud hearts of the two men were indignant. They made the suitors sit down together and stop their games. Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them in distress; his dark heart was filled to the brim with fury, and his eyes were like blazing fire:

663 "Oh, for shame! A great deed has been done with overbearing insolence, this journey of Telemachus; and we said it would never be done. In the face of all of us, against our will, a mere boy goes off just like that, launching a ship and choosing the best men in the land. He will begin to be a trouble to us further on. But may Zeus destroy his strength before he reaches the full measure of manhood. Come, give me a swift ship and twenty companions, so that I may lie in wait and watch for him as he comes back in the strait between Ithaca and rugged Samos, so that his voyage in search of his father may end in misery."

673 So he spoke, and they all praised his words and told him to do so. At once they rose and went into the house of Odysseus.

675 But Penelope was not long without knowledge of the plans the suitors were brewing deep in their hearts. The herald Medon told her, who heard their counsels from outside the courtyard while they were weaving their scheme inside. He went through the house to tell Penelope, and as he stepped over the threshold Penelope said to him:

681 "Herald, why have the lordly suitors sent you? Is it to tell the serving women of godlike Odysseus to stop their work and prepare a feast for them? I wish they would never court me again or gather anywhere else, but would eat their last and final meal here now. You who gather here so often and waste so much livelihood, the wealth 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 anything unjust to anyone, or said anything unjust, among the people, though that is the way of godlike kings: one man they will hate and another they will love. But he never did any wrong at all to any man. Your hearts and your shameful deeds are plain to see, and there is no gratitude afterward for good deeds done."

696 Then Medon, wise of heart, said to her: "If only this, my queen, were the greatest evil. But the suitors are planning another, far greater and more grievous, which I pray the son of Cronus may not bring to pass. They are bent on killing Telemachus with the sharp bronze on his way home. He went to holy Pylos and to bright Lacedaemon to hear news of his father."

703 So he spoke, and her knees and her heart went slack where she sat. For a long time she could not speak, her eyes filled with tears, and her full voice was held fast. At last she answered him and said:

707 "Herald, why has my child gone? There was no need for him to go aboard swift-sailing ships, which serve men as horses of the sea and cross the wide water. Is it so that not even his name may be left among men?"

711 Then Medon, wise of heart, answered her: "I do not know whether some god urged him on, or whether his own heart moved him to go to Pylos, to learn of his father's return, or what fate he met."

715 So speaking, he went away through the house of Odysseus. Heart-wasting grief came over her, and she could no longer bear to sit on a chair, though there were many chairs in the house, but she sat down on the threshold of her well-wrought chamber, wailing pitifully, and around her all the serving women moaned, all who were in the house, young and old. Sobbing without stop, Penelope spoke among them:

722 "Listen, my friends. The Olympian has given me sorrows above all the women who were born and raised with me. First I lost my noble husband, lion-hearted, excelling among the Danaans in every kind of worth, a noble man, whose fame spreads wide through Hellas and the heart of Argos. And now the storm winds have snatched away my beloved son from the halls, without a word, and I did not even hear that he had set out. Cruel women, not even you, any of you, thought to wake me from my bed, though you knew well in your hearts when he went aboard the hollow black ship. If I had learned that he was planning this journey, he would surely have stayed, eager as he was to go, or else he would have left me dead in the halls. 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 may go at once and sit by Laertes and tell him all this, in case Laertes can weave some plan in his mind and go out and make his lament to the people, who are bent on destroying his line, and the line of godlike Odysseus."

742 Then the dear nurse Eurycleia said to her: "Dear young wife, kill me with the pitiless bronze or let me live in the hall; but I will not hide the truth from you. 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 until the twelfth day had come, or until you missed him yourself and heard that he was gone, so that you might not weep and mar your lovely skin. But bathe, and

put clean clothes on your body, and go up to the upper room with your serving women and pray to Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis; for she may save him even from death. And do not trouble a troubled old man. I do not think the line of the son of Arceisius is altogether hateful to the blessed gods. There will still be someone, I think, to hold the high-roofed halls and the rich fields far and wide."

758 So she spoke, and she lulled Penelope's weeping and stopped her eyes from tears. She bathed, put clean clothes on her body, and went up to the upper room with her serving women, and she put barley grains in a basket and prayed to Athena:

762 "Hear me, child of Zeus who holds the aegis, Unwearied One! If ever Odysseus of many wiles burned rich thighs of cattle or sheep to you in his halls, remember it now for me, and save my dear son, and keep off the suitors in their evil arrogance."

767 So speaking, she raised the sacred cry, and the goddess heard her prayer. The suitors broke into uproar through the shadowy halls, and one of the arrogant young men would say:

770 "The much-wooed queen is surely preparing our marriage, and she does not know that murder has been readied for her son."

772 So one of them would say, but they did not know how things had been readied. Antinous spoke out before them and said:

774 "Strange men, keep away from overbearing talk, all of you alike, in case someone reports it inside as well. Come, let us rise in silence and carry out the plan that pleased all of us in our hearts."

778 So speaking, he chose twenty of the best men, and they went to the swift ship and the shore of the sea. First of all they dragged the ship into deep water and put the mast and sail in the black ship, and fitted the oars in their leather loops, all in due order, and spread the white sails; and their high-spirited attendants brought them their arms. They moored her well out in the

water, and stepped out themselves. There they took their supper and waited for evening to come.

787 But up in the upper room prudent Penelope lay without food, tasting neither food nor drink, wondering whether her excellent son would escape death or be overcome by the overbearing suitors. As a lion broods in fear among a crowd of men when they draw their crafty ring around him, so she was brooding when deep, sweet sleep came over her. She lay back and slept, and all her limbs went slack.

795 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought. 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 stop Penelope in her mourning and sobbing from her weeping and tearful lament. It went into the chamber past the strap of the bolt, and stood above her head, and spoke to her:

804 "Are you sleeping, Penelope, sad at heart? The gods who live at ease do not allow you to weep or grieve, for your son will still come home. He has done no wrong against the gods."

808 Then prudent Penelope answered her, sleeping very sweetly at the gates of dreams:

810 "Why have you come here, sister? You have not come often before, for you live very far away. And you bid me cease from my misery and the many sorrows that torment me in my mind and in my heart. First I lost my noble husband, lion-hearted, excelling among the Danaans in every kind of worth, 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 hardship or of assemblies. For him I grieve even more than for that other. For him I tremble and fear that he may suffer something, either among the people of the land where he has gone or

on the sea. For many enemies are plotting against him, eager to kill him before he reaches his native land."

824 The dim phantom answered her: "Take heart, and do not be too much afraid in your mind. Such a guide goes with him as other men too have prayed to have standing by them, for she has the power: Pallas Athena. She pities you in your grief, and she has sent me now to tell you this."

830 Then prudent Penelope said to her: "If you are a god and have heard the voice of a god, come, tell me about that unhappy man too, whether he is still alive somewhere and sees the light of the sun, or is already dead and in the house of Hades."

835 The dim phantom answered her: "About him I will not tell you plainly, whether he is alive or dead. It is wrong to speak words as empty as the wind."

838 So speaking, 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 heart was warmed, so clear was the dream that had rushed upon her in the dead of night.

842 The suitors went aboard and sailed over the watery ways, with sheer murder for Telemachus in their hearts. There is a rocky island in the middle of the sea, between Ithaca and rugged Samos, Asteris, not large, and in it there are twin harbors where ships can lie. There the Achaeans waited in ambush for him.

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1. *Talent*: a fixed weight of gold, of unknown size in Homer; a measure of great value.

2. *Elysian Field*: a paradise at the ends of the earth, beside the river Ocean, to which a few favored mortals are carried without dying. *Ocean*, in Homer, is the great river that encircles the earth.

Book 5

1 Now Dawn rose from her bed beside lordly Tithonus, to bring light to the immortals and to mortal men; and the gods sat down in assembly, and among them Zeus, the high-thundering, whose power is greatest. Athena was telling them of the many sorrows of Odysseus, calling them to mind; for it weighed on her that he was still in the house of the nymph:

7 "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, let no sceptered king ever again be eager to be gentle and kind, or have justice at heart; let him always be harsh and do what is wicked, since no one remembers godlike Odysseus among the people he ruled, though he was as gentle with them as a father. He lies on an island, suffering bitter pains, in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him there by force; and 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 they are bent on killing his beloved son on his way home. He went to holy Pylos and to bright Lacedaemon to hear news of his father."

21 Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered her: "My child, what a word has escaped the fence of your teeth! Was this not your own plan, that Odysseus should come home and take vengeance on those men? As for Telemachus, guide him with skill, for you can, so that he may reach his native land quite unharmed, and the suitors sail back in their ship with nothing done."

28 He spoke, and turned to Hermes, his dear son: "Hermes, since you are our messenger in all other things, tell the lovely-haired nymph our unerring decree, 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 shall come on the twentieth day to deep-soiled Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians, who are near to the gods. They will honor him with all their hearts as if he were a god, and send him in a ship to his own native land, after giving him bronze and gold in plenty, and clothing, more than Odysseus would ever have won for himself from Troy if he had come home unharmed with his share of the spoils. For so it is his fate to see his friends and to reach his high-roofed house and his own native land."

43 So he spoke, and the guide, slayer of Argus, did not disobey. At once he bound on his feet his beautiful sandals, immortal, 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, of whomever he wishes, and wakes others again from sleep; with this in his hands the strong slayer of Argus flew. Setting foot on Pieria, he dropped from the upper air to 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 plumage in the brine: like this Hermes rode over the many waves. But when he came to the island that lay far off, he stepped out of the violet sea onto the land and walked on until he came to the great cave where the lovely-haired nymph lived; and he found her at home. A great fire was burning on the hearth, and far across the island spread the scent of split cedar and citron wood as they burned. Inside, she was singing in a lovely voice as she moved back and forth before the loom, weaving with a golden shuttle. Around the cave grew a flourishing wood, alder and poplar and fragrant cypress, and there long-winged birds made their nests, owls and hawks and long-tongued sea crows that ply their work on the sea. And there around the hollow cave a garden vine in its prime spread out, heavy with clusters of grapes. Four springs

in a row ran with clear water, close to one another, turned this way and that, and around them soft meadows of violets and parsley were in bloom. Even an immortal who came there would gaze in wonder at the sight and be delighted in his heart. There the guide, slayer of Argus, stood and gazed. And when he had gazed his fill at everything in his heart, he went at once into the wide cave. Calypso, bright among goddesses, did not fail to know him when she saw him face to face; for the gods, the immortals, are not strangers to one another, even if one lives in a house far away. But he did not find great-hearted Odysseus inside. He sat weeping on the shore, as he had before, racking his heart with tears and groans and pain, and he would gaze out over the barren sea, shedding tears. Calypso, bright among goddesses, seated Hermes on a shining, glittering chair and questioned him:

87 "Why have you come to me, Hermes of the golden wand, honored and dear? You have not been a frequent visitor before. Say what is on your mind; my heart bids me do what you ask, if I can do it and if it is a thing that can be done. But come farther in, so that I may set a guest's welcome before you."

92 So the goddess spoke, and set a table beside him heaped with ambrosia, and mixed the red nectar. So the guide, slayer of Argus, drank and ate. And when he had dined and satisfied his heart with food, he answered her and said:

97 "You ask me, goddess to god, why I have come; and I will tell you the truth of it, since you bid me. It was Zeus who told me to come here, though I did not want to. Who would willingly speed across so much salt water, more than words can tell? And there is no city of mortals near, who offer the gods sacrifices and choice hecatombs. But there is no way for any other god to get past the purpose of Zeus who holds the aegis, or to make it vain. He says there is a man here with you, the most wretched of all those men who fought around the city of Priam for nine years, and in the

tenth sacked the city and set off for home. But on the way home they sinned against Athena, and she roused an evil wind against them and towering waves. There all his other good companions perished, but the wind and the waves carried him here and brought him to this shore. Now Zeus bids you send him away as quickly as you can; for it is not his lot to die here, far from his friends, but it is still his fate to see his friends and to reach his high-roofed house and his own native land."

116 So he spoke, and Calypso, bright among goddesses, shuddered, and she spoke to him, and her words had wings: "You are cruel, you gods, and jealous beyond all others, you who resent it when goddesses sleep openly with men, if one of us makes a mortal her dear bedfellow. So it was when rose-fingered Dawn took Orion: you gods who live at ease resented her, until in Ortygia pure Artemis of the golden throne came upon him with her gentle arrows and killed him. So it was when lovely-haired Demeter yielded to her heart and lay in love with Iasion in a thrice-plowed fallow field; and Zeus was not long in hearing of it, and he struck Iasion with his white lightning and killed him. And so now again you gods resent me, because a mortal man is with me. It was I who saved him, when he was straddling the keel all alone, after Zeus had struck his swift ship with white lightning and shattered it in the middle of the wine-dark sea. There all his other good companions perished, but the wind and the waves carried him here and brought him to this shore. I loved him and cared for him, and I used to say that I would make him immortal and ageless all his days. But since there is no way for any other god to get past the purpose of Zeus who holds the aegis, or to make it vain, let him go, if Zeus urges and commands it, out over the barren sea. But I will not send him off, not I; 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, so that he may reach his native land quite unharmed."

145 Then the guide, slayer of Argus, said to her: "Send him off now, then, and beware the anger of Zeus, or he may hold a grudge against you hereafter and be hard on you."

148 So he spoke, and the strong slayer of Argus departed; and the lady nymph went to great-hearted Odysseus, now that 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 mourned for his return, since the nymph no longer pleased him. At night, it is true, he slept beside her in the hollow cave, because he must, 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 pain, and he would gaze out over the barren sea, shedding tears. Bright among goddesses, she stood close beside him and spoke:

160 "Poor man, do not grieve here any longer, and do not let your life waste away; for now I will send you off with a ready heart. Come, cut long beams with the bronze and fit them together into a broad raft, and fix a deck on it high up, so that it may carry you over the misty sea. And I will put on board bread and water and red wine, as much as you want, to keep hunger from you, and I will dress you in clothes, and send a fair wind behind you, so that you may reach your native land quite unharmed, if the gods are willing who hold the wide sky; for they are stronger than I am, both to plan and to accomplish."

171 So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus shuddered, and he spoke to her, and his words had wings: "It is something else you are planning, goddess, and not my passage home, when you tell me to cross the great gulf of the sea on a raft, dread and hard as it is. Not even swift ships with balanced hulls cross it, even when they exult in a fair wind from Zeus. I will not set foot on

a raft against your will, unless you bring yourself, goddess, to swear me a great oath that you will not plot some other evil harm against me."

180 So he spoke, and Calypso, bright among goddesses, smiled, and she stroked him with her hand, and spoke to him and called him by name: "What a rogue you are, and no fool, to think of saying such a thing! Let earth be my witness now, and the wide sky above, and the down-flowing water of the Styx, which is the greatest and most dread oath for the blessed gods, that I will not plot some other evil harm against you. No: I am thinking and planning for you just what I would devise for myself, if such need came upon me. For my mind too is just, and the heart in my breast is not made of iron; it knows pity."

192 So she spoke, bright among goddesses, and quickly led the way, and he followed in the goddess's footsteps. They came to the hollow cave, the goddess and the man, and he sat down on the chair from which Hermes had risen, and the nymph set before him every kind of food and drink, such as mortal men eat. She herself sat facing godlike Odysseus, and her maids set ambrosia and nectar before her. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had taken their fill of food and drink, Calypso, bright among goddesses, began to speak:

203 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, so you want to go home to your own native land now, right away? Then farewell, even so. Yet if you knew in your heart how many sorrows it is your fate to fill up before you reach your native land, you would stay 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. Surely I can claim to be no worse than she is, in form or in stature, since it is not fitting for mortal women to vie with immortals in form and beauty."

214 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: “Lady goddess, do not be angry with me for this. I know very well myself that prudent Penelope is less than you in beauty and stature to look upon; for she is mortal, and you are immortal and ageless. But even so I want, and I long all my days, to go home and see the day of return. And if some god wrecks me again on the wine-dark sea, I will endure it, with a heart in my breast that is patient under sorrow; for I have already suffered very much and toiled much, in the waves and in war. Let this be added to the rest.”

225 So he spoke, and the sun went down and darkness came on; and the two of them went into the inmost part of the hollow cave and took their pleasure in love, side by side.

228 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, Odysseus at once put on his cloak and tunic, and the nymph put on a great mantle, shining white, fine-spun and graceful, and around her waist she clasped a lovely golden belt, and on her head she put a veil. Then she set about the sending of great-hearted Odysseus on his way. She gave him a great axe that fit his hands, of bronze, sharpened on both sides, with a fine handle of olive wood fixed firmly in it; then she gave him a polished adze. Then she led the way to the far end of the island, where tall trees grew, alder and poplar and fir that reached to the sky, long dead and well seasoned, which would float lightly for him. And when she had shown him where the tall trees grew, Calypso, bright among goddesses, went back to her house, and he set to cutting timber, and the work went quickly. Twenty trees in all he felled, and trimmed them with the bronze, and smoothed them skillfully and made them straight to the line. Then Calypso, bright among goddesses, brought him augers; and he bored all the beams and fitted them to one another, and hammered the raft together with pegs and joints. As wide as a man well skilled in carpentry lays out the floor of a broad-beamed cargo ship, so wide Odysseus made his raft. He set up the deck,

fitting it to close-set uprights, and worked on, and finished it off with long side planks. He set a mast in it and a yard fitted to it, and he made a steering oar besides, to steer with. He fenced it all along with wicker of willow, to be a bulwark against the waves, and heaped much brushwood on the floor. Then Calypso, bright among goddesses, brought cloth to make a sail; and he fashioned that well too. He made fast the braces and the halyards and the sheets, and then with levers he hauled the raft down into the bright sea.

262 It was the fourth day, and everything was finished. On the fifth, bright Calypso sent him from the island, after she had bathed him and dressed him in fragrant clothes. The goddess put on board for him one skin of dark wine and another, a large one, of water, and provisions in a bag, and she put in many good things to eat, all that his heart could want; and she sent a wind blowing behind him, gentle and warm. Glad of the wind, noble Odysseus spread his sail. He sat and steered skillfully with the steering oar, and sleep never fell on his eyelids as he watched the Pleiades, and Boötes, who sets late, and the Bear, which men also call the Wagon, which turns in its place and keeps watch on Orion, and alone has no share in the baths of Ocean. For Calypso, bright among goddesses, had told him to keep the Bear on his left hand as he crossed the sea. Seventeen days he sailed, crossing the sea, and on the eighteenth the shadowy mountains of the land of the Phaeacians came into sight, where it lay nearest to him; and it looked like a shield laid on the misty sea.

282 But the lord Earth-shaker, coming back from the Ethiopians, saw him from far off, from the mountains of the Solymi; for Odysseus came into his sight sailing over the sea. His anger rose still higher in his heart, and shaking his head he spoke to his own heart:

286 "Oh, for shame! So the gods have changed their minds about Odysseus while I was among the Ethiopians. And now he is

close to the land of the Phaeacians, where it is his fate to escape the great snare of misery that has come upon him. But even so, I think I will drive him to his fill of trouble yet."

291 So saying, he gathered the clouds and stirred up the sea, gripping his trident in his hands; he roused all the blasts of every kind of wind, and covered earth and sea alike with clouds; and night rushed down from the sky. The East Wind and the South Wind fell on together, and the stormy West Wind, and the North Wind, born in the bright air, rolling a great wave before him. Then Odysseus's knees and his heart went slack, and troubled, he spoke to his own great heart:

299 "Ah, wretched me! What will become of me at last? I fear that everything the goddess said was true, when she told me that I would fill up my measure of sorrows on the sea before I reached my native land; and now it is all coming to pass. With such clouds Zeus is crowning the wide sky, and he has stirred up the sea, and the blasts of every kind of wind rush on. Now my sheer destruction is certain. Three times blessed were the Danaans, and four times, who died then in wide Troy, doing a kindness to the sons of Atreus. If only I had died and met my fate on that day when the Trojans in their numbers hurled their bronze-tipped spears at me around the dead son of Peleus! Then I would have had my funeral rites, and the Achaeans would have spread my fame. But now it is my fate to be caught by a miserable death."

313 As he spoke, a great wave struck down on him from above, rushing on terribly, and whirled the raft around. He was thrown far from the raft, and the steering oar flew from his hands; and a dread blast of tangled winds came and snapped the mast in the middle, and sail and yard fell far off into the sea. The wave held him under for a long time, and he could not rise quickly from beneath the onrush of the great wave, for the clothes that bright Calypso had given him weighed him down. At last he came up, and

spat out of his mouth the bitter brine that ran streaming down from his head. Even so he did not forget the raft, spent as he was, but lunged after it among the waves and caught hold of it, and sat down in the middle of it, escaping the end of death. The great wave carried it this way and that with the current. As when in autumn the North Wind carries thistle tufts over the plain, and they cling close to one another, so the winds carried the raft this way and that over the open sea: now the South Wind would toss it to the North Wind to carry, now the East Wind would give it up to the West Wind to chase.

333 But the daughter of Cadmus saw him, Ino of the lovely ankles, Leucothea, who was once a mortal with human speech, but now in the depths of the sea has won a share of honor from the gods. She pitied Odysseus as he drifted, suffering pains, and rising from the water like a shearwater on the wing, she sat on the raft lashed with many bonds and said to him:

339 "Poor man, why is Poseidon the Earth-shaker so terribly enraged with you, that he sows so many evils for you? Still, he will not destroy you, however much he wants to. Do just this, for you seem to me not without sense: strip off these clothes and leave the raft for the winds to carry, and 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 stretch it under your chest; it is immortal, and you need have no fear of suffering harm or dying. But when you have laid hold of the land with your hands, untie it and throw it back into the wine-dark sea, far out from the land, and turn your face away."

351 So the goddess spoke and gave him the veil, and she herself dived back into the surging sea, like a shearwater, and the dark wave hid her. But much-enduring noble Odysseus pondered, and troubled, he spoke to his own great heart:

356 “Ah me, let it not be another of the immortals weaving a trick for me, telling me to leave the raft! No, I will not obey yet, for I saw with my own eyes how far off the land is where she said I would find refuge. This is what I will do, and it seems best to me: as long as the timbers hold together in their joints, I will stay here and endure, suffering pains; but when the wave has shaken my raft to pieces, I will swim, since there is nothing better to be thought of.”

365 While he pondered this in his mind and heart, Poseidon the Earth-shaker raised a great wave, dread and hard, arching over him, and drove it down on him. As a strong wind tosses a heap of dry chaff and scatters it this way and that, so the wave scattered the long timbers of the raft. But Odysseus straddled one beam, as a man rides a horse, and stripped off the clothes that bright Calypso had given him. At once he stretched the veil under his chest, and plunged headlong into the sea with his arms spread wide, eager to swim. And the lord Earth-shaker saw him, and shaking his head he spoke to his own heart:

377 “So now, after all your sufferings, wander over the sea until you come among men who are Zeus-nurtured. Even so, I do not think you will complain that you have had too little trouble.”

380 So saying, he lashed his long-maned horses and came to Aegae, where his famous palace stands.

382 But Athena, daughter of Zeus, had another thought. She bound up the paths of the other winds and ordered them all to cease and be lulled to rest; and she roused the swift North Wind and broke the waves before him, so that Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, might come among the oar-loving Phaeacians, escaping death and the spirits of doom.

388 For two nights then and two days he was driven over the swelling waves, and many times his heart foresaw destruction. But when lovely-haired Dawn brought the third day to its fullness,

then the wind dropped and there was a windless calm; and he saw the land close by, peering sharply ahead as a great wave lifted him. As welcome as a father's life is to his children when he lies sick, suffering bitter pains, long wasting away, for some hateful spirit has assailed him, and then, to their joy, the gods free him from his trouble: so welcome to Odysseus were the land and the woods, and he swam on, straining to set his feet on the land. But when he was as far off as a man's shout carries, he heard the thunder of the sea on the reefs. The great wave roared against the dry shore, belching terribly, and everything was wrapped in the foam of the sea; for there were no harbors to hold ships, no sheltered roadsteads, but jutting headlands and reefs and crags. Then Odysseus's knees and his heart went slack, and troubled, he spoke to his own great heart:

408 "Ah me, now that Zeus has granted me to see land beyond my hope, and I have cut my way across this gulf to the end, there is no way out of the gray sea anywhere to be seen. Out in front are sharp crags, and around them the wave roars and surges, and the rock runs up sheer and smooth, and the sea is deep close in, and there is nowhere to stand on both feet and escape from trouble. As I climb out, a great wave may snatch me and dash me against the jagged rock, and all my striving will be in vain. And if I swim on farther along the coast, in the hope of finding beaches that slope to the waves, or harbors of the sea, I fear that the storm wind may snatch me up again and carry me, groaning heavily, out over the fish-filled sea; or some god may send a great sea monster against me from the deep, such as famous Amphitrite breeds in great numbers; for I know how the famous Earth-shaker is enraged with me."

424 While he pondered this in his mind and heart, a great wave carried him onto the rugged shore. There his skin would have been stripped off and his bones crushed, had not the goddess, gray-

eyed Athena, put a thought in his mind. He rushed in and seized the rock with both hands and clung to it, groaning, until the great wave went past. That one he escaped; but the backwash struck him again as it rushed out and flung him far into the sea. As when an octopus is dragged from its den and many pebbles cling to its suckers, so the skin was torn from his bold hands against the rocks; and the great wave covered him. Then wretched Odysseus would have perished beyond his fate, had not gray-eyed Athena given him presence of mind. Rising out of the wave where it belched against the land, he swam along outside it, looking toward the land, in the hope of finding beaches that slope to the waves, or harbors of the sea. But when, as he swam, he came to the mouth of a fair-flowing river, there the place seemed best to him, clear of rocks, with shelter from the wind; and he knew the river as it flowed out, and prayed to it in his heart:

445 "Hear me, lord, whoever you are. I come to you, to whom so many prayers are made, fleeing out of the sea from the threats of Poseidon. Even to the immortal gods a man is to be revered who comes as a wanderer, as I now come to your stream and to your knees after many toils. Have pity, lord: I declare myself your suppliant."

451 So he spoke, and at once the river stopped his current and held back the wave, and made a calm before him, and brought him safe into the river's mouth. He let both his knees and his strong hands go limp, for the sea had overpowered his heart. All his flesh was swollen, and seawater gushed in streams from his mouth and nostrils. He lay breathless and speechless, barely alive, and a terrible weariness came over him. But when he got his breath back and the spirit gathered again in his heart, he untied the goddess's veil from his body and let it drop into the river where it flows into the sea; and a great wave carried it back down the current, and Ino quickly took it in her own hands. And he turned away from the

river and sank down in the reeds, and kissed the grain-giving land. Troubled, he spoke to his own great heart:

465 "Ah me, what will happen to me? What will become of me at last? If I keep watch through the comfortless night here by the river, I fear the cruel frost and the fresh dew together may overcome me, worn out as I am, with my spirit faint; and a cold breeze blows from a river just before dawn. But if I climb up the slope into the shady wood and lie down to sleep in the thick bushes, hoping the cold and weariness may let me go and sweet sleep come over me, I fear I may become prey and spoil for wild beasts."

474 As he thought it over, this seemed the better course. He went into the wood, and found it near the water in an open place, and crept under two bushes that grew from the same spot, one of wild olive, one of olive. Through them the force of the wet winds never blew, nor did the shining sun ever strike them with its rays, nor did the rain pass through, so thickly did they grow, interlaced with each other; and under them Odysseus crept. At once he heaped up a broad bed with his own hands, for there was a great fall of leaves there, enough to shelter two men or three in the winter season, however hard the weather. When much-enduring noble Odysseus saw it he was glad, and he lay down in the middle and heaped the fallen leaves over himself. As a man buries a firebrand in dark ashes at the edge of his land, where he has no neighbors near, saving the seed of fire so that he need not go elsewhere to kindle it: so Odysseus covered himself with leaves. And Athena poured sleep on his eyes, closing his eyelids, so that it might quickly release him from his painful weariness.

Book 6

1 So much-enduring noble Odysseus slept there, 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, arrogant men, who kept plundering them and were stronger than they were. From there Nausithous, godlike in looks, had made them rise and move, and settled them in Scheria, far from men who eat bread; he drove a wall around the city, built houses, made temples for the gods, and divided the plowland. But he had long since been overcome by his fate and gone down to the house of Hades, and Alcinous was ruling now, whose wisdom came from the gods. To his house went the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, planning the homecoming of great-hearted Odysseus. She went to the richly wrought chamber where a girl was sleeping, like the immortals in form and beauty, Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous; and near her slept two maids who had their beauty from the Graces, one on either side of the doorposts; and the shining doors were shut. Like a breath of wind Athena sped to the girl's bed, and stood above her head and spoke to her, in the likeness of the daughter of Dymas, famed for ships, a girl of her own age and dear to her heart. In her likeness gray-eyed Athena spoke:

25 "Nausicaa, how did your mother come to bear so careless a daughter? Your shining clothes lie uncared for, and your marriage is near, when you must be beautifully dressed yourself and give fine clothes to those who will lead you to your husband's house. It is from such things that a good name goes out among men, and a

father and a lady mother rejoice. So let us go and do the washing as soon as dawn appears. I will go with you to help, so that you can get ready quickly, for you will not be a maiden much longer: already the best young men of all the Phaeacians in the land are courting you, and you are a Phaeacian born. Come, ask your famous father early this morning to have the mules and the wagon made ready, to carry the sashes and the robes and the shining bedspreads. And it is much better for you yourself to go that way than on foot, for the washing pools are a long way from the city."

41 So gray-eyed Athena spoke and went away to Olympus, where, they say, the seat of the gods stands firm forever. It is not shaken by winds, nor ever wet with rain, nor does snow come near it, but the clear air spreads out cloudless, and a white radiance runs over it; there the blessed gods take their pleasure all their days. There the gray-eyed one went, when she had told the girl all she had to say.

48 Soon Dawn of the lovely throne came and woke Nausicaa of the lovely robe; and at once she marveled at the dream, and went through the house to tell her parents, her dear father and mother; and she found them at home. Her mother sat by the hearth with her women, spinning yarn of sea-purple; and her father she met as he was going out to join the famous kings at a council, to which the lordly Phaeacians had called him. She stood close to her dear father and said:

57 "Papa dear, will you not have them get a wagon ready for me, the high one with good wheels, so that I can take our fine clothes to the river to wash? They are all lying dirty. And it is right for you yourself, when you sit among the first men and take counsel, to have clean clothes on your body. And you have five dear sons in the palace, two married and three unmarried, in their bloom, and they always want freshly washed clothes to wear when they go to the dancing. All this is on my mind."

66 So she spoke, for she was shy to speak of her own glad marriage to her dear father; but he understood it all, and answered: "I do not begrudge you the mules, my child, or anything else. Go; the servants will get the wagon ready for you, the high one with good wheels, fitted with a frame on top."

71 So saying, he called to the servants, and they obeyed. Outside they made ready the mule wagon with its good wheels, and led up the mules and yoked them to it; and the girl brought the shining clothes from her chamber and laid them on the polished wagon. Her mother put food in a chest, every kind of food, all the heart could want, and put in relishes, and poured wine into a goatskin; and the girl climbed onto the wagon. Her mother gave her smooth olive oil in a golden flask, so that she and her women could anoint themselves after bathing. She took the whip and the shining reins and whipped the mules to start them; and there was a clatter of hooves, and the mules strained on without stopping, carrying the clothes and the girl, not alone: her other maids went with her.

85 When they came to the lovely streams of the river, where the washing pools were that never failed, and plenty of fair water welled up and flowed through, enough to clean the dirtiest clothes, 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 and carried them into the dark water, and trampled them in the pits, quickly, racing one another. When they had washed them and cleaned off all the dirt, they spread them out in rows on the seashore, where the sea washed the pebbles cleanest on the beach. Then they bathed and anointed themselves richly with oil, and took their meal on the banks of the river, and waited for the clothes to dry in the brightness of the sun. When they had eaten their fill, the maids and their mistress herself, they threw off their veils and played at ball, and white-armed Nausicaa led them in song. As Artemis, the

arrow-showering, goes over the mountains, along towering Taygetus or Erymanthus, delighting in boars and swift deer, and with her play the nymphs, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis, who haunt the wild fields, and Leto is glad at heart; and Artemis holds her head and brow above them all, and she is easily known, though all are beautiful: so the unwed girl stood out among her maids.

110 But when she was about to go home again, and was yoking the mules and folding the beautiful clothes, then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought: that Odysseus should wake and see the fair-faced girl, who would lead him to the city of the Phaeacians. The princess threw the ball to one of her maids; she missed the maid and threw it into a deep eddy; and they all screamed aloud. Noble Odysseus woke, and sat up, and pondered in his mind and heart:

119 "Ah me, to what people's land have I come now? Are they violent and savage and unjust, or kind to strangers, with minds that fear the gods? A shrill cry of girls has rung around me, of nymphs, it seemed, who haunt the steep peaks of the mountains and the springs of rivers and the grassy meadows. Or am I somewhere near men with human speech? Come, I will try for myself and see."

127 So saying, noble Odysseus crept out from under the bushes, and with his thick hand he broke a leafy branch from the dense wood, to hold around his body and cover his nakedness. He set out like a lion bred in the mountains, trusting in his strength, who goes on, rained on and beaten by the wind, and his eyes blaze; he goes among the cattle or the sheep or after the wild deer, and his belly drives him to try the flocks even in a close-built fold: so Odysseus was about to go among the lovely-haired girls, naked as he was; for need had come upon him. A fearful sight he was to them, all fouled with brine, and they fled 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 and faced him; and Odysseus pondered whether he should clasp the fair-faced girl by the knees and beg her,[1] or beg her as he was, from where he stood, with gentle words, to show him the city and give him clothes. As he thought it over, this seemed the better course, to beg her from where he stood with gentle words, for fear the girl might be angry in her heart if he took hold of her knees. At once he spoke, gently and shrewdly:

149 "I clasp your knees, my queen: are you a goddess or a mortal? If you are a goddess, one of those who hold the wide sky, it is to Artemis, daughter of great Zeus, that I would liken you most nearly, in beauty and stature and form. But if you are one of the mortals who live on the earth, three times blessed are your father and your lady mother, and three times blessed your brothers; their hearts must always glow with joy because of you, when they watch such a young flower going into the dance. But blessed in his heart beyond all others is the man who prevails with his bride-gifts and leads you home. For I have never yet seen with my eyes a mortal like you, man or woman; awe holds me as I look at you. Once on Delos, by the altar of Apollo, I saw something like you: the young shoot of a palm tree springing up. For I went there too, and a great host followed me, on that journey on which I was to meet with grievous troubles. And just as, when I saw that, I marveled at it long in my heart, since never yet had such a tree sprung up from the earth, so, lady, I marvel at you and am amazed, and I am terribly afraid to touch your knees; but a hard sorrow 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 were carrying me from the island of Ogygia. And now some god has cast me up here, no doubt so that here too I may suffer some evil; for I do not think it will stop, but the gods will bring much more to pass before

then. But, my queen, have pity; it is to you first that I have come after many hardships, and I know no one else among the people who hold this city and this land. Show me the town, and give me some rag to throw around me, if you had a wrapping for the clothes when you came here. And may the gods give you all that you desire in your heart, a husband and a home, and grant you oneness of heart, a good thing; for there is nothing stronger or better than this, when a man and a woman keep house together, one in heart and mind: a great grief to their enemies and a joy to their friends, and they themselves know it best."

186 Then white-armed Nausicaa answered him: "Stranger, you seem neither a bad man nor a foolish one; and it is Olympian Zeus himself who gives good fortune to men, to the good and the bad, to each as he wills. He must have given you this lot, and you must bear it all the same. But now, since you have come to our city and our land, you will not lack clothing or anything else that a suffering suppliant ought to receive when he comes. I will show you the town, and tell you the name of the people. The Phaeacians hold this city and this land, and I am the daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, on whom the might and power of the Phaeacians rest."

198 She spoke, and called to her lovely-haired maids: "Stand still, my maids! Where are you running, just because you have seen a man? Surely you do not think he is an enemy? There is no man alive, 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 off in the surging sea, the farthest of men, and no other mortals have dealings with us. This is some unlucky wanderer who has come here, and we must take care of him now; for all strangers and beggars come from Zeus, and a gift, though small, is welcome. So, my maids, give the stranger food and drink, and bathe him in the river, where there is shelter from the wind."

211 So she spoke, and they stopped and called to one another, and sat Odysseus down in a sheltered place, as Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, had told them. They laid a mantle and a tunic beside him for clothing, and gave him smooth olive oil in the golden flask, and told him to bathe in the streams of the river. Then noble Odysseus spoke among the maids: "Maids, stand over there, a good way off, so that I may wash the brine from my shoulders myself and rub myself with oil; for it is a long time since oil has touched my skin. I will not bathe in front of you; I am ashamed to go naked among lovely-haired girls."

223 So he spoke, and they went off and told the girl. Then noble Odysseus washed from his skin, with the river water, the brine that crusted his back and his broad shoulders, and from his head he scrubbed the scurf of the barren sea. And when he had bathed all over and rubbed himself with oil, and put on the clothes the unwed girl had given him, Athena, born of Zeus, made him taller to look at and broader, and from his head she made his hair fall in thick curls, like the hyacinth flower. As when a skilled man overlays silver with gold, a craftsman whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught every kind of art, and the work he finishes is full of grace: so she poured grace over his head and shoulders. Then he went off and sat down apart on the seashore, shining with beauty and grace; and the girl gazed at him. Then she spoke among her lovely-haired maids:

239 "Listen to me, my white-armed maids, so that I may tell you something. It is not against the will of all the gods who hold Olympus that this man has come among the godlike Phaeacians. Before, he seemed to me a sorry sight, but now he is like the gods who hold the wide sky. If only such a man might be called my husband, living here, and be pleased to stay here! But come, my maids, give the stranger food and drink."

247 So she spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed, and set food and drink before Odysseus. And much-enduring noble Odysseus drank and ate greedily; for he had long gone without food.

251 But white-armed Nausicaa had another thought. She folded the clothes and put them on the fine wagon, and yoked the strong-hoofed mules, and climbed up herself; and she urged Odysseus on, and spoke to him and called him by name: "Get up now, stranger, and go to the city, so that I may bring you to the house of my wise father, where, I promise you, you will meet all the best of the Phaeacians. But do just this, for you seem to me not without sense. While we are going through the fields and the farmlands of men, walk quickly with the maids behind the mules and the wagon, and I will lead the way. But when we come near the city, you will see a high wall around it, and a fine harbor on either side of the city, and a narrow way in; and the curved ships are drawn up along the road, for every man has a slip for his ship. There is their place of assembly, around the fine temple of Poseidon, built of great quarried stones set deep in the earth. There they tend the tackle of their black ships, the cables and the sails, and shave the oars smooth. For the Phaeacians care nothing for bow or quiver, only for masts and oars and balanced ships, in which they cross the gray sea rejoicing. It is their unkind talk I want to avoid, so that no one may sneer at me afterward; for there are very overbearing men among the people, and some baser fellow who met us might say: 'Who is this tall, handsome stranger following Nausicaa? Where did she find him? He'll be her husband, I suppose. Either she has taken in some wanderer from his ship, a man from far away, since no one lives near us; or some god she has prayed and prayed for has come down from heaven in answer to her prayer, and she will have him all her days. So much the better if she has gone out herself and found a husband from somewhere

else; for she looks down on the Phaeacians here in the land, the many fine men who court her.' So they will say, and it would be a disgrace to me. And I would blame another girl too who did such things, who went with men against the will of her father and mother while they lived, before open marriage came. Stranger, listen quickly to what I say, so that you may soon win an escort and passage home from my father. You will find a splendid grove of Athena near the road, of poplar trees; a spring flows in it, and around it there is a meadow. There is my father's estate and his flourishing orchard, as far from the city as a man's shout carries. Sit down there and wait for a while, until we come into the town and reach my father's house. And when you think we have reached the house, then go into the city of the Phaeacians and ask for the house of my father, great-hearted Alcinous. It is easy to know, and even a little child could lead you there; for the houses of the Phaeacians are built nothing like the house of the hero Alcinous. And when the house and the courtyard have taken you in, go very quickly through the hall until you come to my mother. She sits at the hearth in the firelight, spinning yarn of sea-purple, a wonder to see, leaning against a pillar, and her maids sit behind her. And there, leaning against the same pillar, is my father's chair, where he sits and drinks his wine like an immortal. Pass him by and throw your arms around my mother's knees, so that you may see the day of return with joy, and quickly, even if you are from very far away. If she is kindly disposed to you in her heart, then there is hope that you will see your friends and reach your well-built house and your own native land."

316 So saying, she struck the mules with the shining whip, and they quickly left the streams of the river. They trotted well, and their feet flew; and she drove with care, so that the maids and Odysseus could keep up on foot, and plied the lash with judgment. The sun set, and they came to the famous grove, sacred to Athena,

where noble Odysseus sat down. At once he prayed to the daughter of great Zeus: “Hear me, child of Zeus who holds the aegis, Unwearied One! Hear me now at least, since before you never heard me when I was wrecked, when the famous Earth-shaker wrecked me. Grant that I come to the Phaeacians as a friend and find pity.”

328 So he prayed, and Pallas Athena heard him. But she did not yet appear to him face to face; for she stood in awe of her father’s brother, who raged furiously against godlike Odysseus until he reached his own land.

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1. To clasp someone’s knees was the ritual gesture of a suppliant. A suppliant who was accepted came under the protection of Zeus, and to refuse or harm him was an offense against the god.

Book 7

1 So much-enduring noble Odysseus prayed there, while the strength of the two mules carried the girl to the town. When she came to the glorious house of her father, she halted at the gateway, and her brothers gathered around her, like the immortals, and unyoked the mules from the wagon and carried the clothes inside. She went to her own chamber, and an old woman from Apeire lit a fire for her, her chambermaid Eurymedusa, whom curved ships had once brought from Apeire. The people had chosen her from the spoils as a prize for Alcinous, because he ruled over all the Phaeacians, and the people listened to him as to a god. She had nursed white-armed Nausicaa in the palace. She lit the fire for her and made ready her supper in her room.

14 Then Odysseus set out to go to the city; and Athena, with kind intent toward Odysseus, poured a thick mist around him, so that none of the great-spirited Phaeacians who met him might jeer at 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, in the likeness of a young girl carrying a pitcher. She stood before him, and noble Odysseus questioned her:

22 "My child, would you lead me to the house of a man called Alcinous, who rules among the people here? For I am a stranger who has suffered much, and I have come here from far away, from a distant land; and so I know no one among the people who hold this city and this land."

27 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "Then I will show you the house you ask me for, stranger, old father, since

it lies near the house of my own excellent father. But walk on in silence, just so, and I will lead the way; and do not look at anyone or ask questions. For these people do not care much for strangers, nor do they welcome and make friends with anyone who comes from elsewhere. They trust in their swift ships, and cross the great gulf of the sea, since the Earth-shaker has granted them that; and their ships are as swift as a wing or a thought."

37 So Pallas Athena spoke and quickly led the way, and he followed in the goddess's footsteps. And the Phaeacians, famed for ships, did not notice him as he went through the town among them; for lovely-haired Athena, the dread goddess, would not allow it, but poured a wondrous mist over him, with kind intent in her heart. And Odysseus marveled at the harbors and the balanced ships, and at the meeting places of the heroes themselves, and the long high walls, fitted with palisades, a wonder to see. But when they came to the glorious house of the king, the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, was the first to speak:

48 "Here, stranger, old father, is the house you asked me to show you. You will find the Zeus-nurtured kings feasting at a banquet. Go in, and have no fear in your heart; for a bold man comes off better in everything, even if he is a stranger from somewhere else. You will find the queen first in the hall. Arete is the name she is called by; and she comes of the same parents who begot King Alcinous. First Poseidon the Earth-shaker fathered Nausithous on Periboea, the most beautiful of women, the youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedon, who was once king over the proud-hearted Giants. But he destroyed his reckless people and was destroyed himself. Poseidon lay with Periboea, and she bore him a son, great-spirited Nausithous, who ruled over the Phaeacians; and Nausithous had two sons, Rhexenor and Alcinous. Rhexenor had no son, and Apollo of the silver bow struck him down in his hall when he was newly married, and he left only one child, a

daughter, Arete. Alcinous made her his wife, and he honors 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 and by Alcinous himself and by the people, who look on her as a goddess and greet her with words of welcome when she walks through the town. For she herself is not lacking in good sense, and she settles quarrels for those she favors, even quarrels among men. If she is kindly disposed to you in her heart, then there is hope that you will see your friends and reach your high-roofed house and your own native land."

78 So gray-eyed Athena spoke and went away over the barren sea, and left lovely Scheria, and came to Marathon and to Athens of the wide streets, and went into the strong house of Erechtheus. But Odysseus went toward the famous house of Alcinous, and his heart was full of many thoughts as he stood there, before he reached the threshold of bronze. For there was a gleam as of the sun or of the moon through the high-roofed house of great-hearted Alcinous. Walls of bronze ran this way and that, from the threshold to the inmost room, with a frieze of blue enamel around them; golden doors closed in the strong house; silver doorposts stood on the bronze threshold, with a silver lintel above, and a golden handle on the door. On either side were gold and silver dogs, which Hephaestus had made with cunning skill, to guard the house of great-hearted Alcinous, and they were immortal and ageless all their days. Inside, chairs were set along the wall this way and that, from the threshold right through to the inmost room, and on them were spread fine coverlets, well woven, the work of women. There the leaders of the Phaeacians used to sit, drinking and eating, for they had plenty all year round. And golden statues of young men stood on well-built pedestals, holding blazing torches in their hands, to light the feasters through the house by

night. He has fifty serving women in the house: some grind the yellow grain at the mill, and others weave at the loom, or sit and twirl the spindle, their hands moving like the leaves of a tall poplar; and from the close-woven linen the liquid oil drips off. As far as the Phaeacians are skilled beyond all men in driving a swift ship over the sea, so far are their women skilled at the loom; for Athena has given them, beyond all others, knowledge of beautiful handiwork and good sense. Outside the courtyard, near the doors, is a great orchard of four acres, with a fence running around it on both sides. There tall trees grow, in full bloom, pears and pomegranates and apple trees with shining fruit, and sweet figs and flourishing olives. Their fruit never perishes or fails, winter or summer, all the year round; the West Wind is always blowing, bringing some to bud and ripening others. Pear ripens upon pear, apple upon apple, cluster upon cluster of grapes, and fig upon fig. There too his fruitful vineyard is planted. In one part of it, a warm patch on level ground, grapes are drying in the sun; others they are gathering, and others treading; and in front are unripe grapes just shedding their blossom, and others turning dark. And there by the farthest row trim garden beds grow, of every kind, bright all the year round. And in it there are two springs: one runs through the whole garden, and the other on the far side runs under the threshold of the courtyard toward the high house, and from it the townspeople draw their water. Such were the glorious gifts of the gods in the house of Alcinous.

133 There much-enduring noble Odysseus stood and gazed. And when he had gazed his fill at everything in his heart, he quickly crossed the threshold into the house. He found the leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians pouring drink offerings from their cups to the keen-sighted slayer of Argus, to whom they always poured the last offering when they were thinking of bed. Then much-enduring noble Odysseus went through the house,

wrapped in the thick mist that Athena had poured around him, until he came to Arete and to King Alcinous. Odysseus threw his arms around Arete's knees, and at that moment the wondrous mist flowed back from him. They all fell silent through the house when they saw the man, and they marveled as they looked at him. And Odysseus made his entreaty:

146 "Arete, daughter of godlike Rhexenor, I have come to your husband and to your knees after many toils, and to these feasters. May the gods grant them prosperity while they live, and may each of them hand down to his children the wealth in his halls and the honors the people have given him. But for me, speed my passage home, so that I may reach my native land quickly, since for a long time now I have been suffering hardships far from my friends."

153 So saying, he sat down on the hearth in the ashes beside the fire; and they all fell silent and were still. At last the old hero Echeneus spoke among them, who was the eldest of the Phaeacians and excelled in speech, knowing many things of old. With good intent he addressed the assembly and said: "Alcinous, this is not well, and it is not fitting, that a stranger should 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 an offering to Zeus who delights in thunder, who walks beside suppliants, who are to be revered. And let the housekeeper give the stranger supper from what there is inside."

167 When the sacred strength of Alcinous heard this, he took wise Odysseus, the crafty-minded, by the hand and raised him from the hearth and seated him on a shining chair, making his son, manly Laodamas, stand up, who sat beside him and whom he loved most. A maid brought water in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for him to wash his hands, and drew up a polished table beside him. The revered housekeeper brought bread

and set it before him, and many dishes besides, giving freely of what she had. And much-enduring noble Odysseus drank and ate. Then the strength of Alcinous spoke to the herald:

179 "Pontonous, mix a bowl and serve the wine to everyone throughout the hall, so that we may pour an offering to Zeus who delights in thunder, who walks beside suppliants, who are to be revered."

182 So he spoke, and Pontonous mixed the heart-cheering wine, and served it out to all, first pouring a few drops into each cup. But when they had poured their offerings and drunk as much as their hearts desired, Alcinous addressed them and said:

186 "Hear me, leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians, so that I may say what the heart in my breast commands me. Now that you have feasted, go home and lie down to rest. In the morning we will call more of the elders together and entertain the stranger in the palace and make fine sacrifices to the gods, and then we will think about his passage home, so that the stranger may reach his native land under our escort without toil or pain, with joy, and quickly, even if he comes from very far away, and suffer no evil or harm on the way before he sets foot on his own land. There, after that, he will suffer whatever Fate and the heavy Spinners spun for him with their thread at his birth, when his mother bore him. But if he is one of the immortals come down from heaven, then the gods are planning something else. For always until now the gods have shown themselves to us plainly, when we offer them glorious hecatombs, and they feast beside us, sitting where we sit. And if some traveler going alone meets one of them, they do not hide themselves; for we are near to them, as the Cyclopes are and the savage tribes of the Giants."

207 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Alcinous, put that thought out of your mind. I am not like the immortals who hold the wide sky, either in form or in stature, but like mortal men.

Whoever you know among men who bears the most misery, those are the men I would equal in my sorrows. And I could tell you of still more evils, all that I have toiled through by the will of the gods. But let me eat my supper, grieving as I am; for there is nothing more shameless than the hateful belly, which forces a man to remember it, however worn out he is and with grief in his heart, as I have grief in my heart; and yet it always bids me eat and drink, and makes me forget all I have suffered, and tells me to fill it. But you, make haste at the break of dawn to set me, unlucky man, on my native land, after all I have suffered. Let life leave me, once I have seen my possessions, my servants, and my great high-roofed house."

226 So he spoke, and they all praised his words and urged that the stranger be sent home, since he had spoken fittingly. But when they had poured their offerings and drunk as much as their hearts desired, they went to rest, each to his own house. But noble Odysseus was left behind in the hall, and beside him sat Arete and Alcinous, godlike in looks; and the maids cleared away the dishes of the feast. Then white-armed Arete was the first to speak; for she had recognized the mantle and the tunic when she saw the beautiful clothes, which she herself had made with her women. And she spoke to him, and her words had wings:

237 "Stranger, first I will ask you this myself. Who are you, and where are you from? Who gave you these clothes? Did you not say you came here wandering over the sea?"

240 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "It is hard, my queen, to tell my sorrows from beginning to end, for the gods of heaven have given me many. But I will tell you this, what you ask and inquire. There is an island, Ogygia, that lies far off in the sea. There lives the daughter of Atlas, wily Calypso, lovely-haired, a dread goddess; and no one, god or mortal man, has dealings with her. But some god brought me, unlucky man, to her hearth, alone,

after Zeus had struck my swift ship with white lightning and shattered it in the middle of the wine-dark sea. There all my other good companions perished, but I clasped the keel of my curved ship in my arms and was carried along for nine days; and on the tenth, in the black night, the gods brought me to the island of Ogygia, where Calypso lives, lovely-haired, a dread goddess. She took me in and loved me and cared for me with kindness, and she said she would make me immortal and ageless all my days; but she never won over the heart in my breast. There I stayed seven years without a break, and my tears were always wetting the immortal clothes that Calypso had given me. But when the eighth year came around, then she urged me and told me to go home, either because of a message from Zeus, or because her own mind had changed. She sent me off on a raft lashed with many bonds, and gave me much, bread and sweet wine, and dressed me in immortal clothes, and sent a wind blowing behind me, gentle and warm. Seventeen days I sailed, crossing the sea, and on the eighteenth the shadowy mountains of your land came into sight, and my heart was glad, ill-fated as I was; for I was still to meet with much misery, which Poseidon the Earth-shaker stirred up against me. He roused the winds against me and bound up my path, and stirred up the sea beyond telling, and the waves would not let me ride on the raft, groaning heavily as I was. Then the storm scattered it; but I swam and cut my way across this gulf, until the wind and the water carried me and brought me to your land. There, as I was coming ashore, the waves would have overpowered me and dashed me against great rocks in a cheerless place; but I drew back and swam again, until I came to a river, where the place seemed best to me, clear of rocks, with shelter from the wind. I fell down there, gathering my strength, and immortal night came on. I went out of the Zeus-fed river and away from it and slept among the bushes, and heaped leaves around me; and a god poured end-

less sleep over me. There among the leaves, sick at heart, I slept all night, and into the morning, and to midday. The sun was sinking when sweet sleep let me go. And I saw your daughter's maids playing on the shore, and she was among them, like a goddess. I made my entreaty to her, and she did not fall short of good sense, though you would not expect it of someone so young; for the young are always thoughtless. She gave me bread in plenty and sparkling wine, and had me bathed in the river, and gave me these clothes. This, grieving though I am, I have told you truly."

298 Then Alcinous answered him and said: "Stranger, in this at least my daughter did not think rightly: that she did not bring you to our house with her women, though it was to her first that you made your entreaty."

302 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Hero, do not blame your excellent daughter for this. She did tell me to follow with her women, but I would not, for fear and shame, in case your heart should grow angry when you saw it; for we tribes of men on the earth are quick to jealousy."

308 Then Alcinous answered him and said: "Stranger, the heart in my breast is not such as to be angry without cause; it is better for all things to be in due measure. Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, if only, being such a man as you are, and thinking as I think, you 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 of the Phaeacians will keep you here against your will: may that never be pleasing to father Zeus. As for your passage home, so that you may know it well, I appoint tomorrow. Then you will lie, overcome by sleep, while they row you over the calm sea, until you reach your native land and your house, or wherever you wish to go, even if it lies much farther off than Euboea, which those of our people who saw it say is the farthest of all lands, when they carried red-haired Rhadamanthys to visit

Tityus, son of Earth. They went there, and finished the journey without toil on that same day, and made the trip back home again. You will see for yourself, and know in your heart, how far my ships are the best, and my young men, at tossing up the sea with the oar blade."

329 So he spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, and he prayed, and spoke and called on the god by name: "Father Zeus, may Alcinous bring to pass all that he has said! Then his fame would never be quenched over the grain-giving land, and I would reach my native land."

334 So they spoke with one another, and white-armed Arete told her maids to set up a bed in the portico and to lay fine purple blankets on it, and spread rugs over them, and put woolly cloaks on top for him to wrap himself in. They went out of the hall with torches in their hands; and when they had busily spread the strong bed, they came and stood beside Odysseus and urged him: "Get up and go to bed, stranger; your bed is made."

343 So they spoke, and it seemed welcome to him to lie down. So much-enduring noble Odysseus slept there on the corded bed in the echoing portico; and Alcinous lay down in the inmost room of the high house, and beside him the lady his wife had made ready the bed and shared it.

Book 8

1 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, the sacred strength of Alcinous rose from his bed, and Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, sacker of cities, rose too. The sacred strength of Alcinous led the way to the assembly place of the Phaeacians, which was built for them beside the ships. They came and sat down side by side on the polished stones. And Pallas Athena went through the town in the likeness of the herald of wise Alcinous, planning the homecoming of great-hearted Odysseus, and she stood beside each man and said:

11 "Come, leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians, come to the assembly, so that you may hear about the stranger who has just come to the house of wise Alcinous after wandering over the sea; he is like the immortals in form."

15 So saying, she stirred the strength and spirit of each man. Quickly the meeting places and the seats were filled with men gathering, and many marveled when they saw the wise son of Laertes; for Athena poured a wondrous grace over his head and shoulders, and made him taller and broader to look at, so that he might be welcome to all the Phaeacians and win their awe and respect, and come through the many contests in which the Phaeacians would test Odysseus. And when they were gathered and assembled together, Alcinous addressed them and said:

26 "Hear me, leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians, so that I may say what the heart in my breast commands me. This stranger, I do not 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

send him on his way, and begs that it be assured. Let us make haste to send him, as we have done before; for no one else either who comes to my house waits here long, grieving, for want of an escort home. Come, let us drag a black ship down into the bright sea, on her first voyage, and let fifty-two young men be chosen from the people, those who have proved the best before. When you have all made the oars fast at the oarlocks, come ashore, and then come to my house and make ready a quick meal; I will provide well for all. That is my command to the young men. The rest of you, sceptered kings, come to my beautiful house, so that we may entertain the stranger in the halls; and let no one refuse. And call the godlike bard Demodocus; for the god has given him beyond others the gift of song, to delight us in whatever way his heart prompts him to sing."

46 So he spoke and led the way, and the sceptered kings followed; and a herald went for the godlike bard. The fifty-two chosen young men went, as he had told them, to the shore of the barren sea. And when they had come down to the ship and the sea, they dragged the black ship down into the deep water, and set the mast and the sail in the black ship, and fitted the oars in their leather straps, all in due order, and spread the white sail. They moored her high, out in the water, and then went to the great house of wise Alcinous. The porticoes and the courtyards and the rooms were filled with men gathering; there were many, young and old. For them Alcinous sacrificed twelve sheep, eight white-tusked boars, and two shambling cattle. They flayed them and dressed them, and made ready a lovely feast.

62 The herald came near, leading the faithful bard, whom the Muse loved above all others, and she gave him both good and evil: she took away his eyes, but gave him sweet song. Pontonous set a silver-studded chair for him in the middle of the feasters, leaning it against a tall pillar; and the herald hung the clear-toned lyre on a

peg above his head and showed him how to reach it with his hands. Beside him he set a basket and a fine table, and a cup of wine to drink when his heart bid him. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, the Muse moved the bard to sing the famous deeds of men, from the lay whose fame had then reached the wide sky: the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles, son of Peleus, how once they strove at a rich feast of the gods with violent words, and Agamemnon, lord of men, was glad at heart that the best of the Achaeans were quarreling. For so Phoebus Apollo had foretold to him in prophecy at holy Pytho, when he crossed the stone threshold to consult the oracle. For then the beginning of woe was rolling on for Trojans and Danaans through the will of great Zeus.

83 These things the renowned bard sang. But Odysseus took his great purple mantle in his strong hands and drew it down over his head and covered his handsome face; for he was ashamed before the Phaeacians to shed tears under his brows. Whenever the god-like bard stopped singing, he would wipe away his tears and take the mantle from his head, and take a two-handled cup and pour an offering to the gods. But whenever he began again, and the best of the Phaeacians urged him to sing, since they delighted in his words, Odysseus would cover his head again and weep. There he hid his tears from all the others; but Alcinous alone took notice and saw it, sitting near him, and heard him groaning heavily. At once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians:

97 "Hear me, leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians: by now we have satisfied our hearts with the feast, where each has his equal share, and with the lyre, which is the companion of a rich feast. Now let us go out and try all kinds of contests, so that the stranger may tell his friends, when he comes home, how far we

surpass other men in boxing and wrestling and jumping and running."

104 So he spoke and led the way, and they followed. The herald hung the clear-toned lyre on its peg, and took Demodocus by the hand and led him out of the hall, and guided him along the same road that the best of the Phaeacians had taken, to watch the contests. They went to the place of assembly, and a great crowd followed, thousands of them; and many fine young men stood up. Up rose Acroneus and Ocyalus and Elatreus, Nauteus and Prymneus and Anchialus and Eretmeus, Ponteus and Proreus, Thoon and Anabesineus, and Amphialus, son of Polyneus, son of Tecton; and up rose Euryalus too, the equal of Ares, the bane of men, the son of Naubolus, who was the best of all the Phaeacians in looks and build after excellent Laodamas. And the three sons of excellent Alcinous stood up, Laodamas and Halius and godlike Clytoneus. First they tried themselves in the footrace. The course was stretched out before them from the starting post, and all together they flew swiftly over the plain, raising the dust. Far the best at running was excellent Clytoneus: as far as the length of a furrow that mules plow in a fallow field, so far he ran out ahead and reached the crowd, and the others were left behind. Then they tried the painful wrestling, and in that Euryalus beat all the best. In jumping Amphialus was the foremost of all; with the discus Elatreus was far the best of all; and in boxing Laodamas, the good son of Alcinous. And when they had all delighted their hearts with the contests, Laodamas, son of Alcinous, spoke among them:

133 "Come, friends, let us ask the stranger whether he knows and has learned any contest. He is not badly built, at least, in his thighs and calves and both his arms above, and his sturdy neck and his great strength; nor does he lack youth, but he has been broken by many hardships. For I say there is nothing worse than the sea to wreck a man, however strong he may be."

140 Then Euryalus answered him and said: "Laodamas, you have spoken that word very rightly. Go yourself now and challenge him, and say it to him."

143 And when the good son of Alcinous heard this, he went and stood in the middle and said to Odysseus: "Come, stranger, old father, you too must try the contests, if you have learned any; and you look like a man who knows contests. For there is no greater glory for a man as long as he lives than what he achieves with his own feet and his own hands. So come and try, and scatter the cares from your heart. Your journey will not be put off much longer; your ship is already drawn down, and the crew are ready."

152 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Laodamas, why do you all urge me to this, mocking me? Cares are far more on my mind than contests, I who before have suffered very much and toiled much, and now I sit in your assembly longing for my return, begging the king and all the people."

158 Then Euryalus answered him and taunted him to his face: "No, stranger, I would not liken you to a man skilled in contests, such as are many among men, but to one who goes back and forth with a many-benched ship, a captain of sailors who are traders, a man who keeps his mind on the cargo and watches over the homeward freight and the gains he has snatched. You are no athlete."

165 Odysseus of many wiles looked at him from under his brows and said: "Stranger, that was not well spoken; you seem a reckless man. So it is: the gods do not give their graces to all men alike, whether form or mind or eloquence. One man is less impressive in looks, but the god crowns his form with words, and men look at him with delight; he speaks without faltering, with a winning modesty, and he stands out among the gathered people, and as he goes through the town they look on him as on a god. Another is like the immortals in looks, but no grace is set like a crown around his

words. So it is with you: your looks are splendid, and not even a god could make them otherwise, but in mind you are empty. You have stirred the heart in my breast by speaking so out of turn. I am not unskilled in contests, as you say; I think I was among the first, as long as I could trust in my youth and my hands. But now I am held down by misery and pain; for I have endured much, passing through the wars of men and the cruel waves. Yet even so, though I have suffered many evils, I will try the contests; for your word has bitten into my heart, and your talk has stirred me."

186 He spoke, and leaping up, mantle and all, he seized a discus bigger and thicker, and heavier by no little, than the ones the Phaeacians threw among themselves. He whirled it around and let it fly from his sturdy hand, and the stone hummed; and the Phaeacians of the long oars, men famed for ships, ducked down to the ground under the rush of the stone. It flew past the marks of all of them, speeding lightly from his hand. And Athena, in the likeness of a man, set the mark, and spoke to him and called him by name:

195 "Even a blind man, stranger, could tell your mark by feeling for it, since it is not mixed in with the crowd but far in front. Take heart, in this contest at least: none of the Phaeacians will reach this, let alone throw past it."

199 So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, rejoicing that he saw a friend on his side in the contest. And then he spoke more lightly among the Phaeacians:

202 "Reach that now, young men! And soon, I think, I will send another after it, as far or farther still. And of the rest, anyone whose heart and spirit bid him, come here and try me, since you have made me very angry, in boxing or wrestling or even running, I do not grudge it, any of the Phaeacians, except Laodamas himself. For he is my host: who would fight with a man who is kind to him? A foolish and worthless man is he who challenges his host to a

contest in a foreign land; he only cuts himself short in everything. But of the others I refuse no one and scorn no one; I am willing to know them and to test them face to face. For I am not bad at any of the contests 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 crowd of enemies, even if a great many companions stood beside me and shot at the men. Only Philoctetes surpassed me with the bow in the land of the Trojans, when we Achaeans shot. But I say that I am far the best of all the others, of all the mortals who now eat bread on the earth. With men of former times I will not wish to vie, neither with Heracles nor with Eurytus of Oechalia, who vied even with the immortals at the bow. That is why great Eurytus died early, and did not reach old age in his halls: Apollo in anger killed him, because he challenged him to a contest of archery. And I can hurl a spear farther than any other man can shoot an arrow. Only in running do I fear that one of the Phaeacians may outstrip me; for I was cruelly broken among the many waves, since there was no lasting care for my body on board; and so my limbs are slack."

234 So he spoke, and they all fell silent and were still. Only Alcinous answered him:

236 "Stranger, what you say among us is not ungracious: you want to show the excellence that goes with you, angry because this man stood up beside you at the contests and taunted you; and you want to show it so that no mortal who knew in his heart how to speak fittingly would ever find fault with your excellence. Come now, mark my word, so that you may tell it to another hero, when you are feasting in your own halls beside your wife and your children, and remember our excellence, and the skills that Zeus has given to us too, from our fathers' time on. We are not excellent boxers or wrestlers, but we run swiftly on our feet and are the best with ships; and dear to us always are the feast and the lyre and the

dance, and changes of clothes and warm baths and bed. Come, all you who are the best dancers of the Phaeacians, play, so that the stranger may tell his friends when he comes home how far we surpass other men in seamanship and running and dancing and song. And let someone go at once and bring Demodocus the clear-toned lyre, which lies somewhere in our house."

256 So spoke Alcinous, like a god, and the herald rose to bring the hollow lyre from the king's house. And nine chosen stewards stood up, all of them, men of the people, who arranged everything well at the contests. They leveled a dancing floor and marked out a fine wide ring. The herald came near, bringing the clear-toned lyre to Demodocus; and he moved into the middle, and around him stood boys in the first bloom of youth, skilled in dancing, and they struck the sacred dancing floor with their feet. And Odysseus watched the flashing of their feet and marveled in his heart.

266 Then the bard struck up on the lyre and began his lovely song, about the love of Ares and Aphrodite of the fair crown: how they first lay together in the house of Hephaestus, in secret. Ares gave her many gifts, and shamed the bed of lord Hephaestus. But at once Helios came to Hephaestus with the news, for he had seen them lying together in love. And when Hephaestus heard the heart-wounding tale, he went to his smithy, brooding on evil in his heart, and set the great anvil on its block, and hammered out bonds that could not be broken or loosed, so that the lovers would stay fast where they were. And when he had made the snare, in his anger against Ares, he went to the chamber where his own bed lay, and all around the bedposts he spread the bonds in a circle, and many hung down from the roof beams above, like fine cobwebs, which no one could see, not even one of the blessed gods; so cunningly were they made. And when he had spread the whole snare 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. And Ares of the

golden reins kept no blind watch: when he saw Hephaestus, the famous craftsman, going away, he went to the house of renowned Hephaestus, eager for the love of Cytherea of the fair crown. She had just come from her father, the mighty son of Cronus, and had sat down; and Ares came into the house and took her hand and spoke and called her by name:

292 "Come, my love, let us go to bed and lie down together; for Hephaestus is not at home any more, but has gone off, I suppose, to Lemnos, to the Sintians with their savage speech."

295 So he spoke, and it seemed welcome to her to lie down. The two of them went to the bed and lay down; and the cunning bonds of wise-hearted Hephaestus fell around them, and they could not move a limb or lift one. And then they knew that there was no escape. And the renowned lame god came near them, having turned back before he reached the land of Lemnos; for Helios had kept watch for him and told him the tale. He went to his house, grieved at heart, and stood in the doorway, and savage anger seized him; and he gave a terrible shout and called out to all the gods:

306 "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, come here and see a thing to laugh at and not to be borne: how Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, is forever dishonoring me because I am lame, and loves that destroyer Ares, because he is handsome and sound of foot, while I was born a weakling. But no one else is to blame for that, only my two parents, who I wish had never begotten me! But look, see where these two have climbed into my bed and are sleeping in love, and I am sick at the sight. I do not think they will want to lie like this a moment longer, much as they love each other; soon neither of them will want to sleep. But the snare and the bonds will hold them, until her father pays me back all the bride-gifts, every one, that I put into his hands for the sake

of his shameless girl; for his daughter is beautiful, but she cannot govern her heart."

321 So he spoke, and the gods gathered at the house with the bronze floor. Poseidon the earth-holder came, Hermes the luck-bringer came, and lord Apollo the far-worker came. But the goddesses, being women, stayed at home, each of them, for shame. The gods, the givers of good things, stood in the doorway, and unquenchable laughter rose among the blessed gods as they saw the craft of wise-hearted Hephaestus. And one would say, looking at his neighbor:

329 "Bad deeds don't prosper. The slow catch the swift: look how Hephaestus, slow as he is, has caught Ares, though he is the swiftest of the gods who hold Olympus, lame as he is, by his craft. So Ares owes the adulterer's fine."

333 So they spoke with one another, and lord Apollo, son of Zeus, said to Hermes:

335 "Hermes, son of Zeus, guide, giver of good things, would you be willing, held fast in strong bonds, to sleep in bed beside golden Aphrodite?"

338 Then the guide, slayer of Argus, answered him: "If only that could happen, lord Apollo, far-shooter! Let bonds three times as many, past counting, hold me fast, and all you gods look on, and all the goddesses too, so long as I could sleep beside golden Aphrodite."

343 So he spoke, and laughter rose among the immortal gods. But Poseidon did not laugh; he kept begging Hephaestus, the famous worker, to set Ares free. And he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

347 "Let him go; and I promise you that he will pay, as you demand, everything that is due, in the presence of the immortal gods."

349 Then the renowned lame god said to him: "Do not ask this of me, Poseidon, earth-holder. Worthless are the pledges given for the worthless. How could I hold you bound among the immortal gods, if Ares went off and escaped both his debt and his bonds?"

354 Then Poseidon the Earth-shaker said to him: "Hephaestus, even if Ares slips out of his debt and runs away, I myself will pay you this."

357 Then the renowned lame god answered him: "It is not possible, and it is not fitting, to refuse your word."

359 So saying, the strength of Hephaestus loosed the bonds. And the two of them, as soon as they were free of the bonds, strong as the bonds were, sprang up at once; Ares went off to Thrace, and laughter-loving Aphrodite went to Cyprus, to Paphos, where she has her sanctuary and her fragrant altar. There the Graces bathed her and anointed her with immortal oil, such as gleams on the gods who live forever, and they dressed her in lovely clothes, a wonder to see.

367 These things the renowned bard sang; and Odysseus was delighted in his heart as he listened, and so were the other Phaeacians of the long oars, men famed for ships.

370 Then Alcinous told Halius and Laodamas to dance by themselves, since no one could rival them. They took in their hands a beautiful ball, purple, which wise Polybus had made for them. One of them would bend far back and throw 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 themselves at throwing the ball straight up, they danced on the earth that feeds many, passing it quickly back and forth, while the other young men stood around the ring and beat time, and a great stamping rose.

381 Then noble Odysseus said to Alcinous: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned of all the people, you boasted that your dancers were

the best, and now it has been proved true. Awe holds me as I look at them."

385 So he spoke, and the sacred strength of Alcinous was glad, and at once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians:

387 "Hear me, leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians: the stranger seems to me a man of good sense. Come, let us give him a guest gift, as is fitting. There are twelve glorious kings who rule as chiefs among the people, and I myself am the thirteenth. Let each of you bring him a freshly washed mantle and a tunic and a talent of precious gold. And let us bring it all together at once, so that the stranger may have it in his hands and go to supper glad at heart. And let Euryalus make amends to him himself, with words and with a gift, since the word he spoke was not fitting."

398 So he spoke, and they all praised his words and told him to do so, and each man sent a herald to bring the gifts. And Euryalus answered him and said: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned of all the people, then I will make amends to the stranger, as you bid me. I will give him this sword, all of bronze, with a silver hilt and a sheath of new-sawn ivory wrapped around it; it will be worth much to him."

406 So saying, he put the silver-studded sword into his hands, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings: "Farewell, stranger, old father; and if any word was spoken that gave offense, may the storm winds snatch it up at once and carry it away. And may the gods grant you to see your wife and to reach your native land, since for a long time now you have been suffering hardships far from your friends."

412 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Farewell to you too, my friend, with all my heart, and may the gods grant you prosperity. And may you never come to miss this sword that you have given me, making amends with your words."

416 He spoke, and slung the silver-studded sword around his shoulders. The sun set, and the glorious gifts were there for him. The lordly heralds carried them to the house of Alcinous, and the sons of excellent Alcinous received them and set the beautiful gifts beside their revered mother. The sacred strength of Alcinous led the way, and they came and sat down on the high chairs. Then the strength of Alcinous said to Arete:

424 "Come, wife, bring a splendid chest, the best one, and put in it yourself a freshly washed mantle and a tunic. And heat a bronze cauldron over the fire for him, and warm water, so that when he has bathed and seen all the gifts well stowed that the excellent Phaeacians have brought here, he may enjoy the feast and listen to the strains of song. And I will give him this beautiful cup of mine, of gold, so that he may remember me all his days when he pours offerings in his hall to Zeus and to the other gods."

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 tripod for the bath water on the blazing fire, and poured water into it, and took wood and kindled it beneath. The fire played around the belly of the tripod, and the water grew warm. While it heated, Arete brought out from her chamber a beautiful chest for the stranger, and put in it the splendid gifts, the clothing and the gold that the Phaeacians had given him; and she herself put in a mantle and a fine tunic, and she spoke to him, and her words had wings:

443 "Now look to the lid yourself, and tie a knot on it quickly, so that no one may rob you on the way, when you fall into sweet sleep again as you travel in the black ship."

446 And when much-enduring noble Odysseus heard this, at once he fitted the lid and quickly tied on it a cunning knot, which lady Circe had once taught him in her wisdom. Then the housekeeper told him to step into the tub and bathe; and his heart was glad to see the warm bath, for he had not often been cared for

since he left the house of fair-haired Calypso. While he was with her, he had been cared for constantly, as if he were a god.

454 When the maids had bathed him and rubbed him with oil and put a fine cloak and a tunic about 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 beside a pillar of the well-built roof, and marveled at Odysseus as she looked at him with her eyes, and she spoke to him, and her words had wings:

461 "Farewell, stranger, and when you are in your native land, remember me sometimes, since it is to me first that you owe the price of your life."

463 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Nausicaa, daughter of great-hearted Alcinous, so may Zeus grant it now, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, that I may reach my home and see the day of return. Then there too I would pray to you as to a god, always, all my days; for you gave me my life, girl."

469 He spoke, and sat down on a chair beside King Alcinous. They were already serving out the portions and mixing the wine. The herald came near, leading the faithful bard, Demodocus, honored by the people, and seated him in the middle of the feasters, leaning his chair against a tall pillar. Then Odysseus of many wiles cut off a piece of the chine of a white-tusked boar, though more was left over, with rich fat on either side, and said to the herald:

477 "Herald, here, give this meat to Demodocus to eat; and I will greet him warmly, grieving though I am. For among all men on the earth bards have their share of honor and reverence, because the Muse has taught them the paths of song, and she loves the tribe of bards."

482 So he spoke, and the herald took it and placed it in the hands of the hero Demodocus; and he received it, and was glad at heart. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire

for drink and food, then Odysseus of many wiles said to Demodocus:

487 "Demodocus, I praise you above all mortals. Either the Muse, child of Zeus, has taught you, or Apollo; for you sing all too truly the fate of the Achaeans, all that the Achaeans did and suffered and all they toiled through, as if you had been there yourself or heard it from someone who was. But come now, change your theme, and sing of the making of the wooden horse, which Epeius made with Athena's help, the trick that noble Odysseus once led into the citadel, after filling it with the men who sacked Ilion. If you tell me this rightly, in due order, I will tell all men at once how the god has freely granted you the gift of wondrous song."

499 So he spoke, and the bard, moved by the god, began, and let his song be heard, taking it up from where the Argives had gone aboard their well-benched ships and were sailing away, after throwing fire into their huts, while the others, with glorious Odysseus, were already sitting in the meeting place of the Trojans, hidden in the horse; for the Trojans themselves had dragged it into the citadel. So it stood there, and the Trojans sat around it and talked on and on, without coming to a decision. Three plans pleased them: either to split the hollow timber with the pitiless bronze, or to drag it to the top of the cliff and throw it down onto the rocks, or to let it stand, a great offering to charm the gods; and that was how it was to end at last. For it was their fate to perish once their city had taken in the great wooden horse, where all the best of the Argives sat, bringing slaughter 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 each man ravaged the steep city in a different place, but how Odysseus went like Ares to the house of Deiphobus, with godlike Menelaus. There, he said, Odysseus dared the most terrible

fighting, and won it in the end, with the help of great-spirited Athena.

521 These things the renowned bard sang; and Odysseus melted, and tears wet his cheeks below his eyelids. As a woman weeps, falling over her dear husband, who has fallen before his city and his people, trying to ward off the pitiless day from his town and his children; she sees him dying and gasping for breath, and she clings to him and wails aloud; but the men behind her beat her back and shoulders with their spears and lead her off into slavery, to have toil and misery, and her cheeks waste away with most pitiful grief: so Odysseus shed pitiful tears from under his brows. There he hid his tears from all the others; but Alcinous alone took notice and saw it, sitting near him, and heard him groaning heavily. At once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians:

536 "Hear me, leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians: let Demodocus now stop his clear-toned lyre; for it is not to the pleasure of all that he sings this song. Ever since we began supper and the godlike bard was moved to sing, the stranger has never stopped his miserable weeping; grief must surely have closed around his heart. Come, let the bard stop, so that we may all make merry alike, hosts and guest, since that is much better. For it is for the sake of the revered stranger that all this has been prepared, his passage home and the gifts of friendship that we give him in our love. A stranger and a suppliant is as dear as a brother to any man who has even a little understanding. So now do not hide with crafty thoughts what I am going to ask you; it is better for you to speak out. Tell me the name by which they called you at home, your mother and your father and the others in the town and those who live around it. For no man is altogether nameless, bad or good, once he is born; parents give names to all, as soon as they have borne them. And tell me your land, your people, and your city, so that our ships may carry you there, setting their course by

their own minds. For the Phaeacians have no helmsmen, nor any steering oars such as other ships have; the ships themselves know the thoughts and minds of men, and they know the cities and rich fields of all men, and they cross the gulf of the sea most swiftly, wrapped in mist and cloud; and they never have any fear of harm or of being lost. But this I once heard my father Nausithous tell: he used to say that Poseidon was angry with us because we give safe escort to all men. He said that one day Poseidon would wreck a well-built ship of the Phaeacians as she came back from an escort on the misty sea, and would hide our city behind a great mountain. So the old man spoke; and the god may bring it to pass, or it may stay unfulfilled, as his heart pleases. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: where you 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, with minds that fear the gods. And tell me why you weep and grieve in your heart when you hear of the fate of the Argive Danaans and of Ilion. The gods made it, and spun destruction for men, so that there might be a song for those still to come. Did some kinsman of yours by marriage fall before Ilion, a good man, a daughter's husband or a wife's father, who are the dearest after our own blood and kin? Or perhaps some companion, a good man who knew your heart? For a companion who has an understanding heart is no less than a brother."

Book 9

1 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: “Lord Alcinous, most renowned of all the people, it is a fine thing, truly, to listen to a bard like this one, whose voice is like the voice of the gods. For I say that nothing comes to pass that is more delightful than when gladness holds a whole people, and the banqueters throughout the house sit in their rows listening to the bard, and beside them the tables are loaded with bread and meat, and the wine steward draws wine from the mixing bowl and carries it round and pours it into the cups. This, to my mind, seems the loveliest thing there is. But your heart has turned to asking about my grievous sorrows, so that I may weep and groan still more. What then shall I tell you first, and what last? For the gods of heaven have given me sorrows in plenty. Now 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 every kind of stratagem, and my fame reaches the sky. I live in clear-seen Ithaca. There is a mountain on it, Neriton, with quivering leaves, standing out clear; and around it lie many islands very close to one another, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus. Ithaca itself lies low, farthest out in the sea toward the dark, and the others lie apart, toward the dawn and the sun. It is rugged, but a good nurse of young men; and I for my part can see nothing sweeter than a man’s own land. Calypso, bright among goddesses, kept me there with her in her hollow caves, longing to have me for her husband; and in the same way Circe, the crafty woman of Aeaea, held me

back in her halls, longing to have me for her husband. But they never persuaded the heart in my breast. So true it is that nothing is sweeter than a man's own country and his parents, even if he lives far off in a rich house, in a foreign land, away from his parents. But come, let me tell you also of my homecoming, full of sorrows, which Zeus laid on me as I came from Troy."

39 The wind that carried me from Ilion brought me to the Cicones, to Ismarus. There I sacked the city and killed the men. From the city we took their wives and a great store of goods and divided them, so that no one, as far as it lay with me, should go away cheated of his fair share. Then I urged that we should flee with a swift foot, but they, the great fools, would not listen. There much wine was being drunk, and they slaughtered many sheep along the shore, and shambling cattle with curving horns. And all this while the Cicones who had got away went and called to other Cicones, their neighbors, who were more numerous and better men, living inland, men who knew how to fight from chariots and, when there was need, on foot. They came in the early morning, as many as the leaves and flowers that grow in their season. Then an evil doom from Zeus stood beside us, ill-fated as we were, so that we should suffer many pains. They drew up their lines and fought the battle beside the swift ships, and the two sides struck at each other with bronze-tipped spears. As long as it was morning and the sacred day was growing, we held our ground and beat them off, many more as they were; but when the sun turned toward the hour for unyoking oxen, then the Cicones bent the Achaeans back and overpowered them. From each ship six of my well-greaved companions perished; the rest of us escaped death and doom.

62 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our dear companions. But my curved ships would 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 North Wind against the ships in an unearthly storm, and covered land and sea alike with clouds, and night rushed down from the sky. 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 land. There for two nights and two days on end we lay, eating our hearts out with weariness and grief. But when lovely-haired Dawn brought the third day to its fullness, we set up the masts and hoisted the white sails and sat still, and the wind and the helmsmen kept the ships on course. And I would have come home to my native land unharmed; but as I was rounding Malea, the swell and the current and the North Wind drove me off course and past Cythera.

82 From there for nine days I was carried 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 at once my companions took their meal beside the swift ships. When we had tasted food and drink, I sent some of my companions ahead to go and find out what men these were who ate bread upon the earth, choosing two men and sending a third with them as herald. They went at once and mingled with the Lotus-Eaters. And the Lotus-Eaters did not plot destruction for our companions; they gave them lotus to taste. But whoever of them ate the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus no longer wanted to bring back word or to come home; they wanted to stay there among the Lotus-Eaters, feeding on lotus, and forget their homecoming. These men I brought back to the ships by force, weeping, and dragged them under the benches in the hollow ships and tied them there. Then I ordered the rest of my faithful companions to make haste and board the swift ships, so that none of them might eat the lotus and forget his homecoming. Quickly they

went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks, and sitting in order they struck the gray sea with their oars.

105 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart. And we came to the land of the Cyclopes, overbearing and lawless men, who trust in the immortal gods and neither plant anything with their hands nor plow; all things grow for them unsown and untilled, wheat and barley and vines that bear wine from heavy clusters, and the rain of Zeus makes them grow. 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 take no heed of one another.

116 Now there is a small island that stretches out beyond the harbor, neither close to the land of the Cyclopes nor far off, a wooded island; and wild goats past counting live on it. For no path of men keeps them away, and no 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 plowed fields; unsown and unplowed all its days, it is empty of men and feeds bleating goats. For the Cyclopes have no red-cheeked ships, and there are no shipwrights among them who could build well-benched ships to make every voyage to the cities of men, as men so often cross the sea to one another in ships. Such men would have made the island a well-settled place for them as well. For it is not a poor land at all; it would bear every crop in its season. There are meadows on it by the shores of the gray sea, well watered and soft, where vines would never fail. There is level plowland; men could reap a deep harvest there, always in its season, for the soil underneath is very rich. 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 run the ships ashore and wait until the sailors' hearts urge them on and the winds blow fair. At the head of the harbor bright water flows, a spring beneath a cave, and poplars

grow around it. There we sailed in, and some god was guiding us through the murky night, for nothing could be seen ahead. A thick mist lay around the ships, and no moon shone out from the sky; it was shut in by clouds. No one caught sight of the island with his eyes, nor did we see the long waves rolling in toward the shore, until we ran our well-benched ships aground. When the ships were beached we lowered all the sails, and we ourselves stepped out on the shore where the waves break; and there we fell asleep and waited for bright Dawn.

152 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, we wandered over the island, marveling at it. And the nymphs, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis, roused the mountain goats, so that my companions might have a meal. At once we took our curved bows and our long-socketed hunting spears from the ships, and, divided into three bands, we began to shoot; and soon the god gave us game to our hearts' content. Twelve ships followed me, and to each fell nine goats by lot; for me alone they chose out ten.

161 So all day long until the sun went down we sat feasting on meat beyond measure and sweet wine. For the red wine in the ships was not yet used up; some was still left, since each crew had drawn off plenty in 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 voices of their sheep and goats. When the sun went down and darkness came on, then we lay down to sleep on the shore where the waves break. When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, then I called an assembly and spoke among them all:

172 "The rest of you stay here now, my faithful companions, while I with my own ship and my own companions go and find out about these men, who they are: whether they are violent and sav-

age and unjust, or kind to strangers, with minds that fear the gods."

177 So I spoke and went on board, and ordered my companions to come aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. Quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks, and sitting in order they struck the gray sea with their oars. But when we came to the place, which was close at hand, there at the far edge of the land, near the sea, we saw a cave, high, roofed over with laurels. Many flocks, sheep and goats, used to sleep there at night, and around it a high courtyard wall had been built of stones sunk deep in the earth and of tall pines and oaks with lofty crowns. There a monstrous man used to sleep, who herded his flocks alone, far off. He did not go about with the others; he lived apart, and his mind was lawless. For he was a monstrous wonder, and he did not look like a man who eats bread, but like a wooded peak of the high mountains, standing out alone, apart from the others.

193 Then I ordered the rest of my faithful companions to stay there beside the ship and guard it, and I chose out the twelve best of my companions and set out. I had with me a goatskin of dark wine, sweet wine, which Maron gave me, the son of Euanthes, priest of Apollo, the god who watched over Ismarus. He gave it because we had protected him, with his child and his wife, out of reverence; for he lived in a wooded grove of Phoebus Apollo. And he gave me glorious gifts: he gave me seven talents of well-wrought gold, and he gave me a mixing bowl all of silver, and besides that he drew off wine for me into twelve jars in all, sweet and unmixed, a drink for gods. Not one of the servants or the maids in his house knew of it, only he himself and his dear wife and a single housekeeper. Whenever they drank that honey-sweet red wine, he would fill one cup with it and pour it into twenty measures of water, and a sweet smell rose from the mixing bowl, a wondrous smell; then you would have found it no pleasure to hold

back. I filled a great skin with this wine and took it, and provisions too, in a leather bag; for my proud heart foresaw at once that I would meet a man clothed in great strength, a savage, who knew nothing rightly of justice or of laws.

216 Quickly we came to the cave, but we did not find him inside; he was pasturing his fat flocks in the meadow. We went into the cave and looked at everything in wonder. The racks were laden with cheeses, and the pens were crowded with lambs and kids. Each kind was penned apart: the firstlings by themselves, the middle ones by themselves, and the newborn by themselves again. And all the vessels were swimming with whey, the pails and the bowls, well made, that he milked into. 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 away over the salt water. But I would not listen to them (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. But when he appeared he was not going to be a lovely sight for my companions.

231 There we lit a fire and made an offering, and we ourselves took some of the cheeses and ate, and waited for him, sitting inside, until he came back with his flocks. He was carrying a heavy load of dry wood to have for his supper, and he threw it down inside the cave with a crash; and we shrank back in fear into the farthest corner of the cave. Then he drove his fat flocks into the wide cave, all those that he milked, and left the males outside, the rams and the he-goats, out in the deep courtyard. Then he lifted a great door-stone high and set it in place, a massive thing; twenty-two good four-wheeled wagons could not have heaved 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. At once he curdled half of the white milk, gathered it, and laid it in woven bas-

kets; and the other half he set in pails, so that he could take it and drink, and have it for his supper. And when he had busily finished his chores, then he kindled the fire and caught sight of us, and asked:

252 "Strangers, who are you? From where do you sail the watery ways? Is it on some business, or do you wander at random over the sea, like pirates, who roam about risking their lives and bringing harm to men of other lands?"

256 So he spoke, and our hearts were broken within us, terrified as we were of his deep voice and of the monster himself. But even so I answered him and said:

259 "We are Achaeans, driven off course on our way from Troy by winds of every kind over the great gulf of the sea; we were making for home, but we have come by another road, by other ways. So, I suppose, Zeus wished to devise it. We declare that we are 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 will give us a guest gift or some other present, as is the right of strangers. Respect the gods, mighty one; we are your suppliants. Zeus is the avenger of suppliants and strangers, Zeus the god of strangers, who walks beside revered strangers."

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, telling me to fear the gods or keep clear of them. The Cyclopes care nothing for Zeus who holds the aegis, or for the blessed gods, since we are far stronger. I wouldn't spare you or your companions to keep clear of the hatred 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 land, or close by? I'd like to know."

281 So he spoke, testing me, but I knew too much to be taken in, and I answered him again with crafty words:

283 "Poseidon the Earth-shaker smashed my ship. He drove it onto the rocks at the borders of your land, dashing it against a headland, and the wind carried it in from the sea. But I with these men here escaped sheer destruction."

287 So I spoke, and with a pitiless heart he made no answer, but sprang up and laid his hands on my companions, seized two of them together, and dashed them to the ground like puppies; and their brains ran out on the ground and soaked the earth. He cut them up limb by limb and made his supper of them, and ate like a mountain-bred lion, leaving nothing, entrails and flesh and marrowy bones. We wept and held up our hands to Zeus at the sight of these cruel deeds, and helplessness took hold of our hearts. And when the Cyclops had filled his huge belly, eating human flesh and drinking unmixed milk after it, he lay down inside the cave, stretched out among his flocks. Then I planned in my great heart to go up close, draw the sharp sword from beside my thigh, and stab him in the chest where the midriff holds the liver, feeling for the place with my hand. But a second thought held me back. For there we too would have perished in sheer destruction: we could never have pushed back with our hands, from the high doorway, the massive stone he had set there. So then, groaning, we waited for bright Dawn.

307 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, he kindled the fire and milked his famous flocks, all in due order, and put her young beneath each one. And when he had busily finished his chores, again he seized two men together and made his morning meal of them. When he had eaten, he drove his fat flocks out of the cave, easily lifting away the great door-stone; and then he set it back again, as a man sets 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, to see whether I could somehow take vengeance on him, and Athena would grant me glory.

318 And this seemed to my mind the best plan. Beside the pen there lay a great club of the Cyclops, olive wood, still green; he had cut it to carry once it was dry. Looking at it, we judged it as large as the mast of a black ship of twenty oars, a broad merchant ship that crosses the great gulf of the sea: so long it was and so thick to look at. I went up and cut off about a fathom's length of it and gave it to my companions and told them to shave it down. They made it smooth, and I stood by and sharpened the tip, and then at once took it and hardened it in the blazing fire. Then I laid it carefully away, hiding it under the dung that lay in great heaps throughout the cave. And I told the others to cast lots, to see which of them would dare to lift the stake with me and grind it into his eye when sweet sleep came over him. The lot fell on the very ones I myself would have wanted to choose, four of them, and I was counted with them as the fifth. In the evening he came, herding his fleecy flocks. At once he drove his fat flocks into the wide cave, all of them, and left none out in the deep courtyard, either because he suspected something, or because a god had ordered it so. Then he lifted a great door-stone high and set it in place, and sat down and milked the ewes and the bleating goats, all in due order, and put her young beneath each one. And when he had busily finished his chores, again he seized two men together and made his supper of them. And then I went up close to the Cyclops and spoke to him, holding in my hands an ivy-wood bowl of dark wine:

347 "Cyclops, here, drink wine, now that you have eaten human flesh, so that you may know what kind of drink our ship held hidden. I was bringing it to you as a drink offering, in the hope that you would take pity on 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, since what you have done is against all that is right?"

353 So I spoke, and he took it and drank it off, and he was wonderfully pleased with the sweet drink as he drank, and asked me for more a second time:

355 "Be kind and give me more, and tell me your name, right now, so I can give you a guest gift that will please you. The grain-giving land bears wine from heavy clusters for the Cyclopes too, and the rain of Zeus makes it grow for them; but this is a trickle of ambrosia and nectar."

360 So he spoke, and again I handed him the sparkling wine. Three times I brought it and gave it to him, and three times he drank it off in his folly. Then, when the wine had got round the wits of the Cyclops, I spoke to him with honeyed words:

364 "Cyclops, you ask me my famous name, and I will tell it to you; and you give me a guest gift, as you promised. Nobody is my name. Nobody they call me, my mother and my father and all my companions."[1]

368 So I spoke, and he answered me at once with a pitiless heart: "Nobody I will eat last of all, after his companions; the others first. That will be your guest gift."

371 He spoke, and sank back and fell on his back, and lay there with his thick neck bent to one side, and sleep that conquers all took hold of him. Out of his throat gushed wine and gobbets of human flesh; he was belching, heavy with wine. Then I thrust the stake deep under the heaped embers until it should grow hot, and spoke to all my companions to give them courage, so that none of them would take fright and shrink back on me. And when the olive stake, green as it was, was about to catch fire and was glowing terribly, then I brought it close, out of the fire, and my companions stood around me, and some god breathed great courage into us. They took the olive stake, sharp at the point, and drove it into his

eye, while I, leaning on it from above, twirled it round, as when a man bores a ship's timber with a drill, and the men below keep it spinning with a strap, holding it at either end, and it runs round steadily without stopping. So we took the fire-pointed stake and twirled it in his eye, and the blood flowed around the hot stake. The blast from the burning eyeball singed his eyelids all round and his brows, 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, to temper it, for that is what gives iron its strength, so his eye hissed around the olive stake. He gave a great, terrible howl, and the rock rang all around, and we shrank away in terror. Then he wrenched the stake out of his eye, all clotted with blood, and flung it from him with his hands, beside himself, and shouted loudly for the Cyclopes who lived around him in caves among the windy heights. They heard his cry and came flocking from every side, and standing around the cave they asked him what was troubling him:

403 "What is so wrong with you, Polyphemus, that you shout like this through the immortal night and keep us from sleeping? Surely no man is driving off your flocks against your will? Surely no one is killing you by cunning or by force?"

407 And strong Polyphemus answered them from inside the cave: "Friends, Nobody is killing me by cunning, not by force!"

409 They answered him, and their words had wings: "Well, if no one is forcing you, alone as you are, it's a sickness sent by great Zeus, and there's no escaping that. You'd better pray to your father, lord Poseidon."

413 So they spoke as they went away, and my own heart laughed within me, because my name and my flawless cunning had fooled him. But the Cyclops, groaning and racked with pain, groped with his hands and took the stone away from the doorway, and sat himself down in the doorway with his arms spread wide, to

catch anyone who might try to go out among the sheep; so great a fool, I suppose, he hoped in his heart that I was. But I was planning how everything might turn out best, whether I could find some release from death for my companions and for myself; and I wove every kind of trick and cunning, 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-fleeced, fine big animals, with wool dark as violets. These I silently bound together with the twisted willow withes on which the Cyclops slept, the monster with a lawless mind, taking them in threes. The one in the middle carried a man, and the two on either side went along to keep my companions safe. So three sheep carried each man. But as for me—there was a ram, by far the best of all the flock; I took hold of him by the back and curled myself up under his shaggy belly and lay there; and with my hands I twisted myself into his wonderful fleece and held on fast, with an enduring heart. So then, groaning, we waited for bright Dawn.

437 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, then the males of the flock hurried out to pasture, and the females bleated unmilked around the pens, for their udders were bursting. Their master, worn with cruel pains, felt along the backs of all the sheep as they stood upright; but the fool did not notice that my men were tied under the breasts of the woolly sheep. Last of the flock the ram came out of the door, weighed down by his wool and by me with all my shrewd thinking. Strong Polyphemus felt him over and said to him:

447 "My dear old ram, why are you the last of the flock to come out of the cave like this? You never used to lag behind the sheep; you were always far the first to graze on the soft flowers of the grass, taking long strides, first to reach the flowing rivers, first to want to go back to the fold in the evening. Now you're the very last. You must be grieving for your master's eye, which a wicked

man blinded, with his miserable companions, after he overpowered my wits with wine: that Nobody, who I tell you has not yet escaped destruction. If only you could think as I do and could find a voice, to tell me where he is skulking from my strength! Then his brains would be dashed out on the ground and spattered all over the cave as I smashed him, and my heart would find some relief from the harm that worthless Nobody has done me."

461 So he spoke and 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 loosed myself from under the ram, and then untied my companions. Quickly we drove off the long-shanked flocks, rich with fat, turning them often, until we came to the ship. And a welcome sight we were to our dear companions, we who had escaped death; but for the others they began to groan and wail. I would not let them weep, but nodded to each of them with my brows, and ordered them to throw the many fleecy sheep quickly into the ship and sail away over the salt water. Quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks, and sitting in order they struck the gray sea with their oars. But when I was as far off as a man can make himself heard when he shouts, then I called out to the Cyclops with taunting words:

475 "Cyclops, so it was not a weakling's companions you were going to eat in your hollow cave by brute strength! Your evil deeds were bound to catch up with you, cruel one, since you did not shrink from eating guests in your own house. So Zeus has paid you back, and the other gods."

480 So I spoke, and he grew angrier still at heart. He broke off the top of a great mountain and hurled it, and it came down just ahead of the dark-prowed ship and fell barely short of the tip of the steering oar. The sea surged up under the falling rock, and the backwash, a flood tide from the open sea, carried the ship quickly toward the land and drove it onto the shore. But I took a long pole

in my hands and pushed the ship off and away, and urged my companions with nods of my head and ordered them to throw their weight on the oars, so that we might escape from evil; and they bent forward and rowed. But when we were twice as far out over the sea, then I called out to the Cyclops again, though my companions around me, one after another, tried to hold me back with soothing words:

494 "Reckless man, why do you want to provoke a savage? Just now he threw his missile into the sea and drove the ship back to the land, and we thought we were done for there and then. If he had heard any of us make a sound or speak, he would have smashed our heads and our ship's timbers together with a jagged rock, so far can he throw."

500 So they spoke, but they did not persuade my great heart, and I called back to him again in anger:

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."

506 So I spoke, and he groaned and answered me: "Ah! So the old prophecy has come true for me after all. There was a prophet here once, a good man and a great one, Telemus son of Eurymus, who excelled in prophecy and grew old prophesying among the Cyclopes. He told me that all this would come to pass some day, that I would lose my sight at the hands of Odysseus. But I was always waiting for some tall, handsome man to come here, clothed in great strength; and now a little man, a worthless weakling, has blinded my eye, after he overpowered me with wine. But come here, Odysseus, so I can set guest gifts before you and urge the famous Earth-shaker to send you on your way. For I am his son, and he declares he is my father. He himself will heal me, if he wishes, and no one else, none of the blessed gods and none of mortal men."

522 So he spoke, and I answered him: "I wish I could rob you of soul and life and send you down to the house of Hades, as surely as not even the Earth-shaker will heal your eye."

526 So I spoke, and then he prayed to lord Poseidon, stretching out his hands to the starry sky: "Hear me, Poseidon, earth-holder, dark-haired, if I am truly yours and you declare you are my father: grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca, may never reach his home. 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, in another man's ship, and find troubles in his house."

536 So he prayed, and the dark-haired god heard him. Then again he lifted a far greater stone, swung it round, and hurled it, putting immeasurable strength into it. It came down just astern of the dark-prowed ship and fell barely short of the tip of the steering oar. The sea surged up under the falling rock, and the wave carried the ship forward and drove it onto the shore.

543 But when we came to the island where the rest of our well-benched ships were waiting all together, and our companions sat around them grieving, always watching for us, we came in and beached our ship on the sand, and we ourselves stepped out on the shore where the waves break. We took the Cyclops's flocks out of the hollow ship and divided them, so that no one, as far as it lay with me, should go away cheated of his fair share. But the ram my well-greaved companions gave to me alone, as a special prize, when the flocks were divided. On the shore I sacrificed him to Zeus of the dark clouds, son of Cronus, who rules over all, and burned the thigh pieces. But he took no heed of my offerings; he was pondering how all my well-benched ships and my faithful companions might perish.

556 So all day long until the sun went down we sat feasting on meat beyond measure and sweet wine. When the sun went down

and darkness came on, then we lay down to sleep on the shore where the waves break. When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, then I urged my companions on and ordered them to come aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. Quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks, and sitting in order they struck the gray sea with their oars.

565 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our dear companions.

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1. Greek *Outis*, "Nobody." The name echoes *mētis*, "cunning," the quality for which Odysseus is famous; when the Cyclopes ask whether "no one" (*mē tis*) is harming Polyphemus (9.405–410), they say the same sound.

Book 10

1 We came to the Aeolian island. 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 sheer. 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 loyal mother, and countless good things lie before them, and all day long the house, full of the savor of roasting meat, echoes around the courtyard; and at night they sleep beside their revered wives under coverlets on corded beds. To their city and their fine house we came. For a whole month he made me welcome and questioned me about everything, about Ilion and the ships of the Argives and the homecoming of the Achaeans; and I told him all of it in due order. But when I in my turn asked to be on my way and begged him to send me off, he did not refuse me at all, and he prepared my passage. He flayed a nine-year-old ox and gave me its hide made into a bag, and in it he bound the paths of the blustering winds; for the son of Cronus had made him keeper of the winds, to calm or to rouse whichever he wishes. He tied the bag fast in my hollow ship with a shining silver cord, so that not even a little breath could slip past; but for me he sent the breath of the West Wind to blow, to carry the ships and ourselves along. But he was not going to bring it to pass: we were ruined by our own folly.

28 For nine days we sailed, night and day alike, and on the tenth our native fields were already coming into view, and we were so

close that we could see men tending fires. Then sweet sleep came over me in my weariness, for I had been handling the sheet of the ship all the while and had not given it to any of my companions, so that we might come the sooner to our native land. But my companions talked among themselves, and said that I was bringing home gold and silver for myself, gifts from Aeolus, great-hearted son of Hippotas. And one would say, looking at his neighbor:

38 "Oh, for shame! How loved and honored this man is by everyone, whatever people's city and land he comes to! He is bringing home many fine treasures from Troy, out of the plunder, while we, who have made the same journey, go home with empty hands. And now Aeolus has given him all this, out of friendship, to please him. But come, let us quickly see what this is, how much gold and silver there is in the bag."

46 So they spoke, and the evil counsel of my companions won. They untied the bag, and all the winds rushed out. At once the storm caught them up and carried them out to sea, weeping, away from their native land. But I woke up, and pondered in my excellent heart whether to throw myself from the ship and perish in the sea, or to endure in silence and still remain among the living. I endured and stayed, and lay in the ship with my face covered. And the ships were carried by the evil blast of the wind back to the Aeolian island, and my companions groaned.

56 There we went ashore and drew water, and at once my companions took their meal beside the swift ships. When we had tasted food and drink, I took a herald and one companion with me and went to the famous house of Aeolus; and I found him feasting beside his wife and his children. We went into the house and sat down on the threshold by the doorposts; and they were amazed in their hearts and questioned us:

64 "How is it you have come back, Odysseus? What evil power has fallen on you? We sent you off with every care, so that you

could reach your native land and your home, and wherever you pleased."

67 So they spoke, and I answered them, grieving at heart: "My bad companions ruined me, and cruel sleep besides. But set it right, friends; the power is yours."

70 So I spoke, appealing to them with gentle words; but they fell silent, and the father answered:

72 "Get off this island at once, most shameful of living men! It is not right for me to help or send on his way a man whom the blessed gods hate. Go! You come here hated by the immortals."

76 So he spoke, and sent me from the 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 passage home. For six days we sailed, night and day alike, and on the seventh we came to the steep citadel of Lamus, Telepylus in the Laestrygonians' land, where herdsman calls to herdsman as he drives his flock in, and the one driving out answers him. There a man who needed no sleep could earn a double wage, one for herding cattle and one for pasturing white sheep, for the paths of night and day are close together. When we came into the famous harbor, around which a towering cliff runs unbroken on both sides, and two jutting headlands facing each other stretch out at the mouth, and the entrance is narrow, there all the others steered their curved ships inside. They were moored inside the hollow harbor, close together, for no wave ever rose in it, great or small, and there was a bright calm all around. But I alone kept my black ship outside, there at the very edge, and tied the cables to a rock; and I climbed to a rugged lookout and stood there. No works of oxen or of men could be seen, only smoke that we saw rising from the land. Then I sent some of my companions ahead to go and find out what men these were who ate bread upon the earth, choosing two men and sending a

third with them as herald. They went ashore and took a smooth road, by which wagons brought wood down to the city from the high mountains; and in front of the city they met a girl drawing water, the stately daughter of Antiphates the Laestrygonian. She had come down to the clear-flowing spring Artacia, for they used to carry water from there to the city. They went up to her and spoke to her and asked who was king of these people, and over whom he ruled; and at once she pointed out her father's high-roofed house. When they went into 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 from the place of assembly, her husband, who planned a miserable death for them. At once he seized one of my companions and made a meal of him; and the other two sprang away and fled and reached the ships. Then he raised a cry through the city, and the mighty Laestrygonians heard it and came flocking from every side, thousands of them, not like men but like Giants. They pelted us from the cliffs with boulders a man could hardly lift, and at once a dreadful din rose from the ships, of men dying and ships being smashed together; and spearing the men like fish they carried them off to a joyless meal. While they were killing them inside the deep harbor, I drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and cut with it the cables of my dark-prowed ship. At once I urged my companions on and ordered them to throw their weight on the oars, so that we might escape from evil; and they all made the sea fly up, fearing destruction. Gladly my ship fled out to sea from the overhanging cliffs; but the rest perished there all together.

133 From there we sailed on, grieving at heart, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our dear companions. We came to the island of Aeaea. There lived lovely-haired Circe, dread goddess with a human voice, full sister of baleful-minded Aeetes; both were born of Helios, who gives light to mortals, and of their

mother Perse, whom Ocean had for a child. There we brought our ship in to the shore in silence, into a harbor where ships could lie, and some god was guiding us. Then we went ashore and for two days and two nights we lay there, eating our hearts out with weariness and grief. But when lovely-haired Dawn brought the third day to its fullness, then I took my spear and my sharp sword and went quickly up from the ship to a place with a wide view, to see if I could catch sight of the works of mortals or hear their voices. I climbed to a rugged lookout and stood there, and I saw smoke rising from the broad-wayed earth, in the halls of Circe, through the thick brush and the woods. Then I pondered in my mind and heart whether to go and find out, since I had seen the fiery smoke. And as I thought it over, this seemed to me the better way: first to go back to the swift ship and the seashore, give my companions their meal, and send them out to find out. But when I was coming near the curved ship on my way, then some god took pity on me in my loneliness, and sent a great stag with towering antlers right into my path. He was coming down to the river from his pasture in the woods to drink, for the power of the sun had come over him. As he came out I struck him in the middle of the back, by the spine, and the bronze spear went clean through him, and he fell in the dust with a cry, and his life flew away. I set my foot on him and drew the bronze spear out of the wound, and laid it down there on the ground and left it. Then I pulled up brushwood and willow shoots, and plaited a rope about a fathom long, well twisted from end to end, and tied together the feet of the dreadful monster, and went to the black ship carrying him across my neck, leaning on my spear, since there was no way to carry him on my shoulder with one hand: he was a very great beast. I threw him down in front of the ship and roused my companions with gentle words, standing beside each man in turn:

174 “Friends, we will not go down to the house of Hades yet, grieved as we are, before our day of doom comes. But come, while there is food and drink in the swift ship, let us think of eating, and not waste away with hunger.”

178 So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. They uncovered their faces there on the shore of the barren sea and gazed at the stag, for he was a very great beast. And when they had taken their fill of looking at him with their eyes, they washed their hands and prepared a glorious feast. So all day long until the sun went down we sat feasting on meat beyond measure and sweet wine. When the sun went down and darkness came on, then we lay down to sleep on the shore where the waves break. When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, then I called an assembly and spoke among them all:

189 “Listen to my words, companions, for all you have suffered. Friends, we do not know where the darkness is or where the dawn, where the sun who gives light to mortals goes down beneath the earth or where he rises. But let us consider quickly whether any plan is left to us. I do not think there is. For I climbed to a rugged lookout and saw that this is an island, ringed around by the boundless sea. The island itself lies low, and in the middle of it I saw smoke with my eyes, through the thick brush and the woods.”

198 So I spoke, and their hearts were broken within them, as they remembered the deeds of Antiphates the Laestrygonian and the violence of the great-hearted Cyclops, the eater of men. They wept aloud, shedding big tears; but nothing came of their lamenting.

203 Then I counted off all my well-greaved companions into two bands, and gave each band a leader. I led one, and godlike Eurylochus the other. Quickly we shook the lots in a bronze helmet, and out jumped the lot of great-hearted Eurylochus. He set off, and twenty-two companions with him, weeping; and they left

us behind lamenting. In the glens they found the house of Circe, 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 rush at the men, but rose and came fawning around them, wagging their long tails. As when dogs fawn around their master when he comes from a feast, for he always brings them scraps to please them, so the wolves and the strong-clawed lions fawned around these men; but they were afraid when they saw the dreadful monsters. They stood in the gateway of the goddess with the lovely braids, and they heard Circe inside singing in a lovely voice as she went to and fro at her great immortal loom, at such work as goddesses do, fine and graceful and glorious. Then Polites, leader of men, the dearest of my companions to me and the most trusted, began to speak to them:

226 "Friends, someone inside is 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 us call out to her quickly."

229 So he spoke, and they called out to her. At once she came out and opened the shining doors and invited them in; and they all went with her in their ignorance. Only Eurylochus stayed behind, for he suspected a trick. She led them in and seated them on chairs and high seats, and mixed them cheese and barley meal and pale honey in Pramnian wine; but into the food she mixed baneful drugs, so that they would utterly forget their native land. And when she had given it to them and they had drunk it off, at once she 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 were unchanged, as they had been before. So they were penned there, weeping; and Circe threw them acorns and mast and the fruit of the cornel tree to eat, such as pigs that sleep on the ground always eat.

244 But Eurylochus came quickly back to the swift black ship, to tell the news of our companions and their bitter fate. He could not speak a word, though he tried, so stricken was his heart with great grief; his eyes were filled with tears, and his heart could think only of lamenting. But when we had all questioned him in amazement, then he told us how the rest of our companions had been lost:

251 "We went through the brush, as you ordered, shining Odysseus. In the glens we found a fine house built of polished stone, in a place that could be seen from all around. There someone was going to and fro at a great loom and singing clearly, a goddess or a woman; and they called out to her. At once she came out and opened the shining doors and invited them in; and they all went with her in their ignorance. But I stayed behind, for I suspected a trick. And they vanished all together, and not one of them came out again, though I sat there a long time keeping watch."

261 So he spoke, and I slung my silver-studded sword around my shoulders, a great sword of bronze, and my bow around me, and ordered him to lead me back by the same way. But he clasped my knees with both hands and begged me, and lamenting he spoke to me, and his words had wings:

266 "Do not take me there against my will, Zeus-nurtured one; leave me here. I know you will not come back yourself, or bring back any of your companions. Let us flee quickly with these men here; we may still escape the evil day."

270 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Eurylochus, you stay here, then, in this place, eating and drinking beside the hollow black ship. But I will go: a strong necessity is on me."

274 So I spoke and went up from the ship and the sea. But when, going through the sacred glens, I was about to reach the great house of Circe of many drugs, there Hermes of the golden wand met me as I was going 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:

281 "Where are you going now, unlucky man, through the hills alone, not knowing the country? Your companions are penned up in Circe's house like pigs, in close-packed sties. Have you come here to set them free? I tell you, you will not come back yourself; you will stay where the others are. But come, I will free you from harm and save you. Here, take this good herb with you into Circe's house, and it will ward off the evil day from your head. And I will tell you all of Circe's deadly wiles. She will make you a mixed drink and put drugs into the food. But even so she will not be able to bewitch you, for the good herb that I will give you will not let her. I will tell you everything. When Circe strikes you with her long wand, then draw the sharp sword from beside your thigh and rush at Circe as if you meant to kill her. She will shrink from you in fear and invite you to go to bed with her. Then do not refuse the goddess's bed any longer, so that she may set your companions free and take care of you yourself. But tell her to swear the great oath of the blessed gods that she will not plot any other evil harm against you, so that she does not, once you are stripped, make you a weakling and unmanned."

302 So the slayer of Argus spoke, and 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 away to high Olympus over the wooded island, and I went on to the house of Circe, and my heart was in turmoil as I went. I stood in the gateway of the goddess with the lovely braids. There I stood and shouted, and the goddess heard my voice. At once she came out and opened the shining doors and invited me in, and I followed her, grieving at heart. She led me in and seated me on a silver-studded high seat, beautiful and finely wrought, and

there was a footstool under my feet. She made me the mixed drink in a golden cup, for me to drink, and put the drug into it, with evil in her heart. And when she had given it to me and I had drunk it off, 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 now, and lie down with the rest of your companions."

321 So she spoke, but I drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and rushed at Circe as if I meant to kill her. With a loud cry she ran under my sword and clasped my knees, and lamenting she spoke to me, and her words had wings:

325 "Who are you, and where are you from? Where is your city, and where are your parents? I am amazed that you drank these drugs and were not bewitched. No other man has ever withstood these drugs, once he has drunk them and they have passed the fence of his teeth. But you have a mind in your breast that cannot be bewitched. Surely you are Odysseus, the man of many turns, who the slayer of Argus of the golden wand always told me would come, on his way back from Troy with his swift black ship. But come, put your sword in its sheath, and then let us two go up to our bed, so that, joined in bed and in love, we may trust each other."

336 So she spoke, and I answered her: "Circe, how can you tell me to be gentle with you, when you have turned my companions into pigs in your halls, and now, keeping me here, with treachery in your heart, you tell me to go into your chamber and go up to your bed, so that once I am stripped you can make me a weakling and unmanned? I would not be willing to go up to your bed unless you would consent, goddess, to swear a great oath that you will not plot any other evil harm against me."

345 So I spoke, and at once she swore the oath as I told her. And when she had sworn and finished the oath, then I went up to the beautiful bed of Circe.

348 All this while four maids were busy in the halls, the servants who do her work about the house. They are born of the springs and the groves and the sacred rivers that flow down to the sea. One of them spread fine coverlets on the high seats, purple above, and laid linen cloths beneath. The second drew up silver tables in front of the seats and set golden baskets on them. The third mixed sweet, honey-hearted wine in a silver mixing bowl and set out golden cups. The fourth brought water and lit a big fire under a great tripod, and the water grew warm. And when the water was boiling in the gleaming bronze, she set me in a bathtub and bathed me with water from the great tripod, mixing it to my liking, pouring it over my head and shoulders, until she took the heart-wasting weariness from my limbs. And when she had bathed me and rubbed me with oil and put a fine cloak and a tunic about me, she led me in and seated me on a silver-studded high seat, beautiful and finely wrought, and there was a footstool under my feet. A maid brought water in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for me to wash my hands, and drew up a polished table beside me. The revered housekeeper brought bread and set it before me, and many dishes besides, giving freely of what she had. She told me to eat, but my heart had no pleasure in it. I sat with my mind elsewhere, and my heart foresaw evil.

375 When Circe saw me sitting there and not putting out my hands to the food, held fast by strong grief, she came and stood close by me and spoke, and her words had wings:

378 "Why do you sit like this, Odysseus, like a man without a voice, eating your heart out, and touch neither food nor drink? Do you suspect some other trick? You have no need to fear. I have already sworn you a mighty oath."

382 So she spoke, and I answered her: "Circe, what man who was right-minded could bear to taste food and drink before he had set his companions free and seen them with his own eyes? If you

really mean it when you tell me to eat and drink, set them free, so that I may see my faithful companions with my eyes."

388 So I spoke, and Circe went out through the hall with her wand in her hand, and opened the doors of the sty, and drove them out, looking like nine-year-old hogs. They stood facing her, and she went among them and smeared each one with another drug. The bristles fell away from their limbs, the bristles that the baneful drug which the lady Circe gave them had made grow before; and they became men again, younger than they had been, and far handsomer and taller to look at. They knew me, and each of them clung to my hands. A longing to weep came over all of us, and the house rang terribly all round; and even the goddess herself was moved to pity.

400 Then she came and stood close by me, bright among goddesses, and said: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, go now to the swift ship and the seashore. First of all, haul the ship up onto the land and stow your goods and all the tackle in the caves. Then come back yourself and bring your faithful companions."

406 So she spoke, and my proud heart was persuaded, and I went off to the swift ship and the seashore. There by the swift ship I found my faithful companions, lamenting piteously and shedding big tears. As when calves on a farm, around the cows of the herd coming back to the yard after they have had their fill of grazing, all frisk together to meet them, and the pens no longer hold them, but lowing constantly they run around their mothers: so these men, when they saw me with their eyes, came streaming round me in tears. And it seemed to their hearts as if they had reached their own country, the very city of rugged Ithaca, where they were bred and born. And lamenting they spoke to me, and their words had wings:

419 "Zeus-nurtured one, we are as glad at your return as if we had reached Ithaca, our native land. But come, tell us how the rest of our companions were lost."

422 So they spoke, and I spoke to them with gentle words: "First of all, let us haul the ship up onto the land and stow our goods and all the tackle in the caves. Then all of you hurry and follow me, so that you may see our companions in the sacred house of Circe, eating and drinking, for they have plenty that will last."

428 So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. Only Eurylochus tried to hold back all my companions, and he spoke to them, and his words had wings:

431 "Ah, poor wretches, where are we going? Why do you long for this misery, to go down to Circe's hall? She will turn every one of us into pigs or wolves or lions, to guard her great house for her whether we like it or not, just as the Cyclops did, when our companions went into his fold and this reckless Odysseus went with them. It was through this man's recklessness that they too were lost."

438 So he spoke, and I pondered in my mind whether to draw the long-edged sword from beside my sturdy thigh, strike off his head, and send it rolling on the ground, close kinsman of mine by marriage though he was. But my companions, one after another, held me back with soothing words:

443 "Sprung from Zeus, let us leave this man, if you so order, to stay here beside the ship and guard it. But lead us to the sacred house of Circe."

446 So they spoke and went up from the ship and the sea. Nor was Eurylochus left behind by the hollow ship; he followed, for he was afraid of my fierce rebuke.

449 While we were gone, Circe in her house had bathed the rest of my companions with care, and rubbed them with oil, and put thick cloaks and tunics about them; and we found them all

feasting well in the halls. When they saw one another and recognized one another face to face, they wept and wailed, and the house rang all around. Then she came and stood close by me, bright among goddesses, and said:

457 "Do not rouse your loud lamenting any longer. I know myself all the pains you have suffered on the fish-filled sea, and all the harm that 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. Now you are withered and spiritless, always remembering your hard wandering, and your hearts are never in good cheer, since you have suffered very much indeed."

466 So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. There, day after day, for a full year, we sat feasting on meat beyond measure and sweet wine. But when a year had gone by, and the seasons had turned, as the months waned and the long days came round to their end, then my faithful companions called me aside and said:

472 "Strange man, it is time now to remember your native land, if it is your destiny to be saved and to reach your high-roofed house and your native land."

475 So they spoke, and my proud heart was persuaded. So all day long until the sun went down we sat feasting on meat beyond measure and sweet wine. When the sun went down and darkness came on, they lay down to sleep throughout the shadowy halls. But I went up to the beautiful bed of Circe and clasped her knees in supplication, and the goddess heard my voice; and I spoke to her, and my words had wings:

483 "Circe, fulfill for me the promise you made, to send me home. My heart is eager now to go, and so are the hearts of my other companions, who wear away my dear heart with their lamenting around me whenever you are away."

487 So I spoke, and she answered at once, bright among goddesses: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, do not stay any 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 prophet, whose mind is still steadfast. To him even in death Persephone has granted understanding, that he alone should have his wits; the others are shadows that flit about."

496 So she spoke, and my heart was broken within me. I sat on the bed 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 writhing, then I answered her and said:

501 "Circe, who will guide us on this journey? No one has ever yet come to Hades in a black ship."

503 So I spoke, and she answered at once, bright among goddesses: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, do not trouble yourself about a guide for your ship. Set up the mast, spread the white sails, and sit; the breath of the North Wind will carry her. But when you have crossed the stream of Ocean in your ship, where there is a low shore and the groves of Persephone, tall poplars and willows that shed their fruit, beach your ship there by deep-eddying Ocean, and go yourself to the dank house of Hades. There Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, which is a branch of the water of the Styx, flow into Acheron; and there is a rock where the two roaring rivers meet. There, hero, draw near, as I tell you, and dig a pit about a cubit long each way, and around it pour a drink offering to all the dead, first with milk and honey, then with sweet wine, and a third time with water; and sprinkle white barley meal over it. Then pray earnestly to the strengthless heads of the dead, and promise that when you come to Ithaca you will sacrifice in your halls a barren cow, the best you have, and heap the pyre with good things, and that to Tiresias alone, apart,

you will offer a ram that is black all over, the finest among your flocks. And when with your prayers you have entreated the famous tribes of the dead, then sacrifice a ram and a black ewe, turning them toward Erebus,[1] while you yourself turn away, facing the streams of the river. Then many spirits of the dead who have perished will come. Then urge your companions on and order them to 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 the sharp sword from beside your thigh and sit there, and do not let the strengthless heads of the dead come near the blood until you have questioned Tiresias. Then the prophet will soon come to you, leader of the people, and he will tell you your way and the measure of your journey, and your homecoming, how you will go over the fish-filled sea."

541 So she spoke, and at once Dawn of the golden throne came. Circe dressed me in a cloak and a tunic for clothing, and the nymph herself put on a long silvery mantle, fine and graceful, and fastened a lovely golden belt around her waist and set a veil on her head. But I went through the house and roused my companions with gentle words, standing beside each man in turn:

548 "Do not lie sleeping and drowsing in sweet sleep any longer. Let us go; the lady Circe has told me the way."

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 valiant in war nor very sound in his wits. He had lain down apart from his companions on the roof of Circe's sacred house, wanting the cool air, heavy with wine. When he heard the noise and bustle of his companions as they moved about, he sprang up suddenly and forgot to go back down by the long ladder, and fell headlong from the roof. His neck was broken away from the spine, and his spirit went down to Hades.

561 As my men were setting out, I spoke among them: "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."

566 So I spoke, and their hearts were broken within them. They sat down where they were, lamenting and tearing their hair; but nothing came of their lamenting.

569 But while we were going to the swift ship and the seashore, grieving and shedding big tears, Circe had gone ahead and tied 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?

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1. Erebus: the darkness under the earth, the realm of the dead.

Book 11

1 When we had come down to the ship and the sea, first of all we hauled the ship down into the bright sea, and set the mast and the sails in the black ship, and took the sheep and put them aboard, and we ourselves went aboard, grieving and shedding big tears. And behind our dark-prowed ship lovely-haired Circe, dread goddess with a human voice, sent a favoring wind that filled the sail, a good companion. When we had set all the tackle in order 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. The sun set, and all the ways grew dark.

13 And she came to the limits of deep-flowing Ocean. There is the land and the city of the Cimmerians, wrapped in mist and cloud. Never does the shining sun look 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; deadly night is spread over those wretched mortals. There we came and beached our ship and took the sheep out, and we ourselves went along beside the stream of Ocean until we came to the place that Circe had told us of.

23 There Perimedes and Eurylochus held the victims, while I drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and dug a pit about a cubit long each way, and around it I poured a drink offering to all the dead, first with milk and honey, then with sweet wine, and a third time with water; and I sprinkled white barley meal over it. Then I prayed earnestly to the strengthless heads of the dead, and promised that when I came to Ithaca I would sacrifice in my halls a

barren cow, the best I had, and heap the pyre with good things, and that to Tiresias alone, apart, I would offer a ram that was black all over, the finest among our flocks. And when I had entreated them with vows and prayers, the tribes of the dead, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the pit, and the dark blood flowed; and up out of Erebus the spirits of the dead who had perished gathered: brides and unwed youths and old men who had suffered much, and tender girls with hearts new to grief, and many men wounded by bronze-tipped spears, killed in battle, still wearing their blood-stained armor. They came flocking in crowds around the pit from every side, with an unearthly cry, and pale fear took hold of me. Then I urged my companions on and ordered them to flay the sheep that lay there slaughtered by the pitiless bronze and burn them, and pray to the gods, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone. And I myself drew the sharp sword from beside my thigh and sat there, and did not let the strengthless heads of the dead come near the blood until I had questioned Tiresias.

51 The first to come was the spirit of my companion Elpenor. He had not yet been buried beneath the broad-wayed earth, for we had left his body behind in Circe's hall, unwept and unburied, since another task was pressing us. When I saw him I wept, and pitied him in my heart, and I spoke to him, and my words had wings:

57 "Elpenor, how did you come down beneath the misty darkness? You have come faster on foot than I in my black ship."

59 So I spoke, and he groaned and answered me: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, an evil doom from some god was my ruin, and wine beyond all measure. I lay down to sleep in Circe's house and never thought to go back down by the long ladder, but fell headlong from the roof. My neck was broken away from 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 go from here, out of the house of Hades, you will put in with your well-made ship at the island of Aeaea. There, my lord, I ask you to remember me. Do not go away and leave me behind unwept and unburied, turning your back on me, or I may become a cause of the gods' anger against you. Burn me with my armor, all I have, and heap up a mound for me on the shore of the gray sea, the grave of an unlucky man, for men to come to know of. Do this for me, and fix on the mound the oar I used to row with in life, when I was with my companions."

79 So he spoke, and I answered him: "All this, poor man, I will accomplish and do for you."

81 So we two sat exchanging sad 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.

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 Ilion. When I saw her I wept, and pitied her in my heart; but even so, deep as my grief was, I would not let her come near the blood before I had questioned Tiresias.

90 Then came the spirit of Theban Tiresias, holding a golden staff, and he knew me and spoke to me: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, why, unlucky man, have you left the light of the sun and come to see the dead and this joyless place? Draw back from the pit and hold your sharp sword away, so that I may drink of the blood and tell you the truth."

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, then the excellent prophet spoke to me:

100 "You seek a homecoming sweet as honey, shining Odysseus; but a god will make it hard for you. For I do not think you will escape the notice of the Earth-shaker, who has laid up

anger in his heart against you, furious because you blinded his dear son. Yet even so, though you suffer much, you may still come home, if you are willing to restrain your own heart and your companions' when you first bring your well-made ship to the island of Thrinacia, escaping from the violet sea, and you find grazing there the cattle and fat sheep of Helios, who sees everything and hears everything. If you leave them unharmed and keep your mind on your homecoming, you may still reach Ithaca, though you suffer much. But if you harm them, then I foretell destruction for your ship and your companions. And even if you yourself escape, you will come home late and in misery, having lost all your companions, in another man's ship; and you will find troubles in your house, overbearing men who are eating up your livelihood, courting your godlike wife and offering her bride-gifts. Yet when you come you will surely take vengeance for their violence. But when you have killed the suitors in your halls, whether by cunning or openly with the sharp bronze, then take a well-shaped oar and go on until you come to men who do not know the sea, and do not eat food mixed with salt, who know nothing of ships with crimson cheeks or of well-shaped oars, which are wings to ships. And I will tell you a sign, a very clear one, and it will not escape you. When another traveler meets you and says that you have a winnowing fan on your shining shoulder, then fix your well-shaped oar in the ground and make fine sacrifices to lord Poseidon, a ram and a bull and a boar that mounts the sows, and go back 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 away from the sea, a death so very gentle, that will take you worn out by a sleek old age; and your people around you will be prosperous. This is the truth I tell you."

138 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Tiresias, the gods themselves, I suppose, have spun this thread of fate. But come, tell me

this, and tell it truly: I see here the spirit of my dead mother. She sits in silence near the blood, and she cannot bring herself to look her own son in the face or speak to him. Tell me, lord, how can she know me for who I am?"

145 So I spoke, and he answered me at once: "It is an easy word I will tell you and put in your mind. Whichever of the dead who have perished you let come near the blood will tell you the truth; but whomever you grudge it to will go back again."

150 So saying, the spirit of lord Tiresias went away into the house of Hades, when he had spoken his prophecies. But I stayed there, steadfast, until my mother came and drank the dark blood. At once she knew me, and lamenting she spoke to me, and her words had wings:

155 "My child, how did you come down beneath the misty darkness, still alive? It is hard for the living to see these places. For between lie great rivers and dreadful streams, Ocean first of all, which no one can cross on foot, unless he has a well-made ship. Have you come here only now from Troy, after long wandering with your ship and your companions? Have you not yet come to Ithaca, or seen your wife in your halls?"

163 So she spoke, and I answered her: "Mother, need brought me down to the house of Hades, to consult the spirit of Theban Tiresias. For I have not yet come near the land of Achaea, nor yet set foot on our own country; I have wandered always in misery, ever since I first followed noble Agamemnon to Ilion of the fine horses, to fight the Trojans. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: what doom of death that lays men out at length overcame you? Was it a long sickness, or did Artemis, the arrow-showering, come upon you with her gentle arrows and kill you? And tell me of my father and my son, whom I left behind: does my royal portion still remain with them, or does some other man already hold it, and they say I will never come home? And tell me of my wedded wife,

what she intends and what is in her mind: does she stay with our son and keep everything safe, or has the best of the Achaeans already married her?"

180 So I spoke, and at once my lady mother answered: "She waits, indeed, with an enduring heart, in your halls; and the nights and the days always wane for her in misery as she weeps. No one yet holds your fine royal portion. Telemachus holds your lands in peace and dines at equal feasts, such as a man who gives judgment 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 where the servants sleep in the house, in the dust by the fire, and wears wretched clothes on his body. But when summer comes and rich autumn, all over the slope of his vineyard there are beds of fallen leaves heaped on the ground for him. There he lies grieving, and nurses great sorrow in his heart, longing for your return, and hard old age has come upon him. And that was how I too perished and met my fate. It was not that the keen-sighted, arrow-showering goddess came upon me in my halls with her gentle arrows and killed me, nor did any sickness come over me, of the kind that most often takes the life from the limbs with a hateful wasting. No: it was longing for you, and your counsels, shining Odysseus, and your gentleness, that took away my life, sweet as honey."

204 So she spoke, and I pondered in my heart and longed to take hold of the spirit of my dead mother. Three times I sprang toward her, and my heart urged me to take hold of her; three times she flew out of my hands like a shadow or a dream. And the pain grew ever sharper in my heart, and I spoke to her, and my words had wings:

210 "Mother, why will you not stay for me when I long to take hold of you, so that even in the house of Hades we may throw our

arms around each other and both take our fill of cold lament? Or is this some phantom that noble Persephone has sent me, so that I may weep and groan still more?"

215 So I spoke, and at once my lady mother answered: "Ah me, my child, most ill-fated of all men, Persephone, daughter of Zeus, is not deceiving you. This is the way with mortals when they die. The sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together; the strong force of the blazing fire destroys them, as soon as the life has left the white bones, and the spirit flits away like a dream and hovers there. But hurry to the light as quickly as you can; and remember all this, so that afterward you may tell it to your wife."

225 So we two talked with each other, and the women came, for noble Persephone sent them, all who had been the wives and daughters of princes. They gathered in a crowd around the dark blood, and I considered how I might question each one. And this seemed to my mind 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.

235 There the first I saw was Tyro, born of a noble father, who said she was the daughter of excellent Salmoneus, and said she was the wife of Cretheus, son of Aeolus. She fell in love with a river, godlike Enipeus, by far the most beautiful of the rivers that flow upon the earth, and she used to haunt the lovely streams of Enipeus. Taking his likeness, the earth-holder, the Earth-shaker, lay with her at the mouths of the eddying river; and a dark wave stood up around them like a mountain, arching over, and hid the god and the mortal woman. He loosed her virgin girdle and poured sleep over her. And when the god had finished the work of love, he took her hand and spoke to her and called her by name:

248 "Be glad, woman, in this love. As the year comes round you will bear glorious children, for the beds of the immortals are not

fruitless. You must care for them and bring them up. Now go home, and hold your tongue, and do not tell anyone; but know that I am Poseidon the Earth-shaker."

253 So saying, he plunged beneath the surging sea. And she conceived and bore Pelias and Neleus, who both became mighty servants of great Zeus. Pelias, rich in flocks, lived in Iolcus with its spacious dancing floors, and the other in sandy Pylos. And to Cretheus the queen among women bore other sons, Aeson and Pheres and Amythaon, who fought from chariots.

260 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 towers around it, for they could not live in spacious Thebes without towers, strong as they were.

266 After her I saw Alcmene, the wife of Amphitryon, who lay in the arms of great Zeus and bore Heracles, bold and steadfast, with the heart of a lion; and Megara, daughter of high-hearted Creon, whom the son of Amphitryon, whose strength never wearied, had for his wife.

271 And I saw the mother of Oedipus, beautiful Epicaste, who did a monstrous thing in the ignorance of her mind: she married her own son, and he married her after killing his own father; and soon the gods made it known among men. He, suffering pains, went on ruling the Cadmeans in lovely Thebes, through the deadly counsels of the gods; but she went down to the house of Hades, the strong gatekeeper, tying a noose from a high roof beam, held fast by her grief; and to him she left pains behind, very many, all that a mother's Erinyes bring to pass.

281 And I saw Chloris, the very beautiful, whom Neleus once married for her beauty, when he had given countless bride-gifts: the youngest daughter of Amphion son of Iasus, who once ruled in might at Minyan Orchomenus. She was queen in Pylos, and bore

him glorious children, Nestor and Chromius and proud Periclymenus; and besides them she bore stately Pero, a wonder to mortals, whom all the neighbors courted. But Neleus would not give her to anyone who could not drive off from Phylace the cattle of mighty Iphicles, with curving horns and broad foreheads, hard to win. Only the excellent prophet undertook to drive them off; but a hard fate from a god bound him fast, cruel bonds and the herdsmen of the fields. But when the months and days were fulfilled as the year came round again, and the seasons returned, then mighty Iphicles set him free, when he had told him all the prophecies; and the will of Zeus was accomplished.

298 And I saw Leda, the wife of Tyndareus, who bore to Tyndareus two sons with strong hearts, Castor, tamer of horses, and Polydeuces, good with his fists. The life-giving earth holds them both alive. Even beneath the earth they have honor from Zeus: one day they live, and the next day they are dead in turn; and they have won honor equal to the gods.

305 And after her I saw Iphimedeia, the 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, the tallest men the grain-giving land ever nourished, 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 against them. They were eager to pile Ossa on Olympus, and on Ossa Pelion with its quivering leaves, so that the sky might be climbed. And they would have done it, if they had reached the full measure of youth; but the son of Zeus, whom fair-haired Leto bore, destroyed them both, before the down had bloomed beneath their temples and covered their chins with a fine growth of beard.

321 And I saw Phaedra and Procris and beautiful Ariadne, daughter of baleful-minded Minos, whom Theseus once tried to

bring from Crete to the hill of sacred Athens; but he had no joy of her, for before that Artemis killed her in sea-washed Dia, on the word of Dionysus.

326 And I saw Maera and Clymene and hateful Eriphyle, who took precious gold as the price of her own husband's life. But I could not tell of them all or name them all, all the wives and daughters of heroes that I saw; before that, immortal night would wane. And it is time to sleep, either at the swift ship with my companions or here; my passage will be the concern of the gods and of you.

333 So he spoke, and they all fell silent and were still, and throughout the shadowy halls they were held spellbound. Then white-armed Arete began to speak among them:

336 "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 do not be in a hurry to send him away, and do not stint your gifts to a man in such need; for you have many possessions stored in your halls by the favor of the gods."

342 And the old hero Echeneus spoke among them, the eldest of the Phaeacian men: "Friends, what our prudent queen says is not wide of the mark or of what we would expect. Do as she says. But on Alcinous here depend both deed and word."

347 Then Alcinous answered him and said: "This word shall be so, as surely as I live and rule over the oar-loving Phaeacians. But let our guest, much as he longs for his homecoming, bear to stay on until tomorrow, until I have made up the whole of his gift. His passage home shall be the concern of all the men, and mine above all, for mine is the power in this land."

354 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned of all the people, if you told me to stay here even for a year, and arranged my passage and gave me glorious gifts, I

would be willing, and it would be far better to come to my dear native land with a fuller hand. I would be more respected and more loved by all the men who saw me come home to Ithaca."

362 Then Alcinous answered him and said: "Odysseus, when we look at you we do not take you for a cheat or a swindler, such as the black earth breeds in great numbers, men scattered far and wide who fashion lies out of things no one could ever see. You have grace in your words and good sense within, and you have told your tale with skill, like a bard, the grievous sorrows of all the Argives and of yourself. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: did you see any of your godlike companions who went with you to Ilion and met their fate there? The night is very long, beyond telling, and it is not yet time to sleep in the hall. Tell me of these wondrous deeds. I could hold out until bright Dawn, if you would bear to tell me your sorrows here in the hall."

377 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Lord Alcinous, most renowned of all the people, there is a time for many words, and a time also for sleep. But if you still long to listen, I would not grudge to tell you of these things, and of others more pitiful still, the sorrows of my companions who perished afterward, who escaped the grim war cry of the Trojans but perished on their homecoming through the will of an evil woman."

385 When chaste Persephone had scattered the spirits of the women this way and that, then came the spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, grieving; and around him were gathered the others, all who had died with him in the house of Aegisthus and met their fate. He knew me at once, when he had drunk the dark blood, and he wept aloud, shedding big tears, and stretched out his hands toward me, eager to reach me. But he no longer had any strength or power left, such as there had once been in his supple limbs.

395 When I saw him I wept, and pitied him in my heart, and I spoke to him, and my words had wings: "Most glorious son of

Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, what doom of death that lays men out at length overcame you? Did Poseidon overcome you among your ships, rousing the cruel blast of savage winds? Or did hostile men do you harm on land, as you were cutting off their cattle and their fine flocks of sheep, or fighting for a city and its women?"

404 So I spoke, and he answered me at once: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, Poseidon did not overcome me among my ships, rousing the cruel blast of savage winds, nor did hostile men do me harm on land. It was Aegisthus who contrived my death and doom and killed me, with the help of my accursed wife, when he had invited me to his house and given me dinner, as a man kills an ox at the manger. So I died the most pitiful death, and around me my other companions were killed relentlessly, like white-tusked swine killed in the house of a rich and very powerful man, for a wedding or a shared meal or a lavish feast. You have been present before now at the slaughter of many men, killed in single combat or in the press of battle; but you would have grieved in your heart above all to see that sight, how we lay in the hall around the mixing bowl and the loaded tables, and the whole floor steamed with blood. And the most pitiful cry I heard was that of Priam's daughter, Cassandra, whom guileful Clytemnestra killed over my body; and I, lying on the ground, raised my hands and beat the earth, dying, with the sword through me. But the dog-faced woman turned away, and did not bring herself, though I was going down to the house of Hades, to close my eyes with her hands or shut my mouth. So true it is that there is nothing more terrible or more shameless than a woman who sets her mind on such deeds as these, as she plotted that unspeakable deed and contrived the murder of the husband of her youth. I had thought, truly, that I would come home welcome to my children and my servants; but she, with her mind set on utter wickedness,

has poured shame on herself and on all women who will come after, even on one who is a good woman."

435 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Ah! Truly, far-seeing Zeus has hated the race of Atreus terribly from the beginning, through the schemes of women. For Helen's sake many of us perished, and Clytemnestra laid a trap for you while you were far away."

440 So I spoke, and he answered me at once: "So now you too must never be gentle even with your wife, and never tell her every word you know well; tell her one thing, and keep another hidden. But not for you, Odysseus, will death come from your wife; for she is very wise and has good sense in her heart, the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope. She was a young bride when we left her as we went to the war, and there was a child at her breast, an infant, who now, I suppose, sits among the number of the men, a happy man; for his dear father will see him when he comes, and he will embrace his father, as is right. But my wife would not even let me feast my eyes on my son; before that she killed me myself. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart: bring your ship in to your dear native land in secret, not openly; for there is no trusting women any more. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: have you heard anything of my son, that he is still alive, in Orchomenus perhaps, or in sandy Pylos, or perhaps with Menelaus in wide Sparta? For noble Orestes has not yet died upon the earth."

462 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Son of Atreus, why do you ask me this? I do not know at all whether he is alive or dead; and it is wrong to babble empty words."

465 So we two stood exchanging sad words, grieving and shedding big tears. Then came the spirit of Achilles, son of Peleus, and of Patroclus, and of excellent Antilochus, and of Ajax, who in looks and build was the best of all the Danaans after the excellent son of

Peleus. And the spirit of the swift-footed grandson of Aeacus knew me, and lamenting he spoke to me, and his words had wings:

473 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, reckless man, what greater deed than this will you devise in your heart? How did you dare to come down to Hades, where the dead dwell without their wits, the phantoms of men worn out by life?"

477 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Achilles, son of Peleus, by far the mightiest of the Achaeans, I came because I needed Tiresias, to see if he would tell me some plan by which I might reach rugged Ithaca. For I have not yet come near the land of Achaea, nor yet set foot on our own country; I am always in trouble. But no man, Achilles, has ever been more blessed than you, or ever will be. Before, when you were alive, we Argives honored you as equal to the gods, and now here you are a great power among the dead. So do not grieve at being dead, Achilles."

487 So I spoke, and he answered me at once: "Do not try to console me for death, shining Odysseus. I would rather be a laborer on the land, hired out to another man, some man with no land of his own and not much to live on, than be lord over all the dead who have perished. But come, tell me some news of my noble son: did he follow me to the war to be a leader, or not? And tell me of excellent Peleus, if you have heard anything: does he still have his honor among the many Myrmidons, or do they slight him throughout Hellas and Phthia, because old age binds him hand and foot? For I am not there to help him under the rays of the sun, such as I was once in wide Troy, when I killed the best of their army, 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 my invincible hands hateful to any of those who do him violence and keep him from his honor."

504 So he spoke, and I answered him: "Of excellent Peleus I have heard nothing; but of your dear son Neoptolemus I will tell

you the whole truth, as you ask me. For I myself brought him in my hollow, balanced ship from Scyros to join the well-greaved Achaeans. Whenever we took counsel around the city of Troy, he was always first to speak, and his words never missed the mark; only godlike Nestor and I surpassed him. And whenever we fought with the bronze on the Trojan plain, he never stayed 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 grim combat. I could not tell of them all or name them all, all the men he killed defending the Argives; but only what a man he cut down with the bronze, the son of Telephus, the hero Eurypylus! And many of his companions, the Ceteians, were killed around him, all for a woman's gifts. He was the most handsome man I ever saw, after noble Memnon. And when we, the best of the Argives, were going down into the horse that Epeius made, and the whole command was given to me, to open and close our close-packed ambush, then the other leaders and counselors of the Danaans were wiping away tears, and each man's legs trembled beneath him; but him I never once saw with my eyes go pale in his fair skin or wipe a tear from his cheeks. Again and again he begged me to let him out of the horse, and he kept feeling for the hilt of his sword and his spear heavy with bronze, and his heart was set on harm for the Trojans. And when we had sacked the steep city of Priam, he went on board his ship with his share and a fine prize, unscathed, never hit by the sharp bronze from afar or wounded in close fighting, as so often happens in war, for Ares rages blindly."

538 So I spoke, and the spirit of the swift-footed grandson of Aeacus went away with long strides across the asphodel meadow, rejoicing because I had told him that his son was renowned.

541 And the other spirits of the dead who had perished stood there grieving, and each one asked me about its own sorrows. Only the spirit of Ajax, son of Telamon, stood apart, still angry

because of the victory I had won over him when I pleaded my case by the ships for the armor of Achilles. His lady mother had set it as a prize, and the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athena were the judges. I wish I had never won in such a contest; for because of that armor the earth closed over such a man, Ajax, who in looks and in deeds was above all the other Danaans, after the excellent son of Peleus. I spoke to him with honeyed words:

553 "Ajax, son of excellent Telamon, were you not to forget your anger against me even in death, because of that accursed armor? The gods made it a bane for the Argives, for in you they lost so great a tower of strength; and we Achaeans grieve for your death without ceasing, as much as for the life of Achilles, son of Peleus. No one else is to blame but Zeus, who hated the army of Danaan spearmen terribly and laid this doom on you. But come here, my lord, so that you may hear my word and what I have to say. Master your fury and your proud heart."

563 So I spoke, but he made no answer, and went away after the other spirits of the dead who had perished, into Erebus. Even so he might have spoken to me then, angry as he was, or I to him; but the heart in my breast wanted to see the spirits of the other dead.

568 There I saw Minos, the glorious son of Zeus, holding a golden scepter, giving judgment among the dead from his seat; and they, sitting and standing around the lord, asked him for his judgments throughout the wide-gated house of Hades.

572 And after him I caught sight of huge Orion, driving together across the asphodel meadow the wild beasts that he himself had killed on the lonely mountains, holding a club all of bronze, forever unbroken.

576 And I saw Tityus, son of glorious Earth, lying on the ground. He lay stretched over nine acres, and two vultures sat on either side of him and tore at his liver, plunging their beaks into his bow-

els, and he could not beat them off with his hands. For he had laid violent hands on Leto, the glorious wife of Zeus, as she was going to Pytho through Panopeus with its lovely dancing floors.

582 And I saw Tantalus in harsh torment, standing in a lake, and the water came up to his chin. He stood there straining in his thirst, but he could not reach the water to drink. For every time the old man stooped down, eager to drink, the water was swallowed up and vanished, and the black earth showed around his feet, for some god dried it up. And over his head tall leafy trees let their fruit hang down, pears and pomegranates and apple trees with shining fruit, and sweet figs and luxuriant olives; but whenever the old man reached out to grasp them with his hands, the wind would toss them up toward the shadowy clouds.

593 And I saw Sisyphus in harsh torment, heaving a huge stone with both his arms. Bracing himself with hands and feet, he would push the stone up toward the crest of a hill; but whenever he was about to heave it over the top, then its overwhelming weight would turn it back, and down again to the plain the ruthless stone would roll. And he would strain and push it up again, and the sweat poured from his limbs, and the dust rose up from his head.

601 And after him I caught sight of mighty Heracles, his phantom; for he himself is among the immortal gods, taking his pleasure at their feasts, and he has for his wife Hebe of the lovely ankles, the child of great Zeus and of Hera of the golden sandals. Around him rose a clamor of the dead like the clamor of birds, scattering in terror on every side; and he, like the black night, with his bow bare and an arrow on the string, glared terribly around him, like a man always about to shoot. And terrible was the baldric around his chest, a strap of gold on which wondrous things were wrought, bears and wild boars and lions with flashing eyes, and battles and fights and murders and the slaying of men. May the man who fashioned that baldric with his art never have fashioned,

nor ever fashion, another like it. He knew me in his turn when he saw me with his eyes, and lamenting he spoke to me, and his words had wings:

617 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, ah, poor wretch, are you too dragging out some evil fate, such as I endured beneath the rays of the sun? I was the son of Zeus, son of Cronus, but I had misery without end; for I was made subject to a far lesser man, and he laid hard labors on me. Once he even sent me here to fetch the hound, for he could think of no other labor harder than this. And I brought the hound up and led him out of Hades; and Hermes guided me, and gray-eyed Athena."

627 So saying, he went back into the house of Hades; but I stayed there, steadfast, in case any other of the heroes who had perished in earlier days might still come. And I would have seen still other men of former times, whom I wanted to see, Theseus and Peirithous, glorious children of the gods; but before that the countless tribes of the dead came thronging with an unearthly cry, and pale fear took hold of me that noble Persephone might send up from Hades against me the Gorgon's head, the head of that dreadful monster.

636 At once I went to the ship and ordered my companions to come aboard themselves and loose the stern cables. Quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks. And the swell of the current carried the ship down the river Ocean, with rowing at first, and afterward a fair wind.

Book 12

1 When the ship had left the stream of the river Ocean and come to the swell of the wide-wayed sea and to the island of Aeaea, where early-born Dawn has her house and her dancing floors, and the sun his risings, we came in and beached our ship on the sand, and we ourselves stepped out on the shore where the waves break; and there we fell asleep and waited for bright Dawn.

8 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, then I sent my companions ahead to the house of Circe to bring the body of dead Elpenor. Quickly we cut logs and buried him where the headland juts out farthest, grieving and shedding big tears. And when the body was burned, and the armor of the dead man, we heaped up a mound and dragged a pillar onto it, and on the top of the mound we fixed his well-shaped oar.

16 So we were busy with each of these tasks; and Circe did not fail to notice that we had come back from Hades, but very quickly she came, dressed and ready, and her maids came with her, bringing bread and meat in plenty and sparkling red wine. And the bright among goddesses stood in our midst and spoke:

21 "Reckless men, who have gone down alive to the house of Hades, twice dying, when other men die only once! But come, eat food and drink wine here all day long, and at the first light of dawn you shall sail. I will show you the way and tell you each thing, so that you will not suffer and come to grief through some painful, ill-woven scheme, either on sea or on land."

28 So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. So all day long until the sun went down we sat feasting on meat beyond

measure and sweet wine. When the sun went down and darkness came on, the others lay down to sleep beside the stern cables of the ship; but she took me by the hand, away from my dear companions, and made me sit, and lay down beside me and questioned me about everything; and I told her all of it in due order. Then the lady Circe spoke to me:

37 "All this, then, has been brought to its end. But now listen to what I will tell you, and a god himself will remind you of it. First you will come to the Sirens, who bewitch all men, whoever comes to them. Whoever draws near them in ignorance and hears the voice of the Sirens, his wife and his little children never stand beside him or rejoice at his homecoming; the Sirens bewitch him with their clear song, sitting in a meadow, and around them is a great heap of bones of rotting men, and the skin shrivels on the bones. But row on past, and knead honey-sweet wax and smear it on your companions' ears, so that none of the rest may hear. But if you yourself wish to listen, let them bind you in the swift ship hand and foot, upright against the mast step, with the ropes made fast to the mast itself, so that you may listen with delight to the voice of the two Sirens. And if you beg your companions and order them to set you free, then let them tie you with still more bonds. But when your companions have rowed past them, from then on I will not tell you plainly which of two ways you are to take; you must decide it in your own heart. But I will tell you of both. On one side there are overhanging rocks, and against them the great wave of dark-eyed Amphitrite roars. The blessed gods call them the Planctae, the Wanderers. Not even winged things pass that way, not even the timid doves that carry ambrosia to father Zeus; even of these the sheer rock always snatches one away, and the father sends in another to make up the number. And no ship of men that comes there has ever yet escaped; the waves of the sea and storms of deadly fire carry off together the planks of ships and the bodies

of men. Only one seafaring ship has ever sailed past there, the Argo, known to all, on her voyage home from Aeetes; and even her the wave would soon have dashed against the great rocks there, but Hera sent her through, because Jason was dear to her.

73 "On the other side are two cliffs. One reaches up to the wide sky with its sharp peak, and a dark cloud surrounds it; this never leaves it, and clear weather never holds its peak, in summer or in autumn. No mortal man could climb it or set foot on it, not if he had twenty hands and twenty feet; for the rock is smooth, as if it were polished. In the middle of the cliff is a misty cave, facing the west, toward Erebus; and it is past this, shining Odysseus, that you must steer your hollow ship. Not even a strong man shooting an arrow from a hollow ship could reach that hollow cave. In it lives Scylla, yelping terribly. Her voice is only as loud as a newborn puppy's, but she herself is an evil monster, and no one would be glad to see her, not even a god who met her. She has twelve feet, all dangling, and six very long necks, and on each a hideous head, and in it three rows of teeth, thick and close-set, full of black death. Up to her middle she is sunk down in the hollow cave, but she holds her heads out of the dreadful chasm, and there she fishes, groping eagerly around the cliff for dolphins and dogfish, or any larger sea beast she may catch, of the countless creatures that loud-moaning Amphitrite breeds. No sailors have ever yet boasted that they fled past her with their ship unscathed; with each of her heads she snatches a man and carries him off out of the dark-prowed ship.

101 "The other cliff, you will see, Odysseus, is lower. They are close to each other; you could shoot an arrow across. On it is a great fig tree, rich in leaves, and under it bright Charybdis sucks down the black water. Three times a day she sends 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 save you from

destruction then. No: keep very close to Scylla's cliff and drive your ship past quickly; for it is far better to mourn six companions from your ship than all of them together."

111 So she spoke, and I answered her: "But come, goddess, tell me this truly: could I somehow escape deadly Charybdis, and yet fight off the other when she tries to harm my companions?"

115 So I spoke, and she answered at once, bright among goddesses: "Reckless man, so your mind is set once again on deeds of war and on struggle! Will you not yield even to the immortal gods? She is not mortal; she is an immortal evil, dreadful and grievous and savage, not to be fought. There is no defense against her; the best thing is to flee from her. For if you linger by the rock to arm yourself, I fear she will lunge out again and catch you with as many heads, and take as many men. No: row past with all your might, and call on Crataeis, the mother of Scylla, who bore her to be a bane to mortals; she will stop her from lunging out again.

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. Goddesses are their herdsmen, lovely-haired nymphs, Phaethusa and Lampetia, whom bright Neaera bore to Helios Hyperion. When their lady mother had borne them and reared them, she sent them to live far away on the island of Thrinacia, to guard their father's sheep and his cattle with curving horns. If you leave them unharmed and keep your mind on your homecoming, you may still reach Ithaca, though you suffer much. But if you harm them, then I foretell destruction for your ship and your companions. And even if you yourself escape, you will come home late and in misery, having lost all your companions."

142 So she spoke, and at once Dawn of the golden throne came. Then the bright among goddesses went away up the island, and I went to the ship and urged my companions to come aboard them-

selves and loose the stern cables. Quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks, and sitting in order they struck the gray sea with their oars. And behind our dark-prowed ship lovely-haired Circe, dread goddess with a human voice, sent a favoring wind that filled the sail, a good companion. At once we set all the tackle in order throughout the ship and sat, and the wind and the helmsman kept her on course.

153 Then I spoke among my companions, grieving at heart: "Friends, it is not right for only one or two to know the prophecies that Circe, bright among goddesses, has told me. So I will tell them to you, so that knowing them we may die, or else avoid death and escape our doom. First she tells us to keep clear of the voice of the wondrous Sirens and their flowery meadow. She tells me alone to listen to their voice; but you must bind me with a painful bond, so that I stay fast there, upright against 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 press me with still more bonds."

165 So I told my companions each thing and made it plain to them. In the meantime the well-made ship quickly reached the island of the two Sirens, for a fair wind drove her on, a wind that did no harm. Then at once the wind dropped, and there was a windless calm, and some god lulled the waves to sleep. My companions stood up and furled the ship's sails and stowed them in the hollow ship, and sat down at the oars and made the water white with their polished blades of fir. But I took a great round of wax and cut it into small pieces with the sharp bronze and kneaded them with my strong hands; and soon the wax grew warm, for the great strength of the sun forced it, the light of lord Helios, son of Hyperion. I smeared it on the ears of all my companions in turn; and they bound me in the ship hand and foot, upright against the mast step, and made the ropes fast to the mast itself; and sitting down they struck the gray sea with their oars. But

when we were as far off as a man can make himself heard when he shouts, driving swiftly on, the Sirens did not fail to notice the sea-swift ship as it came close, and they raised their clear song:

184 "Come here, come, much-praised Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans, stop your ship, so that you may listen to the voice of us two. For no one has ever yet rowed past this place in his black ship until he has heard the honey-sweet voice from our lips; he goes home delighted and knowing more. For we know all the toils that the Argives and the Trojans endured in wide Troy by the will of the gods, and we know all that comes to pass upon the bountiful earth."

192 So they spoke, sending out their lovely voice, and my heart longed to listen. I ordered my companions to set me free, nodding to them with my brows; but they bent forward and rowed. At once Perimedes and Eurylochus stood up and bound me with more bonds and pulled them tighter. But when they had rowed past the Sirens, and we could no longer hear their voice or their song, at once my faithful companions took out the wax I had smeared in their ears and set me free from my bonds.

201 But when we had left the island behind, then at once I saw smoke and a great wave, and heard a roar. My men were terrified, and the oars flew out of their hands and all splashed down in the current; and the ship stopped there, since they were no longer pulling the tapering oars with their hands. But I went through the ship and urged my companions on with gentle words, standing beside each man in turn:

208 "Friends, we are no strangers to trouble. Surely this evil that is on us is no greater than when the Cyclops penned us in his hollow cave by brute strength; yet even from there we escaped through my courage and my counsel and my wits, and I think that some day we will remember this too. But now come, let us all do as I say. You men, sit at the oarlocks and strike 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, this is my order to you, and lay it to heart, since you handle the steering oar of our hollow ship: keep the ship away from this smoke and this surf, and make for the cliff, or before you know it she will swerve over there and you will throw us into disaster."

222 So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. But of Scylla I said nothing more, a trouble there was no remedy for, for fear that my companions would take fright and stop rowing and huddle down together in the hold. And then I forgot Circe's painful command, that she had told me not to arm myself. I put on my famous armor and took two long spears in my hands and went up onto the foredeck at the prow, for from there I expected Scylla of the rock to appear first, who was to bring grief to my companions. But I could not catch sight of her anywhere, and my eyes grew weary as I searched everywhere over the misty rock.

234 So we sailed up the narrow strait, lamenting. On one side was Scylla, and on the other bright Charybdis sucked down the salt water of the sea, terribly. Whenever she vomited it up, like a cauldron on a great fire she would seethe and churn all through, and high overhead the spray fell on the tops of both the cliffs. But whenever she sucked down the salt water of the sea, she could be seen churning all through within, and the rock around roared terribly, and below the earth showed through, dark with sand; and pale fear took hold of my men. We looked toward her, fearing destruction; and meanwhile Scylla seized six of my companions out of the hollow ship, the best of them in strength of hand. I looked back to the swift ship and toward my companions, and already I could see their feet and hands as they were lifted high above me. They cried out to me, calling me by name, for the last time then, in anguish of heart. As when a fisherman on a jutting rock, with a long rod, casting bait as a lure for the little fish,

throws the horn of a field ox down into the sea, and then catches a fish and flings it gasping onto the shore, so they were lifted up gasping toward the rocks. And there at her doors she devoured them as they shrieked and stretched out their hands to me in that dreadful struggle. That was the most pitiful sight my eyes have seen, of all I suffered searching out the paths of the sea.

260 But when we had escaped from the rocks and dreadful Charybdis and Scylla, then at once we came to the excellent island of the god. There were the fine broad-browed cattle and the many fat sheep of Helios Hyperion. While I was still out at sea in my black ship, I heard the lowing of the cattle being penned in the yards and the bleating of the sheep. And the word of the blind prophet, Theban Tiresias, fell upon my heart, and of Circe of Aeaea, who had charged me most strictly to shun the island of Helios, who gives joy to mortals. Then I spoke among my companions, grieving at heart:

271 "Listen to my words, companions, for all you have suffered, so that I may tell you the prophecies of Tiresias and of Circe of Aeaea, who charged me most strictly to shun the island of Helios, who gives joy to mortals; for there, she said, the most terrible evil awaited us. So row the black ship on, past the island."

277 So I spoke, and their hearts were broken within them. At once Eurylochus answered me with hateful words:

279 "You are a hard man, Odysseus. Your strength is beyond the common and your limbs never tire. You must be made all of iron, since you will not let your companions, worn out with toil and sleep, set foot on land, where on this sea-washed island we might make ourselves a good supper again. Instead you order us to wander on just as we are through the swift night, driven away from the island over the misty sea. It is out of the nights that the hard winds come, the ruin of ships. How could anyone escape sheer destruction, if a storm of wind should suddenly come, from the South

Wind or the stormy West Wind, which most of all wreck ships, in spite of the gods our masters? No, for now let us yield to black night and make our supper, staying beside the swift ship, and in the morning we will go aboard and put out into the wide sea."

294 So Eurylochus spoke, and the other companions agreed. And then I knew that some power was plotting evil, and I spoke to him, and my words had wings:

297 "Eurylochus, you force me, since I am one 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 some wicked folly. Eat in peace the food that immortal Circe gave us."

303 So I spoke, and at once they swore the oath as I told them. And when they had sworn and finished the oath, we moored the well-made ship in a hollow harbor near sweet water, and my companions went out of the ship and then skillfully prepared their supper. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, they remembered their dear companions whom Scylla had snatched out of the hollow ship and eaten, and they wept for them; and as they wept, deep, sweet sleep came over them. But when it was the third watch of the night, and the stars had passed the zenith, Zeus the cloud-gatherer roused a blustering wind against us in an unearthly storm, and covered land and sea alike with clouds, and night rushed down from the sky. When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, we hauled the ship into a hollow cave and moored her there, where there were fair dancing floors and seats of the nymphs. And then I called an assembly and spoke among them:

320 "Friends, there is food and drink in the swift ship; let us keep our hands off those cattle, or we may come to harm. For these cattle and fat sheep belong to a dread god, Helios, who sees everything and hears everything."

324 So I spoke, and their proud hearts were persuaded. For a whole month the South Wind blew without ceasing, and there was never any other wind but the East Wind and the South.

327 As long as they had bread and red wine, they kept their hands off the cattle, eager as they were to stay alive. But when all the provisions in the ship were used up, they had to roam about and hunt for game, fish and birds, whatever came to their hands, with bent 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 go home. And when I had gone through the island and got away from my companions, I washed my hands where there was shelter from the wind and prayed to all the gods who hold Olympus; and they poured sweet sleep over my eyelids. And Eurylochus began to give his evil counsel to my companions:

340 "Listen to my words, companions, for all you have suffered. All deaths are hateful to wretched mortals, but to die of hunger and meet one's fate that way is the most pitiful. Come, let us drive off the best of the cattle of Helios and sacrifice them to the immortals who hold the wide sky. And if we ever reach Ithaca, our native land, we will at once build a rich temple to Helios Hyperion and set in it many fine offerings. But if he is angry about his straight-horned cattle and wants to destroy our ship, and the other gods agree, I would rather lose my life once and for all, gulping at a wave, than waste away slowly on a desert island."

352 So Eurylochus spoke, and the other companions agreed. At once they drove off the best of the cattle of Helios from close by, for the fine broad-browed cattle with curving horns were grazing not far from the dark-prowed ship. They stood around them and prayed to the gods, plucking tender leaves from a high-crowned oak, for they had no white barley on board the well-benched ship. And when they had prayed and slaughtered and flayed the cattle, they cut out the thigh bones and wrapped them in a double layer

of fat and laid raw strips of meat on them. They had no wine to pour on the burning sacrifice, but they poured libations of water and roasted all the inner parts. When the thigh bones were burned and they had tasted the inner parts, they cut up the rest and spitted it. And then deep, sweet sleep fled from my eyelids, and I went back to the swift ship and the seashore. But when I was coming near the curved ship on my way, then the sweet savor of the fat came all around me. I groaned and cried aloud to the immortal gods:

371 "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, it was to my ruin that you lulled me to sleep in that pitiless sleep, and my companions, staying behind, have contrived a monstrous deed."

374 Swiftly Lampetia of the long 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:

377 "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, punish the companions of Odysseus, son of Laertes, who in their insolence have killed my cattle, which I delighted in when I went up into the starry sky and when I turned back again from the sky toward the earth. If they do not pay me fit atonement for the cattle, I will go down to Hades and shine among the dead."

384 Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered him: "Helios, keep on shining among the immortals and among mortal men on the grain-giving land. As for those men, I will soon strike their swift ship with a bright thunderbolt and shatter it to pieces in the middle of the wine-dark sea."

389 This I heard from fair-haired Calypso; and she said she had heard it herself from Hermes the guide.

391 But when I came down to the ship and the sea, I went up to one man after another and rebuked them; but we could find no remedy, for the cattle were already dead. And then at once the

gods began to show portents to them: the hides crawled, and the meat, both roasted and raw, bellowed on the spits, and there was a sound like the lowing of cattle.

397 For six days after that my faithful companions feasted on the best of the cattle of Helios that they had driven off. But when Zeus, son of Cronus, brought the seventh day, then the wind ceased to rage in its storm, and we went aboard at once and put out into the wide sea, setting up the mast and hoisting the white sails.

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 over the hollow ship, and the sea grew dark beneath it. She did not run on for very long; for suddenly the West Wind came shrieking, raging in a great storm, and the blast of the wind snapped both the forestays of the mast. The mast fell backward, and all the tackle tumbled into the bilge. At the stern of the ship the mast struck the helmsman on the head and crushed all the bones of his skull together; and he dropped from the deck like a diver, and his proud spirit left his bones. At the same moment Zeus thundered and hurled his lightning bolt at the ship. Struck by the lightning of Zeus, she spun all 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 going up and down the ship, until the surge tore the sides from the keel, and the wave carried the keel along bare, and snapped the mast off at the keel. But the backstay, made of oxhide, had been flung 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.

426 Then the West Wind ceased to rage in its storm, and the South Wind came quickly, bringing grief to my heart, so that I should measure out again the way back to deadly Charybdis. All

night long I was carried along, and at sunrise I came to the cliff of Scylla and to dreadful Charybdis. She sucked down the salt water of the sea; but I sprang up high toward the tall fig tree and clung to it like a bat. I had nowhere to plant my feet firmly or to climb up, for its roots were far below and its branches hung far out of reach, long and great, overshadowing Charybdis. I held on relentlessly, until she should vomit up the mast and keel again; and to my longing they came, but late. At the hour when a man rises from the place of assembly for his supper, after judging the many quarrels of young men who go to law, at that hour the timbers appeared out of Charybdis. I let go and dropped from above, hands and feet, and came down with a crash in the water beside the long timbers, and sitting on them I rowed with my hands. And the father of men and gods did not let Scylla see me again; or I would never have escaped sheer destruction.

447 From there I was carried along for nine days, and on the tenth night the gods brought me to the island of Ogygia, where lovely-haired Calypso lives, dread goddess with a human voice, who loved me and cared for me. But why should I tell you all this? Only yesterday I told it to you and your stately wife here in the house; and it is hateful to me to tell again a tale already plainly told.

Book 13

1 So he spoke, and they all fell silent and were still, and throughout the shadowy halls they were held spellbound. Then Alcinous answered him and said:

4 "Odysseus, since you have come to my bronze-floored house, my high-roofed house, I do not think you will be driven off course again on your way home, much as you have suffered. And to each man among you I say this, and I lay it on you as a charge, all of you who drink the sparkling wine of the elders in my halls day after day and listen to the bard: the clothes for our guest already lie in a polished chest, with the finely wrought gold and all the other gifts that the counselors of the Phaeacians brought here. But come, let each of us give him a great tripod and a cauldron as well; and we in turn will gather it from the people and be repaid, for it is hard for one man to give so much and get nothing back."

16 So Alcinous spoke, and his words pleased them. They went home to sleep, each to his own house, and when early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, they hurried down to the ship and brought the bronze that is the pride of men. The sacred strength of Alcinous went through the ship in person and stowed it well 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.

24 For them the sacred strength of Alcinous sacrificed an ox to Zeus of the dark clouds, son of Cronus, who rules over all. They burned the thigh pieces and feasted on a glorious feast and took their delight, and among them the godlike bard sang, Demodocus,

honored by the people. But Odysseus kept turning his head toward the blazing sun, eager for it to set, for he longed now to be on his way. As when a man longs for his supper, a man whose two wine-dark oxen have dragged the jointed plow through the fallow field all day long, and gladly for him the sunlight goes down, so that he can go to his supper, and his knees give under him as he walks: so gladly for Odysseus the sunlight went down. At once he spoke among the oar-loving Phaeacians, and, turning to Alcinous above all, he said:

38 "Lord Alcinous, most renowned of all the people, pour your offerings and send me on my way unharmed; and fare you well yourselves. For now all that my heart desired has been accomplished: an escort, and gifts of friendship. May the gods of heaven bless them for me, and may I come home and find my excellent wife there, and my dear ones unharmed. And you who stay here, may you gladden your wedded wives and your children; may the gods grant you every kind of excellence, and may no evil ever come among your people."

47 So he spoke, and they all praised his words and urged that the stranger be sent on his way, since he had spoken rightly. Then the strength of Alcinous said to the herald: "Pontonous, mix a bowl and serve wine to everyone in the hall, so that we may pray to father Zeus and send the stranger to his own native land."

53 So he spoke, and Pontonous mixed the heart-cheering wine and went to each man in turn and served them all, and they poured their offerings to the blessed gods who hold the wide sky, there from the seats where they sat. But noble Odysseus rose and placed the two-handled cup in Arete's hand, and he spoke to her, and his words had wings:

59 "Fare you well, my queen, all your days, until old age comes, and death, which come to all mankind. I am going now; but you,

take joy in this house, in your children and your people and in Alcinous the king."

63 So saying, noble Odysseus stepped over the threshold, and the strength of Alcinous sent a herald with him to lead him to the swift ship and the shore of the sea. And Arete sent serving women with him: one carried a freshly washed mantle and a tunic, another she sent along to carry the sturdy chest, and a third brought bread and red wine.

70 When they had come down to the ship and the sea, the lordly men of his escort at once took all this and stowed it in the hollow ship, all the drink and the food. For Odysseus they spread a rug and a linen sheet on the deck of the hollow ship, at the stern, so that he could sleep without waking; and he himself went aboard and lay down in silence. They sat down at the oarlocks, each man in order, and loosed the cable from the pierced stone. Then they leaned back and threw up the sea with their oar blades, and deep, sweet sleep fell on his eyelids, unwaking sleep, the sweetest, most like death. And as on a plain four stallions yoked together, all springing forward at once under the blows of the lash, lift themselves high and swiftly cover the road, so the stern of the ship lifted, and behind her the great purple wave of the loud-roaring sea surged and seethed. She ran on very steadily and surely, and not even the circling hawk, the swiftest of winged things, could have kept pace with her. So she ran swiftly and cut through the waves of the sea, carrying a man whose counsels were like the gods', who before had suffered many pains in his heart, passing through the wars of men and the cruel waves; but now he slept unmoving, forgetting all that he had suffered.

93 When the brightest star rose, the one that comes above all others to herald the light of early-born Dawn, then the seafaring ship drew near the island.

96 There is a harbor of Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea, in the land of Ithaca, and two headlands jut out at its mouth, sheer cliffs that slope down toward the harbor and keep off the great waves raised by harsh winds outside; within, well-benched ships ride without a mooring once they have come within the line 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 are tall looms of stone, where the nymphs weave sea-purple mantles, a wonder to see; and in it are waters that flow forever. It has two doors: one faces the North Wind, and by it men may go down; the other faces the South Wind and is more for the gods. No men enter by that way; it is the path of the immortals.

113 There they rowed in, for they knew the place of old. The ship ran up on the shore for fully half her length, so hard did the rowers' hands drive her on. They stepped from the well-benched ship onto the land, and first they lifted Odysseus out of the hollow ship, just as he was, in the linen sheet and the shining rug, and laid him down on the sand still overpowered by sleep. Then they lifted out the treasures that the lordly Phaeacians had given him as he set out for home, by the will of great-hearted Athena. These they piled together by the trunk of the olive tree, out of the path, so that no passer-by 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 once made against godlike Odysseus, and he asked Zeus what he intended:

128 "Father Zeus, I shall no longer be honored among the immortal gods, when mortals do not honor me at all: the Phaeacians, who are of my own blood besides. I meant Odysseus to suffer many evils before he came home; I never took his home-

coming from him altogether, since you had promised it once and nodded your assent. But they have carried him asleep over the sea in a swift ship and set him down in Ithaca, and given him gifts beyond telling, bronze and gold in plenty and woven clothing, more than Odysseus would ever have carried away from Troy if he had come home unharmed with his share of the spoil."

139 Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered him: "Ah, Earth-shaker, wide in strength, what a thing to say! The gods do not dishonor you; it would be a hard thing to heap dishonor on the eldest and the best of us. But if any man, giving way to his own force and strength, fails to honor you, you may always take vengeance, now and hereafter. Do as you wish, as your heart pleases."

146 Then Poseidon the Earth-shaker answered him: "I would have done at once as you say, god of the dark clouds, but I always respect your anger and keep clear of it. Now, though, I want to wreck the beautiful ship of the Phaeacians as she comes back from her convoy on the misty sea, so that they will stop at last and give up escorting men; and I want to hide their city behind a great mountain."

153 Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered him: "My dear brother, this is what seems best to my mind. When all the people are watching from the city as she drives in, turn her to stone near the land, a stone in the shape of a swift ship, so that all men may marvel; and hide their city behind a great mountain."

159 When Poseidon the Earth-shaker heard this, he went to Scheria, where the Phaeacians are born, and there he waited. And the seafaring ship came very near, speeding lightly along; and the Earth-shaker came near her and turned her to stone and rooted her to the bottom with one blow of the flat of his hand, and then he was gone. And the Phaeacians of the long oars, men famed for ships, spoke winged words to one another, and one would say, looking at his neighbor:

168 "Ah me, who has bound our swift ship fast on the sea as she was driving home? Why, she was in plain sight, all of her!"

170 So one would say; but they did not know how it had come about. Then Alcinous spoke among them and said:

172 "Ah! The prophecies my father spoke long ago have come upon me after all. He used to say that Poseidon resented us, because we give safe escort to all men. He said that one day, as a beautiful ship of the Phaeacian men came back from a convoy on the misty sea, the god would wreck her and hide our city behind a great mountain. So the old man said, and now it is all coming to pass. But come, let us all do as I say. Give up escorting mortals, whenever anyone comes to our city; and let us sacrifice twelve choice bulls to Poseidon, in the hope that he will take pity on us and not hide our city behind a towering mountain."

184 So he spoke, and they were afraid, and they made the bulls ready. So the leaders and counselors of the Phaeacian people prayed to lord Poseidon, standing around the altar. And noble Odysseus woke from his sleep in his own native land, and he did not know it, having been away so long; for the goddess had poured a mist around him, Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus, so that she might make him unrecognizable and tell him everything, so that his wife and his townsmen and his friends would not know him before the suitors had paid for all their outrage. So everything looked strange to the land's own lord: the long paths, the harbors where ships can lie, the sheer rocks, and the flourishing trees. He sprang up and stood and looked at his native land; and then he groaned and struck both his thighs with the flat of his hands, and lamenting he said:

200 "Ah me, to what people's land have I come now? Are they violent and savage and unjust, or kind to strangers, with minds that fear the gods? Where am I to take all these treasures? And where am I to wander myself? If only I had stayed there among the

Phaeacians! And I could have come to some other mighty king, who would have welcomed me and sent me home. As it is, I do not know where to put these things, and I will not leave them here, or they may become plunder for others. Oh, for shame! So they were not so wise or so just after all, the leaders and counselors of the Phaeacians, who have brought me to another land. They said they would take me to clear-seen Ithaca, and they did not do it. May Zeus, god of suppliants, punish them, who watches over all men and punishes whoever does wrong. But come, I will count these treasures and look them over, to see if they have gone off with anything in their hollow ship."

217 So saying, he counted the beautiful tripods and the cauldrons and the gold and the fine woven clothes. Of all these he missed nothing. But he wept for his native land, dragging himself along the shore of the loud-roaring sea, lamenting bitterly. And Athena came near him in the likeness of a young man, a herdsman of sheep, as delicate as the sons of kings are, with a well-made cloak folded double about her shoulders; she had sandals on her shining feet and a javelin in her hands. Odysseus was glad when he saw her and went to meet her, and he spoke to her, and his words had wings:

228 "Friend, since you are the first I have met in this place, greetings to you, and may you not come to me with a wicked mind. Save these things, and save me; 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 are born here? Is it some clear-seen island, or a shore of the deep-soiled mainland that slopes down into the sea?"

236 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "You are a fool, stranger, or you have come from far away, if you ask about this land. It is not so very nameless. Very many know it, both those who live toward the dawn and the sun and those who live behind,

toward the misty dark. It is rugged, to be sure, and no land for driving horses; yet it is not too poor, though it is not broad. Grain grows in it beyond measure, and wine too; the rain never fails it, nor the fresh dew. It is good pasture for goats and for cattle; there is timber of every kind, and watering places that last the year round. And so, stranger, the name of Ithaca has reached even to Troy, which they say is far from the Achaean land."

250 So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, rejoicing in his native land, as Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, had told him; and he spoke to her, and his words had wings. But he did not tell the truth: he took back the word before it was spoken, always turning over in his breast a mind full of craft.

256 "I heard of Ithaca even in wide Crete, far over the sea; and now I have come here myself with these treasures. I left as much again to my children, and I am in exile, because I killed the dear son of Idomeneus, Orsilochus, swift of foot, who in wide Crete outran all the bread-eating men with his swift feet. He wanted to rob me of all my spoil from Troy, for which I had suffered pains in my heart, passing through the wars of men and the cruel waves, because I would not do his father the favor of serving under him in the land of the Trojans, but led other companions of my own. I struck him with my bronze-tipped spear as he came down from the fields, lying in ambush by the road with one companion. A very dark night covered the sky, no man saw us, and I took his life unseen. When I had killed him with the sharp bronze, I went at once to a ship and begged the lordly Phoenicians, and gave them spoil to satisfy their hearts. I asked them to take me aboard and set me down 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; they did not mean 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 needed it badly; we all just went ashore and lay down as we were. Then sweet sleep came over me in my weariness, and they took my treasures out of the hollow ship and set them down where I myself lay on the sand. Then they went aboard and left for well-peopled Sidonia, and I was left behind, grieving at heart."

287 So he spoke, and the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, smiled and stroked him with her hand; and now she was like a woman, beautiful and tall and skilled in glorious handiwork. And she spoke to him, and her words had wings:

291 "Sly would he be, and a thief at heart, who could get past you in all your tricks, even if it were a god who met you. You hard man, crafty-minded, never sated with tricks, you were not going to stop, even in your own land, from the deceptions and thieving tales that are dear to you to the very core. But come, let us talk no more of this, for we both know every kind of craft: you are far the best of all mortals in counsel and in speech, and I among all the gods am famous for cunning and for craft. And yet you did not know Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus, who always stands beside you in all your labors and guards you, and who made you dear to all the Phaeacians. And now I have come here to weave a plan with you, and to hide the treasures that the lordly Phaeacians gave you as you set out for home, by my counsel and my thought; and to tell you all the troubles it is your fate to endure in your well-built house. You must bear them, because you must, and tell no one, no man and no woman, none at all, that you have come home from your wandering; but suffer many pains in silence, and submit to the violence of men."

311 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "It is hard, goddess, for a mortal who meets you to know you, however skilled he is, for you take every shape. But this I know well, that 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 off in our ships, and a god had scattered the Achaeans, I never saw you after that, daughter of Zeus, nor saw you come aboard my ship to ward off any pain from me. Always I wandered with my heart torn in my breast, until the gods set me free from misery; until, in the rich land of the Phaeacian men, you cheered me with your words and led me to the city yourself. And now I beg you by your father—for I do not think I have come to clear-seen Ithaca; I am roaming in some other land, and I think you say all this to mock me, to beguile my mind—tell me if I have truly come to my own native land."

329 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Always the same thought in your breast! And that is why I cannot leave you in your misery, because you are courteous, quick-witted, and sensible. Any other man come home from his wanderings would gladly have hurried to see his children and his wife in his halls; but you have no wish to learn or ask of anything until you have first tested your wife, who sits in your halls as she always has, and her nights and days waste away in misery as she weeps. As for me, I never doubted it; I knew in my heart that you would come home, after losing all your companions. But I did not want to fight against Poseidon, my father's brother, who laid up anger in his heart against you, enraged because you blinded his dear son. But come, I will show you the lie of Ithaca, so that you may believe. 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, and near it 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 Neriton, clothed in forest."

352 So saying, the goddess scattered the mist, and the land appeared. Then much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, rejoic-

ing in his own land, and he kissed the grain-giving land. At once he prayed to the nymphs, lifting up his hands:

356 "Naiad nymphs, daughters of Zeus, I never thought I would see you again. Now be glad of my loving prayers; and gifts too we will give you, as we did before, if Zeus's daughter, the driver of spoil, graciously lets me live on and makes my dear son grow to manhood."

361 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "Take heart; do not let these things trouble your mind. But let us put your treasures in the innermost part of the wondrous cave at once, right now, so that they may stay safe for you; and then let us think how all may turn out best."

366 So saying, the goddess went into the shadowy cave, searching out its hiding places, and Odysseus brought everything up close, the gold and the stubborn bronze and the well-made clothes that the Phaeacians had given him. He laid them carefully away, and Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, set a stone against the doorway. Then the two of them sat down by the trunk of the sacred olive and planned destruction for the overbearing suitors. And the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, began the talk:

375 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, think how you will lay hands on the shameless suitors, who for three years now have been lording it in your hall, courting your godlike wife and offering her bride-gifts. And she, always mourning in her heart for your return, gives hope to all of them and makes promises to each man, sending him messages; but her mind is set on other things."

382 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Ah! Surely I was going to die in my halls by an evil fate, like Agamemnon son of Atreus, if you, goddess, had not told me all this rightly. But come, weave a plan by which I may pay them back; and stand beside me

yourself, and put daring strength in me, as on the day we loosed the shining diadem of Troy. If you would stand by me with such eagerness, gray-eyed one, I would fight even three hundred men with you, lady goddess, so long as you gladly gave me your help."

392 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "I will be beside you indeed, and you will not slip from my mind, when we are at this work; and I think that some of the suitors who devour your living will spatter the vast floor with blood and brains. But come, I will make you unrecognizable to all mortals. I will wither the fine skin on your supple limbs and destroy the fair hair on your head, and clothe you in a rag that a man would loathe to see anyone wearing, and I will dim your eyes, that were so beautiful before, so that you will look vile to all the suitors and to your wife and your son, whom you left in your halls. But first of all go to the swineherd, who keeps your swine and is as loyal to you as ever, and loves your son and sensible Penelope. You will find him sitting by his swine. They feed by the Raven's Rock and at the spring of Arethusa, eating the acorns they love and drinking the black water, which make the rich fat grow on swine. Stay there, sit by him, and ask him about everything, while I go to Sparta of the lovely women to call Telemachus, your dear son, Odysseus. He has gone to spacious Lacedaemon, to Menelaus, to learn news of you, whether you were still alive anywhere."

416 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Why then did you not tell him, when you know everything in your mind? Was it so that he too might wander and suffer pains over the barren sea, while others devour his living?" Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, answered him: "Do not let him weigh too heavily on your heart. I escorted him myself, so that he might win good fame by going there. He is in no trouble; he sits at his ease in the house of the son of Atreus, and has plenty of everything around him. True, young men lie in wait for him with a black ship, eager to kill him

before he reaches his native land; but I do not think it will happen. Before that the earth will hold some of the suitors who devour your living."

429 So saying, Athena touched him with her wand. She withered the fine skin on his supple limbs and destroyed the fair hair on his head, and over all his limbs she put the skin of an aged old man, and she dimmed his eyes, that were so beautiful before. She threw about him a vile rag of a cloak and a tunic, tattered and filthy, blackened with foul smoke; and over these she put the great hide of a swift deer, worn bare of hair. And she gave him a staff and a shabby pouch, full of holes, with a twisted cord for a strap.

439 So the two of them, having made their plan, parted; and she went to bright Lacedaemon to fetch the son of Odysseus.

Book 14

1 But Odysseus went up from the harbor by a rough path through wooded country along the heights, to the place where Athena had told him he would find the noble swineherd, who of all the servants noble Odysseus had acquired took the most care of his master's goods.

5 He found him sitting in the forecourt, where his yard had been built with high walls in a place open to view on every side, a fine, large yard with a way all around it. The swineherd had built it himself for the swine while his master was away, without the help of his mistress or old Laertes, out of stones he had hauled there, and he had crowned it with a hedge of wild pear. Outside he had driven stakes all along, on this side and that, close-set and many, splitting them from the black heart of oak. Inside the yard he had made twelve sties close to one another as beds for the swine, and in each of them fifty swine that sleep on the ground were penned, all breeding sows. The boars slept outside, and they were far fewer, for the godlike suitors kept thinning them by their feasting, since the swineherd always had to send them the best of all the fatted hogs; and the boars numbered three hundred and sixty. Beside them, always, slept four dogs like wild beasts, which the swineherd, leader of men, had reared. He himself was fitting sandals to his feet, cutting them from a good, well-colored ox hide. The others had gone off, one here and one there, with the herds of swine, three of them; the fourth he had sent to the city to take a hog to the overbearing suitors, because he had to, so that they might sacrifice it and fill their hearts with meat.

29 Suddenly the loud-barking dogs caught sight of Odysseus. They rushed at him, baying, but Odysseus had the cunning to sit down, and the staff dropped from his hand. There, by his own farmstead, he might have suffered a shameful hurt; but the swineherd came quickly after them on swift feet and dashed out through the gateway, and the leather dropped from his hand. Shouting at the dogs, he drove them off this way and that with a shower of stones, and he said to his master:

37 "Old man, the dogs nearly tore you to pieces just now, and you would have heaped disgrace on me. The gods have given me pains and griefs enough besides. Here I sit, mourning and grieving for my godlike master, and I fatten his hogs for other men to eat; while he, wanting for food, I suppose, wanders over the land and the city of men of strange speech, if he is still alive anywhere and sees the light of the sun. But come with me, old man, let us go to the hut, so that you too may eat and drink your fill of bread and wine, and tell me where you are from and what troubles you have endured."

48 So saying, the noble swineherd led the way to the hut, brought him in, and sat him down. He heaped up thick brushwood underneath and spread on 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:

53 "Stranger, may Zeus and the other immortal gods grant you what you most desire, since you have received me with such a good will." And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Stranger, it is not right for me to slight a stranger, not even if one came who was poorer than you; for all strangers and beggars come from Zeus. Our gift is small, but it is given with love; that is the way of servants, who are always afraid when young masters lord it over them. For the gods have surely stopped the homecoming of the man who loved me kindly and would have given me possessions of

my own, such as a good-hearted master gives his servant: a house and a plot of land and a wife whom many would court, to a man who has worked hard for him and whose work a god makes prosper, as he prospers this work of mine that I keep at. So my master would have done much for me, if he had grown old here. But he is dead—if only the whole race of Helen had perished root and branch, since she has loosed the knees of many men! For he too went to Ilion of the fine horses, for the honor of Agamemnon, to fight the Trojans."

72 So saying, he quickly cinched his tunic with his belt and went to the sties, where the tribes of piglets were penned. He picked out two and brought them and slaughtered both; he singed them, cut them up, and spitted the pieces. When he had roasted it all, he brought it and set it before Odysseus, hot on the spits themselves, and sprinkled white barley meal over it. Then in a wooden bowl he mixed honey-sweet wine, and he sat down himself facing him and urged him on, saying:

80 "Eat now, stranger, what servants have to eat, piglets; the fatted hogs are for the suitors to eat, who have no thought in their hearts of the gods' watchful eye, and no pity. The blessed gods do not love cruel deeds: they honor justice and men's righteous deeds. Even hostile, lawless men, who land on a country not their own, and Zeus gives them plunder, and they fill their ships and set off for home, even on their hearts falls a strong fear of the gods' eye. But these men must know something; they must have heard some voice of a god telling of his miserable death, since they will not court her fairly or go back to what is theirs, but at their ease they devour his possessions insolently, and there is no sparing. For every night and day that comes from Zeus, they never sacrifice just one victim, or just two; and they drain the wine insolently and waste it. For his wealth was beyond telling. No hero had so much, neither on the dark mainland nor on Ithaca itself; not twenty men

together have riches so great. I will reckon it up 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, which hired strangers and his own herdsmen pasture. And here, broad herds of goats, eleven in all, graze at the far end of the island, and good men watch over them. Each of these men, every day, drives one beast to the suitors, whichever of the fatted goats seems the best. And I guard and keep these swine, and pick out the best of the hogs with care, and send it to them."

109 So he spoke, and Odysseus eagerly ate the meat and drank the wine, greedily, in silence, and sowed evil for the suitors. When he had dined and satisfied his heart with food, the swineherd filled the cup from which he himself drank and gave it to him full of wine; and he took it, and was glad at heart, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

115 "Friend, who was it who bought you with his own possessions, a man so very rich and mighty as you say? You say he died for the honor of Agamemnon. Tell me, in case I might have known such a man. Zeus knows, I suppose, and the other immortal gods, whether I have seen him and could bring you news of him; for I have wandered far."

121 Then the swineherd, leader of men, answered him: "Old man, no wanderer who came with news of him could persuade his wife and his dear son. Wanderers who need a living tell lies without a second thought and have no wish to tell the truth. Whoever comes wandering to the land of Ithaca goes to my mistress and babbles lies; and she receives him kindly and makes much of him and asks about everything, and the tears fall from her eyelids as she grieves, as is right for a woman when her husband has died far away. You too, old man, would soon make up a tale, if someone would give you a cloak and a tunic to wear. But by now the dogs and the swift birds must have torn the skin from his bones, and

the life has left him; or the fish have eaten him at sea, and his bones lie on the mainland, wrapped in deep sand. So he has perished there, and sorrow is laid up for his friends hereafter, for all of them, and for me most of all; for never again shall I find so gentle a master, wherever I go, not even if I came back to the house of my father and mother, where I was first born and where they reared me themselves. Nor do I mourn so much for them anymore, though I long to see them with my eyes in my native land; it is longing for Odysseus, who is gone, that takes hold of me. His name, stranger, even when he is not here, I am shy to speak; for he loved me greatly and cared for me in his heart. I call him my dear lord, even though he is far away."

148 Then much-enduring noble Odysseus said to him: "Friend, since you deny it altogether and say that he will never come, and your heart is always unbelieving, I will not say it idly, but with an oath: Odysseus is coming home. Let me have my reward for the good news as soon as he comes to his house: dress me in a cloak and a tunic, fine clothes. Before that, however great my need, I would not take a thing. For hateful to me as the gates of Hades is the man who gives way to poverty and babbles lies. Let Zeus be my witness first of the gods, and this table of hospitality, and the hearth of excellent Odysseus to which I have come: truly all these things will be fulfilled as I say. Within this very year Odysseus will come here. As one month wanes and the next begins, he will come home and take vengeance on anyone here who dishonors his wife and his shining son."

165 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Old man, I shall never pay you that reward for good news, and Odysseus will never come home again. Drink in peace, and let us think of other things, and do not remind me of this; for the heart in my breast grieves whenever anyone speaks of my good master. As for the oath, let it be; but may Odysseus come, as I long for him to come,

and as Penelope does, and old Laertes, and Telemachus, godlike in looks. But now I grieve without end for the boy Odysseus fathered, for Telemachus. When the gods had made him grow like a young sapling, and I thought he would be no worse among men than his dear father, wonderful in form and looks, then some immortal, or some man, disturbed the good sense in him, and he has gone to holy Pylos after news of his father. And the lordly suitors lie in wait for him on his way home, so that the race of godlike Arceisius may perish from Ithaca and leave no name. But let us leave him be, whether he is taken or escapes and the son of Cronus holds his hand over him. But come, old man, tell me of your own troubles, and tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: Who are you, and where are you from? Where is your city, and where are your parents? On what kind of ship did you come? How did sailors bring you to Ithaca? Who did they say they were? For I do not suppose you came here on foot."

191 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Then I will tell you all this truly. If only we two had food and sweet wine enough for a long while, here inside your hut, to feast in quiet while others went about the work, even so I could easily talk for a whole year and never come to the end of the sorrows of my heart, all that I have toiled through by the will of the gods.

199 "I claim to come of a family from wide Crete, the son of a rich man. Many other sons too were born and reared in his halls, true-born sons of his wedded wife; but the mother who bore me was a bought woman, a concubine. Yet Castor son of Hylax honored me equally with his true-born sons, he whose son I claim to be, and who in those days was honored like a god by the people of Crete for his good fortune and his wealth and his renowned sons. But the spirits of death came and carried him off to the house of Hades, and his high-handed sons divided his living among them and cast lots for it; to me they gave very little, and allotted me a

house. But I married a wife from people with many lands, by my own merit, for I was no worthless man and no coward in war. Now all that has left me; and yet, I think, if you look at the stubble you can tell what the grain was, though great misery holds me, heaps of it. Truly Ares and Athena gave me daring, and the strength that breaks through the ranks of men. Whenever I picked the best men for an ambush, sowing evil for our enemies, my proud heart never gave a thought to death; I was far the first to leap out and strike down with my spear any enemy who gave ground before me. Such was I in war. But work was never dear to me, nor tending a household, which rears glorious children; it was always oared ships that I loved, and wars, and polished javelins and arrows, grim things that make others shudder. But those things were dear to me that a god, I suppose, put into my heart; for one man takes joy in one kind of work, and another in another. Before the sons of the Achaeans set foot on Troy, nine times I led men and swift-sailing ships against foreign peoples, and a great deal came my way. Of this I chose out what pleased me, and much more fell to me afterward by lot; quickly my house grew, and after that I was feared and respected among the Cretans. But when far-seeing Zeus devised that hateful voyage which loosed the knees of many men, then they urged me and glorious Idomeneus to lead the ships to Ilion; and there was no way to refuse, for the people's voice pressed hard on us. There we sons of the Achaeans fought for nine years, and in the tenth we sacked the city of Priam and set off homeward with our ships, and a god scattered the Achaeans. But for wretched me Zeus the counselor was devising evil. For only a month I stayed at home, taking my joy in my children and my wedded wife and my possessions; and then my heart urged me to fit out ships well and sail to Egypt with my godlike companions. Nine ships I fitted out, and the men gathered quickly. For six days then my faithful companions feasted, and I provided many victims for

them to sacrifice to the gods and to make a feast for themselves. On the seventh day we went aboard and sailed from wide Crete with a fresh, fair North Wind, easily, as if downstream. Not one of my ships came to harm; we sat unhurt and free of sickness, and the wind and the helmsmen steered them.

257 "On the fifth day we reached the fair-flowing river Aegyptus, and in the river Aegyptus I moored my curved ships. Then I ordered my faithful companions to stay there by the ships and guard them, and I sent out scouts to go up to the lookout points. But my men gave way to insolence and followed their own fury: at once they began to lay waste the beautiful fields of the Egyptian men, and they carried off the women and little children and killed the men, and soon the cry reached the city. Hearing the shouting, the townsmen came out at the break of dawn, and the whole plain was filled with foot soldiers and horses and the flash of bronze. And Zeus who delights in thunder cast an evil panic among my companions, and none dared to stand and face the enemy, for evils stood all around us. Then they killed many of us with the sharp bronze and led others away alive, to work for them by force. But Zeus himself put this thought into my mind—and how I wish I had died and met my fate right there in Egypt, for more misery was still waiting for me—I at once took the well-made helmet from my head and the shield from my shoulders, and let the spear fall from my hand. I went straight toward the horses of the king, and clasped his knees and kissed them; and he spared me and took pity on me, and set me in his chariot and took me home in tears. Many of them, it is true, rushed at me with their ash spears, eager to kill me—for they were very angry—but he kept them off, for he feared the wrath of Zeus, god of strangers, who above all is angered by evil deeds.

285 "There I stayed seven years, and gathered much wealth among the Egyptian men, for they all gave me gifts. But when the

eighth year came round, then came a Phoenician man, well versed in deceit, a greedy knave, who had already done men much harm. He talked me over 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 the days were accomplished, as the year came round again and the seasons returned, he put me aboard a seafaring ship bound for Libya, with lies in his plans: I was to take a cargo there with him, but in truth he meant to sell me there and get a huge price. I went aboard with him, suspecting it, but forced. She ran with a fresh, fair North Wind, on a mid-sea course beyond Crete; and Zeus was planning 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. Zeus thundered and at the same moment hurled his thunderbolt at the ship. She spun all around, struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus, and was filled with the smell of sulfur, and all the men fell out of the ship. Like sea crows they were tossed on the waves around the black ship, and the god took away their homecoming. But Zeus himself, though I had pains enough in my heart, put the huge mast of the dark-prowed ship into my hands, so that I might escape harm once more. I wrapped myself around it and was carried by the deadly winds. Nine days I was carried, and on the tenth, in the black night, a great rolling wave brought me to the land of the Thesprotians. There the king of the Thesprotians, the hero Pheidon, took care of me and asked no price; for his dear son came upon me, overcome by cold and weariness, and raised me by the hand and led me home until he reached his father's house, and he dressed me in a cloak and a tunic.

321 "There I heard of 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 the treasures that Odysseus had gathered,

bronze and gold and iron wrought with much toil. It would feed one man after another to the tenth generation, so much treasure lay stored for him in the halls of the king. He said Odysseus had gone to Dodona, to hear the will of Zeus from the god's oak with its high crown of leaves, how he should return to the rich land of Ithaca after so long away, whether openly or in secret. And he swore to me myself, pouring offerings in his house, that a ship had been launched and companions were ready to take him to his own native land. But he sent me off first, for a ship of Thesprotian men happened to be going to Dulichium, rich in wheat. He ordered them to take me there to King Acastus, and to treat me kindly; but an evil plan concerning me pleased their hearts, so that I might yet sink to the very depths of misery. When the seafaring ship had sailed far from land, at once they plotted the day of slavery for me. They stripped me of my cloak and tunic and threw about me this other vile rag and tunic, all in tatters, which you see with your own eyes. In the evening they reached the fields of clear-seen Ithaca. There they bound me fast in the well-benched ship with a tightly twisted rope, and they went ashore and hurried to take their supper by the shore of the sea. But the gods themselves easily loosened my bonds. I wrapped the rag around my head, let myself down the smooth steering oar, brought my breast to the water, and then 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 up and down with loud cries; but as it seemed to them no use to search any further, they went back aboard their hollow ship. And the gods themselves hid me easily, and led me to the farmstead of a man of understanding; for it is still my fate to live."

360 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Ah, poor stranger, you have stirred my heart deeply with all you have told me, all you have suffered and all your wanderings. But one part, I

think, is not true, and you will not persuade me of what you say about Odysseus. Why must a man like you tell idle lies? I myself know well enough about my master's homecoming: he was hated by all the gods, utterly, since they did not let him fall among the Trojans, or in the arms of his friends, once he had wound up the skein of war. Then all the Achaeans would have built him a tomb, and he would have won great fame for his son as well in days to come. But now the Harpies have snatched him away without fame. And I live apart with the swine. I do not go to the city, unless prudent Penelope happens to call me there, when news has come from somewhere. Then they sit around the newcomer and ask him about everything, both those who grieve for their master so long gone and those who are glad to eat up his living and pay nothing for it. But I have no wish to ask and inquire, ever since an Aetolian fooled me with his story. He had killed a man and wandered over much of the earth, and he came to my house, and I made him warmly welcome. He said he had seen Odysseus among the Cretans with Idomeneus, mending his ships which the storms had shattered; and he said he would come either by summer or by harvest time, bringing much wealth, with his godlike companions. And you, old man of many sorrows, since a god has brought you to me, do not try to please me with lies or charm me. That is not why I will respect you or be kind to you; it is because I fear Zeus, god of strangers, and because I pity you."

390 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Truly the heart in your breast is slow to believe, since not even with an oath can I win you over or persuade you. But come now, let us make a bargain, and the gods who hold Olympus shall be witnesses for us both hereafter. If your master comes home to this house, dress me in a cloak and a tunic and send me on to Dulichium, where my heart wants to go. But if your master does not come as I say, set

your servants on me and have them throw me down a great cliff, so that the next beggar may think twice before he tells lies."

401 The noble swineherd answered him and said: "Stranger, that would be fine fame and fine virtue for me among men, both now and hereafter, if I first brought you into my hut and gave you a guest's portion, and then killed you and took your dear life! With a glad heart, after that, I could pray to Zeus, son of Cronus! But now it is time for supper. I hope my companions will be in soon, so that we can make a good supper in the hut."

409 So they spoke with one another, and the swine and the men who herded them came near. They shut the sows in their usual places to sleep, and an enormous clamor rose from the swine as they were penned. And the noble swineherd called to his companions:

414 "Bring the best of the hogs, so that I can sacrifice it for the stranger from far away. We will have the good of it ourselves too, we who have long suffered hardship for the sake of the white-tusked swine, while others eat up our labor and pay nothing for it."

418 So saying, he split wood with the pitiless bronze, and they brought in a very fat hog, five years old, and stood it by the hearth. And the swineherd did not forget the immortals, for his heart was good. He began the rite by throwing bristles from the head of the white-tusked hog into the fire, and he prayed to all the gods that wise-hearted Odysseus would return to his own home. Then he raised his arm and struck the hog with a billet of oak which he had kept back when he split the wood, and the life left it. They cut its throat and singed it, and quickly jointed it; and the swineherd took raw pieces from all the limbs, as first offerings, and laid them on the rich fat and threw them into the fire, sprinkling them with barley meal. The rest they cut up and pierced with spits, and roasted it carefully, and drew it all off and threw it all together on platters. The swineherd stood up to carve, for his heart knew well what was

fitting. He divided it all into seven portions. One he set aside for the nymphs and for Hermes, son of Maia, with a prayer, and the others he gave out to each man. Odysseus he honored with the long chine of the white-tusked hog, and he gladdened the heart of his master; and Odysseus of many wiles spoke to him and said:

440 "Eumaeus, may you be as dear to father Zeus as you are to me, since you honor me, such as I am, with good things."

442 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Eat, strange man, my guest, and enjoy these things, such as they are. A god will give one thing and withhold another, as his heart wishes; for he can do all things."

446 He spoke, and he burned the first cuttings for the everlasting gods, and when he had poured an offering of sparkling wine he put the cup in the hands of Odysseus, sacker of cities, and sat down by his own portion. Mesaulius served them bread, a servant whom the swineherd had acquired by himself while his master was away, without his mistress or old Laertes; he had bought him from the Taphians with his own goods. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, Mesaulius cleared away the bread, and they hurried to their beds, full of bread and meat.

457 Night came on, foul and moonless. Zeus rained all night long, and the West Wind blew hard, always bringing rain. Odysseus spoke among them, testing the swineherd, to see whether he would take off his own cloak and give it to him, or tell one of his companions to, since he cared for him so much:

462 "Hear me now, Eumaeus, and all you other companions. I will tell you a tale to my own credit; the wine bids me, the maddening wine, which sets even a very wise man singing and laughing softly, and rouses him to dance, and brings out a word that would be better left unsaid. But since I have once begun to shout, I will not hold it back. If only I were young, and my strength firm, as

when we laid an ambush and led it under Troy! Odysseus led it, and Menelaus son of Atreus, and I was third in command with them, for they had asked me themselves. When we came to the city and its steep wall, we lay around the town in the thick brush, among the reeds and the marsh, crouching under our armor. A foul night came on when the North Wind dropped, freezing, and from above the snow came down like hoarfrost, cold, and ice formed thick around the rims of our shields. All the others had cloaks and tunics, and they slept in peace with their shields over their shoulders; but I, when I set out, had left my cloak with my companions, like a fool, since I never thought I would be cold, and I had come with only my shield and my shining belt. But when it was the last third of the night, and the stars had passed their height, I spoke to Odysseus, who was near me, nudging him with my elbow, and he listened at once:

486 "'Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, I shall not be among the living much longer; the cold is killing me, for I have no cloak. Some god beguiled me into coming in only a tunic, and now there is no way out.'

490 "So I spoke, and then he thought of this plan in his heart, such a man he was for counsel and for fighting. He spoke in a low voice and said to me: 'Quiet now, so that no other Achaean hears you.'

494 "He spoke, and he raised his head on his elbow and said: 'Hear me, friends. A dream from the gods came to me in my sleep. We have come too far from the ships. Someone should go and tell Agamemnon son of Atreus, shepherd of the people, in case he will send more men from the ships.'

499 "So he spoke, and Thoas son of Andraemon jumped up at once and threw off his purple cloak and ran to the ships; and I lay gladly in his cloak, until Dawn of the golden throne appeared. If only I were young like that now, and my strength firm! Then some-

one in the swineherds' farmstead would give me a cloak, for two reasons, out of kindness and out of respect for a good man. But now they dishonor me, because I wear wretched clothes on my body."

507 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Old man, that was an excellent tale you told, and you have not yet said a word out of place or without its profit. So you will not lack clothing or anything else that a hard-pressed suppliant ought to have when he comes to us, for tonight; but in the morning you will flap about in your own rags again. For we have no store of cloaks here, or tunics to change into; each man has one only. But when the dear son of Odysseus comes, he himself will give you a cloak and a tunic to wear, and send you wherever your heart and spirit bid you go."

518 So saying, he sprang up and made a bed for him near the fire, and threw on it skins of sheep and goats. There Odysseus lay down, and over him the swineherd threw a thick, large cloak which he kept by him as a change, to wear whenever some monstrous storm arose.

523 So there Odysseus slept, and the young men slept beside him. But the swineherd did not like to have his bed there, to sleep away from the swine; he got himself ready to go outside, and Odysseus was glad that he took such care of his master's goods while he was away. First he slung a sharp sword over his sturdy shoulders, then put on a very thick cloak to keep off the wind, and he took up the fleece of a large, well-fed goat, and a sharp javelin to keep off dogs and men. Then he went to lie down where the white-tusked swine slept under a hollow rock, sheltered from the North Wind.

Book 15

1 Pallas Athena went to spacious Lacedaemon, to remind the shining son of great-hearted Odysseus of his homecoming and to urge him to return. She found Telemachus and the glorious son of Nestor lying in the forecourt of renowned Menelaus. The son of Nestor was overcome by soft sleep; but sweet sleep did not hold Telemachus, for all through the immortal night anxious thoughts of his father kept him wakeful in his heart. Gray-eyed Athena stood near him and said:

10 "Telemachus, it is no longer right for you to wander far from home, leaving your possessions behind and men in your house so overbearing. Beware that they do not divide up all your possessions and eat them up, and your journey prove useless. Quickly, then, urge Menelaus, good at the war cry, to send you on your way, so that you may still find your excellent mother at home. For already her father and her brothers are urging her to marry Eurymachus, since he outdoes all the suitors in his gifts and has been raising his bride-gifts. Take care that nothing of value is carried out of the house against your will. You know what the heart in a woman's breast is like: she wants to build up the house of the man who marries her, and of her former children and her dear wedded husband, once he is dead, she no longer thinks or asks. But go yourself and put everything in the charge of whichever of the women servants seems best to you, until the gods show you a glorious bride. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart. The best of the suitors are lying in wait for you on purpose in the strait between Ithaca and rugged Samos, eager to kill you

before you reach your native land. But I do not think it will happen. Before that the earth will hold some of the suitors who devour your living. Keep your well-built ship far from the islands, and sail by night as well; and whichever of the immortals guards and protects you will send you a fair wind from astern. And when you reach the first shore of Ithaca, send your ship and all your companions on to the city, but go first of all yourself to the swineherd, who keeps your swine and is as loyal to you as ever. Spend the night there, and send him into the city to bring word to prudent Penelope that you are safe and have come back from Pylos."

43 So saying, she went away to high Olympus. And Telemachus woke the son of Nestor from sweet sleep, stirring him with a touch of his heel, and spoke to him:

46 "Wake up, Peisistratus, son of Nestor; bring the single-hoofed horses and yoke them to the chariot, so that we can be on our way."

48 Then Peisistratus, son of Nestor, answered him: "Telemachus, there is no way we can drive through the dark night, however eager we are for the road. Soon it will be dawn. Wait until the hero son of Atreus, Menelaus famed for his spear, brings gifts and sets them in the chariot, and sends us off with kind words of farewell. A guest remembers all his days the host who has shown him kindness."

56 So he spoke, and soon Dawn of the golden throne came. Menelaus, good at the war cry, came near them, risen from his bed beside fair-tressed Helen. When the dear son of Odysseus saw him, he hurried to put his shining tunic on his body and threw a great mantle over his sturdy shoulders, the hero, and went to the door; and standing beside him, Telemachus, the dear son of god-like Odysseus, said:

64 "Menelaus, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured, leader of the people, send me back now to my own native land, for my heart is

longing now to be home."

67 Then Menelaus, good at the war cry, answered him: "Telemachus, I will not keep you here a long time when you are eager to go home. I would blame any other host as well who loves beyond measure or hates beyond measure; all things are better in due measure. It is as bad to hurry a guest away who does not want to go as to hold one back who is eager to leave. You should make a guest welcome while he is with you and send him on his way when he wishes. But wait until I bring fine gifts and set them in the chariot, and you see them with your own eyes; and I will tell the women to make a meal in the hall from the plenty that is in the house. It is both honor and glory, and profit too, for travelers to dine before they set out over the wide and boundless earth. And if you want to travel through Hellas and the heart of Argos, so that I may go with you myself, I will yoke my horses for you and lead 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 two mules, or a golden cup."

86 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Menelaus, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured, leader of the people, I wish to go back now to what is ours; for when I left, I left no one behind to guard my possessions. I fear that while I search for my godlike father I may perish myself, or that some fine treasure may be lost from my halls."

92 When Menelaus, good at the war cry, heard this, he at once told his wife and the women servants to make a meal in the hall from the plenty that was in the house. And Eteoneus son of Boethous came near him, just risen from his bed, for he lived not far away; and Menelaus, good at the war cry, told him to kindle a fire and roast meat, and he heard and did not disobey. Menelaus himself went down into the fragrant storeroom, not alone: Helen went with him, and Megapenthes. When they came to where the

treasures lay, the son of Atreus took a two-handled cup and told his son Megapenthes to carry a mixing bowl of silver; and Helen stood beside the chests where her robes lay, richly embroidered, which she had made herself. Helen, noble among women, lifted out one of them and carried it, the one that was loveliest in its embroidery and the largest; it shone like a star, and it lay beneath all the others. Then they went forward through the house until they came to Telemachus, and red-haired Menelaus said to him: "Telemachus, may Zeus, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, accomplish your homecoming just as your heart desires. And of the gifts that lie stored as treasures in my house, I will give you the one that is loveliest and most precious. I will give you a mixing bowl, finely wrought; it is all of silver, and its rims are finished with gold, the work of Hephaestus. The hero Phaedimus gave it to me, the king of the Sidonians, when his house sheltered me as I came there on my way home; and I want to give it to you." So saying, the hero son of Atreus put the two-handled cup in his hand, and strong Megapenthes brought the shining mixing bowl, the silver one, and set it before him; and fair-cheeked Helen stood beside him with the robe in her hands, and she spoke and addressed him:

125 "I too give you this gift, dear child, a keepsake of Helen's hands, for your bride to wear at the time of your longed-for wedding; until then let it lie in the hall with your dear mother. And may you come home in joy to your well-built house and your own native land."

130 So saying, she put it in his hands, and he received it gladly. The hero Peisistratus took the gifts and laid them in the wagon basket, and gazed at all of them with wonder in his heart. Then red-haired Menelaus led them to the house, and they sat down on chairs and high seats. A maid brought water in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and drew up a polished table beside them. The revered

housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, and many dishes besides, giving freely of what she had. The son of Boethous carved the meat beside them and served out the portions, and the son of renowned Menelaus poured the wine. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, then Telemachus and the glorious son of Nestor yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot, and drove out of the gateway and the echoing portico. Red-haired Menelaus, son of Atreus, went after them, holding heart-cheering wine in his right hand in a golden cup, so that they might pour an offering before they went. He stood in front of the horses and, pledging them, he said:

151 "Farewell, young men, and give my greeting to Nestor, shepherd of the people; for truly he was as kind as a father to me, while we sons of the Achaeans fought at Troy."

154 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Indeed, Zeus-nurtured, we will tell him all this, just as you say, as soon as we come. And I wish that I might as surely come home to Ithaca and find Odysseus in the house, and tell him that I come from you after meeting with every kindness, and that I bring many fine treasures."

160 As he spoke, a bird flew by on the right, an eagle carrying in its talons a huge white goose, a tame one from the yard; and men and women followed shouting. The eagle came near them and darted off to the right in front of the horses. When they saw it they were glad, and the hearts in all their breasts grew warm. And Peisistratus, son of Nestor, began to speak among them:

167 "Consider now, Menelaus, Zeus-nurtured, leader of the people, whether the god has shown this sign to us two, or to you yourself."

169 So he spoke, and Menelaus, dear to Ares, pondered how he should rightly understand it and give his answer. But long-robed Helen spoke before him and said:

172 "Hear me, and I will prophesy, as the immortals put it into my heart and as I think it will be fulfilled. As this eagle came from the mountain, where his birth and his kin are, and snatched up the goose that was reared in the house, so Odysseus, after suffering many evils and wandering far, will come home and take vengeance; or he is already at home, and is sowing evil for all the suitors."

179 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "May Zeus, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, make it so; then even there, at home, I would pray to you as to a god."

182 He spoke, and he laid the whip on the horses, and they sped very quickly through the city toward the plain, eager to go. All day long they shook the yoke they bore between them. The sun set, and all the ways grew dark. They came to Pherae, to the house of Diocles, son of Ortilochus, whom Alpheus had fathered. There they spent the night, and he set before them the gifts due to guests.

189 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, they yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot, and drove out of the gateway and the echoing portico. He touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew on not unwillingly. Soon after that they reached the steep citadel of Pylos, and then Telemachus said to the son of Nestor:

195 "Son of Nestor, will you promise me something and do it, as I ask? We claim to be guest-friends from of old because of our fathers' friendship, and we are of the same age as well; and this journey will make us still more of one mind. Do not take me past my ship, Zeus-nurtured, but leave me there, or the old man may keep me in his house against my will in his eagerness to show me kindness; and I must get home more quickly."

202 So he spoke, and the son of Nestor took counsel with his heart how he might rightly promise this and do it. And as he thought it over, this seemed the better way. He turned the horses

toward the swift ship and the shore of the sea, and 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 he urged him on, and his words had wings:

209 "Go aboard now, quickly, and order all your companions aboard, before I reach home and tell the old man. For I know this well in my mind and in my heart: so overbearing is his spirit that he will not let you go; he will come here himself to call you, and I do not think he will go back without you; for he will be very angry all the same."

215 So saying, he drove the fine-maned horses back to the city of the Pylians and quickly reached the house. And Telemachus urged his companions and gave his orders: "Put the gear in order in the black ship, companions, and let us go aboard ourselves, so that we can be on our way."

220 So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. Quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks.

222 So he was busy with this, and praying, and sacrificing to Athena by the stern of the ship, when a man came near him from a far country, a fugitive from Argos because he had killed a man, a seer. By descent he was of the line of Melampus, who long ago had lived in Pylos, mother of flocks, a rich man among the Pylians, living in a house far above the rest. But then he had come to the land of other men, fleeing his own country and great-hearted Neleus, the lordliest of living men, who had held his many possessions by force for a full year. All that time Melampus lay bound in hard bonds in the halls of Phylacus, suffering bitter pains for the sake of Neleus's daughter and the heavy folly that the goddess, the dread Erinys, had laid on his mind. But he escaped his fate 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 the land of other

men, to horse-pasturing Argos; for there it was fated for him to live, ruling over many Argives. There he married a wife and built a high-roofed house, and fathered Antiphates and Mantius, two strong sons. Antiphates fathered great-hearted Oecles, and Oecles Amphiaraus, rouser of hosts, whom Zeus who holds the aegis and Apollo loved with all their hearts, with every kind of love; but he did not reach the threshold of old age, for he died at Thebes because of gifts given to a woman. His sons were Alcmaeon and Amphilochus. And Mantius fathered Polypheides and Cleitus; but Cleitus was carried off by Dawn of the golden throne, for his beauty, so that he might live among the immortals. And Apollo made high-hearted Polypheides a seer, far the best of mortals, once Amphiaraus was dead. He moved away to Hyperesia in anger against his father, and there he lived and prophesied for all mortals.

256 It was his son who came now, and his name was Theoclymenus. He stood beside Telemachus and found him pouring offerings and praying by the swift black ship, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

260 "Friend, since I find you sacrificing in this place, I beg you by these offerings and the god, and then by your own head and the heads of the companions who follow you, tell me truly what I ask, and hide nothing: Who are you, and where are you from? Where is your city, and where are your parents?" Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Then I will tell you everything truly, stranger. I am 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 have taken my companions and a black ship and come to learn news of my father, who has been gone so long."

271 Then Theoclymenus, godlike in looks, said to him: "So I too am away from my country, because I killed a man of my own tribe.

He has many brothers and kinsmen in horse-pasturing Argos, and they have great power among the Achaeans. To escape death and black fate at their hands I am a fugitive, since it is my lot now to wander among men. But take me aboard your ship, since I come to you a fugitive and a suppliant, so that they do not kill me; for I think they are after me."

279 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Since you want to come, I will certainly not drive you from my well-balanced ship. Come with us; there at home you will be made welcome with whatever we have."

282 So saying, he took the bronze spear from him and laid it along the deck of the curved ship, and went aboard the seafaring ship himself. He sat down in the stern and seated Theoclymenus beside him; and they loosed the stern cables. Telemachus urged his companions and ordered them to lay hold of the tackle, and they quickly obeyed. They raised the mast of fir, set it in the hollow socket, made it fast with the forestays, and hauled up the white sails with ropes of twisted oxhide. Gray-eyed Athena sent them a favoring wind, blowing hard through the upper air, so that the ship might finish her run over the salt water of the sea as fast as she could. They passed by Cruni and Chalcis of the lovely streams.

296 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 Telemachus steered for the sharp islands, wondering whether he would escape death or be taken.

301 Meanwhile, in the hut, Odysseus and the noble swineherd were having supper, and the other men had supper with them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, Odysseus spoke among them, testing the swineherd, to see whether he would still treat him kindly and ask him to stay there at the farmstead, or would send him off to the city:

307 "Hear me now, Eumaeus, and all you other companions. In the morning I want to go off to the city to beg, so as not to wear out you and your companions. But give me good advice, and send a good guide with me to take me there. Then I will wander through the city on my own, since I must, in case someone will hold out a cup and a crust to me. And I could go to the house of godlike Odysseus and bring news to prudent Penelope, and mingle with the overbearing suitors, in case they would give me a meal, since they have good things beyond counting. I could quickly do good service among them, whatever they wanted. For I will tell you, and you mark it and listen to me: by the favor of Hermes the guide, who gives grace and glory to the work of all men, no other mortal could rival me in serving, at building a fire well and splitting dry wood, at carving and roasting and pouring wine, all the things that lesser men do in the service of their betters."

325 Deeply troubled, you said to him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Ah, stranger, why has this thought come into your mind? You must be utterly set on dying there, if you mean to go into the crowd of the suitors, whose insolence and violence reach the iron sky. Their servants are not men like you; they are young, well dressed in cloaks and tunics, their hair and their handsome faces always glossy with oil, the ones who wait on them; and the polished tables are loaded with bread and meat and wine. No, stay here. No one is troubled by your being here, neither I nor any of the companions I have. And when the dear son of Odysseus comes, he will dress you in a cloak and a tunic, and send you wherever your heart and spirit bid you go."

340 Then much-enduring noble Odysseus answered him: "Eumaeus, may you be as dear to father Zeus as you are to me, since you have put an end to my wandering and my dreadful misery. There is nothing worse for mortals than roaming; for the sake of the cursed belly men endure evil sorrows, whoever is visited by

wandering and pain and grief. But now, since you keep 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 on the threshold of old age when he went: are they still alive somewhere under the rays of the sun, or are they dead already and in the house of Hades?"

351 Then the swineherd, leader of men, said to him: "Then I will tell you everything truly, stranger. Laertes is still alive, but he prays to Zeus always that the life may waste away from his limbs in his halls. For he grieves terribly for his son, who is gone, and for his wise wedded wife, whose death grieved him most of all and brought him to old age before his time. She died of grief for her renowned son, a miserable death; may no one die so who lives here as my friend and is kind to me! So long as she was alive, sorrowful as she was, I was glad to ask and inquire after her, because she had brought me up herself with long-robed Ctimene, her stately daughter, the youngest of her children. I was brought up with her, and she honored me only a little less. But when we both reached the lovely age of youth, they gave her in marriage to Same and got gifts beyond counting, and her mother dressed me in a cloak and a tunic, very fine clothes, gave me sandals for my feet, and sent me off to the fields; and she loved me the more in her heart. Now I go without all that; but the blessed gods prosper the work I stay at, and from it I have eaten and drunk and given to those who deserve respect. But from my mistress there is no kindness to be heard, neither word nor deed, since evil has fallen on the house, these overbearing men; and servants badly want to speak with their mistress face to face and hear all the news, and to eat and drink there, and then carry something back to the fields as well, such things as always warm a servant's heart."

380 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Ah! So you were only a little boy, Eumaeus, swineherd, when you were carried far

from your country and your parents. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: was the city of wide streets sacked, where your father and your lady mother lived? Or were you alone with the sheep or the cattle, when enemies took you in their ships and sold you to this man's house, and he paid a good price?"

389 Then the swineherd, leader of men, said to him: "Stranger, since you ask and question me about this, listen now in silence and enjoy it, and sit and drink your wine. These nights are endless. There is time to sleep, and there is time to take pleasure in listening; and you need not lie down before it is time. Too much sleep is a weariness. As for the others, whoever's heart and spirit bid him, let him go out and sleep; and at dawn let him eat his breakfast and go with our master's swine. But let us two, drinking and feasting in the hut, take our pleasure in each other's bitter sorrows as we remember them; for afterward a man takes pleasure even in his pains, one who has suffered very much and wandered very far. So I will tell you what you ask and question me about.

403 "There is an island called Syrie, if you have heard of it, above Ortygia, where the sun turns. It is not so very thickly peopled, but it is good land, good for cattle, good for sheep, full of wine, rich in wheat. Famine never comes upon its people, nor does any other hateful sickness fall on wretched mortals there; but when the tribes of men grow old throughout the city, Apollo of the silver bow comes with Artemis and attacks 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, a man like the immortals.

415 "There came Phoenicians, men famed for ships, greedy knaves, bringing countless trinkets in their black ship. Now in my father's house there was a Phoenician woman, beautiful and tall and skilled in glorious handiwork; and the wily Phoenicians beguiled her. First, as she was washing clothes, one of them lay

with her by the hollow ship in love, which beguiles the minds of women, even one who is good. Then he asked her who she was and where she came from, and she at once pointed out her father's high-roofed house:

425 "'I claim to come from Sidon, rich in bronze, and I am the daughter of Arybas, who had wealth in streams. But Taphian pirates seized me as I was coming in from the fields, and brought me here and sold me to this man's house, and he paid a good price.'

430 "Then the man who had lain with her in secret said to her: 'Would you come home again with us now, so that you may see your father's and mother's high-roofed house, and see them too? For they are still alive and are called rich.'

434 "Then the woman said to him in answer: 'That could be, if you sailors would pledge me by an oath to take me home unharmed.'

437 "So she spoke, and they all swore as she told them. And when they had sworn and finished the oath, the woman spoke among them again and answered:

440 "'Quiet now, and let none of your companions speak a word to me if he meets me in the street or at the spring, in case someone goes to the house and tells the old man, and he suspects, and binds me in hard bonds, and plans your destruction. Keep the word in your minds, and hurry on the buying of your cargo. But when the ship is loaded with goods, let a message come to me at the house quickly; for I will bring gold too, whatever comes to my hand. And I would gladly give you another thing for my passage. I am nurse in the halls to the child of my good master, a clever little boy who runs out of doors with me. I could bring him aboard your ship, and he would fetch you a huge price, wherever you sold him among men of strange speech.'

454 "So saying, she went back to the beautiful house. They stayed with us there a whole year, and gathered goods in plenty in

their hollow ship by trading. But when the hollow ship was loaded for their going, they sent a messenger to tell the woman. There came a cunning man to my father's house with a golden necklace strung here and there with amber beads. In the hall the maids and my lady mother handled it and gazed at it, and offered him a price; and he nodded to the woman in silence. Having nodded, he went off to the hollow ship, and she took me by the hand and led me out of the house. In the forecourt she found cups and tables left by the men who had feasted there, my father's attendants. They had gone out to the council, to the people's place of debate; and at once she 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. Walking quickly, we came to the famous harbor, where the swift ship of the Phoenician men lay. Then they went aboard and sailed over the watery ways, taking the two of us aboard, and Zeus sent a wind behind them. For six days we sailed on, night and day alike; but when Zeus, son of Cronus, brought on the seventh day, then arrow-showering Artemis struck the woman, and she fell into the hold with a thud, like a sea tern. They threw her overboard to become prey for the seals and the fish; and I was left behind, grieving at heart. The wind and the water carried them on and brought them to Ithaca, where Laertes bought me with his own possessions. That is how I came to see this land with my eyes." Then Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, answered him: "Eumaeus, truly you have stirred the heart in my breast deeply with all you have told me, all the pains you have suffered in your heart. But for you, at least, Zeus has set good beside the evil, since after many toils you came to the house of a kind man, who gives you food and drink generously, and you live a good life; while I have come here wandering through many cities of men."

493 So they spoke with one another, and they slept, not for long but only a little while; for soon came Dawn of the lovely

throne. Near the shore Telemachus's companions loosed the sails and quickly took down the mast, and rowed the ship forward to her moorings. They threw out the anchor stones and made the stern cables fast, and they went ashore themselves on the beach where the waves break, and made their breakfast ready and mixed the sparkling wine. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, thoughtful Telemachus began to speak among them:

503 "Row the black ship on to the city now; I will go out to the fields and the herdsmen, and in the evening, when I have seen my lands, I will come down to the city. In the morning I will set before you a feast as the wage for your voyage, a good meal of meat and sweet wine."

508 Then Theoclymenus, godlike in looks, said to him: "And where am I to go, dear child? To whose house shall I go, of the men who rule over rocky Ithaca? Shall I go straight to your mother's house, and yours?"

512 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "At another time I would tell you to come to our house, for there is no lack of welcome for a guest; but it would be worse for you now, since I will not be there, and my mother will not see you. She does not often show herself to the suitors in the house, but weaves at her loom in an upper room, away from them. But I will tell you of another man whose house you might go to: Eurymachus, the glorious son of wise Polybus, whom the men of Ithaca now look on as a god. For he is far the best man of them, and the most eager to marry my mother and to have the honors of Odysseus. But Olympian Zeus, who dwells in the upper air, knows whether before the wedding he will bring on them the day of evil."

525 As he spoke, a bird flew by on the right, a falcon, the swift messenger of Apollo. In its talons it held a dove and was plucking it, and it shed the feathers on the ground midway between the

ship and Telemachus himself. Then Theoclymenus called him aside from his companions, and clasped his hand, and spoke and addressed him:

531 "Telemachus, it was not without a god that the bird flew by on the right; I knew when I saw it, face to face, that it was a bird of omen. There is no other family more kingly than yours in the land of Ithaca; you will always have the power." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Stranger, if only this word of yours might be fulfilled! Then you would soon know my friendship and many gifts from me, so that anyone who met you would call you blessed."

539 He spoke, and he called to Peiraeus, his trusted companion: "Peiraeus, son of Clytius, of all my companions who went with me to Pylos you are the one who does as I say in other things; and now, please, take this stranger to your house and treat him kindly and honor him until I come."

544 Then Peiraeus, famed for his spear, answered him: "Telemachus, even if you were to stay there a long time, I will look after him, and he will not lack for welcome."

547 So saying, he went aboard the ship and ordered his companions to go aboard themselves and loose the stern cables; and quickly they went aboard and sat down at the oarlocks. Telemachus bound his fine sandals under his feet and took from the deck of the ship his strong spear, tipped with sharp bronze; and they loosed the stern cables. They pushed off and sailed for the city, as Telemachus had ordered, the dear son of godlike Odysseus; and his feet carried him quickly on, striding forward, until he reached the farmyard where his swine were, countless, among whom the good swineherd slept, loyal of heart to his masters.

Book 16

1 Meanwhile, in the hut, Odysseus and the noble swineherd had kindled a fire at dawn and were making breakfast ready, and they had sent the herdsmen out with the droves of swine. The loud-barking dogs fawned around Telemachus and did not bark as he came near. Noble Odysseus noticed the dogs fawning, and the sound of footsteps came to him, and at once he spoke to Eumaeus, and his words had wings:

8 "Eumaeus, surely some companion of yours is coming here, or someone else you know, since the dogs are not barking but fawning around him; and I hear the tread of feet."

11 He had not yet finished speaking when his own dear son stood in the doorway. The swineherd sprang up in amazement, and the vessels he had been busy with, mixing the sparkling wine, fell from his hands. He went to meet his master, and he kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes and both his hands, and a warm tear fell from him. As a father, full of love, welcomes his son who comes home from a far country in the tenth year, his only son, born late, for whom he has endured many sorrows, so the noble swineherd threw his arms around Telemachus, godlike in looks, and kissed him all over, as one escaped from death; and weeping, he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

23 "You have come, Telemachus, sweet light of my eyes! I thought I would never see you again, when you had gone off in the ship to Pylos. But come in now, dear child, so that I may delight my heart in looking at you, home again just now from abroad. For you do not often come out to the fields and the herdsmen; you stay in

the town. So it has pleased your heart, I suppose, to look on that ruinous crowd, the suitors." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "It shall be as you say, old father. It is for your sake that I have come here, to see you with my eyes and to hear from you whether my mother still stays in the halls, or whether some other man has married her by now, and the bed of Odysseus lies empty of sleepers, covered with foul cobwebs."

36 Then the swineherd, leader of men, said to him: "She stays indeed, with a heart that endures, in your halls, and her nights and days waste away in misery as she weeps." So saying, he took the bronze spear from him; and Telemachus went inside and stepped over the stone threshold. As he came in, his father Odysseus rose to give him his seat; but Telemachus, from the other side, held him back and said:

44 "Sit, stranger; we will find a seat somewhere else in our farmstead, and here is the man who will set one for me."

46 So he spoke, and Odysseus went back and sat down again; and for Telemachus the swineherd heaped up green brushwood and laid a fleece on top, and there the dear son of Odysseus sat down. The swineherd set before them platters of roast meat, which they had left over from eating the day before, and quickly heaped bread in baskets, and in a wooden bowl he mixed honey-sweet wine; and he himself sat down facing godlike Odysseus. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, then Telemachus spoke to the noble swineherd:

57 "Old father, where has this stranger come to you from? How did sailors bring him to Ithaca? Who did they say they were? For I do not suppose he came here on foot."

60 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Then I will tell you all the truth, child. He claims to come of a family from wide Crete, and he says he has roamed through many cities of

men in his wanderings; for that is the thread a god has spun for him. Now he has run away from a ship of Thesprotian men and come to my farmstead, and I will put him in your hands. Do as you wish; he claims to be your suppliant."

68 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Eumaeus, this word you have spoken truly wounds my heart. How am I to receive the stranger in my house? I am young myself, and do not yet trust my hands to defend me against a man who starts a quarrel. And my mother's heart is divided in her breast, whether to stay here with me and keep the house, respecting her husband's bed and the voice of the people, or to go off now with whoever is best of the Achaeans who court her in the halls and offers the most gifts. But since the stranger has come to your house, I will dress him in a cloak and a 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 go. Or if you wish, keep him here at the farmstead and look after him; I will send clothes here, and all the food he needs to eat, so that he will not be a burden on you and your companions. But I would not let him go there among the suitors, for their insolence is far too reckless; they might mock him, and that would be a dreadful grief to me. It is hard for one man, however mighty, to do anything among so many, since they are far stronger." Then much-enduring noble Odysseus said to him: "Friend, since it is surely right for me too to answer, it truly tears my heart to hear what you say, the reckless things the suitors are contriving in the halls, against your will, a man such as you are. Tell me, do you submit to them willingly, or do the people throughout the land hate you, following the voice of a god? Or do you blame your brothers, whom a man trusts 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 a stranger cut my head from my shoul-

ders at once, if I did not become the bane of every one of them, when I came to the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes. And if they overpowered me by their numbers, alone as I was, I would rather die, killed in my own halls, than go on watching these shameful deeds forever, strangers being knocked about and men dragging the women servants shamefully through the beautiful house, and the wine drawn off and wasted, and men eating up the bread, wantonly, without end, in a business that is never finished."

112 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Then I will tell you everything truly, stranger. It is not that all the people hate me and are angry with me, nor do I blame my brothers, whom a man trusts to fight beside him, even when a great quarrel arises. For this is how the son of Cronus has made our family a line of only sons: Arceisius fathered one son only, Laertes, and his father fathered one son only, Odysseus; and Odysseus fathered only me, and left me in his halls and had no joy of me. So now there are enemies beyond counting in the house. For all the nobles who rule over the islands, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus, and all who lord it over rocky Ithaca, so many are courting my mother and wearing out my house. And she neither refuses the hateful marriage nor can she bring it to an end; and they eat up my house and waste it, and soon they will destroy me too. But these things lie on the knees of the gods. Old father, you go quickly and tell sensible Penelope that I am safe and have come back from Pylos. I will stay here, and you come back here once you have told her alone; let none of the other Achaeans learn of it, for there are many who are plotting evil against me."

135 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "I understand, I follow; you are giving these orders to a man who has sense. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: shall I go the same way as a messenger to Laertes too, poor man? Until now, though he grieved greatly for Odysseus, he would watch over the work, and eat and

drink with the servants in the house, whenever the heart in his breast bid him. But now, ever since you went off in the ship to Pylos, they say he has not eaten or drunk as he used to, nor looked to the work; he sits groaning and lamenting and weeping, and the flesh wastes away on his bones."

146 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "That is a sorrier thing; but still we will let him be, though it grieves us. For if mortals could have everything for the choosing, first of all we would choose my father's day of return. No, when you have given your message, come back, and do not wander through the fields to find him. But tell my mother to send the housekeeper, her attendant, as quickly as she can, in secret; she could take the news to the old man."

154 He spoke, and he sent the swineherd off; and he took his sandals in his hands, bound them under his feet, and set off for the city. But Athena did not fail to notice Eumaeus the swineherd leaving the farmstead. She came near, and now she was like a woman, beautiful and tall and skilled in glorious handiwork. She stood by the doorway of the hut, visible to Odysseus; but Telemachus did not see her before him or notice her, for the gods do not show themselves plainly to everyone. But Odysseus saw her, and the dogs did, and they did not bark; whimpering, they shrank away in fear to the other side of the farmstead. She nodded with her brows, and noble Odysseus understood, and he went out of the hut past the great wall of the yard and stood before her; and Athena said to him:

167 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, now is the time to tell your son, and hide nothing, so that the two of you may plan death and doom for the suitors and go to the famous city. I myself will not be away from you for long, for I am eager for the fight."

172 She spoke, and Athena touched him with her golden wand. First she put a freshly washed mantle and a tunic about his chest, and she made him taller and younger. His skin was dark again, his cheeks filled out, and the beard about his chin turned black. When she had done this, she went away again; and Odysseus went into the hut. His dear son was astonished at him, and he turned his eyes aside in fear that it might be a god, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

181 "Stranger, you look different now from before; you have other clothes on, and your skin is not the same. Surely you are one of the gods who hold the wide sky. Be gracious, so that we may give you pleasing sacrifices and golden gifts, finely wrought; and spare us!"

186 Then much-enduring noble Odysseus answered him: "I am no god; why do you liken me to the immortals? I am your father, for whose sake you have groaned and suffered many pains, submitting to the violence of men."

190 So saying, he kissed his son, and let a tear fall down his cheeks to the ground; until then he had held back his tears, steadfastly, all the time. But Telemachus, since he could not yet believe that this was his father, answered him again and said:

194 "You are not Odysseus, my father; some god is beguiling me, so that I may groan and lament still more. For no mortal man could contrive these things by his own wit, unless a god himself came to him and easily, at his own will, made him young or old. Only a moment ago you were an old man and dressed in shabby clothes; and now you are like the gods who hold the wide sky."

201 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Telemachus, it is not right for you to wonder beyond measure at your dear father, now that he is home, or to be so amazed. No other Odysseus will ever come here; it is I, such as you see me, who have suffered evils and wandered far and come in the twentieth year to my native

land. As for this, it is the work of Athena, the driver of spoil, who makes me what she will, for she can: now like a beggar, and now again like a young man with fine clothes on his body. It is easy for the gods who hold the wide sky both to glorify a mortal man and to bring him low."

213 So saying, he sat down; and Telemachus threw his arms around his noble father and wept, shedding tears, and in both of them rose the longing to lament. They cried aloud, more shrilly than birds, sea eagles or vultures with crooked talons, whose young the country people have taken from the nest before they could fly: so pitifully did they let the tears fall from under their brows. And the light of the sun would have gone down on their weeping, if Telemachus had not quickly spoken to his father:

222 "In what kind of ship, dear father, did sailors bring you here to Ithaca? Who did they say they were? For I do not suppose you came here on foot." Then much-enduring noble Odysseus said to him: "Then I will tell you the truth, child. The Phaeacians brought me, men famed for ships, who give escort to other men too, whoever comes to them. They carried me asleep over the sea in a swift ship and set me down in Ithaca, and gave me glorious gifts, bronze and gold in plenty and woven clothing. These lie in caves by the will of the gods. And now I have come here at Athena's bidding, so that we may plan the killing of our enemies. But come, count over the suitors for me and tell me, so that I may know how many there are and what men they are; and then I will consider in my excellent heart and decide whether we two will be able to stand against them alone, without others, or whether we should look for others too." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Father, I have always heard of your great fame, that you were a spearman with your hands and wise in counsel. But what you have said is far too much; I am amazed. Two men could never fight against many, and strong ones. The suitors are not just ten, or twice ten, but many

more; you will soon learn their number here. From Dulichium there are fifty-two picked young men, and six serving men go with them; from Same there are twenty-four men; from Zacynthus there are twenty young Achaeans; and from Ithaca itself twelve, all of them the best; and with them is Medon the herald, and the god-like bard, and two attendants skilled in carving. If we meet all these men inside, I fear you may come home to a bitter and terrible revenge for their violence. But you, if you can think of any helper, consider who might help us both with a willing heart."

258 Then much-enduring noble Odysseus said to him: "Then I will tell you, and you mark it and listen to me: consider whether Athena, with father Zeus, will be enough for us two, or whether I should think of some other helper."

262 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Good helpers indeed, these two you name, though they sit high up in the clouds; they rule over other men and over the immortal gods."

266 Then much-enduring noble Odysseus said to him: "Those two will not stay long apart from the fierce fighting, when the strength of Ares is put to the test between the suitors and us in my halls. But for now, go home at the break of dawn, and mix with the overbearing suitors. The swineherd will bring me to the city later, looking like a wretched beggar and an old man. If they treat me with dishonor in the house, let the dear heart in your breast endure it while I suffer ill treatment, even if they drag me by the feet through the house to the door, or throw things at me and strike me; you look on and bear it. But do tell them to stop their folly, persuading them with gentle words; they will not listen to you at all, for their day of doom is standing at their side. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart: when Athena, rich in counsel, puts it in my mind, I will nod to you with my head; and when you see it, take all the weapons of war that lie in the halls and carry them up and put them away in the innermost corner of

the high storeroom, every one. And when the suitors miss them and ask you about them, put them off with soft words:

288 "'I have put them away out of the smoke, since they no longer look like the arms Odysseus left behind long ago when he went to Troy; they are all fouled, as far as the breath of the fire has reached. And besides, the son of Cronus has put this greater fear into my mind, that you might get drunk and start a quarrel among yourselves and wound one another, and shame the feast and your courting; for iron of itself draws a man on.' But for the two of us alone leave two swords and two spears, and two oxhide shields for our hands to take up, so that we can rush to them and snatch them up; and then Pallas Athena and Zeus the counselor will beguile the suitors' minds. And I will 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 at home. Do not let Laertes know it, or the swineherd, or anyone of the household, or Penelope herself; but let you and me alone find out the mind of the women. And we might test some of the men servants too, to see who among them honors us and fears us in his heart, and who has no regard for us and dishonors you, such a man as you are."

308 His shining son answered him and said: "Father, you will come to know my spirit later on, I think; there is no slackness of mind in me. But I do not think this plan will be to the profit of either of us, and I ask you to consider. You will go a long way round, testing each man, going about the farms; while in the halls the suitors at their ease devour your possessions insolently, and there is no sparing. No, I urge you to find out about the women, which of them dishonor you and which are guiltless. But as for the men, I would not want us to go testing them in the farmsteads; let us see to that later, if you truly know some sign from Zeus who holds the aegis."

321 So they spoke with one another. Meanwhile the well-built ship that had brought Telemachus and all his companions from Pylos put in at Ithaca. When they came inside the deep harbor, they hauled the black ship up on the land, and proud attendants carried off their gear, and they took the beautiful gifts at once to the house of Clytius. And they sent a herald ahead to the house of Odysseus to bring word to prudent Penelope that Telemachus was out in the fields and had told them to sail the ship on to the city, so that the stately queen would not be afraid in her heart and shed tender tears. The herald and the noble swineherd met, on the same errand, to give the news to the lady. When they came to the house of the godlike king, the herald stood among the women servants and said: "Your dear son has come back, my queen."

338 But the swineherd came up close to Penelope and told her everything her dear son had bidden him say. And when he had told her all he was charged with, he went off to his swine and left the courtyard and the hall.

342 The suitors were vexed and downcast in their hearts. They went out of the hall past the great wall of the courtyard and sat down there in front of the gates. And Eurymachus son of Polybus began to speak among them:

346 "Friends, this is a great deed that Telemachus has carried through so insolently, this voyage; we said he would never accomplish it. But come, let us launch a black ship, the best there is, and gather seamen to row her, who can go quickly and tell the others to come home at once."

351 He had not yet finished speaking when Amphinomus, turning in his place, saw a ship inside the deep harbor, and men taking in the sails and holding the oars in their hands. He laughed out pleasantly and said to his companions:

355 "Let us not send any message now; they are here already. Either some god told them, or they saw the ship for themselves as

she went by, and could not catch her."

358 So he spoke, and they rose and went to the shore of the sea, and quickly they hauled the black ship up on the land, and proud attendants carried off their gear. Then they went all together to the place of assembly, and they let no one else, young or old, sit with them. And Antinous son of Eupeithes spoke among them:

364 "Ah! How the gods have saved this man from harm! By day our lookouts sat on the windy heights, one relieving another, all the time; and at sunset we never spent a night on the land, but sailed the sea in our swift ship and waited for bright Dawn, lying in wait for Telemachus, to seize him and destroy him. But meanwhile some god has brought him home. Let us plan a miserable death for Telemachus here, and let him not escape us; for I do not think that while he lives this business of ours will ever be accomplished. He himself is skilled in counsel and in thought, and the people no longer show us favor at all. Come, before he gathers the Achaeans to the assembly—for I do not think he will let things go; he will rage at us, and he will stand up and tell them all how we plotted sheer murder against him and did not catch him; and they will not praise us when they hear of these evil deeds. Let us take care they do not do us some harm and drive us out of our country, and we have to go to the land of strangers. Let us strike first and seize him in the fields far from the city, or on the road; and let us keep his livelihood and his possessions ourselves, dividing them 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 want him to live and keep all his father's goods, then let us no longer gather here and devour his heart-pleasing goods in plenty, but let each man court her from his own hall and seek her with bride-gifts; and then she would marry the one who offers the most and comes as her destined husband."

393 So he spoke, and they all fell silent and were still. And Amphinomus spoke to them and addressed them, the shining son of lord Nisus, son of Aretias, who led the suitors from Dulichium, rich in wheat and grassy, and who pleased Penelope most with his words, for he had a good heart. With good intent he spoke to them and said:

400 "Friends, I for one would not want to kill Telemachus; it is a dreadful thing to kill one of royal blood. Let us first ask the will of the gods. If the decrees of great Zeus approve, I will kill him myself and urge all the others on; but if the gods turn us from it, I tell you to stop."

406 So Amphinomus spoke, and his words pleased them. At once they rose and went to the house of Odysseus, and when they came they sat down on the polished chairs.

409 Then prudent Penelope had another thought: to show herself to the suitors in their overweening insolence. For she had heard of the death they planned for her son in the halls; the herald Medon had told her, who had overheard their plans. She went to the hall with her women attendants. When she, noble among women, had come to the suitors, she stood beside a pillar of the well-built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks; and she rebuked Antinous, and spoke and addressed him:

418 "Antinous, insolent man, contriver of evil, they say that in the land of Ithaca you are the best of those your age in counsel and in speech; but you were never that. Madman, why are you weaving death and doom for Telemachus, and pay no heed to suppliants, for whom Zeus is witness? It is unholy to weave evil for one another. Do you not know how your father came here as a fugitive, in fear of the people? They were very angry with him, because he had joined Taphian pirates and harried the Thesprotians, who were our allies. They wanted to kill him and tear the dear heart out of him, and eat up all his livelihood, rich

and plentiful; but Odysseus held them back and stopped them, eager as they were. Now it is his house you are eating up without paying, his wife you are courting, his son you are trying to kill, and me you grieve bitterly. I tell you to stop, and to tell the others to stop."

434 Then Eurymachus son of Polybus answered her: "Daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, take heart; do not let these things trouble your mind. That man does not exist and never will, nor will he ever be born, who will lay hands on Telemachus, your son, so long as I am alive and see the light on the earth. For I will tell you this, and it will surely be done: his black blood would at once stream around my spear. For Odysseus, sacker of cities, often set me on his knees too, and 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; from the gods there is no escaping it."

448 So he spoke to encourage her, but he himself was plotting the boy's death. She went up to her shining upper rooms, and wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

452 In the evening the noble swineherd came back to Odysseus and his son. They were busy making supper ready, having sacrificed a yearling pig. But Athena came near Odysseus, son of Laertes, struck him with her wand and made him an old man again, and dressed him in wretched clothes, so that the swineherd would not recognize him when he saw him face to face, and go to tell sensible Penelope, unable to keep it in his heart. And Telemachus spoke to him first: "You have come, noble Eumaeus. What news is there in the city? Are the proud suitors back home already from their ambush, or are they still watching for me on my way home?"

464 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "I did not care to ask or inquire about that as I went down through the town; my heart bid me give my message as quickly as I could and come back here. But a swift messenger from your companions fell in with me, a herald, who was the first to tell the news to your mother. And this other thing I know, for I saw it with my own eyes. I was already above the city, where the hill of Hermes is, on my way back, when I saw a swift ship coming down into our harbor. There were many men in her, and she was loaded with shields and two-edged spears; and I thought it was they, but I do not know."

476 So he spoke, and the sacred strength of Telemachus smiled, glancing at his father, but he kept out of the swineherd's sight.

478 When they had finished their work and made the meal ready, they feasted, and their hearts lacked nothing of the fair-shared feast. But when they had put from them the desire for drink and food, they thought of rest and took the gift of sleep.

Book 17

1 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, bound his fine sandals under his feet and took up the strong spear that fitted his grip, eager to be off to the city; and he spoke to his swineherd:

6 "Old father, I am going to the city so that my mother may see me; for I do not think she will stop her hateful weeping and her tearful lamenting until she sees me with her own eyes. But this is what I want you to do. Take this unlucky stranger to the city, so that he can beg his dinner there; whoever wants to will give him a crust and a cupful. I cannot possibly look after every man in the world, with the sorrows I have in my own heart. If the stranger is very angry at this, it will be the worse for him. I like to speak the truth."

16 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Friend, I have no wish to be kept here myself. A beggar does better to beg his dinner in the city than in the fields; whoever wants to will give to me. I am past the age for staying on at a farm and obeying a master in everything he orders. Go on, then. This man you are giving the order to will take me, as soon as I have warmed myself at the fire and there is some heat in the sun. These clothes of mine are terribly poor, and I am afraid the morning frost may get the better of me; and you say the city is a long way off."

26 So he spoke, and Telemachus strode out through the farmyard, moving fast on his feet and sowing evil for the suitors. When he reached the stately house, he carried his spear in and stood it

against a tall pillar, and went on inside himself and crossed the stone threshold.

31 The nurse Eurycleia was far the first to see him, as she was spreading fleeces over the inlaid chairs, and she burst into tears and came straight to him; and around him the other maids of steadfast Odysseus gathered, and they kissed his head and his shoulders in welcome.

36 Then prudent Penelope came out of her chamber, looking like Artemis or golden Aphrodite, and weeping she threw her arms around her dear son and kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes, and through her sobs she spoke to him, and her words had wings:

41 "You have come, Telemachus, sweet light of my eyes! I thought I would never see you again, once you had gone off in a ship to Pylos, secretly, against my will, after news of your dear father. But come, tell me what sight of him you met with." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mother, do not rouse my grief, do not stir up the heart in my breast, when I have only just escaped sheer destruction. Instead, bathe, put clean clothes on your body, go up to the upper rooms with your women, and vow to all the gods that you will offer them perfect hecatombs, if ever Zeus brings about a day of requital. I am going to the place of assembly to call for a stranger who came with me from there on my way home. I sent him on ahead with my godlike companions and told Peiraeus to take him home and look after him kindly and do him honor until I came."

57 So he spoke, and her word stayed without wings. She bathed, put clean clothes on her body, and vowed to all the gods that she would offer them perfect hecatombs, if ever Zeus brought about a day of requital.

61 Telemachus went out through the hall holding his spear, and two swift hounds went with him. Athena shed a wondrous grace

upon him, and all the people gazed at him as he came. The proud suitors gathered around him, with fair words on their lips, but deep in their hearts they brooded on evil. He kept clear of their great crowd and went and sat down where Mentor sat, and Antiphus and Halitherses, who had been his father's companions from the first; and they questioned him about everything. Then Peiraeus, famed for his spear, came up to them, bringing the stranger through the city to the place of assembly; and Telemachus did not keep away from the stranger for long, but went and stood beside him. Peiraeus spoke first:

75 "Telemachus, send some women to my house quickly, so that I can send you the gifts Menelaus gave you."

77 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Peiraeus, we do not know how these things will turn out. If the proud suitors kill me secretly in the halls and divide all my father's goods among them, I would rather you kept the gifts and enjoyed them yourself than any of these men. But if I sow death and doom for them, then bring them to my house, and you will be glad to bring them and I glad to have them."

84 So he spoke, and led the much-tried stranger to the house. When they reached the stately house, they laid their cloaks on the chairs and seats, and stepped into the polished bathtubs and bathed. When the maids had bathed them and rubbed them with oil and put fleecy cloaks and tunics about them, they stepped out of the tubs and sat down on chairs. A maid brought water in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it over a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and drew up a polished table beside them. The revered housekeeper brought bread and set it before them, and many dishes besides, giving freely of what she had. His mother sat facing them by the doorpost of the hall, leaning back in a chair and twirling fine yarn on a spindle. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them. But when they had put

from them the desire for drink and food, prudent Penelope began to speak:

101 "Telemachus, I will go up to my upper room and lie down on my bed, which has become a bed of groaning for me, always wet with my tears, ever since Odysseus went off with the sons of Atreus to Ilion. And you could not bring yourself, before the proud suitors come into this house, to tell me plainly about your father's return, if you have heard of it anywhere."

107 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Then I will tell you the truth, Mother. We went to Pylos, to Nestor, shepherd of the people. He received me in his lofty house and made me kindly welcome, as a father welcomes his own son who has just come home after a long time from far away; so kindly did he care for me, he and his glorious sons. But of steadfast Odysseus, living or dead, he said he had never heard a word from any man on earth. He sent me on with horses and a well-joined chariot to the son of Atreus, Menelaus famed for his spear. There I saw Argive Helen, for whose sake Argives and Trojans toiled so much by the will of the gods. And 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 and said:

124 "'Ah! So they wanted to lie in the bed of a man strong of heart, when they are weaklings 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 the hill spurs and grassy glens for pasture, and then the lion comes back to his lair and brings a shameful doom on them both, so Odysseus will bring a shameful doom on those men. Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, if only Odysseus, the man he was once in well-built Lesbos, when he rose to wrestle Philomeleides in a match and threw him hard, and all the Achaeans rejoiced, if only that man would come among the suitors! They would all find a swift death and a bitter wedding. But as for what

you ask and beg of me, I will not turn aside and tell you anything else, nor deceive you; of all that the unerring Old Man of the Sea told me, I will hide no word from you and keep nothing back. He said he had seen him on an island, suffering hard pains, in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him there by force; and he cannot reach his native land, for he has no ships fitted with oars and no companions to carry him over the broad back of the sea.'

147 "So spoke the son of Atreus, Menelaus famed for his spear. When I had done all this, I set out for home, and the immortals gave me a fair wind and quickly brought me to my own native land."

150 So he spoke, and stirred the heart in her breast. And Theoclymenus, godlike in looks, spoke among them too:

152 "Revered wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, he does not know clearly; but listen to what I say. I will 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 excellent Odysseus to which I have come: Odysseus is already in his native land, sitting still or on the move, learning of these evil deeds, and he is sowing evil for all the suitors. Such was the bird of omen I saw as I sat on the well-benched ship, and I declared it to Telemachus."

162 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Stranger, if only this word of yours might be fulfilled! Then you would soon know my kindness and many gifts from me, so that anyone who met you would call you blessed."

166 So they spoke with one another, while the suitors, in front of the hall of Odysseus, amused themselves throwing the discus and the javelin on the leveled ground, where they had always behaved with insolence. But when it was time for dinner and the flocks came in from the fields on every side, brought in by the men who always brought them, then Medon spoke to them, for of all

the heralds he was the one they liked best, and he was always with them at their feasts:

174 "Young men, now that you have all had your pleasure of the games, come into the house, so that we can make the dinner ready. It is no bad thing to take one's dinner in good season."

177 So he spoke, and they rose and went, obeying his word. When they reached the stately house, they laid their cloaks on the chairs and seats, and they slaughtered great sheep and fat goats, and slaughtered fatted hogs and a heifer of the herd, making the dinner ready. Meanwhile Odysseus and the noble swineherd were making haste to go from the country to the city. And the swineherd, leader of men, began to speak:

185 "Stranger, since you are eager to go to the city today, as my master ordered—though I would rather have left you here myself, to guard the farm; but I respect him and am afraid he may scold me afterward, and a master's rebukes are hard—come, let us go now. The day is mostly gone, and toward evening you will soon find it colder."

192 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "I know, I understand; you are telling this to a man who has sense. Let us go, and you lead the way the whole way. But give me a stick to lean on, if you have one cut anywhere, since you say the path is very slippery."

197 So he spoke, and threw his shabby wallet 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, and the dogs and the herdsmen stayed behind to guard the farm. And he led his master to the city looking like a wretched beggar and an old man, leaning on a staff; and the clothes on his body were miserable rags.

204 But when, going down the rugged road, they were near the city and had come to the fountain, well built and fair-flowing, where the townspeople drew their water (Ithacus had made it, and

Neritus and Polyctor), with a grove of poplars that grow by water around it, circling it on every side, and cold water running down from the rock above, and over it an altar to the nymphs, where all travelers made offerings: there Melanthius, son of Dolius, came upon them, driving goats, the best in all the herds, for the suitors' dinner; and two herdsmen came along with him. When he saw them he abused them and spoke and addressed them, savage and shameful words, and stirred the heart of Odysseus:

217 "Now here's one wretch leading another wretch, sure enough; the god always brings like to like. Where are you taking this greedy pig, you miserable swineherd, this nuisance of a beggar, this spoiler of feasts? He'll stand rubbing his shoulders on many doorposts, begging for scraps, not for swords or cauldrons. If you would give him to me to watch my farm and sweep out the pens and carry green fodder to the kids, he could drink whey and put some bulk on his thighs. But since he has learned nothing but bad ways, he won't want to set about work; he'd rather go cringing through the country, begging to feed that bottomless belly of his. But I tell you plainly, and it will come true: if he comes to the house of godlike Odysseus, his ribs will wear out many a footstool that men hurl about his head as he is pelted through the house."

233 So he spoke, and as he passed, in his folly, he kicked him on the hip; but he could not push him off the path; Odysseus stood firm. And Odysseus pondered whether to rush at him and take his life with his stick, or to lift him by the waist and dash his head against the ground. But he endured it and held himself back. The swineherd looked the man in the face and rebuked him, and lifted up his hands and prayed aloud:

240 "Nymphs of the fountain, daughters of Zeus, if ever Odysseus burned thigh bones for you, wrapped in rich fat, of lambs and kids, grant me this wish: that that man may come home, and some god guide him. Then he would scatter all those fine airs

you put on so insolently, forever wandering about the town while bad herdsmen ruin the flocks."

247 Then Melanthius, the goatherd, said to him: "Oh, for shame! What a thing this dog has said, with his head full of tricks! Some day I'll take him off in a well-benched black ship far from Ithaca, so that he can earn me a good living. I wish Apollo of the silver bow would strike Telemachus down today in the halls, or the suitors would kill him, as surely as Odysseus, far away, has lost the day of return."

254 So he spoke, and 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 busy serving set a portion of meat before him, and the revered housekeeper brought bread and set it before him to eat. Odysseus and the noble swineherd came up close and stood still, and around them rose the sound of the hollow lyre, for Phemius was striking up a song for the suitors. And Odysseus took the swineherd by the hand and said to him:

264 "Eumaeus, surely this is the fine house of Odysseus. It would be easy to pick out even among many. Building opens out of building, the courtyard is finished off with a wall and coping, and the double doors are strongly made; no man could make light of it. And I can tell that many men are feasting in it, for the savor of roasting fat rises up, and the lyre sounds within, which the gods made the companion of the feast."

272 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "You recognized it easily, since you are no fool in other things either. But come, let us think how this is to be done. Either you go into the stately house first and mingle with the suitors, and I stay behind here; or, if you like, wait here, and I will go ahead. But do not linger long, in case someone sees you outside and throws something at

you or strikes you. I tell you to think about this." Then much-enduring noble Odysseus answered him:

281 "I know, I understand; you are telling this to a man who has sense. Go on ahead, and I will stay behind here. I am no stranger to blows and things thrown. My heart is patient, for I have suffered many hardships on the waves and in war; let this be added to them. But there is no way to hide a ravenous belly, the cursed thing, which brings men many evils; for its sake well-benched ships are fitted out to sail the barren sea, bringing evil to enemies." So they spoke with one another. And a dog that lay there raised his head and pricked his ears: Argos, the dog of steadfast Odysseus, whom he had bred himself long ago but never had the joy of, for before that he went to sacred Ilion. In past days the young men used to take him out after wild goats and deer and hares; but now, with his master gone, he lay neglected in the deep dung of mules and cattle that was heaped up in plenty before the doors, until the servants of Odysseus should carry it off to manure his great estate. There lay the dog Argos, full of ticks. And now, when he knew Odysseus close by, he wagged his tail and dropped both his ears, but he had no strength anymore to come nearer to his master. And Odysseus looked away and wiped a tear, easily hiding it from Eumaeus, and at once he asked him:

306 "Eumaeus, this is a strange thing, this dog lying here in the dung. He has a fine build, but I cannot tell for certain whether he was fast at running too, to go with his looks, or just like the table dogs men have, that their masters keep for show."

311 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Yes, this is the dog of a man who has died far away. If he were the dog he was in build and in deeds when Odysseus left him and went to Troy, you would soon be amazed to see his speed and his strength. No beast he chased in the depths of the thick forest ever got away from him, and he was keen at tracking too. But now he is in a bad

way. His master has perished far from his own country, and the women do not care and do not look after him. Servants, when their masters are no longer over them, do not want to do their proper work anymore; for far-seeing Zeus takes away half a man's worth on the day that slavery takes him."

324 So he spoke, and went into the stately house and straight to the hall among the lordly suitors. But the fate of black death took Argos as soon as he had seen Odysseus, in the twentieth year.

328 Telemachus, godlike in looks, was far the first to see the swineherd coming through the house, and at once he nodded and called him to his side. The swineherd looked about and took up a stool that lay there, where the carver used to sit when he carved the meat in plenty for the suitors feasting in the house. He carried it to Telemachus's table and set it opposite him, and sat down there himself; and the herald took a portion and set it before him, and bread from the basket.

336 Close behind him Odysseus came into the house, looking like a wretched beggar and an old man, leaning on a staff; and the clothes on his body were miserable rags. He sat down on the ash-wood threshold inside the doors, leaning against the doorpost of cypress, which a carpenter had once planed with skill and made true to the line. Telemachus called the swineherd to him and spoke to him, taking a whole loaf from the beautiful basket and as much meat as his hands could hold when he spread them around it: "Take these and give them to the stranger, and tell him to go around among all the suitors and beg from each. Shame is no good companion for a man in need."

348 So he spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard the word, and standing near he spoke, and his words had wings:

350 "Telemachus gives you these, stranger, and tells you to go around among all the suitors and beg from each. He says shame is no good thing for a beggar."

353 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Lord Zeus, grant that Telemachus may be blessed among men, and may he have all that his heart desires."

356 So he spoke, and took it in both hands and set it down there before his feet on his shabby wallet, and he ate while the bard sang in the halls. When he had dined, the godlike bard stopped singing, and the suitors broke into uproar through the hall. But Athena came and stood beside Odysseus, son of Laertes, and urged him to go collecting bread among the suitors and find out which of them were decent and which were lawless; but even so she was not going to save any one of them from ruin. He set off to beg from each man in turn, going around from left to right, stretching out his hand on every side as if he had been a beggar all his life. They pitied him and gave, and they wondered at him, and asked one another who he was and where he came from.

369 Then Melanthius, the goatherd, spoke among them: "Hear me, suitors of the glorious queen, about this stranger; for I have seen him before. It was the swineherd who led him here, I know that, but the man himself I do not know for certain, or where he claims his family comes from."

374 So he spoke, and Antinous rebuked the swineherd with words: "You notorious swineherd, why did you bring this man to the city? Haven't we vagabonds enough already, nuisance beggars, spoilers of feasts? Is it not enough for you that men gather here and eat up your master's livelihood, but you have to invite this one too?"

380 And you answered him, Eumaeus, swineherd: "Antinous, noble as you are, what you say is not well said. Who goes out himself and calls a stranger in from abroad, unless he is one of those who work for the people: a seer, or a healer of sickness, or a builder in wood, or else an inspired bard, who gives delight with his song? Those are the men who are invited all over the bound-

less earth. But nobody would invite a beggar to eat him out of house and home. You are always harder than all the other suitors on the servants of Odysseus, and on me most of all. But I do not care, so long as sensible Penelope lives on in the halls, and Telemachus, godlike in looks."

392 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Quiet. Do not answer him with so many words. Antinous always likes to provoke people meanly with harsh words, and he urges the others on as well."

396 So he said, and to Antinous he spoke, and his words had wings: "Antinous, how kindly you look after me, like a father his son, telling me to drive the stranger out of the hall with a harsh word! May the god never bring that about. Take something and give it to him; I do not grudge it. I tell you to. Do not hold back for fear of my mother in this, or of any of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. But that is not the thought in your breast; you would much rather eat yourself than give to another." Then Antinous answered him: "Telemachus, you high and mighty talker, unchecked in your fury, what a thing to say! If all the suitors handed him as much as I will, he would keep away from this house for three months."

409 So he spoke, and seized the footstool from under the table where it lay, the one he rested his shining feet on as he feasted, and showed it. But all the others gave, and they filled the wallet with bread and meat. And now Odysseus was about to go back to the threshold and taste the Achaeans' free gifts; but he stopped beside Antinous and said to him:

415 "Give, friend. You do not seem to me the worst of the Achaeans, but the best, for you look like a king. So you ought to give me a better portion of bread than the others, and I will sing your fame over the boundless earth. For I too once lived among men in a house of my own, a rich man in a wealthy house, and

often I gave to a wanderer, whoever he was and whatever need had brought him. I had servants past counting, and plenty of all the other things by which men live well and are called rich. But Zeus, son of Cronus, ruined it all—he wanted to, I suppose—and sent me off with roving pirates to go to Egypt, a long voyage, to my ruin. I moored my curved ships in the river of Egypt. Then I ordered my faithful companions to stay there by the ships and guard them, and I sent out scouts to the lookout points. But they gave way to insolence, following their own impulse, and at once began plundering the beautiful fields of the Egyptians, and carried off the women and little children, and killed the men; and soon the cry reached the city. The people heard the shouting and came at the breaking of dawn, and the whole plain was filled with foot soldiers and horses and the flash of bronze. And Zeus who delights in thunder cast an evil panic among my companions, and no one dared to stand and face them, for evils stood around 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 might. And from there I have now come here, suffering hardships." Then Antinous answered him and said: "What god has brought this plague here, this pest of the feast? Stand off, out there in the middle, away from my table, or you will soon come to a bitter Egypt and Cyprus! What a bold and shameless beggar you are. You stand by each man in turn, and they give recklessly; for there is no holding back and no scruple about being generous with what belongs to someone else, when each of them has plenty beside him."

453 Odysseus of many wiles drew back and said to him: "Ah! So your wits do not match your looks after all. You would not give even salt from your own house to a man who stood at your door, you who now, sitting at another man's table, could not bring your-

self to take a bit of bread and give it to me, though there is plenty here."

458 So he spoke, and Antinous grew angrier still at heart, and with a dark look from under his brows he spoke to him, and his words had wings: "Now I do not think you will get back out of this hall in one piece, since you are even throwing insults."

462 So he spoke, and took the footstool and threw it, and hit him on the right shoulder, at the base of the back. But he stood firm as a rock, and the missile of Antinous did not make him stagger; he shook his head in silence, brooding on evil deep within. He went back to the threshold and sat down and set down his well-filled wallet, and he spoke among the suitors:

468 "Hear me, suitors of the glorious queen, so that I may say what the heart in my breast commands me. There is no pain in a man's heart, and no grief, when he is struck fighting for his own possessions, for his cattle or his white sheep. But Antinous struck me for the sake of my wretched belly, the cursed thing, which brings men many evils. But if there are gods and Erinyes for beggars, may the end of death come upon Antinous before his marriage."

477 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to him: "Sit still and eat, stranger, or go somewhere else, or the young men will drag you through the house by the foot or by the hand for the things you say, and strip the skin off you all over."

481 So he spoke, and they were all indignant beyond measure; and one of the arrogant young men would say:

483 "Antinous, you did wrong to strike the poor wanderer. You are a doomed man, if he turns out to be some god from heaven. And the gods do take the likeness of strangers from other lands, appearing in every kind of shape, and go about the cities, watching over the insolence and the good order of men."

488 So the suitors spoke, but he paid no heed to their words. And Telemachus nursed a great grief in his heart for the blow, but he let no tear fall from his eyelids to the ground; he shook his head in silence, brooding on evil deep within.

492 When prudent Penelope heard of the man being struck in the hall, she said among her maids: "I wish Apollo, famed for his bow, would strike you yourself like that!" And Eurynome the housekeeper said to her: "If only our prayers were fulfilled! Not one of these men would live to see Dawn of the lovely throne."

498 Then prudent Penelope said to her: "Old mother, they are all hateful, since they are plotting evil; but Antinous most of all is like black doom. Some poor stranger is wandering through the house begging from the men, for need drives him to it; and all the others filled his wallet and gave, but this one hit him with a foot-stool on the right shoulder, at the base of the back."

505 So she spoke among her women, sitting in her chamber, while noble Odysseus was eating his dinner. And she called the noble swineherd to her and said:

508 "Go, noble Eumaeus, and tell the stranger to come here, so that I may 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."

512 And you answered her, Eumaeus, swineherd: "If only the Achaeans would be quiet, my queen! The things he tells would charm your dear heart. I had him three nights, and kept him three days, in my hut, for I was the first he came to when he ran away from a ship; and still he has not come to the end of telling his sufferings. As when a man gazes at a bard who has learned from the gods to sing words of longing to mortals, and they yearn endlessly to hear him whenever he sings, so he charmed me as he sat beside me in my house. He says he is an old friend of Odysseus's family, and lives in Crete, where the race of Minos is. From there he has

now come here, suffering hardships, rolling on and on; and he insists that he has heard of Odysseus close by, in the rich land of the Thesprotians, alive, and that he is bringing many treasures home."

528 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Go, call him here, so that he may tell me himself, face to face. Let these men amuse themselves sitting at the doors, or here in the house, since their hearts are merry. Their own goods lie untouched in their homes, bread and sweet wine, and their servants eat them; but they haunt our house day after day, slaughtering our oxen and sheep and fat goats, and they feast and drink the sparkling wine recklessly, and most of it is being wasted. For there is no man like Odysseus to ward off ruin from the house. But if Odysseus were to come and reach his native land, he and his son would soon pay these men back for their violence."

541 So she spoke, and Telemachus sneezed loudly, and the whole house rang with it fearfully. Penelope laughed, and at once she spoke to Eumaeus, and her words had wings:

544 "Go and call the stranger here before me. Do you not see how my son sneezed at all my words? So death will not fail to come for the suitors, for all of them, and not one would escape death and doom. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart: if I find that he tells the whole truth, I will dress him in a cloak and a tunic, fine clothes."

551 So she spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard the word, and standing near he spoke, and his words had wings:

553 "Stranger, old father, prudent Penelope, the mother of Telemachus, is calling for you. Her heart bids her ask you something about her husband, though she has suffered many sorrows. And if she finds that you tell the whole truth, she will dress you in a cloak and a tunic, which you need most of all; and then you can

beg your bread through the land and feed your belly. Whoever wants to will give to you."

560 Then much-enduring noble Odysseus said to him: "Eumaeus, I would gladly tell the whole truth at once to the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope; for I know about him well, and we have shared the same misery. But I am afraid of the crowd of harsh suitors, whose insolence and violence reach the iron sky. Just now, when this man struck me and gave me pain as I went through the house doing no harm, neither Telemachus nor anyone else protected me from it. So now tell Penelope to wait in the halls, eager though she is, until the sun goes down; and then let her ask me about her husband and the day of his return, giving me a seat nearer the fire, for the clothes I have are wretched. You know that yourself, since it was you I came to first as a suppliant."

574 So he spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard the word. And as he crossed the threshold Penelope said to him:

576 "You have not brought him, Eumaeus? What does the wanderer mean by this? Is he afraid of someone beyond measure, or is he shy in the house for some other reason? A shy beggar is a poor beggar."

579 And you answered her, Eumaeus, swineherd: "He speaks rightly, as anyone else would think; he wants to avoid the insolence of arrogant men, and he asks you to wait until the sun goes down. And it is much better for you yourself, my queen, to speak to the stranger alone and hear what he has to say." Then prudent Penelope said to him: "The stranger is no fool. He sees how things may well turn out, for surely there are no mortal men anywhere who behave so insolently and plan such reckless deeds as these."

589 So she spoke, and the noble swineherd went back into the crowd of suitors, when he had made everything clear. At once he spoke to Telemachus, and his words had wings, holding his head close so that the others would not hear:

593 "Friend, I am going away to guard the pigs and all the rest, your livelihood and mine. You see to everything here. Keep yourself safe first of all, and take care in your heart that nothing happens to you. Many of the Achaeans are plotting evil. May Zeus destroy them before they do us harm."

598 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "It will be so, old father. Go when you have had your evening meal, and come at dawn and bring fine animals for sacrifice. All this will be my care, and the immortals'."

602 So he spoke, and the swineherd sat down again on the polished stool, and when he had satisfied his heart with food and drink, he set off to go to his pigs, and left the courtyard and the hall full of feasters. And they took their pleasure in dancing and song, for evening had already come on.

Book 18

1 Then came a public beggar, one who used to go begging through the city of Ithaca, famous for his ravenous belly, for 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 him that name at his birth; but all the young men called him Irus,[1] because he used to go and carry messages whenever anyone told him to. He came now and tried to drive Odysseus out of his own house, and abusing him he spoke, and his words had wings:

10 "Get out of the doorway, old man, before you're dragged out by the foot, and soon. Don't you see they're all winking at me and telling me to drag you? But I'm ashamed to, all the same. Up with you, or our quarrel will soon come to fists."

14 Odysseus of many wiles, with a dark look from under his brows, said to him: "Strange man, I do you no harm in deed or in word, and I do not grudge anyone giving to you, even if he takes up a great deal to give. This threshold will hold us both, and you have no need to grudge what belongs to others. You seem to me a wanderer like me; and it is the gods who will grant wealth. But do not challenge me too far with your fists, or you will make me angry, and old as I am I may smear your chest and your lips with blood. Then I would have still more peace tomorrow, for I do not think you would come back a second time to the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes." Then Irus the wanderer said to him in anger: "Oh, for shame! How glibly this greedy pig rattles on, like an old woman

at the oven! I could do him some harm, I could, 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. Gird yourself now, so that all these men too can see us fight. How could you fight a younger man?"

32 So in front of the lofty doors, on the polished threshold, the two of them whetted each other's fury with all their hearts. And the sacred strength of Antinous heard them, and he broke into a sweet laugh and said among the suitors:

36 "Friends, nothing like this has ever happened before, such entertainment as the god has brought to this house! The stranger and Irus are challenging each other to fight it out with their fists. Come, let us set them on at once."

40 So he spoke, and they all sprang up laughing and gathered around the ragged beggars. And Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said among them:

43 "Hear me, proud suitors, while I say something. Here are goats' paunches lying at the fire, which we set aside for supper, stuffed with fat and blood. Whichever of the two wins and proves the stronger, let him get up and take whichever of them he likes himself. And from now on he shall always feast with us, and we will let no other beggar come in among us to beg."

50 So spoke Antinous, and his word pleased them. And Odysseus of many wiles, with crafty mind, said among them:

52 "Friends, there is no way an old man worn down by misery can fight a younger man. But my belly, that mischief-maker, drives me on, to be beaten down with blows. But come, all of you, swear me a mighty oath that no one, to do Irus a favor, will strike me with a heavy hand in wanton violence and beat me down by force for him."

58 So he spoke, and they all swore not to, as he asked. And when they had sworn and finished the oath, the sacred strength of

Telemachus spoke among them again:

61 "Stranger, if your heart and your proud spirit urge you to beat this man off, do not be afraid of any of the other Achaeans; whoever strikes you will have more than one man to fight. I am the host, and the two lords agree with me, Antinous and Eurymachus, both of them thoughtful men."

66 So he spoke, and they all approved. Then Odysseus girded his rags about his loins and showed his thighs, fine and big, and his broad shoulders came into view, and his chest and his mighty arms; and Athena came and stood beside him and filled out the limbs of the shepherd of the people. The suitors were all amazed beyond measure, and one would say, looking at his neighbor:

73 "Irus will soon be Irus no more. He'll get the trouble he asked for, by the look of the thigh the old man shows out of his rags!"

75 So they spoke, and Irus's heart was badly shaken. But even so the serving men girded him and dragged him forward by force, terrified, and the flesh quivered on his limbs. And Antinous rebuked him and spoke and addressed him:

79 "Better you were not alive now, you big bully, and had never been born, if you tremble at this man and are so terribly afraid of him, an old man worn down by the misery that has come upon him! But I tell you plainly, and it will come true: if this man beats you and proves the stronger, I will throw you into a black ship and send you to the mainland, to King Echetus, the bane of all mortals, who will cut off your nose and your ears with the pitiless bronze and tear out your private parts and give them raw to the dogs to eat."

88 So he spoke, and a trembling seized his limbs still more. They led him into the middle, and both men put up their fists. Then much-enduring noble Odysseus pondered whether to hit him so that the life would leave him there where he fell, or to hit him lightly and stretch him out on the ground. And as he thought

it over, this seemed the better way: to hit him lightly, so that the Achaeans would not take note of Odysseus himself. Then they put up their fists, and Irus hit him on the right shoulder; but Odysseus hit him on the neck below the ear and smashed the bones inside, and at once the red blood came out of his mouth, and he dropped in the dust with a bleat and gnashed his teeth together, kicking the ground with his feet. And the lordly suitors threw up their hands and died laughing. Then Odysseus seized him by the foot and dragged him out through the doorway until he came to the courtyard and the gates of the portico; and he propped him against the courtyard wall and sat him there, and put his stick in his hand, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

105 "Sit there now and keep the pigs and the dogs away, and don't you try to be lord over strangers and beggars, wretch that you are, or you may come by something worse yet."

108 So he spoke, and threw his shabby wallet over his shoulders, full of holes, with a twisted cord for a strap; and he went back to the threshold and sat down. And the suitors went inside, laughing sweetly, and greeted him with these words:

112 "Stranger, may Zeus and the other immortal gods give you what you most desire and what is dear to your heart, since you have put a stop to this insatiable creature's begging through the land. We will soon ship him off to the mainland, to King Echetus, the bane of all mortals."

117 So they spoke, and noble Odysseus rejoiced at the omen in their words. Antinous set a great paunch before him, stuffed with fat and blood; and Amphinomus took two loaves from the basket and set them before him, and pledged him with a golden cup and said:

122 "Welcome, old father, stranger! May happiness be yours in time to come, though now you are held fast by many evils."

124 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Amphinomus, you seem to me a very thoughtful man, and so was your father; for I have heard his good fame, Nisus of Dulichium, that he was a good man and a rich one. They say you are his son, and you seem a man of sense. So I will tell you something, and you take it in and listen to me. Of all the things that breathe and creep upon the earth, the earth nourishes nothing feebler than man. For he thinks he will never suffer evil in time to come, as long as the gods give him prosperity and his knees are quick; but when the blessed gods bring sorrows on him too, he bears them against his will, with an enduring heart. For the mind of men on earth is such as the day the father of men and gods brings upon them. I too was once to be a prosperous man among men, and I did many reckless things, giving way to my strength and my might, relying on my father and my brothers. So let no man ever be lawless in anything, but let him keep in silence whatever gifts the gods may give. Such reckless things I see the suitors plotting, wasting the possessions and dishonoring the wife of a man who, I tell you, will not be away from his friends and his native land much longer: he is very near. But may some god lead you away home out of this, and may you not meet him when he comes back to his own native land. For I do not think the suitors and he will part without blood, once he comes under his own roof."

151 So he spoke, and he poured an offering and drank the honey-sweet wine, and put the cup back in the hands of the marshal of the people. And Amphinomus went off through the house sick at heart, shaking his head, for his heart foresaw evil. But even so he did not escape his doom: Athena bound him too, to be beaten down by force under the hands and the spear of Telemachus. And he sat down again on the chair from which he had risen.

158 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, put it into the mind of the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, to show herself to the suitors, so that she might flutter their hearts as much as she could and be held in greater honor by her husband and her son than before. She gave an aimless laugh, and spoke and addressed her housekeeper:

164 "Eurynome, my heart longs, as it never did before, to show myself to the suitors, hateful as they are. And I might say a word to my son that would be for his good: not to be always keeping company with the overbearing suitors, who speak him fair but plan evil behind his back."

169 And Eurynome the housekeeper said to her: "Yes, child, all this you have said is right. Go, tell your son that word and hide nothing from him; but first wash your body and anoint your cheeks. Do not go as you are, with your face all stained with tears, for it is worse to grieve forever without end. Your son is already of the age you most prayed to the immortals to see him reach, with a beard on his face."

177 Then prudent Penelope said to her: "Eurynome, do not try to talk me into it, though you care for me, to wash my body and anoint myself with oil. The gods who hold Olympus destroyed my beauty on the day he went away in the hollow ships. But tell Autonoe and Hippodameia to come to me, so that they may stand beside me in the halls. I will not go among the men alone; I am ashamed to."

185 So she spoke, and the old woman went out through the hall to give the women the message and tell them to come.

187 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought. She shed sweet sleep upon the daughter of Icarius, and she leaned back and slept, and all her joints went slack, there on the couch. And meanwhile the bright among goddesses gave her immortal gifts, so that the Achaeans would marvel at her. First she cleansed

her lovely face with immortal beauty, such as Cytherea of the fair crown 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 bright among goddesses went away, and the white-armed maids came from the hall, chattering as they came; and sweet sleep let her go, and she wiped her cheeks with her hands and said:

201 "A soft sleep wrapped me round, in all my bitter suffering. I wish chaste Artemis would give me a death as soft as that, now, this moment, so that I need no longer waste my life away grieving at heart, longing for my dear husband's excellence of every kind; for he was the finest of the Achaeans."

206 So saying, she came down from the shining upper rooms, not alone: two maids went with her. And when the noble among women came to the suitors, she stood beside a pillar of the well-built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks, and a loyal maid stood on either side of her. And there and then their knees went slack, their hearts were bewitched with desire, and every one of them prayed to lie beside her in bed. But she spoke to Telemachus, her dear son:

215 "Telemachus, your mind and your thinking are no longer steady. When you were still a child you had more cunning in your head; but now that you are grown and have reached the full measure of youth, and any foreigner who saw your size and your good looks would say you were the son of a fortunate man, your mind and your thinking are no longer what they should be. What a thing has been done in these halls, that you let the stranger be so abused! What now, if a stranger sitting in our house should come to harm like this from such cruel handling? The shame and the disgrace among men would be yours."

226 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "Mother, I do not blame you for being angry. But I understand in my heart and

know each thing, the good and the worse; before, I was still a child. Yet I cannot think of everything wisely, for these men confound me, sitting about me on every side with their evil plans, and I have no one to help me. But this fight between the stranger and Irus did not turn out the way the suitors wanted; he was the stronger. Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, if only the suitors in our house were beaten like this now and hung their heads, some in the courtyard and some inside the house, and the limbs of every man gone slack, just as that Irus sits now at the courtyard gate, hanging his head like a drunken man, and cannot stand upright on his feet or go home, wherever his home is, since his limbs have gone slack!"

243 So they spoke with one another. And Eurymachus spoke to Penelope:

245 "Daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, if all the Achaeans throughout Iasian Argos could see you, still more suitors would be feasting in your house from dawn on, since you surpass all women in beauty and stature and in the balanced mind within you."

250 Then prudent Penelope answered him: "Eurymachus, my excellence, my beauty, and my form the immortals destroyed when the Argives went up to Ilion, and with them went my husband, Odysseus. If he were to come and care for my life, my fame would be greater and finer so. But now I grieve, so many evils has some god let loose on me. When he went away and left his native land, he took my right hand by the wrist and said to me:

259 "'Wife, I do not think the well-greaved Achaeans will all come back from Troy safe and unharmed. For they say the Trojans are fighting men, throwers of spears and shooters of arrows and drivers of swift-footed horses, men who most quickly decide the great strife of evenly matched war. So I do not know whether the god will let me come home, or I shall be taken there in Troy. You must see to everything here. Remember my father and mother in

the halls as you do now, or even more, while I am away. But when you see our son with a beard on his face, marry whom you will, and leave your house.'

271 "That is what he said; and now it is all coming to pass. The night will come when a hateful marriage will befall me, cursed as I am, whose happiness Zeus has taken away. But this bitter grief comes to my heart and spirit: this was not the way of suitors before. Men who want to woo a good woman and a rich man's daughter, and compete with one another for her, bring cattle and fat sheep of their own, a feast for the bride's friends, and give glorious gifts. They do not eat up another's livelihood without paying."

281 So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, because she was drawing gifts out of them and charming their hearts with soft words, while her mind intended other things.

284 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to her: "Daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, take the gifts that any of the Achaeans wants to bring here; it is not right to refuse a gift. But we will not go back to our lands or anywhere else until you marry whichever of the Achaeans is the best."

290 So spoke Antinous, and his word pleased them, and each man sent off a herald to bring his gifts. For Antinous the herald brought a great robe, very beautiful, richly embroidered, with twelve brooches on it, all of gold, fitted with well-bent clasps. For Eurymachus he brought at once a necklace of elaborate work, of gold, strung with amber beads, like the sun; and for Eurydamas two attendants brought earrings, each with three clustered drops like mulberries, and great grace shone from them. From the house of lord Peisander, son of Polyctor, an attendant brought a choker, a very beautiful ornament. Each of the Achaeans brought a different fine gift. Then the noble among women went up to the upper rooms, and her maids carried the beautiful gifts up with her.

304 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, black evening came on. At once they set up three braziers in the halls to give light, and put kindling around them, seasoned long and very dry, newly split with the bronze, and mixed in torches; and the maids of steadfast Odysseus took turns to keep them blazing. Then Odysseus of many wiles himself, sprung from Zeus, spoke among the maids:

313 "Maids of Odysseus, your master long gone, go to the rooms where your revered queen is. Twirl your spindles beside her and cheer her, sitting in her room, or card wool with your hands. I will give light to all these men. Even if they want to wait for Dawn of the lovely throne, they will not wear me out; I can endure a great deal."

320 So he spoke, and they laughed and looked at one another. And fair-cheeked Melantho scolded him shamefully. Dolius was her father, but Penelope had brought her up and cherished her like her own child, and gave her playthings to her heart's content; but even so she felt no sorrow at heart for Penelope, and she slept with Eurymachus and was his lover. She scolded Odysseus with abusive words:

327 "You miserable stranger, you must be some kind of crack-brain. You won't go and sleep at the smithy, or at some public lodge, but you stand here talking on and on, boldly, among many men, and you're not afraid at heart. Either the wine has got your wits, or your mind is always like this, and that's why you babble such nonsense. Are you beside yourself because you beat Irus the tramp? Look out, or someone better than Irus will soon get up, and he'll pound your head with his strong fists and send you out of the house all fouled with blood."

337 Odysseus of many wiles, with a dark look from under his brows, said to her: "I will go over there and tell Telemachus at

once what you are saying, you dog, so that he will cut you limb from limb on the spot."

340 So saying, he scattered the women with his words. They went off through the house, and every one of them went weak at the knees with fright, for they thought he spoke the truth. But he stood by the burning braziers, keeping them alight and watching them all; and the heart in his breast was pondering other things, which did not go unfulfilled.

346 But Athena would not let the proud suitors hold back altogether from heartbreaking insult, so that the pain would sink still deeper into the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes. Eurymachus, son of Polybus, began to speak among them, jeering at Odysseus, and he set his companions laughing:

351 "Hear me, suitors of the glorious queen, so that I may say what the heart in my breast commands me. This man has not come to the house of Odysseus without some god. At any rate, the glare of the torches seems to me to come from him, from his head, for there is no hair on it, not even a little."

356 So he spoke, and then he spoke to Odysseus, sacker of cities: "Stranger, would you be willing to work for hire, if I took you on, at the far edge of my land—your wages will be enough—gathering stones for walls and planting tall trees? There I would give you bread all year round, and put clothes on you and give you shoes for your feet. But since you have learned nothing but bad ways, you won't want to set about work; you'd rather go cringing through the country, begging, so that you can feed that bottomless belly of yours."

365 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Eurymachus, if only there could be a contest of work between us two in the springtime, when the days are long, in the hay; if I had a well-curved scythe, and you had one just like it, so that we could put each other to the test of work, fasting, until full dark, and there

was hay enough! Or if there were oxen to drive, the best there are, tawny and big, both well fed with grass, of the same age and pulling the same load, with strength that is not feeble, and a four-acre field, and the clod gave way under the plow: then you would see whether I could cut a straight furrow to the end. Or 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 would see me mingling with the foremost fighters, and you would not talk about my belly to taunt me. But you are very insolent, and your mind is harsh, and I suppose you think you are someone great and mighty, because you keep company with few men, and those not good ones. But if Odysseus were to come and reach his native land, those doors, wide as they are, would soon be too narrow for you as you ran out through the doorway."

387 So he spoke, and Eurymachus grew angrier still at heart, and with a dark look from under his brows he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

389 "You wretch, I'll soon do you harm for the things you say, boldly, among many men, and you're not afraid at heart. Either the wine has got your wits, or your mind is always like this, and that's why you babble such nonsense. Are you beside yourself because you beat Irus the tramp?"

394 So saying, he seized a footstool; but Odysseus sat down at the knees of Amphinomus of Dulichium, for fear of Eurymachus, and Eurymachus hit the wine-pourer on the right hand. The pitcher fell ringing to the ground, and the man groaned and fell on his back in the dust. And the suitors broke into uproar through the shadowy halls, and one would say, looking at his neighbor:

401 "I wish this stranger had perished somewhere else in his wanderings before he came here! Then he would not have stirred up such an uproar among us. Now we are quarreling over beggars, and there will be no pleasure in the good feast, since the worse

things win." And the sacred strength of Telemachus spoke among them too: "Strange men, you are mad, and you can no longer hide in your hearts that you have been eating and drinking. Some god is stirring you up. Now that you have feasted well, go home and lie down to rest, whenever your heart bids you. I am not driving anyone away, not I."

410 So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachus, how boldly he spoke. Then Amphinomus spoke and addressed them, the shining son of lord Nisus, son of Aretias:

414 "Friends, no one should take offense at what has been rightly said and attack it with hostile words. Do not mistreat the stranger, or any other of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. But come, let the wine-pourer pour the first drops into the cups, so that we may pour our offerings and go home to rest. And let us leave the stranger in the halls of Odysseus for Telemachus to look after, for it is his house he has come to."

422 So he spoke, and the word he said pleased them all. The hero Mulius mixed a bowl for them, a herald from Dulichium, who was an attendant of Amphinomus; and he served it out to all, going from man to man. They poured offerings to the blessed gods and drank the honey-sweet wine. But when they had poured their offerings and drunk as much as their hearts desired, they went off to lie down, each to his own house.

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1. *Irus*: a nickname formed from Iris, the messenger of the gods, because the man ran errands for anyone who asked. At 18.73 the suitors pun on it: Greek *Iros Airos*, "Irus un-Irus," that is, Irus about to come to grief.

Book 19

1 But noble Odysseus was left behind in the hall, pondering with Athena how to bring death on the suitors; and at once he spoke to Telemachus, and his words had wings:

4 "Telemachus, we must put away the weapons of war inside, every one of them; and as for the suitors, put them off with soft words when they miss them and ask you about them: 'I have put them away out of the smoke, since they no longer look like what Odysseus left behind when he went to Troy, but are all disfigured, as far as the breath of the fire has reached them. And besides, a god has put this greater fear into my mind, that you might get drunk and start a quarrel among yourselves and wound one another and disgrace the feast and the wooing; for iron of itself draws a man on.'"

14 So he spoke, and Telemachus obeyed his dear father, and he called out the nurse Eurycleia and said to her:

16 "Old mother, come, keep the women in their quarters for me, while I put away in the storeroom my father's fine arms, which the smoke is tarnishing about the house, uncared for, since my father went away; I was still a child. Now I want to put them away where the breath of the fire will not reach them."

21 Then the dear nurse Eurycleia said to him: "Child, if only you would someday take thought to care for the house and guard all its possessions! But come, who will go with you and carry a light, since you would not let the maids go ahead, who might have given you light?"

26 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "This stranger here. I will not let a man be idle who touches my measure of grain, even if he has come from far away."

29 So he spoke, and her word stayed without wings. She locked the doors of the stately halls. And the two of them sprang up, Odysseus and his shining son, and carried in the helmets and the bossed shields and the sharp-pointed spears; and before them Pallas Athena, holding a golden lamp, made a most beautiful light. Then at once Telemachus said to his father:

36 "Father, this is a great wonder I see with my eyes! The walls of the hall, and the fine panels between the pillars, and the rafters of fir, and the pillars that rise up high, all shine before my eyes as if with blazing fire. Surely some god is inside, one of those who hold the wide sky."

41 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Quiet. Keep it in your own mind and do not ask. This is the way of the gods who hold Olympus. But you go and lie down, and I will stay behind here, so that I can stir up the maids and your mother a little more; and she in her grief will ask me about everything."

47 So he spoke, and Telemachus went out through the hall by the light of blazing torches to go to his room, where he always slept when sweet sleep came to him. There he lay down that night too and waited for bright Dawn. But noble Odysseus was left behind in the hall, pondering with Athena how to bring death on the suitors.

53 Then prudent 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, a chair inlaid with spirals of ivory and silver, which the craftsman Icmalius had made long ago; and beneath it he had set a footstool for her feet, joined to the chair itself, and on the chair a great fleece was thrown. There prudent Penelope sat down. The white-armed maids came from the hall

and cleared away the heaps of bread and the tables and the cups from which the overweening men had been drinking; and they threw the embers from the braziers onto the floor and piled much fresh wood on them, for light and for warmth. And Melantho scolded Odysseus a second time: "Stranger, are you still going to make a nuisance of yourself here all night, prowling around the house and spying on the women? Get outside, you wretch, and be glad of your dinner, or you'll soon be out the door with a torch thrown after you."

70 Odysseus of many wiles, with a dark look from under his brows, said to her: "Strange woman, why do you set upon me like this with an angry heart? Is it because I am dirty, and wear wretched clothes on my body, and beg through the land? Necessity drives me to it. That is what beggars and wanderers are like. For I too once lived among men in a house of my own, a rich man in a wealthy house, and often I gave to a wanderer, whoever he was and whatever need had brought him. I had servants past counting, and plenty of all the other things by which men live well and are called rich. But Zeus, son of Cronus, ruined it all; he wanted to, I suppose. So now, woman, take care that you too do not someday lose all the splendor in which you now outshine the other maids; take care that your mistress does not grow angry and turn harsh with you, or that Odysseus does not come home; for there is still a share of hope. And if he has perished, as you think, and will never return, still, by the grace of Apollo, his son is grown to such a man now, Telemachus. None of the women in the halls behaves wickedly without his knowing it, for he is no longer a child."

89 So he spoke, and prudent Penelope heard him, and she rebuked the maid and spoke and addressed her:

91 "You bold and shameless dog, make no mistake: I know the monstrous thing you are doing, and you will wipe it off on your

own head. You knew it all very well, for you heard it from me myself, that I meant to question the stranger in my halls about my husband, since I am sorely grieved."

96 So she spoke, and she said to Eurynome the housekeeper: "Eurynome, bring a chair with a fleece on it, so that the stranger may sit and speak to me and hear me; I want to question him." So she spoke, and Eurynome very quickly brought a polished chair and set it down and threw a fleece over it; and there much-enduring noble Odysseus sat down. And prudent Penelope began to speak:

104 "Stranger, I will ask you this first myself: Who are you, and where are you from? Where is your city, and where are your parents?"

106 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Lady, no mortal on the boundless earth could find fault with you, for your fame reaches the wide sky, like the fame of some excellent king who fears the gods and rules over many mighty men, upholding justice; and the black earth bears wheat and barley, and the trees are heavy with fruit, and the flocks bear young unfailingly, and the sea yields fish, because he leads them well, and the people prosper under him. So now ask me other things in your house, but do not ask about my family and my native land, or you will fill my heart still more with pains as I remember; I am a man of many sorrows. And it is not right for me to sit weeping and wailing in another's house, for it is worse to grieve forever without end. One of the maids might be indignant with me, or you yourself, and say that I swim in tears because my mind is heavy with wine."

123 Then prudent Penelope answered him: "Stranger, my excellence, my beauty, and my form the immortals destroyed when the Argives went up to Ilion, and with them went my husband, Odysseus. If he were to come and care for my life, my fame would be greater and finer so. But now I grieve, so many evils has some

god let loose on me. For all the best men who rule over the islands, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus, and those who live around clear-seen Ithaca itself, are wooing me against my will and wearing away the house. So I pay no heed to strangers or to suppliants or to heralds, who work for the people, but I waste away at heart, longing for Odysseus. They press for the marriage, and I spin out tricks. First a god breathed into my mind the thought of setting up a great loom in the halls and weaving a mantle, fine and very wide; and at once I said to them:

141 "'Young men, my suitors, since noble Odysseus is dead, wait, eager though you are for my marriage, until I finish this mantle—I would not have my spinning go to waste—a burial cloth for the hero Laertes, against the day when the deadly fate of death that lays men out at length shall take him; so that none of the Achaean women in the land may blame me, if he lies without a shroud, who won so much.'

148 "So I spoke, and their proud hearts were persuaded. Then by day I would weave at the great loom, and by night I would unravel it, with torches set beside me. So for three years I kept it secret and fooled the Achaeans; but when the fourth year came and the seasons came round, as the months waned and many days were completed, then, through my maids, the careless dogs, they came and caught me and rebuked me loudly. So I finished it, against my will, because I had to. And now I cannot escape the marriage, and I can find no other plan. My parents are pressing me hard to marry, and my son is distressed at the men who eat up his livelihood, now that he understands; for he is a grown man now, well able to care for a house, a man to whom Zeus grants glory. But even so, tell me your family, where you come from; for you are not sprung from the oak of the old tale, or from a stone."

164 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Revered wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, will you never stop asking about my

family? Well, I will tell you; though you will hand me over to more sorrows than those that hold me now, for that is the way of it 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. But even so I will tell you what you ask and inquire. There is a land called Crete, in the middle of the wine-dark sea, a beautiful land and rich, washed by water all around; and in it are many men, past counting, and ninety cities. Their tongues are mixed, one with another. There are Achaeans there, and great-hearted Eteocretans, and Cydonians, and Dorians in their three tribes, and noble Pelasgians. Among the cities is Cnossus, a great city, where Minos was king, who every nine years held converse with great Zeus: Minos, the father of my father, great-hearted Deucalion. Deucalion was the father of me and of lord Idomeneus. But Idomeneus went off to Ilion in his beaked ships with the sons of Atreus; and my famous name is Aethon. I was the younger by birth; he was the elder and the better man. It was there that I saw Odysseus and gave him gifts of hospitality. For the force of the wind had brought him to Crete as well, as he was making for Troy, driving him off course past Malea; and he anchored at Amnisus, where the cave of Eileithyia is, in a harbor hard to make, and barely escaped the storm. At once he went up to the city and asked for Idomeneus, for he said Idomeneus was his guest-friend, dear and respected. But it was already the tenth or the eleventh dawn since Idomeneus had gone off with his beaked ships to Ilion. So I took him to my house and entertained him well, treating him with kindness, for there was plenty in the house; and for the other companions who followed him I collected barley meal from the people and sparkling wine and cattle for sacrifice, so that they could have their fill. There the noble Achaeans stayed twelve days, for a great north wind penned them in and would not let a man

stand on his feet even on land; some harsh god had roused it. On the thirteenth day the wind fell, and they put out to sea."

203 He made the many lies he told seem like the truth; and as she listened her tears flowed and her face melted. As the snow melts on the high mountains, snow that the west wind has shed and the east wind thaws, and as it melts the rivers run full: so her lovely cheeks melted as she wept, weeping for her husband, who was sitting beside her. And Odysseus pitied his weeping wife in his heart, but his eyes stood as if they were horn or iron, unmoving between their lids; and by craft he hid his tears. When she had had her fill of tearful lamenting, she answered him again and said:

215 "Now, stranger, I think I will put you to the test, to see whether you really 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."

220 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Lady, it is hard to say, when it has been so long; for it is now the twentieth year since he went from there and left my country. But I will tell you how my heart pictures him. Noble Odysseus wore a thick purple cloak, a double one, and the brooch on it was made of gold, with twin sockets for the pins, and on its face there was a design worked in: a hound held a dappled fawn in his forepaws and gripped it as it struggled. Everyone marveled at it, how, though they were of gold, the hound gripped the fawn and strangled it, and the fawn struggled with its feet, trying to escape. And I noticed the tunic on his body, shining like the skin of a dried onion, so soft it was, and it gleamed like the sun. Many women, I tell you, gazed at it in wonder. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart: I do not know whether Odysseus wore these clothes at home, or one of his companions gave them to him when he went aboard the swift ship, or perhaps some host, since Odysseus was dear to many; for

few of the Achaeans were his equal. I too gave him a bronze sword and a double robe, beautiful and purple, and a tunic with a fringe, and I sent him off with honor in his well-benched ship. And a herald went with him, a little older than he was; I will tell you what he was like as well. He was round-shouldered, dark-skinned, curly-haired, and his name was Eurybates; and Odysseus honored him above all his other companions, because he was like-minded with him."

249 So he spoke, and stirred in her a still greater longing to weep, as she recognized the sure tokens Odysseus had told her. When she had had her fill of tearful lamenting, she answered him and said:

253 "Now, stranger, though you were pitied before, you will be dear to me and respected in my halls. For it was I myself who gave him those clothes you speak of; I folded them and brought them from the storeroom, and I fastened on the shining brooch to be his ornament. But I will never welcome him home again, come back to his own native land. It was an evil fate that took Odysseus off in the hollow ship to see Evil-Ilion,[1] that is not to be named."

261 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Revered wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, do not mar your lovely skin any longer, or wear away your heart, weeping for your husband. Not that I blame you at all: any woman mourns the wedded husband she has lost, to whom she has borne children in love, though he be a very different man from Odysseus, who they say was like the gods. But stop your weeping and listen to what I say; for I will tell you truly and hide nothing. I have heard of Odysseus's return, that he is near, in the rich land of the Thesprotians, alive; and he is bringing many fine treasures, which he is begging through the land. But he lost his faithful companions and his hollow ship on the wine-dark sea, coming from the island of Thrinacia; for Zeus and Helios were angry with him, because his companions had killed the cattle of

Helios. They all perished in the surging sea; but the wave cast him, on the keel of the ship, onto the shore, into the land of the Phaeacians, who are close kin to the gods. They honored him with all their hearts like a god, and gave him many gifts, and were willing to send him home themselves unharmed. And Odysseus would have been here long ago; but it seemed more profitable to his heart 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. So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me. And he swore to me myself, as he poured an offering in his house, that a ship had been dragged down to the sea and a crew was ready to take Odysseus to his own native land. But he sent me off first, for a ship of Thesprotian men happened to be setting out for Dulichium, rich in wheat. And he showed me all the treasures that Odysseus had gathered: they would feed one man after another down to the tenth generation, so much treasure 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 oak of the towering leaves, how he should return to his own native land after being so long away, openly or in secret. So he is safe, and he will come very soon; he will not be far from his friends and his native land much longer. But still I will give you my oath. Let Zeus be my witness now, first, highest and best of the gods, and the hearth of excellent Odysseus to which I have come: all this will surely be fulfilled as I tell you. Within this very year Odysseus will come here, as this month wanes and the next begins."

308 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Stranger, if only this word of yours might be fulfilled! Then you would soon know my kindness and many gifts from me, so that anyone who met you would call you blessed. But this is how my heart forebodes it, and so it will be: Odysseus will not come home again, and you will not get your passage home; for there are no masters in the house such

as Odysseus was among men, if he ever was, to send respected strangers on their way and to receive them. But come, maids, wash his feet and make up a bed for him, with bedding and cloaks and shining blankets, so that he can come warm and snug to Dawn of the golden throne. And early tomorrow bathe him and anoint him, so that he can sit inside beside Telemachus in the hall and think of his dinner. And it will be the worse for any of those men who torments him, heart-destroying as he is; he will get nothing more done here, however terribly angry he may be. For how will you learn of me, stranger, whether I surpass other women in mind and shrewd judgment, if you dine in my halls unkempt and in rags? Men's lives are short. The man who is harsh himself and has a harsh mind, all mortals pray for sorrows to come upon him afterward while he lives, and when he is dead they all mock him. But the man who is excellent himself and has an excellent mind, strangers carry his fame far and wide among all men, and many call him good." Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Revered wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, cloaks and shining blankets became hateful to me on the day I left the snowy mountains of Crete behind, going on board the long-oared ship. I will lie as I used to spend my sleepless nights before; for many nights I have passed on a shabby bed and waited for bright Dawn of the lovely throne. Nor is footwashing any pleasure to my heart. No woman shall touch my foot, of those who are servants in your house, unless there is some old woman, ancient and loyal, who has suffered in her heart as much as I have. Her I would not grudge to touch my feet."

349 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Dear stranger, no man so thoughtful has ever come to my house, of all the strangers from far lands who have been my guests, as you are, so thoughtful and so well-spoken in everything you say. I have an old woman with a shrewd mind, who nursed and reared that unhappy man well, tak-

ing him in her arms the moment his mother bore him. She will wash your feet, feeble as she is. Come now, rise, prudent Eurycleia, and wash a man who is the same age as your master. And Odysseus too, I suppose, has feet like these by now, and hands like these; for in misfortune mortals grow old quickly."

361 So she spoke, and the old woman hid her face in her hands and shed hot tears, and she spoke a word of lament:

363 "Ah me, my child, I can do nothing for you! Zeus must have hated you above all men, god-fearing as you were. No mortal ever burned so many fat thigh bones to Zeus who delights in thunder, or so many choice hecatombs, as you gave him, praying that you might come to a sleek old age and raise your glorious son; and now from you alone he has taken away the day of return entirely. So too, I suppose, the women mocked him in strangers' lands far away, when he came to some man's famous house, as all these dogs here mock you, stranger; and to escape their insults and their many shameful words you will not let them wash you. But the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, has told me to, and I am not unwilling. So I will wash your feet, both for Penelope's own sake and for yours, for the heart within me is stirred with sorrows. But come now, take in what I say. Many travel-worn strangers have come here, but I tell you I have never seen anyone so like Odysseus as you are, in build and voice and feet."

382 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Old woman, so everyone says who has seen the two of us with their own eyes, that we are very like each other, just as you yourself have noticed and say."

386 So he spoke, and the old woman took the shining basin she used for washing feet, and poured in plenty of cold water, and then added hot. But Odysseus sat at the hearth, and quickly he turned toward the darkness; for at once he thought in his heart 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, which a boar had once dealt him with its white tusk, when he went to Parnassus to Autolycus and his sons. Autolycus was his mother's noble father, who surpassed all men in thievery and in oaths; a god himself had given him this, Hermes, for he used to burn thigh bones of lambs and kids that pleased him, and the god gladly stood by him. Autolycus had once come to the rich land of Ithaca and found his daughter's son newly born. Eurycleia set the child on his dear knees as he was finishing his supper, and spoke and addressed him:

403 "Autolycus, find a name yourself now to give your daughter's dear son; he is the child of many prayers." Then Autolycus answered her and said: "My son-in-law and my daughter, give him the name I tell you. Since I have come here as one who has been angry with many, men and women alike, over the much-nourishing earth, let Odysseus be his name, a name with a meaning.[2] And when he is grown and comes to his mother's family, to the great house at Parnassus where my possessions are, I will give him some of them and send him home rejoicing."

413 For the sake of those gifts Odysseus went there, so that Autolycus would give him glorious gifts. Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus welcomed him with their hands and with gentle words; and Amphithea, his mother's mother, threw her arms around Odysseus and kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes. Autolycus called on his glorious sons to prepare a dinner, and they heard his urging and at once brought in a bull five years old. They flayed it and dressed it and cut it all into joints, and chopped it skillfully and pierced it with spits, and roasted it carefully and divided the portions. So all day long until the sun went down they feasted, and no heart lacked its share of the equal feast. When the sun went down and darkness came on, then they lay down and took the gift of sleep.

428 When early-born Dawn appeared, the rose-fingered, they went out to the hunt, the dogs and the sons of Autolycus themselves, and noble Odysseus went with them. They climbed the steep mountain of Parnassus, clothed in forest, and soon came to its windy hollows. The sun was just striking the fields, rising from the gently flowing, deep-streaming Ocean, when the beaters came to a glen. Before them went the dogs, searching out the tracks, and behind came the sons of Autolycus, and noble Odysseus went with them, close behind the dogs, brandishing his long-shadowed spear. There in a dense thicket lay a great boar. The force of the wet winds did not blow through it, nor did the shining sun strike it with his rays, nor did the rain pierce it through, so dense it was, and there was a great heap of fallen leaves in it. The noise of the feet of men and dogs came around the boar as they pressed on, driving the game, and he came out of his lair to face them, his bristles raised high and fire flashing from his eyes, and stood close to them. Odysseus was the very first to rush at him, holding up the long spear in his strong hand, eager to wound him; but the boar was quicker and struck him above the knee, and tore away much flesh with his tusk, slashing sideways, but did not reach the bone of the man. And Odysseus struck him, hitting him on the right shoulder, and the point of the shining spear went clean through; and the boar fell in the dust with a scream, and his life flew from him. Then the dear sons of Autolycus busied themselves over him, and they bound up the wound of excellent, godlike Odysseus skillfully, and stopped the black blood with a charm, and quickly went back to their dear father's house. Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus healed him well and gave him glorious gifts, and quickly sent him home rejoicing to his dear native land, to Ithaca. His father and his lady mother rejoiced at his return and asked him everything, how he came by the scar; and he told them well how a

boar had struck him with its white tusk as he hunted, when he went to Parnassus with the sons of Autolycus.

467 This the old woman took between the flats of her hands, and as she felt it she knew it, and let the foot go. The leg dropped into the basin, the bronze rang, and the basin tipped over to one side, and the water spilled out on the ground. Joy and pain seized her heart at once, both her eyes filled with tears, and her full voice was stopped. She touched Odysseus's chin and said to him:

474 "You are Odysseus, surely, dear child. And I did not know you, not until I had touched my master all over."

476 She spoke, and turned her eyes toward Penelope, wanting to show her that her dear husband was there in the house. But Penelope could not look her way or notice, for Athena had turned her mind aside. And 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:

482 "Old mother, why do you want to destroy me? You nursed me yourself at your own breast. And now, after suffering many hardships, I have come in the twentieth year to my native land. But since you have found out, and a god has put it in your heart, be quiet, so that no one else in the halls may learn of it. For I tell you plainly, and it will be fulfilled: if under my hand a god beats down the lordly suitors, I will not spare you, though you are my nurse, when I kill the other maids in my halls."

491 Then prudent Eurycleia said to him: "My child, what a word has escaped the fence of your teeth! You know how steadfast my spirit is, and unyielding; I will keep it like hard stone or iron. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart: if under your hand a god beats down the lordly suitors, then I will tell you which women in the halls dishonor you and which are guiltless."

499 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Old mother, why will you name them? There is no need. I will watch well myself and

know each one. But keep the matter quiet, and leave it to the gods."

503 So he spoke, and the old woman went out through the hall to fetch water for his feet, for all the first had been spilled. When she had washed him and rubbed him richly with oil, Odysseus drew his chair closer to the fire again to warm himself, and hid the scar under his rags.

508 Then prudent Penelope began to speak: "Stranger, I will still ask you a little more myself; for soon it will be the hour for sweet rest, for anyone whom sweet sleep takes hold of, even in his sorrow. But to me a god has given grief beyond measure. By day I take my pleasure in mourning and lamenting, as I see to my own work and the maids' in the house; but when night comes and sleep takes everyone, I lie on my bed, and sharp cares crowd thick about my throbbing heart and torment me as I mourn. As when the daughter of Pandareus, the greenwood nightingale, sings her lovely song when spring has newly come, perched among the thick leaves of the trees, and pours out her voice of many notes, trilling it back and forth, mourning her dear child Itylus, whom once she killed with the bronze in her folly, the son of lord Zethus: so my heart too is divided and stirred this way and that, whether to stay with my son and keep everything secure, my possessions, my maids, and my great high-roofed house, respecting my husband's bed and the talk of the people, or to go now with whichever of the Achaeans is the best, who woos me in the halls and offers bride-gifts beyond counting. My son, while he was still a child and thoughtless, 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 prays me to go away out of the halls, troubled for his property, which the Achaeans are eating up. But come, interpret this dream for me, and listen. I have twenty geese about the house that eat wheat out of the water, and I warm my heart

watching them. And a great eagle with a hooked beak came from the mountain and broke all their necks and killed them; and they lay heaped in the halls, while he rose into the bright upper air. And I wept and wailed, in my dream though it was, and the lovely-haired Achaean women gathered around me as I lamented piteously that the eagle had killed my geese. But he came back and perched on a jutting roof beam, and with a human voice he checked my weeping and said:

546 "'Take heart, daughter of far-famed Icarius. This is no dream but a waking vision of good, which will be fulfilled for you. The geese are the suitors, and I, who was a bird before, an eagle, have now come back as your husband, who will bring a shameful doom on all the suitors.'

551 "So he spoke, and honey-sweet sleep let me go. I looked around and saw the geese in the halls, pecking at the wheat beside the trough, where they always had."

554 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Lady, there is no way to interpret the dream by bending it to another meaning, since Odysseus himself has shown you how he will fulfill it. Destruction is plain to see for the suitors, for all of them, and not one will escape death and doom."

559 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Stranger, dreams are baffling things, hard to read, and not all of them come true for men. For there are two gates of fleeting dreams: one is made of horn, and one of ivory. The dreams that come through the sawn ivory deceive, bringing words that will not be fulfilled; but those that come out through the polished horn bring true things to pass, when a mortal sees them. But I do not think my dread dream came from there; that would be a welcome thing to me and to my son. And I will tell you something else, and you lay it to heart. This dawn that is coming will be a dawn of evil name, which will part me from the house of Odysseus. For now I will set a contest: the

axes that he used to set up in his halls in a row, like the props of a ship's keel, twelve in all; and he would stand far off and shoot an arrow through them.[3] Now I will set this contest for the suitors. Whoever strings the bow most easily in his hands and shoots an arrow through all twelve axes, him I will follow, and leave this house of my marriage, so very beautiful, so full of the means of life, which I think I shall remember even in my dreams."

582 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Revered wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, put off this contest in the house no longer. Odysseus of many wiles will be here before these men can handle this polished bow and string it and shoot an arrow through the iron."

588 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "If you were willing, stranger, to sit beside me in the halls and give me pleasure, sleep would never be shed upon my eyelids. But there is no way for men to go sleepless forever; for the immortals have set a portion for each thing, for mortals on the grain-giving land. So I will go up to my upper room and lie down on my bed, which has become a bed of groaning for me, always wet with my tears, ever since Odysseus went off to see Evil-Ilion, that is not to be named. There I will lie down; but you lie down here in the house, either making a bed on the floor, or let the maids set up a bedstead for you."

600 So saying, she went up to the shining upper rooms, not alone: the other maids went with her too. And when she had gone up to the upper rooms with her women, she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

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1. *Evil-Ilion* (Greek *Kakoïlios*): Penelope's own coinage, "Ilion the evil," for the city she will not call by its name.

2. *Odysseus*: Autolycus derives the name from the Greek verb *odyssomai*, "to be angry, to hate," so that it means something like "man of wrath," one who gives anger and suffers it. Homer plays on the same verb at 1.62, where Athena asks Zeus why he is so angry with Odysseus, and at 5.340 and 5.423, of Poseidon's anger against him.

3. *The axes*: probably iron axe heads without their handles, set upright in a straight line so that their holes (the sockets for the handle, or rings at the butt) lined up; the archer had to shoot one arrow through all twelve. The exact arrangement is uncertain.

Book 20

1 But noble Odysseus made his bed in the forecourt. He spread an untanned oxhide on the ground, and on top of it many fleeces of sheep that the Achaeans had slaughtered, and Eurynome threw a cloak over him when he had lain down. There Odysseus lay awake, plotting evil for the suitors in his heart. And the women came out of the hall, the ones who had long been sleeping with the suitors, laughing and making merry with one another. And the heart in his dear breast was stirred, 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 overbearing suitors for the last and final time; and his heart growled within him. As a bitch standing over her tender puppies growls at a man she does not 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 these words:

18 "Endure, my heart. You endured a viler thing than this once, on the day when the Cyclops, unchecked in his fury, devoured my mighty companions; and you held out, until cunning got you out of the cave when you thought you would die."

22 So he spoke, rebuking the dear heart in his breast; and his heart stayed obedient and endured without ceasing; but he himself tossed this way and that. As when a man turns a paunch full of fat and blood this way and that before a great blazing fire, very eager to have it roasted quickly, so he tossed this way and that, pondering how he could lay hands on the shameless suitors, one man against many. And Athena came close to him, coming down

from heaven in the form of a woman, and she stood over his head and said to him:

33 "Why are you awake again, ill-starred beyond all men? This is your house, and here is your wife in the house, and your son, such a son as any man might wish to have."

36 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Yes, goddess, all this you have said is right. But the heart in my breast is pondering this: how I can lay hands on the shameless suitors, alone as I am, while they are always together inside. And besides, I ponder this greater thing in my mind: even if I kill them, by the will of Zeus and by yours, where can I escape to? I ask you to think about that."

44 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, said to him: "Stubborn man! People trust even a weaker friend, one who is mortal and does not know so many plans. But I am a goddess, who guards you to the end in all your toils. I tell you plainly: even if fifty companies of mortal men stood around the two of us, eager to kill us in battle, even so you would drive off their cattle and their fat sheep. But let sleep take you too. It is a weariness to keep watch all night awake, and soon you will come up out of your troubles."

54 So she spoke, and shed sleep upon his eyelids; and she herself, bright among goddesses, went back to Olympus.

56 While sleep seized him, loosening the cares of his heart, sleep that loosens the limbs, his loyal wife woke, and she wept, sitting up in her soft bed. And when she had wept to her heart's fill, the noble among women prayed first of all to Artemis:

61 "Artemis, lady goddess, daughter of Zeus, I wish you would shoot an arrow into my breast and take my life away now, at once; or else that a storm wind would snatch me up and go carrying me off along the misty ways and cast me down where backward-flowing Ocean pours out. So the storm winds carried off the daughters of Pandareus. The gods had destroyed their parents, and they were left orphans in the halls; and bright Aphrodite tended them

with cheese and sweet honey and sweet wine, and Hera gave them beauty and wisdom beyond all women, and chaste Artemis gave them stature, and Athena taught them to do glorious handiwork. 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 fated and what is not fated for mortal men—meanwhile the Harpies snatched the girls away and gave them to the hateful Erinyes to serve. So may those who hold the halls of Olympus make me vanish, or may lovely-haired Artemis 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 the evil can be borne when a man weeps by day, sorely grieved at heart, but sleep holds him at night—for sleep makes him forget everything, good and bad, once it has covered his eyelids—but on me a god has sent evil dreams as well. For this very night someone lay beside me who looked like him, such as he was when he went with the army; and my heart was glad, for I thought it was not a dream but a waking vision at last."

91 So she spoke, and at once Dawn of the golden throne came. And noble Odysseus heard the sound of her weeping, and 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 outside, and he lifted up his hands and prayed to Zeus:

98 "Father Zeus, if you gods willingly brought me over dry land and sea to my own land, after you had afflicted me so much, let someone of the people waking inside speak a word of omen for me, and outside let some other sign from Zeus appear."

102 So he prayed, and Zeus the counselor heard him, and at once he thundered from gleaming Olympus, from high among the

clouds; and noble Odysseus was glad. And a woman grinding at the mill gave out a word of omen from the house nearby, where the mills of the shepherd of the people stood. At them twelve women in all labored, making barley meal and wheat meal, the marrow of men. The others were asleep, for they had ground their wheat, but this one had not yet stopped, for she was the weakest of them all. She stopped her mill and spoke a word, a sign for her master:

112 "Father Zeus, you who rule over gods and men, you have thundered loudly from the starry sky, and there is no cloud anywhere; surely you are showing this sign to someone. Fulfill now for me too, wretched as I am, the word I speak: may the suitors, on this day, for the last and final time, take their pleasant feast in the halls of Odysseus, they who have loosened my knees with heartbreaking toil as I make their barley meal. May they now dine for the last time!"

120 So she spoke, and noble Odysseus rejoiced at the omen in her words and at the thunder of Zeus; for he thought he would punish the wrongdoers.

122 The other maids gathered throughout the fine house of Odysseus and kindled the tireless fire on the hearth. And Telemachus rose from his bed, a man equal to the gods, and put on his clothes. He slung his sharp sword around his shoulder, bound his fine sandals under his shining feet, and took up his strong spear, tipped with sharp bronze; and he went and stood on the threshold and said to Eurycleia:

129 "Dear old mother, did you honor the stranger in the house with a bed and food, or does he lie just as he is, uncared for? For that is how my mother is, wise though she is: she will rashly honor one man, the worse of mortals, and send the better away without honor."

134 Then prudent Eurycleia said to him: "Child, you should not blame her now, when she is blameless. He sat and drank wine as

long as he wanted, but food, he said, he no longer hungered for; for she asked him. And when he was thinking of rest and sleep, she told the maids to spread a bed for him; but he, like a man utterly wretched and unlucky, would not sleep in a bed and under blankets, but slept on an untanned oxhide and sheep fleeces in the forecourt; and we threw a cloak over him."

144 So she spoke, and Telemachus went out through the hall holding his spear, and two swift hounds went with him. He went to the place of assembly to join the well-greaved Achaeans. And the noble among women, Eurycleia, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor, called to the maids:

149 "Come, some of you, get busy and sweep the house and sprinkle it, and throw purple covers on the well-made chairs; and you others, wipe all the tables with sponges, and clean the mixing bowls and the well-made two-handled cups; and you others, go to the fountain for water and bring it here quickly. The suitors will not be long away from the hall; they will come very early, for today is a feast day for everyone."

157 So she spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. Twenty of them went to the fountain of dark water, and the others worked skillfully there in the house.

160 Then the Achaeans' serving men came in. They split the firewood well and skillfully, and the women came back from the fountain; and after them came the swineherd, driving three fatted hogs, the best he had. These he left to graze in the fine courtyard, and he himself spoke to Odysseus with gentle words:

166 "Stranger, do the Achaeans look on you with more respect now, or do they dishonor you in the hall as before?"

168 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Eumaeus, if only the gods would punish the outrage these men commit in their insolence, plotting reckless deeds in another man's house, with no share of shame!"

172 So they spoke with one another, and Melanthius, the goatherd, came up close to them, driving goats, the best in all the herds, for the suitors' dinner; and two herdsmen came along with him. He tied the goats under the echoing portico, and he himself spoke to Odysseus with taunting words:

178 "Stranger, are you still going to make a nuisance of yourself here in the house, begging from the men? Won't you get out the door? I don't think we two will part now till we've had a taste of each other's fists, since the way you beg is not decent. There are other feasts of the Achaeans."

183 So he spoke, but Odysseus of many wiles said nothing to him; he shook his head in silence, brooding on evil deep within.

185 Third came Philoetius, leader of men, bringing a barren heifer and fat goats for the suitors. Ferrymen had brought them across, the ones who carry other people too, whoever comes to them. He tied the animals well under the echoing portico, and he himself came and stood near the swineherd and asked him:

191 "Who is this stranger, swineherd, newly come to our house? From what people does he claim to be? Where are his family and his native fields? Poor man! In build he looks like a king, a lord. But the gods plunge wandering men into misery, when they spin out trouble even for kings."

197 So he spoke, and he came up and greeted him with his right hand, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

199 "Welcome, old father, stranger! May happiness be yours in time to come, though now you are held fast by many evils. Father Zeus, no other god is more destructive than you. You have no pity on men, though you yourself begot them, but plunge them into misery and wretched pains. I broke into a sweat when I saw you, and my eyes filled with tears as I remembered Odysseus; for I think he too is wandering among men 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 excellent Odysseus, who set me over his cattle in the land of the Cephallenians when I was still a boy. Now they have grown past counting; in no other way could a breed of broad-browed cattle multiply better for a man. But other men tell me to bring them in for themselves to eat, and they care nothing for the son in the halls, and do not tremble at the vengeance of the gods; for they are eager now to divide the possessions of our master, so long gone. And the heart in my dear breast keeps turning this over and over: it would be a very wrong thing, while his son is alive, to go off to another people, cattle and all, to foreign men; but it is worse to stay here and suffer hardships, sitting over cattle that belong to others. I would have fled long ago and gone to some other mighty king, for things are past bearing now; but I still think of that unhappy man, and wonder whether he might come from somewhere and scatter the suitors through the house."

226 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Cowherd, since you seem neither a bad man nor a foolish one, and I see for myself that understanding has come into your mind, I will tell you something 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 excellent 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 herded the cattle said to him: "Stranger, if only the son of Cronus would fulfill this word! Then you would know what my strength is, and how my hands follow it."

238 In the same way Eumaeus prayed to all the gods that wise-hearted Odysseus might come home to his own house.

240 So they spoke with one another. But the suitors were plotting death and doom for Telemachus; and a bird came to them on

their left, an eagle flying high, holding a trembling dove. And Amphinomus spoke and addressed them:

245 "Friends, this plan of ours will not prosper, the murder of Telemachus. Let us think of the feast."

247 So spoke Amphinomus, and his word pleased them. They went into the house of godlike Odysseus and laid their cloaks on the chairs and seats, and they slaughtered great sheep and fat goats, and slaughtered fatted hogs and a heifer of the herd. They roasted the inner parts and served them out, and mixed the wine in the bowls; and the swineherd handed out the cups. Philoetius, leader of men, served them bread in beautiful baskets, and Melanthius poured the wine. And they put out their hands to the good things that lay ready before them.

257 Telemachus, with crafty purpose, seated Odysseus inside the well-built hall by the stone threshold, setting down a shabby stool and a small table for him. He set portions of the inner parts beside him and poured wine into a golden cup, and said to him:

262 "Sit there now among the men and drink your wine. I myself will keep off the insults and the hands of all the suitors, since this is no public house but the house of Odysseus, and he won it for me. And you, suitors, keep your hearts from abuse and your hands from blows, so that no strife and quarrel may arise."

268 So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachus, how boldly he spoke. And Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said among them:

271 "Achaeans, hard as it is, let us accept Telemachus's word; he speaks to us with great threats. Zeus, son of Cronus, would not let us; otherwise we would have silenced him in the halls by now, clear-voiced speaker though he is."

275 So spoke Antinous; but Telemachus paid no heed to his words. Meanwhile the heralds were leading a sacred hecatomb for

the gods through the city, and the long-haired Achaeans gathered beneath the shady grove of far-shooting Apollo.

279 When they had roasted the outer flesh and drawn it off the spits, they divided the portions and feasted on a glorious feast. And those who served set beside Odysseus a portion equal to the one they received themselves; for so Telemachus had ordered, the dear son of godlike Odysseus.

284 But Athena would not let the proud suitors hold back altogether from heartbreaking insult, so that the pain would sink still deeper into the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes. There was among the suitors a man whose mind was set on lawless things; Ctesippus was his name, and he lived in Same. Trusting in his vast wealth, he was wooing the wife of Odysseus, so long gone. He now said to the overbearing suitors:

292 "Hear me, proud suitors, while I say something. The stranger has long had his portion, as is fitting, an equal one; for it is neither fine nor just to slight the guests of Telemachus, whoever comes to this house. But come, let me too give him a guest gift, so that he can give a present himself to the bath-woman or to some other servant in the house of godlike Odysseus."

299 So saying, he threw a cow's hoof with his strong hand, taking it from the basket where it lay. But Odysseus avoided it, ducking his head a little to one side, and in his heart he smiled a grim, sardonic smile; and the hoof struck the well-built wall. Then Telemachus rebuked Ctesippus:

304 "Ctesippus, it turned out much the better for you: you did not hit the stranger, for he avoided the missile himself. 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 your funeral here. So let no one show me unseemly behavior in my house. For now I understand and know each thing, the good and the worse; before, I was still a child. But even so we bear to see

these things, sheep being slaughtered and wine being drunk and bread eaten; for it is hard for one man to restrain many. But come, do me no more harm in your hostility. If you are eager now to kill me myself with the bronze, I would even wish it, and it would be much better to be dead than to see these shameful deeds forever, strangers being mistreated and men dragging the women servants shamefully through the fine house."

320 So he spoke, and they all fell silent and were still. At last Agelaus, son of Damastor, spoke among them:

322 "Friends, no one should take offense at what has been rightly said and attack it with hostile words. Do not mistreat the stranger, or any other of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. But I would say a gentle word to Telemachus and his mother, if it might please the hearts of them both. As long as the hearts in your breasts still hoped that wise-hearted Odysseus would return to his own house, there was no blame in waiting and holding back the suitors in the house; that was the better course, in case Odysseus did return and come back home. But now this is plain: he will never return. So come, sit by your mother and tell her this: to marry whoever is the best man and offers the most, so that you may enjoy all your father's possessions gladly, eating and drinking, and she may keep another man's house."

338 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "No, by Zeus, Agelaus, and by the sorrows of my father, who has perished or is wandering somewhere far from Ithaca, I am not delaying my mother's marriage. I urge her to marry whom she will, and I offer gifts beyond telling besides. But I am ashamed to drive her out of the hall against her will with a harsh word. May the god never bring that about."

345 So spoke Telemachus. And Pallas Athena roused unquenchable laughter among the suitors and drove their wits astray. They were laughing now with jaws that were not their own, and the

meat they were eating was all smeared with blood; their eyes filled with tears, and their hearts foreboded lamentation. And Theoclymenus, godlike in looks, spoke among them:

351 "Ah, wretched men, what evil is this you suffer? Your heads and your faces and your knees beneath are wrapped in night. A sound of wailing has blazed up, your cheeks are wet with tears, and the walls and the fine panels between the pillars are spattered with blood. The doorway is full of ghosts, and the courtyard full too, hastening down to Erebus into the darkness; the sun has perished out of the sky, and an evil mist has come rushing over all."

358 So he spoke, and they all laughed sweetly at him. And Eurymachus, son of Polybus, began to speak among them:

360 "This stranger newly come from somewhere else is out of his mind. Quick, young men, send him out of the house to go to the place of assembly, since he finds it like night in here."

363 Then Theoclymenus, godlike in looks, said to him: "Eurymachus, I do not ask you to give me guides. I have eyes and ears and both my feet, and a mind in my breast that is not badly made. With these I will go out the door, for I see evil coming upon you, which not one of the suitors will escape or avoid, you who in the house of godlike Odysseus insult men and plot reckless deeds."

371 So saying, he went out of the stately house and came to Peiraeus, who welcomed him kindly. And all the suitors, looking at one another, tried to provoke Telemachus by laughing at his guests; and one of the arrogant young men would say:

376 "Telemachus, no one is unluckier in his guests than you. What a fellow you keep here, this scrounging wanderer, wanting bread and wine, no use for work or for strength, just a burden on the earth! And this other one stood up to prophesy. If you would listen to me, it would be much better: let us throw these strangers into a many-oared ship and send them to the Sicels, where they would fetch you a good price."

384 So the suitors spoke; but he paid no heed to their words, and in silence he kept looking at his father, always waiting for the moment when Odysseus would lay hands on the shameless suitors.

387 But the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, had set her beautiful chair facing them, and she heard every man's words in the halls. For they had made their dinner ready with laughter, a sweet and satisfying one, since they had slaughtered a great many beasts; but no supper could have been 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

1 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, put it into the mind of the daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, to set the bow and the gray iron before the suitors in the halls of Odysseus, to be the contest and the beginning of slaughter. She climbed the high stairway of her house and took in her strong hand the beautiful curved key of bronze, which had a handle of ivory, and she went with her women attendants to the storeroom at the far end of the house, where her lord's treasures lay: bronze and gold and iron, wrought with much labor. There too lay the back-bending bow and the quiver that held the arrows, and many arrows were in it, bringers of groans. These were gifts that a guest-friend had given Odysseus when they met in Lacedaemon: Iphitus, son of Eurytus, a man like the immortals. The two of them had met in Messene, in the house of wise Ortilochus. Odysseus had gone there after 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. On that errand Odysseus had made the long journey as an envoy while he was still a boy, for his father and the other elders had sent him. And Iphitus had come in search of horses he had lost, twelve mares, with hardworking mule foals still at the teat. These afterward became his death and his doom, when he came to the son of Zeus, the strong-hearted man Heracles, who knew great deeds; Heracles killed him in his own house, though he was his guest. Ruthless man, he did not respect the watchful eye of the gods, nor the table he had set before him; he killed the man and kept the strong-hoofed horses for himself in his halls. It was

while he was asking after these that Iphitus met Odysseus and gave him the bow, which great Eurytus had carried once, and which he had left to his son when he died in his high house. Odysseus gave him a sharp sword and a stout spear, the beginning of a close friendship between guest and host; but they never came to know each other at table, for before that the son of Zeus killed Iphitus, son of Eurytus, a man like the immortals, who had given him the bow. Noble Odysseus never took it with him on the black ships when he went to war; it lay at home in his halls as a remembrance of a dear friend, and he carried it in his own land.

42 When she, noble among women, came to that storeroom and stepped onto the oak threshold, which a carpenter had once planed with skill and made true to the line, and fitted the doorposts into it and hung the shining doors, at once she slipped the thong quickly from the hook, put in the key, and aimed it straight and shot back the bolts of the doors. They bellowed as a bull bellows grazing in a meadow; so loud the beautiful doors roared when the key struck them, and they flew open before her. She stepped up onto a high platform, where the chests stood that held the fragrant clothes. Reaching up from there, she took the bow down from its peg, case and all, the shining case that held it. Then she sat down there and laid it on her knees and wept aloud, and she drew her lord's bow out of its case. When she had had her fill of tearful weeping, she went to the hall, among the lordly suitors, carrying in her hand the back-bending bow and the quiver that held the arrows, and many arrows were in it, bringers of groans. With her the maids carried a chest in which lay much iron and bronze, the gear for her lord's contests. When she, noble among women, came to the suitors, she stood beside a pillar of the well-built roof, holding her shining veil before her cheeks, and a loyal maid stood on either side of her. At once she spoke to the suitors and said:

68 "Hear me, proud suitors, who have fallen upon this house to eat and drink, always, without end, while its master has been long away, and you could offer no other excuse for what you do except your desire to marry me and make me your wife. Come then, suitors, since here is your prize before you. I will set out the great bow of godlike Odysseus, and whoever most easily strings the bow in his hands and shoots an arrow through all twelve axes, with him I will go, and leave this house of my marriage, so beautiful, so full of all good living, which I think I will remember even in my dreams."

80 So she spoke, and she 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, in another place, wept too when he saw his lord's bow. But Antinous rebuked them and spoke to them, calling them by name:

85 "Fools! Country clods, whose thoughts reach no further than the day! You pair of wretches, why do you shed tears and stir up the heart in the lady's breast? Her heart lies in pain enough already, since she has lost her dear husband. Sit and eat in silence, or else go outside to weep, and leave the bow here, a contest for the suitors that will be no plaything; for I do not think this polished bow will be easy to string. There is no man among all those here such as Odysseus was. I saw him myself, and I remember him, though I was still a little child."

96 So he spoke, but the heart in his breast was hoping that he would string the bow and shoot through the iron. In truth he was to be the first to taste an arrow from the hands of excellent Odysseus, whom he was dishonoring then as he sat in the halls, and he was urging on all his companions.

101 Then the sacred strength of Telemachus spoke among them: "Ah! Zeus, the son of Cronus, must surely have made me witless. My dear mother, wise as she is, says that she will follow another man and leave this house, and I laugh and take pleasure in

it with a witless heart. Come then, suitors, since here is your prize before you: a woman whose like there is not now in all the Achaean land, not in sacred Pylos, nor in Argos, nor in Mycenae, nor in Ithaca itself, nor on the dark mainland. You know this yourselves; why should I praise my mother? But come, do not put it off with excuses, and do not turn away any longer from stringing the bow, so that we may see. I might even try the bow myself. If I string it and shoot through the iron, then my lady mother would not leave this house and go off with another, to my grief, while I was left behind, a man already able to win his father's fine prizes."

118 He spoke, and he sprang to his feet and threw the crimson cloak from his shoulders, and took the sharp sword from his shoulders. First he set up the axes, digging one long trench for them all and making it true to the line, and he stamped the earth down around them. Amazement took hold of all who watched, 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, straining to draw it, and three times he let up on his strength, though he hoped in his heart to string it and shoot through the iron. And now he would have strung it, pulling with all his might a fourth time, but Odysseus shook his head and checked him, eager as he was. Then the sacred strength of Telemachus spoke among them again:

131 "Ah! I will be a coward and a weakling all my days, or else I am too young and cannot yet trust my hands to defend me against a man when someone picks a quarrel first. But come, you who are stronger than I am, try the bow, and let us finish the contest."

136 With these words he set the bow down from him on the ground, leaning it against the close-fitted, polished doors, and leaned the swift arrow there against the fine hook of the bow; then he sat down again on the chair from which he had risen.

140 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them: "Get up in order, all you companions, from left to right, beginning from the place where the wine is poured."

143 So Antinous spoke, and his word pleased them. First to stand up was Leodes, son of Oenops, who was their soothsayer and always sat in the farthest corner beside the fine mixing bowl. He alone hated their reckless deeds and was indignant with all the suitors. 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 that his hands grew tired as he pulled, his soft, unworked hands, and he said to the suitors:

152 "Friends, I cannot string it; let someone else take it. This bow will rob many princes of heart and life, since it is far better to die than to live on and fail of the thing for whose sake we always gather here, waiting day after day. Now a man still hopes in his heart and longs to marry Penelope, the wife of Odysseus. But when he has tried the bow and seen how it is, let him go and woo some other of the Achaean women in their lovely robes, and seek her with his bride-gifts; and then Penelope may marry the man who offers most and comes as her fate."

163 So he spoke, and he set the bow down from him, leaning it against the close-fitted, polished doors, and leaned the swift arrow there against the fine hook of the bow; then he sat down again on the chair from which he had risen. But Antinous rebuked him and spoke to him, calling him by name: "Leodes, what a word has escaped the fence of your teeth, a dreadful word and a grievous one; it angers me to hear it! So this bow will rob princes of heart and life, just because you cannot string it? Your lady mother did not bear you to be a man who draws bows and shoots arrows; but others among the lordly suitors will soon string it."

175 So he spoke, and he called to Melanthius, the goatherd: "Come, Melanthius, light a fire in the halls, and set a big stool

beside it with a fleece on it, and bring out a big cake of the fat that is inside, so that we young men may warm the bow and rub it with grease, and try it and finish the contest."

181 So he spoke, and Melanthius at once kindled a tireless fire, and he brought a stool and set it beside it with a fleece on it, and brought out a big cake of the fat that was inside. With this the young men warmed the bow and tried it, but they could not string it; they fell far short of the strength.

186 Antinous still held back, and Eurymachus, godlike in looks, the leaders of the suitors, who were by far the best of them in prowess. Meanwhile two men had gone out of the house together, the cowherd and the swineherd of godlike Odysseus, and noble Odysseus himself went out of the house after them. When they were outside the doors and the courtyard, he spoke to them in gentle words:

193 "Cowherd, and you, swineherd, shall I say something to you, or keep it to myself? My heart tells me to speak. What kind of men would you be in defending Odysseus, if he came from somewhere, all of a sudden like this, and some god brought him? Would you stand with the suitors, or with Odysseus? Tell me as your heart and spirit bid you."

199 Then the man who herded the cattle said to him: "Father Zeus, if only you would fulfill this wish, that that man might come, and some power bring him! Then you would know what my strength is, and how my hands follow it."

203 In the same way Eumaeus prayed to all the gods that wise-hearted Odysseus might come home to his own house.

205 But when he had learned for certain the mind of both of them, he spoke to them again in answer:

207 "Here I am at home, I myself. After many hardships I have come in the twentieth year to my native land. And I know that I come wished for by you two alone of my servants; I have heard no

one else of all the rest pray that I might come back home again. To you two I will tell the truth, how it will be. If under my hand a god beats down the lordly suitors, I will find wives for you both and give you possessions and houses built near mine; and from then on you will be to me comrades of Telemachus, and his brothers. But come, I will show you a clear sign besides, so that you may know me well and be assured in your hearts: the scar the boar gave me with his white tusk long ago, when I went to Parnassus with the sons of Autolycus."

221 With these words he drew the rags back from the great scar. And when the two of them had seen it and taken note of everything, they wept and threw their arms around wise Odysseus, and kissed his head and shoulders in welcome; and Odysseus kissed their heads and hands in the same way. And now the light of the sun would have gone down on their weeping, if Odysseus himself had not held them back and said:

228 "Stop your crying and your lamenting, in case someone comes out of the hall and sees us, and tells them inside as well. Go in one after the other, not all together: I first, and you after me. And let this be the signal. All the others, all 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 into my hands, and tell the women to lock the close-fitted doors of the hall; and if any of them hears groaning or a din of men inside within our walls, let her not run outside, but stay where she is, quietly, at her work. And you, noble Philoetius, I order to lock the gates of the courtyard with the bar, and quickly tie them fast."

242 With these words he went into the stately house, and he went and sat down on the stool from which he had risen; and the two servants of godlike Odysseus went in too.

245 Eurymachus by now was handling the bow, warming it on this side and that in the light of the fire; but even so he could not

string it, and his proud heart groaned aloud. Troubled, he spoke out and said:

249 "Ah! I am grieved, for myself and for all of us. It is not so much the marriage I lament, though I am grieved at that; there are many other Achaean women, some in sea-girt Ithaca itself, and some in other cities. But that we should fall so far short of godlike Odysseus in strength that we cannot string his bow! It will be a disgrace even for men to come to hear of."

256 Then Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said to him: "Eurymachus, it will not be so, and you know it yourself. Today throughout the land is the feast of the god, a holy day; who would bend a bow? No, lay it down and be easy. As for the axes, what if we let them all stand? I do not think anyone will come into the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes, and carry them off. Come, let the wine-pourer begin with the cups, so that we may pour our offerings and set aside the curved bow. And in the morning tell Melanthius, the goatherd, to bring the goats that are by far the best in all the herds, so that we may lay thigh bones on the altar to Apollo, famed for his bow, and then try the bow and finish the contest."

269 So Antinous spoke, and his word pleased them. The heralds poured water over their hands, and the young men filled the mixing bowls to the brim with drink and served it out to all, first pouring a few drops into each cup for the gods. But when they had poured their offerings and drunk as much as their hearts desired, Odysseus of many wiles spoke among them with crafty purpose:

275 "Hear me, suitors of the glorious queen, so that I may say what the heart in my breast commands me. Eurymachus above all, and Antinous, godlike in looks, I beg, since this word too he spoke rightly: stop with the bow for now, and leave it to the gods; in the morning the god will give the victory to whom he will. But come, give me the polished bow, so that among you I may test my hands and strength, whether I still have such power as there once was in

my supple limbs, or whether my wandering and my want of care have already destroyed it."

285 So he spoke, and they were all outrageously indignant, afraid that he might string the polished bow. And Antinous rebuked him and spoke to him, calling him by name:

288 "Wretched stranger, there is not a scrap of sense in you. Are you not content that you feast at your ease among us overbearing men, and are not shut out of your share of the feast, and that you hear our words and our talk? No other stranger and beggar hears our words. It is wine that is wounding you, honey-sweet wine, which harms others too, whoever gulps it down and does not drink in measure. Wine it was that crazed the Centaur too, far-famed Eurytion, in the hall of great-hearted Peirithous, when he went among the Lapiths; and when he had crazed his wits with wine, he did evil deeds in his madness through the house of Peirithous. Grief took hold of the heroes; they sprang up and dragged him out through the porch, and cut off his ears and his nose with the pitiless bronze, and he went off, crazed in his wits, carrying his ruin with a witless heart. From that time on there has been a feud between Centaurs and men, but he was the first to bring harm upon himself, heavy with wine. So I proclaim great trouble for you too, if you string the bow. You will find no kindness from anyone in our land; we will send you at once in a black ship to King Echetus, the maimer of all mortals, and from there you will not escape alive. So drink at your ease, and do not quarrel with men younger than you."

311 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Antinous, it is neither fine nor just to slight the guests of Telemachus, whoever comes to this house. Do you think that if the stranger strings the great bow of Odysseus, trusting in his hands and his strength, he will lead me home and make me his wife? He himself, I suppose, has no such

hope in his breast. Let none of you sit here at the feast grieving his heart on that account, since it is not fitting at all."

320 Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered her: "Daughter of Icarius, prudent Penelope, we do not think he will lead you home; that would not be fitting. But we are ashamed of what men and women will say, that some baser Achaean might say one day: 'Far weaker men are wooing the wife of an excellent man, and they cannot string his polished bow. But another man, a beggar, came wandering in and easily strung the bow and shot through the iron.' So they will say, and this would be a disgrace to us." Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Eurymachus, there is no way for men to have good repute in the land who dishonor and devour the house of a prince. Why do you make a disgrace of this? This stranger is very tall and well built, and he claims to be the son of a good father. Come, give him the polished bow, so that we may see. For I will tell you this, and it will be brought to pass: if he strings it, and Apollo grants him the glory, I will dress him in a cloak and a tunic, fine clothes, and give him a sharp javelin to keep off dogs and men, and a two-edged sword, and give him sandals for his feet, and send him wherever his heart and spirit bid him go."

343 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered her: "My mother, as for the bow, no man among the Achaeans has a better right than I to give it or refuse it to whomever I will, none of all who rule in rocky Ithaca, nor of all who rule on the islands toward horse-pasturing Elis. None of these will force me against my will, even if I chose to give this bow to the stranger outright to take away. But go to your rooms and see to your own work, the loom and the distaff, and tell your maids to go about their work. The bow will be the concern of men, all of them, and of me most of all; for the power in this house is mine."

354 She was amazed, and went back to her rooms, for she laid to heart the thoughtful words of her son. She went up to the upper rooms with her women attendants, and there she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, until gray-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

359 Now 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 arrogant young men would say:

362 "Where are you taking the curved bow, you miserable swineherd, you wandering fool? Soon the swift dogs that you raised yourself will eat you among your pigs, alone, away from men, if Apollo is gracious to us, and the other immortal gods."

366 So they spoke, and he set the bow down where he stood, in fear, because many men were shouting at him in the halls. But Telemachus from the other side called out to him threateningly:

369 "Old father, carry the bow on; you will soon be sorry if you obey everyone. Watch out, or I, younger though I am, will chase you off to the country, pelting you with stones, for I am the stronger. If only I were as much stronger in hands and might than all the suitors who are in the house! Then I would soon send one of them packing in misery out of our house, for they are plotting evil."

376 So he spoke, and all the suitors laughed sweetly at him and let go of their bitter anger against Telemachus. The swineherd carried the bow through the house and went up to wise Odysseus and put it into his hands. Then he called out the nurse Eurycleia and said to her:

381 "Telemachus bids you, prudent Eurycleia, to lock the close-fitted doors of the hall; and if any of the women hears groaning or a din of men inside within our walls, let her not run outside, but stay where she is, quietly, at her work."

386 So he spoke, and her word stayed without wings, and she locked the doors of the stately halls.

388 Silently Philoetius slipped out of the house and locked the gates of the well-fenced courtyard. Under the portico lay the cable of a curved ship, made of papyrus, and with it he tied the gates fast, and then went in himself. He went and sat down on the stool from which he had risen, watching Odysseus. Odysseus was already handling the bow, turning it every way and testing it on this side and that, to see whether worms had eaten the horn while its master was away. And one would say, looking at his neighbor:

397 "He has an eye for bows, a sly one with them. Maybe he has bows like this lying at home himself, or he has a mind to make one, the way he turns it this way and that in his hands, this vagabond up to no good."

401 And another of the arrogant young men would say: "I wish he may have as much luck in life as he will have in ever stringing that."

404 So the suitors spoke. But Odysseus of many wiles, as soon as he had lifted the great bow and looked it over on every side, as a man skilled with the lyre and in song easily stretches a string around a new peg, making fast at both ends the twisted sheep gut, so without effort Odysseus strung the great bow. He took it in his right hand and tried the string, and it sang sweetly under his touch, with a voice like a swallow's. Great grief came upon the suitors, and the color of all of them changed. Zeus thundered loudly, showing his signs, and much-enduring noble Odysseus rejoiced that the son of crooked-counseling Cronus had sent him an omen. He took up a swift arrow that lay bare beside him on the table; the others were stored inside the hollow quiver, the ones the Achaeans were soon to taste. He laid it on the bridge of the bow and drew back the string and the notched arrow, sitting right there on his stool, and let the arrow fly, aiming straight ahead; and

he did not miss one of the axes, from the first handle-hole on, but the bronze-weighted arrow went clean through them and out the far end. Then he said to Telemachus:

424 "Telemachus, the stranger sitting in your halls does not shame you. I did not miss the mark, and I did not labor long in stringing the bow. My strength is still firm in me, not as the suitors say in their scorn when they mock me. But now it is time for the Achaeans to have their supper made ready while it is still light, and then to make merry in another way, with song and the lyre; for those are the crowning delights of a feast."

431 He spoke, and nodded with his brows. And Telemachus, the dear son of godlike Odysseus, girded his sharp sword about him and closed his hand on his spear, and stood beside him at his chair, armed in gleaming bronze.

Book 22

1 Then Odysseus of many wiles stripped off his rags and sprang onto the great threshold with the bow and the quiver full of arrows, and he poured out the swift arrows there before his feet and spoke among the suitors: "This contest, which was no plaything, is finished at last. Now I will find out about another mark, one that no man has ever hit yet, whether I can strike it, and Apollo grant me the glory."

8 He spoke, and he aimed a bitter arrow at Antinous. Antinous was just about to lift a fine goblet, a two-handled cup of gold, and he had it in his hands already so that he might drink of the wine, and death was not in his thoughts. Who would think that one man among many at a feast, however strong he might be, would bring evil death and black fate upon him? But Odysseus aimed and struck him with the arrow in the throat, and the point went clean through the soft neck. He sank to one side, and the cup fell from his hand as he was struck, and 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 the food spilled to the ground, and the bread and roast meat were fouled. The suitors broke into an uproar through the house when they saw the man fall, and they sprang up from their chairs, driven in panic through the hall, looking everywhere along the well-built walls; but there was no shield anywhere, and no stout spear to take. They scolded Odysseus with angry words:

27 "Stranger, you will pay for shooting at men. You will never face another contest; now your sheer destruction is certain. For

now you have killed the man who was by far the best of the young men in Ithaca. So the vultures will eat you here."

31 So each man spoke, because they thought he had not killed the man on purpose. Fools, they did not see that the ropes of destruction had been made fast over every one of them. Odysseus of many wiles looked at them from under his brows and said:

35 "You dogs, you thought I would never come home again from the land of the Trojans, and so you wasted my house and forced the women servants to lie with you, and while I was still alive you wooed my wife, with no fear of the gods who hold the wide sky, nor of any blame from men to come. Now the ropes of destruction have been made fast over every one of you."

42 So he spoke, and pale fear took hold of them all, and each man looked around for a way to escape sheer destruction. Eurymachus alone answered him and said:

45 "If you really are Odysseus of Ithaca come home, what you say is right, all that the Achaeans have done, many reckless things in the halls and many in the fields. But the man who was to blame for all of it already lies dead, Antinous. He was the one who set this work going, not so much because he wanted or needed the marriage, but with something else in mind, which the son of Cronus did not bring to pass for him: that he might be king himself over the people of well-built Ithaca, and that he might lie in ambush and kill your son. Now he has been killed, as was his due; but you, spare your people. We will make it good to you afterward, gathering it from the land, for all that has been drunk and eaten in your halls; each of us will bring you a recompense worth twenty oxen, and pay you back in bronze and gold until your heart is warmed. Until then no one can blame you for being angry."

60 Odysseus of many wiles looked at him from under his brows and said: "Eurymachus, not even if you gave me all your fathers' wealth, all that you have now and whatever more you could add to

it from anywhere, not even so would I keep my hands from slaughter until the suitors had paid for all their outrage. Now the choice is before you, to fight face to face or to run, whoever can escape death and the fates. But I do not think any of you will escape sheer destruction."

68 So he spoke, and their knees and their hearts went slack where they stood. Then Eurymachus spoke among them a second time:

70 "Friends, this man will not hold back his unconquerable hands. Now that he has the polished bow and the quiver, he will shoot from the polished threshold until he has killed us all. So let us remember the joy of battle. Draw your swords and hold up the tables against his arrows of swift death, and let us all fall on him together, and see if we can drive him off the threshold and out of the doorway and get into the town, and raise the alarm as fast as we can. Then this man would soon have shot his last."

79 So he spoke, and he drew his sharp sword, bronze, honed on both edges, and sprang at him with a terrible cry. At the same moment noble Odysseus let fly an arrow and struck him in the chest beside the nipple, and drove the swift shaft into his liver. The sword dropped from his hand to the ground, and he doubled over and fell sprawling across the table, and spilled the food and the two-handled cup to the ground. He struck the earth with his forehead in agony, and kicking with both feet he shook the chair, and a mist poured over his eyes.

89 Then Amphinomus rushed at glorious Odysseus, springing straight at him, and he drew his sharp sword, to see if he might somehow make him give way from the doorway. But Telemachus was too quick for him: he struck him from behind with his 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 and left the long-shadowing spear

where it was in Amphinomus, for he was badly afraid that, while he was pulling out the long-shadowing spear, one of the Achaeans might rush at him and drive a sword into him, or strike him as he bent forward. He set off running, and very quickly he reached his dear father, and standing close beside him he spoke, and his words had wings:

101 "Father, I will bring you a shield now, and two spears, and a helmet all of bronze that fits close to your temples; and as I go I will arm myself, and give other armor to the swineherd and the cowherd. It is better to be armed."

105 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Run and bring them, while I still have arrows to defend myself, so they do not push me out of the doorway while I am alone."

108 So he spoke, and Telemachus obeyed his dear father, and he went to the storeroom where the famous armor lay. From there he took out four shields and eight spears and four bronze helmets crested with horsehair, and he went carrying them, and very quickly he reached his dear father. First of all he put the bronze on his own body; and the two servants likewise put on the fine armor, and they stood around wise, crafty-minded Odysseus.

116 As for Odysseus, as long as he had arrows to defend himself, he kept aiming and shooting down one suitor after another in his house, and they fell thick and close together. But when the arrows ran out as their lord kept shooting, he leaned the bow against the doorpost of the well-built hall to stand against the shining wall of the entrance, and he himself put a shield of four layers about his shoulders, and on his mighty head he set a well-made helmet with a horsehair crest, and the plume nodded terribly above it; and he took up two stout spears tipped with bronze.

126 Now there was a raised side 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 by well-fitted doors. Odysseus told

the noble swineherd to watch this, standing close beside it, for there was only one way to come at it. Then Agelaus spoke among them and called out his word to all:

132 "Friends, will someone not go up through the side door and tell the people, and raise the alarm as fast as we can? Then this man would soon have shot his last."

135 Then Melanthius, the goatherd, said to him: "It cannot be done, Zeus-nurtured Agelaus. The fine gates of the courtyard are terribly close, and the mouth of the passage is hard to get through; one man could hold back all of us, if he were brave. But come, let me bring you armor from the storeroom to arm yourselves; for it is in there, I think, and nowhere else, that Odysseus and his shining son have put the armor away."

142 With these words Melanthius, the goatherd, went up by the gaps in the hall wall to the storerooms of Odysseus. From there he took out twelve shields, as many spears, and as many bronze helmets crested with horsehair, and he went off, and very quickly he brought them and gave them to the suitors. And then the knees and the heart of Odysseus went slack, when he saw them putting on armor and brandishing long spears in their hands; the task before him looked huge. At once he spoke to Telemachus, and his words had wings:

151 "Telemachus, surely one of the women in the halls is stirring up an evil fight against us, or else Melanthius."

153 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "Father, I myself made this mistake, and no one else is to blame. I left the close-fitted door of the storeroom ajar, and their lookout was better than ours. But go, noble Eumaeus, shut the door of the storeroom, and see whether it is one of the women who is doing this, or Melanthius, the son of Dolius, as I think."

160 So they spoke with one another, and Melanthius, the goatherd, went back again to the storeroom to bring more of the

fine armor. But the noble swineherd saw him, and at once he spoke to Odysseus, who was near:

164 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, there is that ruinous man again, the one we suspected, going to the storeroom. Tell me truly: shall I kill him, if I prove the stronger, or bring him here to you, so that he may pay for the many outrages he has devised in your house?"

170 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Telemachus and I will keep the lordly suitors penned inside the hall, however eager they are. You two twist his feet and his hands behind him and throw him into the storeroom, and tie boards to his back, and fasten a plaited rope to him and haul him up a tall pillar until he is close to the rafters, so that he may stay alive a long time and suffer cruel pains."

178 So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. They went to the storeroom, and the man inside did not see them. He was searching for armor in the far corner of the storeroom, and the two of them stood waiting on either side of the doorposts. When Melanthius, the goatherd, was stepping over the threshold, carrying a fine helmet in one hand and in the other a broad old shield, flecked with mildew, which the hero Laertes had carried as a young man (it had long been lying there, and the stitching of its straps had come loose), the two of them sprang on him and seized him, and dragged him inside by the hair, and threw him on the floor in anguish, and bound his feet and hands together with a painful bond, twisting them well behind him, as the son of Laertes, much-enduring noble Odysseus, had ordered. They fastened a plaited rope to him and hauled him up a tall pillar until he was close to the rafters. And mocking him, you spoke to him, Eumaeus, swineherd:

195 "Now, Melanthius, you will keep watch all night long, lying in a soft bed, as is right for you. Nor will early-born Dawn of the

golden throne escape you, coming up from the streams of Ocean, at the hour when you bring the goats to the suitors to make ready a feast in the house."

200 So he was left there, stretched in the deadly bond, and the two of them put on their armor, shut the shining door, and went to wise, crafty-minded Odysseus. There they stood, breathing fury, four on the threshold, and in the hall the others, many and brave. And close to them came Athena, daughter of Zeus, in the likeness of Mentor, in form and in voice. Odysseus rejoiced when he saw her, and said:

208 "Mentor, help me fend off ruin, and remember your dear companion, who often did you good. You are my own age."

210 So he spoke, guessing that it was Athena, rouser of armies. The suitors on the other side shouted in the halls, and the first to rebuke her was Agelaus, son of Damastor:

213 "Mentor, do not 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 men, father and son, then you will be killed among them for what you have in mind to do in the halls; you will pay for it with your own head. And when we have taken away your strength with the bronze, all your possessions, those in your house and those outside it, we will mix with the goods of Odysseus; and we will not let your sons live in your halls, nor your daughters, nor your loyal wife go about the town of Ithaca."

224 So he spoke, and Athena grew all the angrier in her heart, and she scolded Odysseus with angry words:

226 "Odysseus, there is no firm strength in you any more, no valor, such as there was when for nine years you fought the Trojans for white-armed Helen, daughter of a noble father, without ceasing, always; and you killed many men in dreadful warfare, and by your counsel the wide-streeted city of Priam was taken.

How is it that now, when you have come to your own house and your own possessions, you lament instead of showing your valor against the suitors? Come here, friend, stand beside me and watch my work, so that you may see what kind of man Mentor, son of Alcimus, is in repaying kindnesses among enemies."

236 She spoke, but she did not yet give him the victory that turns a battle; she was still testing the strength and valor of Odysseus and of his glorious son. She herself flew up and sat on a rafter of the smoky hall, like a swallow to look at.

241 Agelaus, son of Damastor, urged the suitors on, and Eurynomus and Amphimedon and Demoptolemus, and Peisander, son of Polyctor, and wise Polybus; for these were by far the best in prowess of the suitors who were still alive and fighting for their lives. The rest the bow and the thick-falling arrows had already brought down. Agelaus spoke among them and called out his word to all:

248 "Friends, now this man will hold back his unconquerable hands. Mentor has gone off, after his empty boasting, and they are left alone at the front of the doors. So do not all throw your long spears at once, but come, you six throw first, and see if Zeus will grant that Odysseus is hit and we win the glory. The others are no worry, once he has fallen."

255 So he spoke, and they all threw as he ordered, eagerly; but Athena made all their throws go for nothing. 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 when they had dodged the spears of the suitors, much-enduring noble Odysseus began to speak among them:

262 "Friends, now I say that we too should throw into the crowd of the suitors, who are eager to strip us of our armor, on top of their former wrongs."

265 So he spoke, and they all threw their sharp spears, aiming straight ahead. Odysseus killed Demoptolemus, Telemachus Euryades, the swineherd Elatus, and the man who herded the cattle killed Peisander. These all bit the vast floor together with their teeth, and the suitors fell back into the far end of the hall; and the others rushed forward and pulled the spears out of the dead.

272 Again the suitors threw their sharp spears, eagerly, and Athena made most of their throws go for nothing. 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 grazed Eumaeus on the shoulder over his shield; the spear flew over and fell to the ground. Then again those around wise, crafty-minded Odysseus threw their sharp spears into the crowd of the suitors. Then Odysseus, sacker of cities, struck Eurydamas, Telemachus Amphimedon, and the swineherd Polybus; and then the man who herded the cattle struck Ctesippus in the chest, and spoke over him in triumph:

287 "Son of Polytherses, lover of jeers, never again give way to folly and talk big, but leave the word to the gods, since they are far stronger. This is your guest gift in return for the hoof you once gave to godlike Odysseus when he was going begging through the house."

292 So spoke the herdsman of the curving-horned cattle. And Odysseus wounded the son of Damastor at close quarters with his long spear, and Telemachus wounded Leiocritus, son of Evenor, with his spear full in the flank and drove the bronze clean through; he fell face down and struck the ground full with his forehead. Then Athena held up the man-destroying aegis, high up from the roof, and their minds were crazed with terror. They fled through the hall like cattle in a herd that the darting gadfly sets upon and

drives wild in the season of spring, when the days are long. And the others, like vultures with crooked talons and curved beaks that come down from the mountains and swoop upon the birds, and the birds, shrinking from the clouds, dart low over the plain, but the vultures leap on them and kill them, and there is no defense and no escape, and men take delight in the hunt: so they rushed upon the suitors through the house and struck them right and left, and a hideous groaning rose as heads were struck, and the whole floor ran with blood.

310 But Leodes rushed forward and clasped the knees of Odysseus, and he begged him, and his words had wings:

312 "I clasp your knees, Odysseus; respect me and have pity on me. I tell you that I never said or did anything reckless to any of the women in the halls; no, I tried to stop the other suitors when any of them did such things. But they would not listen to me and keep their hands from evil, and so through their recklessness they have met a shameful doom. And I, their soothsayer, who have done nothing, I will lie among them, since there is no thanks hereafter for good deeds."

320 Odysseus of many wiles looked at him from under his brows and said: "If you claim to be their soothsayer, you must often have prayed in the halls that the end of my sweet homecoming might be far away, and that my dear wife might go off with you and bear you children. So you will not escape death that lays men out in pain."

326 So he spoke, and he took up in his strong hand a sword that lay there, which Agelaus had let fall to the ground when he was killed, and with it he struck him full on the neck, and while he was still speaking his head was mingled with the dust.

330 But the bard, Phemius, son of Terpis, who had been made to sing among the suitors, was still trying to escape black fate. He stood with the clear-toned lyre in his hands close to the raised

side door, and his mind was divided: should he slip out of the hall and sit down by the well-built altar of great Zeus of the Courtyard, where Laertes and Odysseus had burned many thigh bones of oxen, or should he rush forward and beg Odysseus at his knees? As he pondered, this seemed to him the better way, 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 clasped Odysseus by the knees, and he begged him, and his words had wings:

344 "I clasp your knees, Odysseus; respect me and have pity on me. You yourself will be sorry 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 all kinds of songs. I am fit to sing before you as before a god; so do not be eager to cut my throat. Telemachus too, your dear son, could tell you this, that it was not by my own will or from any need that I kept coming to your house to sing for the suitors at their feasts; they were far more and far stronger, and they brought me by force."

354 So he spoke, and the sacred strength of Telemachus heard him, and at once he spoke to his father, who was near:

356 "Hold off, and do not strike this man with the bronze; he is innocent. And we will save Medon too, the herald, who always took care of me in our house when I was a child, unless Philoetius or the swineherd has already killed him, or he has run into you as you raged through the house."

361 So he spoke, and Medon heard him, for his mind was wise. He was lying cowering under a chair, wrapped in the newly flayed hide of an ox, trying to escape black fate. At once he got up from under the chair and quickly threw off the oxhide, and then he rushed forward and clasped Telemachus by the knees, and he begged him, and his words had wings:

367 "Friend, here I am. Hold off, and tell your father not to harm me with the sharp bronze in the greatness of his strength, in his anger at the suitors who wasted his possessions in the halls and, fools, paid no honor to you."

371 Odysseus of many wiles smiled at him and said: "Take heart, since this man has saved you and kept you safe, so that you may know in your heart, and tell another as well, how much better good deeds are than evil ones. But go out of the halls and sit outside in the courtyard, away from the slaughter, you and the bard of many songs, while I finish the work in the house that I must do."

378 So he spoke, and the two of them went out of the hall and sat down by the altar of great Zeus, looking around on every side, still expecting death at every moment. And Odysseus looked all through his house, to see whether any man was still alive and hiding, trying to escape black fate. But he saw them all, every one, fallen in the blood and the dust, many of them, like fish that fishermen have drawn out of the gray sea in their many-meshed net onto the curving beach; they all lie heaped on the sand, longing for the waves of the salt sea, and the shining Sun takes away their life: so the suitors lay then, heaped on one another. Then Odysseus of many wiles said to Telemachus:

391 "Telemachus, come, call the nurse Eurycleia for me, so that I may tell her what I have in mind." So he spoke, and Telemachus obeyed his dear father, and he shook the door and called to the nurse Eurycleia:

395 "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; he has something to say to you."

398 So he spoke, and her word stayed without wings, and she opened the doors of the stately halls 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, and all his chest and his jaws on either side are bloody, and he is terrible to look in the face: so Odysseus was spattered, from his feet up to his hands. When she saw the dead and the boundless blood, she was ready to raise a cry of triumph, since she saw a great work done; but Odysseus held her back and checked her, eager as she was, and he spoke to her, and his words had wings:

411 "Rejoice in your heart, old woman, but hold back and do not cry out. It is not holy to exult over men who have been killed. These men the fate of the gods has brought down, and their own cruel deeds; for they honored no one among men on earth, bad or good, whoever came among them; and so through their recklessness they have met a shameful doom. But come, tell me which of the women in the halls dishonor me and which are guiltless."

419 Then the dear nurse Eurycleia said to him: "Then I will tell you the truth, child. You have fifty women servants in the halls, whom we have taught to do their work, to card wool and to bear their servitude. Of these, twelve in all have set foot on the way of shamelessness. They respect neither me nor Penelope herself. Telemachus was only lately grown. His mother would not let him give orders to the women servants. But come, let me go up to the shining upper rooms and tell your wife, on whom some god has sent sleep."

430 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Do not wake her yet. But tell the women to come here, the ones who were devising shameful things before."

433 So he spoke, and the old woman went through the hall to tell the women and urge them to come. And he called Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd to him and spoke to them, and his words had wings:

437 "Begin now to carry out the dead, and order the women to help; and then have them clean the beautiful chairs and the tables

with water and porous sponges. And when you have set the whole house in order, lead the women servants out of the well-built hall to a place between the round house and the excellent wall of the courtyard, and strike them with your long-edged swords until you have taken the life out of all of them and they have forgotten Aphrodite, whom they had in their power with the suitors when they lay with them in secret."

446 So he spoke, and the women came all together in a crowd, lamenting terribly and shedding big tears. First they carried out the bodies of the dead and laid them under the portico of the well-fenced courtyard, propping them against one another; and Odysseus himself gave the orders and hurried them on, and they carried them out by force. And then they cleaned the beautiful chairs and the tables with water and porous sponges. Then Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd scraped the floor of the well-built house with hoes, and the women servants carried the scrapings and put them outside the door. And when they had set the whole hall in order, they led the women servants out of the well-built hall to a place between the round house and the excellent wall of the courtyard, and penned them in a narrow space from which there was no escape. Then thoughtful Telemachus began to speak among them:

462 "I will not take the life of these women by a clean death, who have poured insults on my head and on my mother, and slept with the suitors."

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 up, so that none of them could touch the ground with her feet. And as when long-winged thrushes or doves fly into a net set up in a thicket, as they are making for their roost, and a hateful bed takes them in, so the women held their heads in a row, and nooses were around all their necks, so that they might die most

pitifully. They twitched with their feet for a little while, not very long.

474 And they led Melanthius out through the porch and the courtyard. They cut off his nose and his ears with the pitiless bronze and tore out his genitals for the dogs to eat raw, and they cut off his hands and feet in the fury of their hearts.

478 Then they washed their hands and feet and went into the house to Odysseus, and the work was done. And he said to the dear nurse Eurycleia: "Bring sulfur, old woman, the cure for foulness, and bring me fire, so that I may purify the hall with sulfur. And tell Penelope to come here with her women attendants, and urge all the women servants to come through the house." Then the dear nurse Eurycleia said to him: "Yes, my child, all that you have said is right. But come, let me bring you a cloak and a tunic to wear; do not stand like this in the halls with your broad shoulders wrapped in rags. That would be a thing for blame."

490 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "First of all now let there be a fire in the halls for me."

492 So he spoke, and the dear nurse Eurycleia did not disobey; she brought fire and sulfur, and Odysseus thoroughly purified the hall and the house and the courtyard. Then the old woman went back through the beautiful house of Odysseus to tell the women and urge them to come; and they came out of the hall holding torches in their hands. They thronged around Odysseus and welcomed him, and kissed his head and shoulders in welcome, and took his hands; and a sweet longing took hold of him to weep and groan, for in his heart he knew them all.

Book 23

1 The old woman went up to the upper rooms, laughing aloud, to tell her mistress that her dear husband was at home. Her knees moved nimbly, and her feet went stumbling in their haste. She stood over her head and spoke to her:

5 "Wake up, Penelope, dear child, so that you may see with your own eyes what you have longed for all your days. Odysseus has come, he is home, late though he has come. And he has killed the proud suitors who troubled his house and ate up his possessions and bullied his son." Then prudent Penelope said to her: "Dear nurse, the gods have made you mad. They can make even the very wise witless, and they set the feeble-minded on the path of good sense; they have harmed you, though before your mind was sound. Why do you mock me, when my heart is full of sorrow, telling me these wild things, and wake me from the sweet sleep that had bound me and covered my eyelids? I have never slept like that since Odysseus went away to see Evil-Ilion, that name not to be spoken. But come now, go down and go back to the hall. If any other of the women who are mine had come and told me this and woken me from sleep, I would soon have sent her back to the hall in misery; but this time your old age will save you." Then the dear nurse Eurycleia said to her: "I am not mocking you, dear child. It is true, Odysseus has come, he is home, as I tell you: the stranger whom they all dishonored in the halls. Telemachus has long known he was in the house, but in his good sense he kept his father's plans hidden, so that he might take vengeance on the violence of these arrogant men."

32 So she spoke, and Penelope was glad, and she sprang from her bed and threw her arms around the old woman, and tears fell from her eyelids, and she spoke to her, and her words had wings:

35 "But come, dear nurse, tell me truly: if he really has come home, as you say, how did he lay his hands on the shameless suitors, alone as he was, while they always stayed together in the house?"

39 Then the dear nurse Eurycleia said to her: "I did not see, I was not told; I only heard the groaning of men being killed. We sat in the far corner of the well-built storerooms, terrified, and the well-fitted doors held us shut in, until your son called me from the hall, Telemachus, for his father had sent him out to call me. Then I found Odysseus standing among the bodies of the slain, and around him, covering the hard-beaten floor, they lay heaped on one another. It would have warmed your heart to see him. Now they are all lying together at the courtyard gates, and he is purifying the beautiful house with sulfur, and he has lit a great fire; and he sent me to call you. Come with me, so that both of you may bring your dear hearts into gladness, since you have suffered many evils. Now at last this long desire has been fulfilled: he has come himself, alive, to his own hearth, and he has found you and his son in the halls; and the suitors, who did him evil, he has punished, every one of them, in his own house."

58 Then prudent Penelope said to her: "Dear nurse, do not boast over them yet, laughing aloud. You know how welcome he would be if he appeared in the halls, to everyone, and most of all to me and to the son we bore. But this is no true story, as you tell it; one of the immortals has killed the lordly suitors, angered by their heart-wounding insolence and their evil deeds. For they honored no one among men on earth, bad or good, whoever came among them; and so through their recklessness they have suffered evil.

But Odysseus, far away, has lost his homecoming to the Achaean land, and is lost himself."

69 Then the dear nurse Eurycleia answered her: "My child, what a word has escaped the fence of your teeth! Your husband is here inside, by the hearth, and you said he would never come home. Your heart is always unbelieving. But come, I will tell you another clear sign besides: the scar the boar once gave him with his white tusk. I recognized it when I was washing him, and I wanted to tell you yourself, but he seized me by the mouth with his hands and would not let me speak, in the great cunning of his mind. But come with me, and I will stake my own life on it: if I am deceiving you, kill me by the most pitiful death." Then prudent Penelope answered her: "Dear nurse, it is hard for you to see into the counsels of the gods who are forever, however wise you are. All the same, let us go to my son, so that I may see the suitors dead, and the man who killed them." So saying, she came down from the upper rooms, and her heart was much divided, whether to question her dear husband from a distance, or to go up to him and kiss his head and take his hands. When she came in and stepped over the stone threshold, she sat down opposite Odysseus in the light of the fire, against the other wall; and he was sitting against a tall pillar, looking down, waiting to see whether his stately wife would say anything to him, now that her eyes had seen him. She sat a long time in silence, and amazement came upon her heart. At one moment she would look full in his face, and at another she would not know him, in the vile clothes he had on. But Telemachus rebuked her and spoke to her, calling her by name:

97 "Mother, my cruel mother, with your hard heart, why do you keep so apart from my father, and do not sit beside him and question him and ask him about everything? No other woman would harden her heart like this and stand aloof from her husband, who

after many hardships had come back to her in the twentieth year to his native land. But your heart is always harder than stone."

104 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "My child, the heart in my breast is lost in wonder. I cannot speak a word to him, or ask a question, or look him in the face. But if he truly is Odysseus and has come home, then we two will surely know each other, and better than anyone; for we have signs that we two alone know, hidden from others."

111 So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus smiled, and at once he spoke to Telemachus, and his words had wings:

113 "Telemachus, let your mother test me in the halls; she will soon know me better. Now, because I am dirty and have vile clothes on my body, she dishonors me and will not yet say that I am he. But let us consider how things may turn out best. Whoever has killed even one man in the land, a man who leaves few behind to avenge him, flees, leaving his kinsmen and his native land. But we have killed the mainstay of the city, the best by far of the young men in Ithaca. I bid you think about this."

123 Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "See to this yourself, dear father. They say your cunning is the best among men, and no other man among mortal men could rival you. We will follow you eagerly, and I tell you we will not fall short in courage, as far as our strength goes."

129 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Then I will tell you what seems to me best. First wash yourselves and put on your tunics, and tell the women servants in the halls to put on their clothes. Then let the godlike bard with his clear-toned lyre lead us in a playful dance, so that anyone outside who hears it, a passerby on the road or one of those who live around us, will say it is a wedding. Let no wide rumor of the slaughter of the suitors go through the town before we have gone out to our farm with its many trees.

There afterward we will consider what advantage the Olympian may put into our hands."

141 So he spoke, and they listened closely and obeyed. First they washed and put on their tunics, and the women dressed themselves; and the godlike bard took up the hollow lyre and stirred in them the desire for sweet song and excellent dancing. The great house resounded all around with the feet of men dancing and of women with lovely sashes. And one would say who heard it from outside the house:

149 "Surely someone has married the queen so many wooed. Hard woman, she could not bear to keep the great house of her wedded husband to the end, until he came."

152 So one would say, but they did not know what had been done. Meanwhile in his own house the housekeeper Eurynome bathed great-hearted Odysseus and rubbed him with oil and put a fine mantle and a tunic about him; and Athena poured great beauty over him from the head down, and made him taller to look at, and broader, and from his head she made his hair flow in curls like the hyacinth flower. As when a skilled man overlays silver with gold, a man whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught every kind of craft, and he finishes work full of grace: so she poured grace over his head and shoulders. He stepped out of the bath looking like the immortals, and he sat down again on the chair from which he had risen, opposite his wife, and spoke to her:

166 "Strange woman, those who have their homes on Olympus have given you, beyond all womankind, a heart that will not soften. No other woman would harden her heart like this and stand aloof from her husband, who after many hardships had come back to her in the twentieth year to his native land. But come, nurse, make up a bed for me, so that I may lie down alone; for the heart in her breast is iron."

173 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Strange man, I am not proud, nor do I scorn you, nor am I too much amazed; I know very well what you looked like when you went from Ithaca on your long-oared ship. But come, Eurycleia, make up the sturdy bed for him outside the well-built bedroom, the one he built himself. Put the sturdy bed out there for him, and throw bedding on it, fleeces and cloaks and shining blankets."

181 So she spoke, testing her husband. But Odysseus, troubled, spoke to his loyal wife:

183 "Woman, that is a word that wounds my heart, what you have just said. Who has put my bed somewhere else? That would be hard even for a very skilled man, unless a god himself came and easily set it in another place, if he wished. But no mortal man alive, not even one in the prime of youth, could easily pry it loose, since a great sign is wrought into that well-wrought bed, and I made it myself, no one else. A long-leaved olive tree grew inside the courtyard, in full bloom and thriving, and its trunk was as thick as a pillar. Around this I built my bedroom until I finished it, with close-set stones, and I roofed it well above, and I hung doors on it, close-fitted and well joined. Then I lopped the leafy crown of the long-leaved olive and trimmed the trunk from the root up, and I smoothed it all around with the bronze, well and skillfully, and made it true to the line, and shaped it into a bedpost, and bored it all with an auger. Beginning from this I fashioned the bed until I had finished it, inlaying it with gold and silver and ivory, and I stretched across it straps of oxhide, shining with crimson. So I tell you this sign. But I do not know, woman, whether my bed is still fixed where it was, or whether some man has already cut through the olive trunk at its base and moved it somewhere else."

205 So he spoke, and her knees and her heart went slack where she sat, as she recognized the sure signs that Odysseus had told her. Then she burst into tears and ran straight to him, and threw

her arms around the neck of Odysseus, and kissed his head and said:

209 "Do not be angry with me, Odysseus, since in everything else you were always the wisest of men. It was the gods who gave us sorrow, who begrudged that we two should stay together and have joy of our youth and come to the threshold of old age. So do not be angry with me now, or resent it, that I did not welcome you like this as soon as I saw you. For always the heart in my breast shuddered in fear that some man would come and deceive me with his words; for there are many who plot evil schemes for gain. Not even Argive Helen, daughter of Zeus, would have lain in love with a stranger, a man of another land, if she had known that the warlike sons of the Achaeans would bring her home again to her own dear country. It was a god who stirred her to do that shameful deed; before then she had not laid to heart that grievous folly, from which sorrow first came upon us too. But now, since you have told me the clear signs of our bed, which no other mortal has ever seen, only you and I and a single maid, Actoris, whom my father gave me when I came here, who kept the doors of our sturdy bedroom for us, now you have persuaded my heart, hard as it is."

231 So she spoke, and stirred in him still more the desire to weep, and he wept, holding his wife, dear to the heart, loyal. As when the land appears welcome to men swimming, whose well-built ship Poseidon has shattered on the sea, driven by wind and heavy waves, and only a few have escaped the gray sea to the shore by swimming, and the brine is caked thick on their skin, and gladly they set foot on land, escaped from evil: so welcome to her was her husband as she gazed at him, and she would not let her white arms go from his neck at all. And now rose-fingered Dawn would have appeared while they wept, if the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had not had another thought. She held the long night back

at the end of its course, and she kept Dawn of the golden throne 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.

247 And then Odysseus of many wiles said to his wife: "Wife, we have not yet come to the end of all our trials. There is still measureless labor to come, long and hard, and I must fulfill it all. For so the spirit of Tiresias foretold to me on the day when I went down into the house of Hades to ask about the homecoming of my companions and myself. But come, wife, let us go to bed, so that now at last we may lie down and take our joy of sweet sleep."

256 Then prudent Penelope said to him: "Your bed will be ready whenever your heart desires it, since the gods have brought you back to your well-built house and to your native land. But since you have thought of it, and a god has put it in your heart, come, tell me of this trial; for I think I will learn of it later, and it is no worse to know it at once."

263 Odysseus of many wiles answered her: "Strange woman, why do you urge me so hard and bid me tell it? Well, I will tell you, and hide nothing. Your heart will not rejoice at it, and I do not rejoice either. For he bid me go to very many cities of men, carrying a well-fitted oar in my hands, until I come to men who do not know the sea and do not eat food mixed with salt; they know nothing of crimson-cheeked ships, nor of well-fitted oars, which are wings for ships. And he told me this sign, very clear, and I will not hide it from you: when another traveler meets me and says that I have a winnowing fan on my shining shoulder, then he bid me fix the oar in the ground and make fine sacrifices to lord Poseidon, a ram and a bull and a boar that mounts the sows, and go back 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 me myself away from the sea, a gentle death, that will take me worn out with

sleek old age; and around me my people will be prosperous. All this, he said, would come to pass for me." Then prudent Penelope said to him: "If the gods are going to bring about a better old age, then there is hope that you will have an escape from evils."

288 So they spoke with one another, and meanwhile Eurynome and the nurse made up the bed with soft coverings by the light of blazing torches. And when they had busily spread the sturdy bed, the old woman went back to her room to lie down, and Eurynome, the bedchamber maid, led them on their way to bed with a torch in her hands; she brought them to the bedroom and went back. And they came gladly 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 they lay down to sleep throughout the shadowy halls.

300 And when the two of them had taken their joy of love's delight, they took joy in talk, telling each other everything: she, noble among women, all that she had endured in the halls, watching the ruinous crowd of the suitors, who for her sake slaughtered many cattle and fat sheep, and much wine was drawn from the jars; and Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, told all the sorrows he had brought upon men and all the toils he himself had suffered in his misery. He told her everything, and she was delighted to listen, and sleep did not fall upon her eyelids until he had told it all.

310 He began with how he first conquered 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 and had no pity; and how he came to Aeolus, who received him kindly and sent him on his way, but it was not yet his lot to reach his dear native land; a storm caught him up again and carried him, groaning heavily, over the fish-filled sea; and how he came to Telepylus of the Laestrygonians, who destroyed his ships and all his well-greaved companions, and

Odysseus alone escaped in his black ship. He told of the guile of Circe and her many devices, and how he came 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 little; and how he heard the voice of the Sirens in their full-throated song, and how he came to the Wandering Rocks and dread Charybdis and Scylla, whom no men have ever escaped unharmed; and how his companions killed the cattle of Helios; and how high-thundering Zeus struck the swift ship with his smoking thunderbolt, and his good companions perished, all together, while he himself escaped the evil fates; 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 that 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 in their hearts as if he were a god and sent him in a ship to his dear native land, after giving him bronze and gold in plenty and clothing. This was the last thing he told, when sweet sleep that loosens the limbs fell upon him, loosening the cares of his heart.

344 Then the goddess, gray-eyed Athena, had another thought. When she judged in her heart that Odysseus had had his joy of his wife's bed and of sleep, at once she roused early-born Dawn of the golden throne from Ocean, to bring light to men. And Odysseus rose from the soft bed and gave his wife this charge:

350 "Wife, we two have had our fill of many trials by now: you here, weeping over my troubled homecoming, and I, whom Zeus and the other gods kept bound in pains far from my native land, for all my longing. But now that we two have come to the bed we longed for, you must take care of the possessions I have in the halls. As for the flocks that the overbearing suitors have wasted, I

will take many myself by raiding, and the Achaeans will give others, until they fill all my folds. But now I am going to the farm with its many trees, to see my good father, who grieves for me constantly. And this I charge you, wife, wise as you are: as soon as the sun comes up, word will go out about the suitors whom I killed in the halls. Go up to the upper rooms with your women attendants and sit there, and do not look at anyone or ask any questions."

366 He spoke, and he put his fine armor around his shoulders, and roused Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd, and told them all to take up the weapons of war in their hands. They did not disobey him; they armed themselves in bronze and opened the doors and went out, and Odysseus led the way. By now there was light over the earth, but Athena hid them in night and quickly led them out of the city.

Book 24

1 And Cyllenian Hermes called forth the spirits of the suitors. He held in his hands the wand, beautiful and golden, with which he charms the eyes of men, of whomever he will, and wakes others again from sleep. With this he roused them and led them on, and they followed, gibbering. As when bats in the depths of an eerie cave fly about gibbering, when one has dropped from the cluster on the rock, and they cling to one another, so the spirits went with him, gibbering, and Hermes the Helper led them down the dank ways. They went past the streams of Ocean and the White Rock,[1] past the gates of the Sun and the land of dreams, and soon they came to the meadow of asphodel, where the spirits dwell, the phantoms of those who are done with toil. There they found the spirit of Achilles, son of Peleus, and of Patroclus, and of excellent Antilochus, and of Ajax, who was the best in looks and build of all the Danaans after the excellent son of Peleus.

19 So these were gathered around Achilles, and close to them came the spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, grieving; and around him were gathered the others, all who had died with him in the house of Aegisthus and met their doom. The spirit of the son of Peleus spoke to him first:

24 "Son of Atreus, we thought that of all heroes you were dear to Zeus who delights in thunder all your days, because you were lord over many mighty men in the land of the Trojans, where we Achaeans suffered hardships. But to you too, after all, deadly fate was to come early, the fate that no one born escapes. How I wish

that, in the full enjoyment of the honor you were lord of, you had met death and doom in the land of the Trojans! Then all the Achaeans would have made a tomb for you, and you would have won great glory for your son as well in days to come. But now it was your lot to be caught by a most pitiful death." Then the spirit of the son of Atreus said to him: "Fortunate son of Peleus, godlike Achilles, who died in Troy far from Argos! Around you others were killed, the best of the sons of the Trojans and the Achaeans, fighting over you, while you lay in the whirling dust, a great man stretched over a great space of ground, your horsemanship forgotten. And we fought all day long, and would never have stopped the fighting if Zeus had not stopped it with a storm. But when we had carried you from the battle to the ships, we laid you on a bier and cleansed your fair skin with warm water and with ointment, and the Danaans shed many hot tears around you and cut their hair. Your mother came out of the sea with the immortal sea nymphs when she heard the news, and an unearthly cry rose over the sea, and trembling took hold of all the Achaeans. They would have sprung up and gone to the hollow ships, if a man who knew many things of old had not held them back: Nestor, whose counsel had always seemed the best before. With good intent he spoke among them and said:

54 "'Hold, Argives, do not run, young men of the Achaeans! This is his mother coming out of the sea with the immortal sea nymphs, to meet her dead son.'

57 "So he spoke, and the great-hearted Achaeans held back from flight. The daughters of the old man of the sea stood around you, wailing pitifully, and they clothed you in immortal garments. And the Muses, all nine, answering one another with lovely voices, sang the lament. Then you would not have seen one of the Argives without tears, so piercing was the clear-voiced Muse who stirred them. For seventeen days, nights and days alike, we wept for you,

immortal gods and mortal men; and on the eighteenth we gave you to the fire, and around you we slaughtered many fat sheep and shambling cattle with curving horns. You were burned in the clothing of the gods and in much ointment and sweet honey, and many Achaean heroes moved in their armor around the pyre as you burned, men on foot and in chariots, and a great din arose. And when the flame of Hephaestus had made an end of you, in the morning we gathered your white bones, Achilles, in unmixed wine and ointment. Your mother gave a golden jar with two handles; she said it was the gift of Dionysus, the work of far-famed 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. Around them we, the sacred army of Argive spearmen, heaped up a great and excellent tomb on a headland jutting out over the broad Hellespont, so that it might be seen far out from the sea by men, those who are born now and those who will come hereafter. And your mother asked the gods for beautiful prizes and set them in the middle of the field for the best of the Achaeans. You have been present before now at the funerals of many heroes, when at the death of a king the young men gird themselves and make ready for the games; but you would have marveled most in your heart if you had seen those prizes, so beautiful, that the goddess, silver-footed Thetis, set out in your honor; for you were very dear to the gods. So even in death you did not lose your name, but always among all men your fame will be great, Achilles. But what pleasure did I have in this, when I had wound up the war? For Zeus devised a grievous destruction for me on my homecoming, at the hands of Aegisthus and my accursed wife."

98 So they spoke with one another, and close to them came the guide, the slayer of Argus, leading down the spirits of the suitors whom Odysseus had killed. The two of them were amazed, and

went straight toward them when they saw them. And the spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, recognized the dear son of Melaneus, far-famed Amphimedon, for he had been his host, living in his house in Ithaca. The spirit of the son of Atreus spoke to him first:

106 "Amphimedon, what has happened to you, that you have come down beneath the dark earth, all of you chosen men and of an age? No one choosing the best men in a city would have chosen otherwise. Did Poseidon overwhelm you in your ships, rousing cruel winds and long waves? Or did hostile men kill you on land as you were cutting off their cattle and their fine flocks of sheep, or fighting for a city and its women? Tell me, since I ask; I claim to be your guest-friend. Do you not remember when I came down to your house there with godlike Menelaus, to urge Odysseus to go with us to Ilion on the well-benched ships? It took us a whole month to cross the wide sea, for we had a hard time persuading Odysseus, sacker of cities." Then the spirit of Amphimedon said to him: "Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men, I remember all this, Zeus-nurtured, as you tell it. And I will tell you everything, very truly, the evil end of our death, how it came about. We were wooing the wife of Odysseus, who had been long away. She neither refused the hateful marriage nor brought it to an end, but she was planning death and black fate for us. She devised this further trick in her mind: she set up a great loom in the halls and began to weave a web, fine and very wide, and at once she said to us:

131 "'Young men, my suitors, since noble Odysseus is dead, wait, eager as you are for my marriage, until I finish this robe, so that my spinning may not go to waste: a shroud for the hero Laertes, for the time when the deadly fate of death that lays men out at length shall take him; so that none of the Achaean women in the land may blame me, if he lies without a shroud, who had won so much.'

138 "So she spoke, and our proud hearts were persuaded. Then by day she would weave at the great loom, and by night she would unravel it, with torches set beside her. So for three years she kept her trick hidden and persuaded the Achaeans. But when the fourth year came and the seasons came around, as the months waned and many days were completed, then at last one of the women, who knew it well, told us, and we caught her unraveling the splendid web. So she finished it, against her will, under compulsion.

147 "Just when she had shown us the robe, when she had woven the great web and washed it, and it shone like the sun or the moon, then some evil power brought Odysseus from somewhere to the edge of the farm, where the swineherd had his dwelling. There came the dear son of godlike Odysseus too, on his way back from sandy Pylos in his black ship. The two of them plotted an evil death for the suitors and came to the far-famed town, Odysseus later, while Telemachus led the way before him. The swineherd brought Odysseus, with vile clothes on his body, looking like a miserable beggar and an old man, leaning on a staff; and the clothes he wore on his body were wretched. And none of us could recognize who he was when he appeared so suddenly, not even the older men among us; we attacked him with evil words and with things thrown at him. For a time he endured being struck and abused in his own halls with a steadfast heart. But when the mind of Zeus who holds the aegis roused him, he and Telemachus took the fine armor and laid it away in the storeroom and shot the bolts. Then in his great cunning he told his wife to set the bow and the gray iron before the suitors, to be the contest for us ill-fated men and the beginning of slaughter. None of us could string that mighty bow; we fell far short of the strength. But when the great bow came to the hands of Odysseus, then we all shouted out that the bow should not be given to him, however much he talked; only Telemachus urged him on and told him to take it. And much-

enduring noble Odysseus took it in his hand and strung the bow easily and shot through the iron. Then he went and stood on the threshold and poured out the swift arrows, glaring terribly, and struck down King Antinous. And then he let fly his arrows, bringers of groans, at the others, aiming straight ahead, and they fell thick and close together. It was plain that one of the gods was helping them; for at once they rushed through the house in their fury and killed us right and left, and a hideous groaning rose as heads were struck, and the whole floor ran with blood. So we perished, Agamemnon, and even now our bodies lie uncared for in the halls of Odysseus; for our families in each man's house do not know yet, who would wash the black blood from our wounds and lay us out and mourn us; for that is the due of the dead."

191 Then the spirit of the son of Atreus said to him: "Fortunate son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus, truly you won a wife of great virtue! How good was the understanding of excellent Penelope, daughter of Icarius! How well she remembered Odysseus, her wedded husband! So the fame of her virtue will never perish, and the immortals will make a lovely song for those on earth in honor of sensible Penelope. Not so did the daughter of Tyndareus devise evil deeds, when she killed her wedded husband; a hateful song she will be among men, and she will give an evil name to all womankind, even to one who does good."

203 So they spoke with one another, standing in the house of Hades, under the depths of the earth.

205 And 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. There was his house, and all around it ran a row of sheds, where the bond servants who did his will would eat and sit and sleep. In it there was an old Sicilian woman, who cared for the old man devotedly out on the

farm, far from the city. There Odysseus spoke to the servants and to his son:

214 "You go now into the well-built house and quickly kill the best of the pigs for dinner. I will make trial of my father, to see whether he will recognize me and know me with his eyes, or whether he will not know me, since I have been away so long."

219 With these words he gave his weapons of war to the servants. They went quickly into the house, and Odysseus went nearer to the fruitful orchard to make his trial. He did not find Dolius as he went down into the great orchard, nor any of the servants or Dolius's sons; they had gone to gather stones for a wall around the orchard, and the old man had led the way for them. He found his father alone in the well-tended orchard, digging around a plant. He was wearing a dirty tunic, patched and wretched, and around his shins he had bound patched leggings of oxhide to guard against scratches, and he had gloves on his hands because of the brambles; and on his head he wore a cap of goatskin, nursing his grief. When much-enduring noble Odysseus saw him, worn with old age and with great grief in his heart, he stood under a tall pear tree and wept. Then he debated in his mind and in his heart whether to kiss his father and embrace him and tell him everything, how he had come back and reached his native land, or to question him first and test him on every point. As he pondered, this seemed to him the better way, to test him first with cutting words. With this in mind noble Odysseus went straight toward him. He was digging around a plant, keeping his head down, and his shining son came up beside him and spoke to him:

244 "Old man, there is no lack of skill in the way you tend the orchard; your care for it is good, and there is nothing at all, no plant, no fig tree, no vine, no olive, no pear, no garden bed in your plot that goes without care. But I will tell you something else, and do not take it to heart in anger: you yourself are not well cared for.

You bear a miserable old age, and you are terribly unkempt and wear wretched clothes. It is not for your idleness that your master does not care for you, and there is nothing of the slave to be seen in your looks or your stature; you look like a king. You look like a man who should bathe and eat and then sleep softly; for that is the way of old men. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: whose servant are you? Whose orchard do you tend? And tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: have I really come to Ithaca, as a man told me just now, who met me on my way here? He was not very sensible, for he would not tell me everything, or listen to what I said when I asked him about a guest-friend of mine, whether he is still alive or already dead and in the house of Hades. For I will tell you, and you mark it and listen to me. Once in my own dear native land I entertained a man who came to our house, and no other mortal of all the strangers from far away was ever dearer to me as a guest in my house. He claimed that his family was from Ithaca, and he said that Laertes, son of Arceisius, was his father. I took him to my house and entertained him well, with all kindness, from the plenty there was in the house, and I gave him guest gifts, such as were fitting. 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 cloaks and as many rugs, as many fine mantles, and as many tunics besides; and besides these, women skilled in excellent handiwork, four comely women, whom he chose himself."

280 Then his father answered him, shedding tears: "Stranger, you have indeed come to the land you ask about, but violent and reckless men hold it. In vain you gave those gifts, the countless gifts you bestowed. If you had found him alive in the land of Ithaca, he would have sent you on your way repaid with good gifts and good hospitality; for that is right, for whoever begins it. But come, tell me this, and tell it truly: how many years is it since you entertained him, that unhappy guest of yours, my son, if he ever was,

my ill-fated son? Somewhere far from his dear ones and his native land the fish have eaten him in the sea, or on land he has become the prey of wild beasts and birds. His mother did not lay him out and weep for him, nor did his father, we who brought him into the world; nor did his richly dowered wife, sensible 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 it well: Who are you, and where are you from? Where is your city, and where are your parents? Where is the swift ship moored that brought you here, and your godlike companions? Or did you come as a passenger on someone else's ship, and they put you ashore and went away?"

302 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Then I will tell you everything truly. I am from Alybas, where I live in a famous house; I am the son of Apheidas, son of lord Polypemon, and my name is Eperitus. But some power drove me off course from Sicania to come here against my will, and my ship is moored over there off the fields, far from the city. As for Odysseus, this is the fifth year since he went from there and left my country, ill-fated man. Yet the birds were good for him as he went, on the right, and I was glad as I sent him on his way, and he was glad as he went; and our hearts were still hoping that we would meet again as host and guest and give each other glorious gifts."

315 So he spoke, and a black cloud of grief covered Laertes. He took the sooty dust in both his hands and poured it down over his gray head, groaning without end. The heart of Odysseus was stirred, and a sharp pang shot up through his nostrils as he looked at his dear father. He sprang to him and threw his arms around him and kissed him and said:

321 "I am he, father, the man you ask about, here I am myself; I have come in the twentieth year to my native land. But hold back from your crying and your tearful lament. For I will tell you plainly,

and we must make all haste: I have killed the suitors in our house, avenging their heart-wounding outrage and their evil deeds."

327 Then Laertes answered him and said: "If you really are Odysseus, my son, come back here, tell me now some clear sign, so that I may be sure."

330 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "First look with your eyes at this scar, which the boar gave me with his white tusk on Parnassus, when I went there. You and my lady mother sent me to Autolycus, my mother's dear father, to get the gifts that he promised me and nodded his assent to when he came here. And come, let me tell you too the trees in the well-tended orchard, which you gave me once. I was a child, following you through the garden, and I asked you for each one; we went among them, and you named them and told me each one. You gave me thirteen pear trees and ten apple trees and forty fig trees; and you promised to give me fifty rows of vines, just so, each of them ripening in turn. There are grapes of every kind on them, whenever the seasons of Zeus weigh them down from above."

345 So he spoke, and the knees and the heart of Laertes went slack where he stood, as he recognized the sure signs that Odysseus had told him. He threw his arms around his dear son, and much-enduring noble Odysseus caught him to himself as he fainted. But when he had recovered his breath and his spirit had gathered back into his breast, he spoke again in answer:

351 "Father Zeus, you gods are still on high Olympus after all, 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 against us here, and send messengers everywhere to the cities of the Cephallenians."

356 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Take heart, and do not let these things trouble your mind. Let us go to the house that lies near the orchard. I sent Telemachus and the cowherd and the

swineherd ahead there, to make dinner ready as quickly as they can."

361 So the two of them spoke and went to the fine house. When they came to the stately house, they found Telemachus and the cowherd and the swineherd carving meat in plenty and mixing the sparkling wine. Meanwhile the Sicilian maid bathed great-hearted Laertes in his own house and rubbed him with oil,

367 and put a fine cloak about him; and Athena came and stood near him and filled out the limbs of the shepherd of the people, and made him taller than before to look at, and broader. He stepped out of the bath, and his dear son marveled at him when he saw him looking like the immortal gods face to face, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

373 "Father, surely one of the gods who are forever has made you finer to look at in form and stature." Then thoughtful Laertes answered him: "Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, if only I were such as 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 such as that yesterday in our house, with armor on my shoulders, to stand at your side and beat back the suitors! Then I would have loosened the knees of many of them in the halls, and your heart would have been glad within you."

383 So they spoke with one another. And when they had finished their work and made the meal ready, they sat down in order on the chairs and seats. They were just putting out their hands to the food when old Dolius came near, 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 cared for 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 still in the halls, astonished. But Odysseus spoke to them with gentle words and said:

394 "Old man, sit down to dinner, and put your amazement away. We have been waiting long in the halls, eager to set our hands to the food, expecting you all the while."

397 So he spoke, and Dolius went straight to him with both hands outstretched, and he took the hand of Odysseus and kissed it at the wrist, and he spoke to him, and his words had wings:

400 "Dear master, since you have come back to us, who longed for you so much and had stopped expecting you, and the gods themselves have brought you home: health to you, and great joy, and may the gods give you happiness. And tell me this truly, so that I may know it well: does prudent Penelope know for certain yet that you have come back here, or shall we send her a messenger?"

406 Odysseus of many wiles answered him: "Old man, she knows already. Why should you trouble yourself with that?"

408 So he spoke, and Dolius sat down again on the polished stool. And in the same way the sons of Dolius gathered around famous Odysseus and greeted him in words and clasped his hands, and then they sat down in order beside Dolius, their father.

412 So they were busy with their dinner in the halls. Meanwhile Rumor the messenger went swiftly all through the city, telling of the hateful death and fate of the suitors. And the people heard it all alike and came from every side, with moaning and with groaning, before the house of Odysseus. They carried the dead out of the house and buried them, each family its own; and those from other cities they sent each one home, putting them on swift ships for fishermen to carry. Then they went 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 unforgettable grief for his son lay in his heart, for Antinous, the first man noble Odysseus had killed. Shedding tears for him, he spoke in the assembly and said:

426 “Friends, this man has done a monstrous thing to the Achaeans. Some he led away in his ships, many and brave, 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 will be shamed forever after. It is a disgrace even for men hereafter to hear of, if we do not take vengeance on the killers 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 get across ahead of us and escape.”

438 So he spoke, shedding tears, and pity took hold of all the Achaeans. Then Medon came near them, and the godlike bard, from the halls of Odysseus, for sleep had let them go, and they stood in the middle of them, and amazement took hold of every man. And Medon, whose mind was wise, spoke among them:

443 “Hear me now, men of Ithaca. Odysseus did not do these deeds without the will of the immortal gods. I myself saw an immortal god who stood close beside Odysseus and looked in every way like Mentor. At one moment the immortal god appeared in front of Odysseus, urging him on, and at another he rushed through the hall, routing the suitors, and they fell thick and close together.”

450 So he spoke, and pale fear took hold of them all. Then the old hero Halitherses, son of Mastor, spoke among them, for he alone saw both before and after. With good intent he spoke among them and said:

454 “Hear me now, men of Ithaca, what I have to say. It is through your own wickedness, friends, that these things have come about. You would not listen to me, nor to Mentor, shepherd of the people, and stop your sons in their folly, who did a monstrous thing in their wicked recklessness, wasting the possessions

of a prince and dishonoring his wife; they said he would never return. And now let it be this way; be persuaded by me, as I tell you. Let us not go, in case someone finds an evil that he has brought upon himself."

463 So he spoke, and more than half of them sprang up with a great shout, but the rest stayed where they were, together. His word did not please their minds, but they were persuaded by Eupeithes, and at once they rushed for their armor. And when they had put the flashing bronze around their bodies, they gathered together in front of the spacious city. Eupeithes led them in his folly. He said he would avenge the killing of his son, but he was not to come home again; he was to meet his doom there.

472 But Athena said to Zeus, the son of Cronus: "Our father, son of Cronus, highest of all who rule, tell me, since I ask: what does your mind hide within it? Will you bring about further evil war and dread strife, or will you set friendship between the two sides?"

477 Then Zeus the cloud-gatherer answered her: "My child, why do you question me and ask me about this? Did you not devise this plan yourself, that Odysseus should come back and take vengeance on those men? Do as you will; but I will tell you what is fitting. Now that noble Odysseus has taken vengeance on the suitors, let them swear solemn oaths, and let him be king all his days; and let us bring about a forgetting of the killing of their sons and brothers. Let them love one another as before, and let there be wealth and peace in plenty."

487 With these words he urged on Athena, who was eager before, and she went darting down from the peaks of Olympus.

489 But when they had put from them the desire for honey-sweet food, much-enduring noble Odysseus began to speak among them: "Let someone go out and see whether they are already near and coming."

492 So he spoke, and a son of Dolius went out as he bid. He went and stood on the threshold and saw them all close by, and at once he spoke to Odysseus, and his words had wings: "Here they are, close by! Let us arm quickly."

496 So he spoke, and they sprang up and put on their armor, the 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. And when they had put the flashing bronze around their bodies, they opened the doors and went out, and Odysseus led the way.

502 And close to them came Athena, daughter of Zeus, in the likeness of Mentor, in form and in voice. Much-enduring noble Odysseus rejoiced when he saw her, and at once he spoke to Telemachus, his dear son:

506 "Telemachus, now you will learn this for yourself, when you have come to where men fight and the best are tested: not to shame the line of your fathers, we who have always excelled in strength and courage all over the earth." Then thoughtful Telemachus answered him: "You will see, if you like, dear father, that in this spirit I will not shame your line, as you say."

513 So he spoke, and Laertes was glad and said: "What a day this is for me, dear gods! I am very glad. My son and my grandson are vying with each other in courage."

516 Then gray-eyed Athena came and stood beside him and said: "Son of Arceisius, dearest by far of all my companions, pray to the gray-eyed maiden and to father Zeus, and then at once raise your long-shadowing spear and throw it."

520 So she spoke, and Pallas Athena breathed great strength into him. He prayed to the daughter of great Zeus, and then at once he raised his long-shadowing spear and threw it, and struck Eupeithes through the bronze cheek-piece of his helmet. The helmet did not stop the spear; the bronze went clean through, and he

fell with a thud, and his armor clanged upon him. And Odysseus and his shining son fell upon the front ranks and struck them with swords and two-edged spears. And now they would have killed them all and cut them off from coming home, if Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, had not shouted aloud and held back all the people:

531 "Hold back from painful war, men of Ithaca, so that you may part quickly, without bloodshed."

533 So Athena spoke, and pale fear took hold of them. In their fear the weapons flew from their hands, and all of them fell to the ground as the goddess's voice rang out; and they turned toward the city, longing for their lives. Much-enduring noble Odysseus gave a terrible shout, and gathering himself he swooped like a high-flying eagle. And then the son of Cronus hurled a smoking thunderbolt, and it fell in front of the gray-eyed daughter of the mighty father. Then gray-eyed Athena said to Odysseus:

542 "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, hold back, and stop the strife of war that spares no one, in case far-seeing Zeus, the son of Cronus, is angry with you."

545 So Athena spoke, and he obeyed, and was glad in his heart. And afterward Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, set oaths between the two sides, in the likeness of Mentor, in form and in voice.

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1. The White Rock (Greek *Leukas petrē*): a landmark on the road to the dead, known only from this passage; it seems to stand at the edge of the world, by the streams of Ocean.

Colophon

The Odyssey

Original title · *Ὀδύσσεια*

Author · Homer

Translator · Ether Library

Composition · Greek hexameter epic, probably of the eighth or seventh century BC.

Source text · A public-domain digital transcription of the Greek text in A. T. Murray, *Homer*: *The Odyssey*, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1919). Translated directly from the Greek.

Extent · Complete and unabridged · twenty-four books · 12,107 lines · 1,186 paragraphs, as in the source, each marked with its first line number · nineteen short translator's notes

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