

Homer, *Odyssey* Reading

Introduction to the Text

The translation I have provided is by Emily Wilson, the first woman to translate Homer's *Odyssey* into English. The translation came out in 2017.

The sections that I have provided in this document focus on ideas of community and kingship, and I ask that you read the text with this theme in mind. I have also scanned more of the text than you are required to read (if you feel ambitious, feel free to read the entirety of what I scanned). Here is an outline of the **required sections** along with questions for you to consider:

Book 1.1-96 (pp. 105-108)

This is the very beginning of the Odyssey, in which we hear about which gods are helpful or harmful to Odysseus.

What ideas about kingship and community does it show? Does Zeus, king of the gods, have absolute power to do whatever he wants?

Book 1.325-444 (pp. 115-119)

This offers a glimpse of how the suitors behave at Odysseus' house. Odysseus' son Telemachus tells the suitors that he is going to have a meeting the next day and tell them that they have to leave. Homer uses two different words for 'king' in this passage: anax (a little more like 'high king') and basileus (a little more like 'community leader').

What ideas about kingship and community does the discussion explore?

Book 6.248-331 (pp. 205-207)

In Book 6, Athena helps Odysseus as he is washed up after the wreck of his raft on the island of Scheria and meets the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa. In this section from the end of Book 6, Nausicaa is cautious about how to get Odysseus to meet her parents, the king and queen of Phaeacia, Alcinoos and Arete.

What is Nausicaa worried about, and what does that tell you about society among the Phaeacians? What is Athena worried about, and what does that tell you about kingship and society among the gods?

Book 8.265-368 (pp. 229-232)

In Book 8, while Odysseus is staying with the Phaeacians, the poet Demodocus sings a song about the time when the war god Ares slept with the love goddess Aphrodite. Aphrodite's husband Hephaestus, god of the forge and toolmaking, caught them with a gold net that he made.

What does the story show about the way the gods relate to each other as a society?

Book 9.106-150 (pp. 243-244)

Odysseus tells the Phaeacians all of the adventures he has had on his way home from the Trojan war (during which time all of the other men in his ships died). One of these adventures was with Polyphemos, the one-eyed cyclops who lived on an island.

What kinds of ideas about communities and societies emerge in the description of Polyphemos' island and what happens there?

Book 9.194-306 (pp. 246-249)

Eventually Odysseus selects several of his men to explore the area with him. How does the Cyclops' way of life and values differ from Odysseus'? What kind of leader do these events show Odysseus to be?

Book 12.260-453 (pp. 309-315)

In Book 12, Odysseus hears from the goddess Circe that he will arrive at Thrinacia, the island where Helios (also called Hyperion), god of the sun, keeps his cattle. Circe explains that it is very important that Odysseus prevent his men from touching the cattle.

Book 24.1-16, 99-205, 346-548 (pp. 507, 510-513, 518-525)

The story so far ... Odysseus returned to Ithaca in disguise and observed the suitors behaving badly. Penelope arranged an archery contest, with Odysseus' old, huge bow and arrows. Odysseus won, and killed the suitors. He also executed enslaved women in the household because the suitors had been taking advantage of them (Odysseus sees the women's dealings with the suitors as a betrayal of his household). As the book opens, Hermes brings the souls (can be translated as 'ghosts' -- the Greek word is psychai or psukhai) of the suitors to the underworld.

What makes the conflict in Ithaca stop? How aware are the characters of the role played by the gods in these events?

We know that the Homeric *Odyssey* was a central part of education in antiquity for centuries. What kind of a lesson might this resolution of conflict be trying to teach leaders and communities?



The Boy and the Goddess

Tell me about a complicated man.
 Muse, tell me how he wandered and was lost
 when he had wrecked the holy town of Troy,
 and where he went, and who he met, the pain
 he suffered in the storms at sea, and how
 he worked to save his life and bring his men
 back home. He failed to keep them safe; poor fools,
 they ate the Sun God's cattle, and the god
 kept them from home. Now goddess, child of Zeus,
 tell the old story for our modern times.
 Find the beginning.

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All the other Greeks
 who had survived the brutal sack of Troy
 sailed safely home to their own wives—except
 this man alone. Calypso, a great goddess,
 had trapped him in her cave; she wanted him
 to be her husband. When the year rolled round
 in which the gods decreed he should go home
 to Ithaca, his troubles still went on.

The man was friendless. All the gods took pity,
 except Poseidon's anger never ended
 until Odysseus was back at home.
 But now the distant Ethiopians,
 who live between the sunset and the dawn,
 were worshipping the Sea God with a feast,
 a hundred cattle and a hundred rams.
 There sat the god, delighting in his banquet.
 The other gods were gathered on Olympus,
 in Father Zeus' palace. He was thinking
 of fine, well-born Aegisthus, who was killed
 by Agamemnon's famous son Orestes.
 He told the deathless gods,

"This is absurd,
 that mortals blame the gods! They say we cause
 their suffering, but they themselves increase it
 by folly. So Aegisthus overstepped:
 he took the legal wife of Agamemnon,
 then killed the husband when he came back home,
 although he knew that it would doom them all.
 We gods had warned Aegisthus; we sent down
 perceptive Hermes, who flashed into sight
 and told him not to murder Agamemnon
 or court his wife, Orestes would grow up
 and come back to his home to take revenge.
 Aegisthus would not hear that good advice.
 But now his death has paid all debts."

Athena

looked at him steadily and answered, "Father,
 he did deserve to die. Bring death to all
 who act like him! But I am agonizing
 about Odysseus and his bad luck.
 For too long he has suffered, with no friends,

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sea all around him, sea on every side,
 out on an island where a goddess lives,
 daughter of fearful Atlas, who holds up
 the pillars of the sea, and knows its depths—
 those pillars keep the heaven and earth apart.
 His daughter holds that poor unhappy man,
 and tries beguiling him with gentle words
 to cease all thoughts of Ithaca; but he
 longs to see even just the smoke that rises
 from his own homeland, and he wants to die.
 You do not even care, Olympian!
 Remember how he sacrificed to you
 on the broad plain of Troy beside his ships?
 So why do you dismiss Odysseus?"

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"Daughter!" the Cloud God said, "You must be joking,
 since how could I forget Odysseus?
 He is more sensible than other humans,
 and makes more sacrifices to the gods.
 But Lord Poseidon rages, unrelenting,
 because Odysseus destroyed the eye
 of godlike Polyphemus, his own son,
 the strongest of the Cyclopes—whose mother,
 Thoösa, is a sea-nymph, child of Phorcys,
 the sea king; and she lay beside Poseidon
 inside a hollow cave. So now Poseidon
 prevents Odysseus from reaching home
 but does not kill him. Come then, we must plan:
 how can he get back home? Poseidon must
 give up his anger, since he cannot fight
 alone against the will of all the gods."

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Athena's eyes lit up and she replied,

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"Great Father, if the blessed gods at last
will let Odysseus return back home,
then hurry, we must send our messenger,
Hermes the giant-slayer. He must swoop
down to Ogygia right away and tell
the beautiful Calypso we have formed
a firm decision that Odysseus
has waited long enough. He must go home.
And I will go to Ithaca to rouse
the courage of his son, and make him call
a meeting, and speak out against the suitors
who kill his flocks of sheep and longhorn cattle
unstoppably. Then I will send him off
to Pylos and to Sparta, to seek news
about his father's journey home, and gain
a noble reputation for himself."

With that, she tied her sandals on her feet,
the marvelous golden sandals that she wears
to travel sea and land, as fast as wind.
She took the heavy bronze-tipped spear she uses
to tame the ranks of warriors with whom
she is enraged. Then from the mountain down
she sped to Ithaca, and stopped outside
Odysseus' court, bronze spear in hand.
She looked like Mentès now, the Taphian leader,
a guest-friend. There she found the lordly suitors
sitting on hides—they killed the cows themselves—
and playing checkers. Quick, attentive house slaves
were waiting on them. Some were mixing wine
with water in the bowls, and others brought
the tables out and wiped them off with sponges,
and others carved up heaping plates of meat.
Telemachus was sitting with them, feeling

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dejected. In his mind he saw his father
coming from somewhere, scattering the suitors,
and gaining back his honor, and control
of all his property. With this in mind,
he was the first to see Athena there.
He disapproved of leaving strangers stranded,
so he went straight to meet her at the gate,
and shook her hand, and took her spear of bronze,
and let his words fly out to her.

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"Good evening,
stranger, and welcome. Be our guest, come share
our dinner, and then tell us what you need."

He led her in, and Pallas followed him.
Inside the high-roofed hall, he set her spear
beside a pillar in a polished stand,
in which Odysseus kept stores of weapons.
And then he led her to a chair and spread
a smooth embroidered cloth across the seat,
and pulled a footstool up to it. He sat
beside her on a chair of inlaid wood,
a distance from the suitors, so their shouting
would not upset the stranger during dinner;
also to ask about his absent father.
A girl brought washing water in a jug
of gold, and poured it on their hands and into
a silver bowl, and set a table by them.
A deferential slave brought bread and laid
a wide array of food, a generous spread.
The carver set beside them plates of meat
of every kind, and gave them golden cups.
The cup boy kept on topping up the wine.
The suitors sauntered in and sat on chairs,

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observing proper order, and the slaves
 poured water on their hands. The house girls brought
 baskets of bread and heaped it up beside them,
 and house boys filled their wine-bowls up with drink.
 They reached to take the good things set before them.
 Once they were satisfied with food and drink,
 the suitors turned their minds to other things—
 singing and dancing, glories of the feast.
 A slave brought out a well-tuned lyre and gave it
 to Phemius, the man the suitors forced
 to sing for them. He struck the chords to start
 his lovely song.

Telemachus leaned in
 close to Athena, so they would not hear,
 and said,

“Dear guest—excuse my saying this—
 these men are only interested in music—
 a life of ease. They make no contribution.
 This food belongs to someone else, a man
 whose white bones may be lying in the rain
 or sunk beneath the waves. If they saw him
 return to Ithaca, they would all pray
 for faster feet, instead of wealth and gold
 and fancy clothes. In fact, he must have died.
 We have no hope. He will not come back home.
 If someone says so, we do not believe it.
 But come now, tell me this and tell the truth.
 Who are you? From what city, and what parents?
 What kind of ship did you here arrive on?
 What sailors brought you here, and by what route?
 You surely did not travel here on foot!
 Here is the thing I really want to know:

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have you been here before? Are you a friend
 who visited my father? Many men
 came to his house. He traveled many places.”

Athena's clear bright eyes met his. She said,
 “Yes, I will tell you everything. I am
 Mentès, the son of wise Anchialus,
 lord of the Taphians, who love the oar.
 I traveled with my ship and my companions
 over the wine-dark sea to foreign lands,
 with iron that I hope to trade for copper
 in Temese. My ship is in the harbor
 far from the town, beneath the woody hill.
 And you and I are guest-friends through our fathers,
 from long ago—Laertes can confirm it.
 I hear that fine old man no longer comes
 to town, but lives out in the countryside,
 stricken by grief, with only one old slave,
 who gives him food and drink when he trails back
 leg-weary from his orchard, rich in vines.
 I came because they told me that your father
 was here—but now it seems that gods have blocked
 his path back home. But I am sure that he
 is not yet dead. The wide sea keeps him trapped
 upon some island, captured by fierce men
 who will not let him go. Now I will make
 a prophecy the gods have given me,
 and I think it will all come true, although
 I am no prophet. He will not be gone
 much longer from his own dear native land,
 even if chains of iron hold him fast.
 He will devise a means of getting home.
 He is resourceful. Tell me now—are you
 Odysseus' son? You are so tall!

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Your handsome face and eyes resemble his.
 We often met and knew each other well,
 before he went to Troy, where all the best
 leaders of Argos sailed in hollow ships.
 From that time on, we have not seen each other."

Telemachus was careful as he answered.
 "Dear guest, I will be frank with you. My mother
 says that I am his son, but I cannot
 be sure, since no one knows his own begetting.
 I wish I were the son of someone lucky,
 who could grow old at home with all his wealth.
 Instead, the most unlucky man alive
 is said to be my father—since you ask."

Athena looked at him with sparkling eyes.
 "Son of Penelope, you and your sons
 will make a name in history, since you are
 so clever. But now tell me this. Who are
 these banqueters? And what is the occasion?
 A drinking party, or a wedding feast?
 They look so arrogant and self-indulgent,
 making themselves at home. A wise observer
 would surely disapprove of how they act."

Telemachus said moodily, "My friend,
 since you have raised the subject, there was once
 a time when this house here was doing well,
 our future bright, when he was still at home.
 But now the gods have changed their plans and cursed us,
 and cast my father into utter darkness.
 If he had died it would not be this bad—
 if he had fallen with his friends at Troy,
 or in his loved ones' arms, when he had wound

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the threads of war to end. The Greeks would then
 have built a tomb for him; he would have won
 fame for his son. But now, the winds have seized him,
 and he is nameless and unknown. He left
 nothing but tears for me. I do not weep
 only for him. The gods have given me
 so many other troubles. All the chiefs
 of Same, Zacynthus, Dulichium,
 and local lords, from rocky Ithaca,
 are courting Mother, wasting our whole house.
 She does not turn these awful suitors down,
 nor can she end the courting. They keep eating,
 spoiling my house—and soon, they will kill me!"

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Athena said in outrage, "This is monstrous!
 You need Odysseus to come back home
 and lay his hands on all those shameless suitors!
 If only he would come here now and stand
 right at the gates, with two spears in his hands,
 in shield and helmet, as when I first saw him!
 Odysseus was visiting our house,
 drinking and having fun on his way back
 from sailing in swift ships to Ephyra
 to visit Ilus. He had gone there looking
 for deadly poison to anoint his arrows.
 Ilus refused, because he feared the gods.
 My father gave Odysseus the poison,
 loving him blindly. May Odysseus
 come meet the suitors with that urge to kill!
 A bitter courtship and short life for them!
 But whether he comes home to take revenge,
 or not, is with the gods. You must consider
 how best to drive these suitors from your house.
 Come, listen carefully to what I say.

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Tomorrow call the Achaean chiefs to meeting,
 and tell the suitors—let the gods be witness—
 ‘All of you, go away! To your own homes!’
 As for your mother, if she wants to marry,
 let her return to her great father’s home.
 They will make her a wedding and prepare
 abundant gifts to show her father’s love.
 Now here is some advice from me for you.
 Fit out a ship with twenty oars, the best,
 and go find out about your long-lost father.
 Someone may tell you news, or you may hear
 a voice from Zeus, best source of information.
 First go to Pylos, question godlike Nestor;
 from there, to Sparta; visit Menelaus.
 He came home last of all the Achaean heroes.
 If you should hear that he is still alive
 and coming home, put up with this abuse
 for one more year. But if you hear that he
 is dead, go home, and build a tomb for him,
 and hold a lavish funeral to show
 the honor he deserves, and give your mother
 in marriage to a man. When this is done,
 consider deeply how you might be able
 to kill the suitors in your halls—by tricks
 or openly. You must not stick to childhood;
 you are no longer just a little boy.
 You surely heard how everybody praised
 Orestes when he killed the man who killed
 his famous father—devious Aegisthus?
 Dear boy, I see how big and tall you are.
 Be brave, and win yourself a lasting name.
 But I must go now, on my speedy ship;
 my friends are getting tired of waiting for me.
 Remember what I said and heed my words.”

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Telemachus was brooding on her words,
 and said, “Dear guest, you were so kind to give me
 this fatherly advice. I will remember.
 I know that you are eager to be off,
 but please enjoy a bath before you go,
 and take a gift with you. I want to give you
 a precious, pretty treasure as a keepsake
 to mark our special friendship.”

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But the goddess

Athena met his gaze and said, “Do not
 hold me back now. I must be on my way.
 As for the gift you feel inspired to give me,
 save it for when I come on my way home
 and let me give you presents then as well
 in fair exchange.”

With that, the owl-eyed goddess

flew away like a bird, up through the smoke.
 She left him feeling braver, more determined,
 and with his father even more in mind.
 Watching her go, he was amazed and saw
 she was a god. Then godlike, he went off
 to meet the suitors.

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They were sitting calmly,

listening to the poet, who sang how
 Athena cursed the journey of the Greeks
 as they were sailing home from Troy. Upstairs,
 Penelope had heard the marvelous song.
 She clambered down the steep steps of her house,
 not by herself—two slave girls came with her.
 She reached the suitors looking like a goddess,
 then stopped and stood beside a sturdy pillar,
 holding a gauzy veil before her face.

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Her slave girls stood, one on each side of her.
In tears, she told the holy singer,

“Stop,
please Phemius! You know so many songs,
enchancing tales of things that gods and men
have done, the deeds that singers publicize.
Sing something else, and let them drink in peace.
Stop this upsetting song that always breaks
my heart, so I can hardly bear my grief.
I miss him all the time—that man, my husband,
whose story is so famous throughout Greece.”

Sullen Telemachus said, “Mother, no,
you must not criticize the loyal bard
for singing as it pleases him to sing.
Poets are not to blame for how things are;
Zeus is; he gives to each as is his will.
Do not blame Phemius because he told
about the Greek disasters. You must know
the newest song is always praised the most.
So steel your heart and listen to the song.
Odysseus was not the only one
who did not come back home again from Troy.
Many were lost. Go in and do your work.
Stick to the loom and distaff. Tell your slaves
to do their chores as well. It is for men
to talk, especially me. I am the master.”

That startled her. She went back to her room,
and took her son's uneasy words to heart.
She went upstairs, along with both her slaves,
and wept there for her dear Odysseus,
until Athena gave her eyes sweet sleep.

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Throughout the shadowy hall the suitors clamored,
praying to lie beside her in her bed.
Telemachus inhaled, then started speaking.

“You suitors, you are taking this too far.
Let us enjoy the feast in peace. It is
a lovely thing to listen to a bard,
especially one with such a godlike voice.
At dawn, let us assemble in the square.
I have to tell you this—it is an order.
You have to leave my halls. Go dine elsewhere!
Eat your own food, or share between your houses.
Or if you think it easier and better
to ruin one man's wealth, and if you think
that you can get away with it—go on!
I call upon the gods; Zeus will grant vengeance.
You will be punished and destroyed, right here!”

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He spoke, and they began to bite their lips,
shocked that Telemachus would dare to speak
so boldly. But Antinous replied,

“Telemachus, the gods themselves have taught you
such pride, to talk so big and brash in public!
May Zeus the son of Cronus never grant you
your true inheritance, which is the throne
of Ithaca.”

His mind alert and focused,
Telemachus replied, “Antinous,
you will not like this, but I have to say,
I hope Zeus does give me the throne. Do you
deny it is an honorable thing
to be a king? It brings the household wealth,
and honor to the man. But there are many

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other great chiefs in sea-girt Ithaca,
both old and young. I know that. One of them
may seize the throne, now that Odysseus
has died. But I shall be at least the lord
of my own house and of the slaves that he
seized for my benefit."

Eurymachus

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replied, "Telemachus, the gods must choose
which of us will be king of Ithaca.
But still, I hope you keep your own possessions,
and rule your house. May no man drive you out,
and seize your wealth, while Ithaca survives.
Now, friend, I want to ask about the stranger.
Where was he from, what country? Did he say?
Where is his place of birth, his native soil?
Does he bring news your father will come home?
Or did he come here for some other purpose?
How suddenly he darted off, not waiting
for us to meet him. Yet he looked important."

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The boy said soberly, "Eurymachus,
my father is not ever coming home.
I do not listen now to any gossip,
or forecasts from the psychics whom my mother
invites to visit us. The stranger was
my father's guest-friend Mentès, son of wise
Anchialus, who rules the Taphians,
the people of the oar."

Those were his words,

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but in his mind he knew she was a god.
They danced to music and enjoyed themselves
till evening, then they went back home to sleep.

Telemachus' bedroom had been built
above the courtyard, so it had a view.
He went upstairs, preoccupied by thought.
A loyal slave went with him, Eurycleia,
daughter of Ops; she brought the burning torches.
Laertes bought her many years before
when she was very young, for twenty oxen. 430
He gave her status in the household, equal
to his own wife, but never slept with her,
avoiding bitter feelings in his marriage.
She brought the torches now; she was the slave
who loved him most, since she had cared for him
when he was tiny. Entering the room,
he sat down on the bed, took off his tunic,
and gave it to the vigilant old woman.
She smoothed it out and folded it, then hung it
up on a hook beside his wooden bed, 440
and left the room. She used the silver latch
to close the door; the strap pulled tight the bolt.
He slept the night there, wrapped in woolen blankets,
planning the journey told him by Athena.

the hero who had suffered for so long
 was happy. He lay down inside and heaped
 more leaves on top. As when a man who lives
 out on a lonely farm that has no neighbors
 buries a glowing torch inside black embers
 to save the seed of fire and keep a source—
 so was Odysseus concealed in leaves.
 Athena poured down sleep to shut his eyes
 so all his painful weariness could end.

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BOOK 6



A Princess and Her Laundry

Odysseus had suffered. In exhaustion
 from all his long ordeals, the hero slept.
 Meanwhile, Athena went to the Phaeacians.
 This people used to live in Hyperia,
 a land of dancing. But their mighty neighbors,
 the Cyclopes, kept looting them, and they
 could not hold out. Their king, Nausithous,
 brought them to Scheria, a distant place,
 and built a wall around the town, and homes,
 and temples to the gods, and plots of land.
 He went to Hades. Then Alcinous,
 who has god-given wisdom, came to power.
 Bright-eyed Athena traveled to his palace,
 to help Odysseus' journey home.
 She went inside the decorated bedroom
 where the young princess, Nausicaa, was sleeping,
 as lovely as a goddess. Slaves were sleeping
 outside her doorway, one on either side;
 two charming girls with all the Graces' gifts.
 The shining doors were shut, but like the wind

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the goddess reached the bed of Nausicaa,
disguised as her best friend, a girl her age,
the daughter of the famous sailor Dymas.
Sharp-eyed Athena said,

"Oh, Nausicaa!

So lazy! But your mother should have taught you!
Your clothes are lying there in dirty heaps,
though you will soon be married, and you need
a pretty dress to wear, and clothes to give
to all your bridesmaids. That impresses people,
and makes the parents happy. When day comes,
we have to do the laundry. I will come
and help you, so the work will soon be done.
Surely you will not long remain unmarried.
The best young men here in your native land
already want to court you. So at dawn
go ask your father for the cart with mules,
to carry dresses, scarves, and sheets. You should
ride there, not walk; the washing pools are far
from town."

The goddess looked into her eyes,
then went back to Olympus, which they say
is where the gods will have their home forever.
The place is never shaken by the wind,
or wet with rain or blanketed by snow.
A cloudless sky is spread above the mountain,
white radiance all round. The blessed gods
live there in happiness forevermore.

Then Dawn came from her lovely throne, and woke
the girl. She was amazed, remembering
her dream, and in a fine dress, went to tell
her parents, whom she found inside the hall.

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Her mother sat beside the hearth and spun
sea-purpled yarn, her house girls all around her.
Her father was just heading out to council
with his renowned advisors, since his people
had called him to a meeting. She stood near him
and said,

"Dear Daddy, please would you set up
the wagon with the big smooth wheels for me,
so I can take my fine clothes to the river
to wash them? They are dirty. And you too
should wear clean clothes for meeting your advisors,
dressed in your best to make important plans.
Your five sons also—two of whom are married,
but three are strapping single men—they always
want to wear nice fresh-laundered clothes when they
are going dancing. This is on my mind."

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She said this since she felt too shy to talk
of marriage to her father. But he knew,
and answered, "Child, I would not grudge the mules
or anything you want. Go on! The slaves
can fit the wagon with its cargo rack."

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He called the household slaves, and they obeyed.
They made the wagon ready and inspected
its wheels, led up the mules, and yoked them to it.
The girl brought out the multicolored clothes,
and put them on the cart, while in a basket
her mother packed nutritious food for her—
a varied meal, with olives, cheese, and wine,
stored in a goatskin. Then the girl got in.
Her mother handed her a golden flask
of oil, to use when she had had her bath.

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Then Nausicaa took up the whip and reins,
 and cracked the whip. The mules were on their way,
 eager to go and rattling the harness,
 bringing the clothes and girl and all her slaves.
 They reached the lovely river where the pools
 are always full—the water flows in streams
 and bubbles up from underneath, to wash
 even the dirtiest of laundry. There
 they freed the mules and drove them to the river
 to graze on honeyed grass beside the stream.
 The girls brought out the laundry from the cart,
 and brought it to the washing pools and trod it,
 competing with each other. When the dirt
 was gone, they spread the clothes along the shore,
 where salt sea washes pebbles to the beach.
 They bathed and rubbed themselves with olive oil.
 Then they sat on the riverbank and ate,
 and waited for the sun to dry the clothes.
 But when they finished eating, they took off
 their head-scarves to play ball. The white-armed princess
 led them in play—like Artemis the archer,
 running across the heights of Taygetus
 and Erymanthus; she is glad to run
 with boars and fleet-foot deer. The rustic daughters
 of Zeus the Aegis King play round about her,
 while Leto is delighted in her heart,
 seeing her daughter far above the rest,
 though all are beautiful. So Nausicaa
 stood out above them all. But when the girl
 was thinking she should head for home and yoke
 the mules, and pack the laundry up again,
 Athena's eyes flashed bright. Odysseus
 must wake up, see the pretty girl, and have
 an escort to the town of the Phaeacians.

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The princess threw the ball towards a slave girl,
 who missed the catch. It fell down in an eddy;
 the girls all started screaming, very loudly.
 Odysseus woke up, and thought things over.

"What is this country I have come to now?
 Are all the people wild and violent,
 or good, hospitable, and god-fearing?
 I heard the sound of female voices. Is it
 nymphs, who frequent the craggy mountaintops,
 and river streams and meadows lush with grass?
 Or could this noise I hear be human voices?
 I have to try to find out who they are."

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Odysseus jumped up from out the bushes.
 Grasping a leafy branch he broke it off
 to cover up his manly private parts.
 Just as a mountain lion trusts its strength,
 and beaten by the rain and wind, its eyes
 burn bright as it attacks the cows or sheep,
 or wild deer, and hunger drives it on
 to try the sturdy pens of sheep—so need
 impelled Odysseus to come upon
 the girls with pretty hair, though he was naked.
 All caked with salt, he looked a dreadful sight.
 They ran along the shore quite terrified,
 some here, some there. But Nausicaa stayed still.
 Athena made her legs stop trembling
 and gave her courage in her heart. She stood there.
 He wondered, should he touch her knees, or keep
 some distance and use charming words, to beg
 the pretty girl to show him to the town,
 and give him clothes. At last he thought it best
 to keep some distance and use words to beg her.

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The girl might be alarmed at being touched.
His words were calculated flattery.

"My lady, please! Are you divine or human?
If you are some great goddess from the sky,
you look like Zeus' daughter Artemis—
you are as tall and beautiful as she.

But if you live on earth and are a human,
your mother and your father must be lucky,
your brothers also—lucky three times over.
Their hearts must be delighted, seeing you,
their flourishing new sprout, the dancers' leader.
And that man will be luckiest by far,
who takes you home with dowry, as his bride.

I have seen no one like you. Never, no one.
My eyes are dazzled when I look at you.
I traveled once to Delos, on my way
to war and suffering; my troops marched with me.
Beside Apollo's altar sprang a sapling,
a fresh young palm. I gazed at it and marveled.

I never saw so magical a tree.
My lady, you transfix me that same way.
I am in awe of you, afraid to touch
your knees. But I am desperate. I came from
Ogygia, and for twenty days storm winds
and waves were driving me, adrift until
yesterday some god washed me up right here,
perhaps to meet more suffering. I think
my troubles will not end until the gods
have done their all. My lady, pity me.
Battered and wrecked, I come to you, you first—
and I know no one else in this whole country.
Show me the town, give me some rags to wear,
if you brought any clothes when you came here.

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So may the gods grant all your heart's desires,
a home and husband, somebody like-minded.
For nothing could be better than when two
live in one house, their minds in harmony,
husband and wife. Their enemies are jealous,
their friends delighted, and they have great honor."

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Then white-armed Nausicaa replied, "Well, stranger,
you seem a brave and clever man; you know
that Zeus apportions happiness to people,
to good and bad, each one as he decides.
Your troubles come from him, and you must bear them.
But since you have arrived here in our land,
you will not lack for clothes or anything
a person needs in times of desperation.
I will show you the town. The people here
are called Phaeacians, and I am the daughter
of the great King Alcinous, on whom
depends the strength and power of our people."

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And then she called her slaves with braided hair.
"Wait, girls! Why are you running from this man?
Do you believe he is an enemy?
No living person ever born would come
to our Phaeacia with a hostile mind,
since we are much beloved by the gods.
Our island is remote, washed round by sea;
we have no human contact. But this man
is lost, poor thing. We must look after him.
All foreigners and beggars come from Zeus,
and any act of kindness is a blessing.
So give the stranger food and drink, and wash him
down in the river, sheltered from the wind."

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They stopped, and egged each other on to take
 Odysseus to shelter, as the princess,
 the daughter of Alcinous, had told them.
 They gave him clothes, a tunic and a cloak,
 the olive oil in the golden flask,
 and led him down to wash beside the river.
 Odysseus politely said,

“Now, girls,
 wait at a distance here, so I can wash
 my grimy back, and rub myself with oil—
 it has been quite a while since I have done it.
 Please let me wash in private. I am shy
 of being naked with you—pretty girls
 with lovely hair.”

So they withdrew, and told
 their mistress. Then he used the river water
 to scrub the brine off from his back and shoulders,
 and wash the crusty sea salt from his hair.
 But when he was all clean and richly oiled,
 dressed in the clothes the young unmarried girl
 had given him, Athena made him look
 bigger and sturdier, and made his hair
 grow curling tendrils like a hyacinth.
 As when Athena and Hephaestus teach
 a knowledgeable craftsman every art,
 and he pours gold on silver, making objects
 more beautiful—just so Athena poured
 attractiveness across his head and shoulders.
 Then he went off and sat beside the sea;
 his handsomeness was dazzling. The girl
 was shocked. She told her slaves with tidy hair,

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“Now listen to me, girls! The gods who live
 on Mount Olympus must have wished this man
 to come in contact with my godlike people.
 Before, he looked so poor and unrefined;
 now he is like a god that lives in heaven.
 I hope I get a man like this as husband,
 a man that lives here and would like to stay.
 But, girls, now give the stranger food and drink!”

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She gave her orders and the girls obeyed—
 they gave Odysseus some food and drink.
 He wolfed the food and drank. He was half starved;
 it had been ages since he tasted food.
 Then white-armed Nausicaa had formed a plan.
 Folding the clothes, she packed them in the wagon,
 and yoked the mules, and then she climbed inside.
 She gave Odysseus some clear instructions.

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“Stranger, get ready; you must go to town,
 and I will have you meet the best of all
 our people. You seem smart; do as I say.
 While we are passing through the fields and farmlands,
 you have to follow quickly with the girls
 behind the mules, and let me lead the way.
 Then we will reach the lofty city wall,
 which has a scenic port on either side,
 and one slim gate, where curved ships are drawn up
 along the road: a special spot for each.
 The meeting place surrounds Poseidon's shrine,
 fitted with heavy stones set deep in earth.
 And there the workers make the ships' equipment—
 cables and sails—and there they plane the oars.
 Phaeacians do not care for archery;
 their passion is for sails and oars and ships,

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on which they love to cross the dark-gray ocean.
 The people in the town are proud; I worry
 that they may speak against me. Someone rude
 may say, 'Who is that big strong man with her?
 Where did she find that stranger? Will he be
 her husband? She has got him from a ship,
 a foreigner, since no one lives near here,
 or else a god, the answer to her prayers,
 descended from the sky to hold her tight.
 Better if she has found herself a man
 from elsewhere, since she scorns the people here,
 although she has so many noble suitors.'
 So they will shame me. I myself would blame
 a girl who got too intimate with men
 before her marriage, and who went against
 her loving parents' rules. But listen, stranger,
 I will explain the quickest way to gain
 my father's help to make your way back home.
 Beside the road there is a grove of poplars;
 it has a fountain, and a meadow round it.
 It is Athena's place, where Father has
 his orchard and estate, as far from town
 as human voice can carry. Sit down there
 and wait until I reach my father's house
 in town. But when you think I have arrived,
 walk on and ask directions for the palace
 of King Alcinous, my mighty father.
 It will be very easy finding it;
 a tiny child could guide you there. It is
 unlike the other houses in Phaeacia.
 Go through the courtyard, in the house and on
 straight to the Great Hall. You will find my mother
 sitting beside the hearth by firelight,
 and spinning her amazing purple wool.

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She leans against a pillar, slaves behind her.
 My father has a throne right next to hers;
 he sits and sips his wine, just like a god.
 But pass him by, embrace my mother's knees
 to supplicate. If you do this, you quickly
 will reach your home, however far it is,
 in happiness. If she is good to you,
 and looks upon you kindly in her heart,
 you can be sure of getting to your house,
 back to your family and native land."

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With that, she used her shining whip to urge
 the mules to go. They left the river streams,
 and trotted well and clipped their hooves along.
 She drove an easy pace to let her slaves
 and great Odysseus keep up on foot.
 The sun was setting when they reached the grove,
 the famous sanctuary of Athena.
 Odysseus sat in it, and at once
 he prayed to mighty Zeus' daughter.

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"Hear me,
 daughter of Zeus! Unvanquished Queen! If ever,
 when that earth-shaker god was wrecking me,
 you helped me—may they pity me and give me
 kind welcome in Phaeacia." And Athena
 heard him but did not yet appear to him,
 respecting her own brother in his fury
 against Odysseus till he reached home.

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I lost my stamina and my legs weakened
during my time at sea, upon the raft;
I could not do my exercise routine."

The crowd was silent, but Alcinous
said, "Sir, you have expressed, with fine good manners,
your wish to show your talents, and your anger
at that man who stood up in this arena
and mocked you, as no one who understands
how to speak properly would ever do. 240
Now listen carefully, so you may tell
your own fine friends at home when you are feasting
beside your wife and children, and remember
our skill in all the deeds we have accomplished
from our forefathers' time till now. We are
not brilliant at wrestling or boxing,
but we are quick at sprinting, and with ships
we are the best. We love the feast, the lyre,
dancing and varied clothes, hot baths and bed.
But now let the best dancers of Phaeacia 250
perform, so that our guest may tell his friends
when he gets home, how excellent we are
at seafaring, at running, and at dancing
and song. Let someone bring the well-tuned lyre
from inside for Demodocus—go quickly!"

So spoke the king. The house boy brought the lyre.
The people chose nine referees to check
the games were fair. They leveled out a floor
for dancing, with a fine wide ring around.
The house boy gave Demodocus the lyre. 260
He walked into the middle, flanked by boys,
young and well trained, who tapped their feet performing
the holy dance, their quick legs bright with speed.
Odysseus was wonder-struck to see it.

The poet strummed and sang a charming song
about the love of fair-crowned Aphrodite
for Ares, who gave lavish gifts to her
and shamed the bed of Lord Hephaestus, where
they secretly had sex. The Sun God saw them,
and told Hephaestus—bitter news for him. 270
He marched into his forge to get revenge,
and set the mighty anvil on its block,
and hammered chains so strong that they could never
be broken or undone. He was so angry
at Ares. When his trap was made, he went
inside the room of his beloved bed,
and twined the mass of cables all around
the bedposts, and then hung them from the ceiling,
like slender spiderwebs, so finely made
that nobody could see them, even gods: 280
the craftsmanship was so ingenious.
When he had set that trap across the bed,
he traveled to the cultured town of Lemnos,
which was his favorite place in all the world.
Ares the golden rider had kept watch.
He saw Hephaestus, famous wonder-worker,
leaving his house, and went inside himself;
he wanted to make love with Aphrodite.
She had returned from visiting her father,
the mighty son of Cronus; there she sat. 290
Then Ares took her hand and said to her,

"My darling, let us go to bed. Hephaestus
is out of town; he must have gone to Lemnos
to see the Sintians whose speech is strange."

She was excited to lie down with him;
they went to bed together. But the chains
ingenious Hephaestus had created

wrapped tight around them, so they could not move
or get up. Then they knew that they were trapped.
The limping god drew near—before he reached
the land of Lemnos, he had turned back home.
Troubled at heart, he came towards his house.
Standing there in the doorway, he was seized
by savage rage. He gave a mighty shout,
calling to all the gods,

“O Father Zeus,
and all you blessed gods who live forever,
look! You may laugh, but it is hard to bear.
See how my Aphrodite, child of Zeus,
is disrespecting me for being lame.
She loves destructive Ares, who is strong
and handsome. I am weak. I blame my parents.
If only I had not been born! But come,
see where those two are sleeping in my bed,
as lovers. I am horrified to see it.
But I predict they will not want to lie
longer like that, however great their love.
Soon they will want to wake up, but my trap
and chains will hold them fast, until her father
pays back the price I gave him for his daughter.
Her eyes stare at me like a dog. She is
so beautiful, but lacking self-control.”

The gods assembled at his house: Poseidon,
Earth-Shaker, helpful Hermes, and Apollo.
The goddesses stayed home, from modesty.
The blessed gods who give good things were standing
inside the doorway, and they burst out laughing,
at what a clever trap Hephaestus set.
And as they looked, they said to one another,

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“Crime does not pay! The slow can beat the quick,
as now Hephaestus, who is lame and slow,
has used his skill to catch the fastest sprinter
of all those on Olympus. Ares owes
the price for his adultery.” They gossiped.

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Apollo, son of Zeus, then said to Hermes,
“Hermes my brother, would you like to sleep
with golden Aphrodite, in her bed,
even weighed down by mighty chains?”

And Hermes

the sharp-eyed messenger replied, “Ah, brother,
Apollo lord of archery: if only!
I would be bound three times as tight or more
and let you gods and all your wives look on,
if only I could sleep with Aphrodite.”

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Then laughter rose among the deathless gods.
Only Poseidon did not laugh. He begged
and pleaded with Hephaestus to release
Ares. He told the wonder-working god,

“Now let him go! I promise he will pay
the penalty in full among the gods,
just as you ask.”

The famous limping god
replied, “Poseidon, do not ask me this.
It is disgusting, bailing scoundrels out.
How could I bind you, while the gods look on,
if Ares should escape his bonds and debts?”

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Poseidon, Lord of Earthquakes, answered him,
 "Hephaestus, if he tries to dodge this debt,
 I promise I will pay."

The limping god
 said, "Then, in courtesy to you, I must
 do as you ask." So using all his strength,
 Hephaestus loosed the chains. The pair of lovers
 were free from their constraints, and both jumped up. 360
 Ares went off to Thrace, while Aphrodite
 smiled as she went to Cyprus, to the island
 of Paphos, where she had a fragrant altar
 and sanctuary. The Graces washed her there,
 and rubbed her with the magic oil that glows
 upon immortals, and they dressed her up
 in gorgeous clothes. She looked astonishing.

That was the poet's song. Odysseus
 was happy listening; so were they all.
 And then Alcinous told Halios 370
 to dance with Laodamas; no one danced
 as well as them. They took a purple ball
 which Polybus the artisan had made them.
 One boy would leap and toss it to the clouds;
 the other would jump up, feet off the ground,
 and catch it easily before he landed.
 After they practiced throwing it straight upwards,
 they danced across the fertile earth, crisscrossing,
 constantly trading places. Other boys
 who stood around the field were beating time 380
 with noisy stomping. Then Odysseus
 said,

"King of many citizens, great lord,
 you boasted that your dancers are the best,

and it is true. I feel amazed to see
 this marvelous show."

That pleased the reverend king.
 He spoke at once to his seafaring people.
 "Hear me, Phaeacian leaders, lords and nobles.
 The stranger seems extremely wise to me.
 So let us give him gifts, as hosts should do
 to guests in friendship. Twelve lords rule our people, 390
 with me as thirteenth lord. Let us each bring
 a pound of precious gold and laundered clothes,
 a tunic and a cloak. Then pile them up,
 and let our guest take all these gifts, and go
 to dinner with them, happy in his heart.
 Euryalus should tell him he is sorry,
 and give a special gift, since what he said
 was inappropriate."

They all agreed,
 and each sent back a deputy to fetch
 the presents. And Euryalus spoke out. 400

"My lord Alcinous, great king of kings,
 I will apologize, as you command.
 And I will give him this bronze sword which has
 a silver handle, and a scabbard carved
 of ivory—a precious gift for him."
 With that he put the silver-studded sword
 into Odysseus' hands; his words
 flew out.

"I welcome you, sir. Be our guest.
 If something rude of any kind was said,
 let the winds take it. May the gods allow you
 to reach your home and see your wife again, 410

was bright and strong, we held them off, though they outnumbered us. But when the sun turned round and dipped, the hour when oxen are released, the Cicones began to overpower us Greeks. Six well-armed members of my crew died from each ship. The rest of us survived, and we escaped the danger. We prepared to sail away with heavy hearts, relieved to be alive, but grieving for our friends. Before we launched the ships, we called aloud three times to each of our poor lost companions, slaughtered at the hands of the Cicones.

The Cloud Lord Zeus hurled North Wind at our ships, a terrible typhoon, and covered up the sea and earth with fog. Night fell from heaven and seized us and our ships keeled over sideways; the sails were ripped three times by blasting wind. Scared for our lives, we hoisted down the sails and rowed with all our might towards the shore. We stayed there for two days and nights, exhausted, eating our hearts with pain. When bright-haired Dawn brought the third morning, we set up our masts, unfurled the shining sails, and climbed aboard. The wind blew straight, the pilots steered, and I would have come safely home, to my own land, but as I rounded Malea, a current and blast of wind pushed me off course, away from Cythera. For nine days I was swept by stormy winds across the fish-filled sea. On the tenth day, I landed on the island of those who live on food from lotus flowers. We gathered water, and my crew prepared a meal. We picnicked by the ships, then I

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chose two men, and one slave to make the third, to go and scout. We needed to find out what kind of people lived there on that island. The scouts encountered humans, Lotus-Eaters, who did not hurt them. They just shared with them their sweet delicious fruit. But as they ate it, they lost the will to come back and bring news to me. They wanted only to stay there, feeding on lotus with the Lotus-Eaters. They had forgotten home. I dragged them back in tears, forced them on board the hollow ships, pushed them below the decks, and tied them up. I told the other men, the loyal ones, to get back in the ships, so no one else would taste the lotus and forget about our destination. They embarked and sat along the rowing benches, side by side, and struck the grayish water with their oars.

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With heavy hearts we sailed along and reached the country of high-minded Cyclopes, the mavericks. They put their trust in gods, and do not plant their food from seed, nor plow, and yet the barley, grain, and clustering wine-grapes all flourish there, increased by rain from Zeus. They hold no councils, have no common laws, but live in caves on lofty mountaintops, and each makes laws for his own wife and children, without concern for what the others think. A distance from this island is another, across the water, slantways from the harbor, level and thickly wooded. Countless goats live there but people never visit it. No hunters labor through its woods to scale

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its hilly peaks. There are no flocks of sheep,
 no fields of plowland—it is all untilled,
 unsown and uninhabited by humans.
 Only the bleating goats live there and graze.
 Cyclopic people have no red-cheeked ships
 and no shipwright among them who could build
 boats, to enable them to row across
 to other cities, as most people do,
 crossing the sea to visit one another.
 With boats they could have turned this island into
 a fertile colony, with proper harvests.
 By the gray shore there lie well-watered meadows,
 where vines would never fail. There is flat land
 for plowing, and abundant crops would grow
 in the autumn; there is richness underground.
 The harbor has good anchorage; there is
 no need of anchor stones or ropes or cables.
 The ships that come to shore there can remain
 beached safely till the sailors wish to leave
 and fair winds blow. Up by the harbor head
 freshwater gushes down beneath the caves.
 The poplars grow around it. There we sailed:
 the gods were guiding us all through the darkness.
 Thick fog wrapped round our ships and in the sky
 the moon was dark and clothed in clouds, so we
 saw nothing of the island. None of us
 could see the great waves rolling in towards
 the land, until we rowed right to the beach.
 We lowered all the sails and disembarked
 onto the shore, and there we fell asleep.

When early Dawn shone forth with rosy fingers,
 we roamed around that island full of wonders.
 The daughters of the great King Zeus, the nymphs,
 drove out the mountain goats so that my crew

could eat. On seeing them, we dashed to fetch
 our javelins and bows from on board ship.
 We split into three groups, took aim and shot.
 Some god gave us good hunting. All twelve crews
 had nine goats each, and ten for mine. We sat there
 all day till sunset, eating meat and drinking
 our strong red wine. The ships' supply of that
 had not run out; when we had sacked the holy
 citadel of the Cicones, we all
 took gallons of it, poured in great big pitchers.
 We looked across the narrow strip of water
 at the Cyclopic island, saw their smoke,
 and heard the baaing of their sheep and goats.
 The sun went down and in the hours of darkness
 we lay and slept on shore beside the sea.
 But when the rosy hands of Dawn appeared,
 I called my men together and addressed them.

'My loyal friends! Stay here, the rest of you,
 while with my boat and crew I go to check
 who those men are, find out if they are wild,
 lawless aggressors, or the type to welcome
 strangers, and fear the gods.'

With that, I climbed
 on board and told my crew to come with me
 and then untie the cables of the ship.
 Quickly they did so, sat along the benches,
 and struck the whitening water with their oars.
 The journey was not long. Upon arrival,
 right at the edge of land, beside the sea,
 we saw a high cave overhung with laurel,
 the home of several herds of sheep and goats.
 Around that cave was built a lofty courtyard,
 of deep-set stones, with tall pines rising up,

and leafy oaks. There lived a massive man
 who shepherded his flocks all by himself.
 He did not go to visit other people,
 but kept apart, and did not know the ways
 of custom. In his build he was a wonder,
 a giant, not like men who live on bread,
 but like a wooded peak in airy mountains,
 rising alone above the rest.

I told

my loyal crew to guard the ship, while I
 would go with just twelve chosen men, my favorites.
 I took a goatskin full of dark sweet wine
 that I was given by Apollo's priest,
 Maron the son of Euanthes, who lived
 inside the shady grove on Ismarus.
 In reverence to the god, I came to help him,
 and save his wife and son. He gave me gifts:
 a silver bowl and seven pounds of gold,
 well wrought, and siphoned off some sweet strong wine,
 and filled twelve jars for me—a godlike drink.
 The slaves knew nothing of this wine; it was
 known just to him, his wife, and one house girl.
 Whenever he was drinking it, he poured
 a single shot into a cup, and added
 twenty of water, and a marvelous smell
 rose from the bowl, and all would long to taste it.
 I filled a big skin up with it, and packed
 provisions in a bag—my heart suspected
 that I might meet a man of courage, wild,
 and lacking knowledge of the normal customs.

We soon were at the cave, but did not find
 the Cyclops; he was pasturing his flocks.
 We went inside and looked at everything.

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We saw his crates weighed down with cheese, and pens
 crammed full of lambs divided up by age:
 the newborns, middlings, and those just weaned.
 There were well-crafted bowls and pails for milking,
 all full of whey. My crew begged, 'Let us grab
 some cheese and quickly drive the kids and lambs
 out of their pens and down to our swift ships,
 and sail away across the salty water!'
 That would have been the better choice. But I
 refused. I hoped to see him, and find out
 if he would give us gifts. In fact he brought
 no joy to my companions. Then we lit
 a fire, and made a sacrifice, and ate
 some cheese, and sat to wait inside the cave
 until he brought his flocks back home. He came
 at dinnertime, and brought a load of wood
 to make a fire. He hurled it noisily
 into the cave. We were afraid, and cowered
 towards the back. He drove his ewes and nannies
 inside to milk them, but he left the rams
 and he-goats in the spacious yard outside.
 He lifted up the heavy stone and set it
 to block the entrance of the cave. It was
 a rock so huge and massive, twenty-two
 strong carts could not have dragged it from the threshold.
 He sat, and all in order milked his ewes
 and she-goats, then he set the lambs to suck
 beside each bleating mother. Then he curdled
 half of the fresh white milk, set that aside
 in wicker baskets, and the rest he stored
 in pails so he could drink it with his dinner.
 When he had carefully performed his chores,
 he lit a fire, then looked around and saw us.

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'Strangers! Who are you? Where did you come from across the watery depths? Are you on business, or roaming round without a goal, like pirates, who risk their lives at sea to bring disaster to other people?'

So he spoke. His voice, so deep and booming, and his giant size, made our hearts sink in terror. Even so, I answered,

'We are Greeks, come here from Troy. The winds have swept us off in all directions across the vast expanse of sea, off course from our planned route back home. Zeus willed it so. We are proud to be the men of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, whose fame is greatest under the sky, for sacking that vast city and killing many people. Now we beg you, here at your knees, to grant a gift, as is the norm for hosts and guests. Please sir, my lord: respect the gods. We are your suppliants, and Zeus is on our side, since he takes care of visitors, guest-friends, and those in need.'

Unmoved he said, 'Well, foreigner, you are a fool, or from some very distant country. You order me to fear the gods! My people think nothing of that Zeus with his big scepter, nor any god; our strength is more than theirs. If I spare you or spare your friends, it will not be out of fear of Zeus. I do the bidding of my own heart. But are you going far in that fine ship of yours, or somewhere near?'

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He spoke to test me, but I saw right through him. I know how these things work. I answered him deceitfully.

'Poseidon, the Earth-Shaker, shipwrecked me at the far end of your island. He pushed us in; wind dashed us on the rocks. We barely managed to survive.'

But he made no reply and showed no mercy. Leaping up high, he reached his hands towards my men, seized two, and knocked them hard against the ground like puppies, and the floor was wet with brains. He ripped them limb by limb to make his meal, then ate them like a lion on the mountains, devouring flesh, entrails, and marrow bones, and leaving nothing. Watching this disaster, we wept and lifted up our hands in prayer to Zeus. We felt so helpless. When the Cyclops had filled his massive belly with his meal of human meat and unmixed milk, he lay stretched out among his flocks. Then thinking like a military man, I thought I should get out my sword, go up to him and thrust right through his torso, feeling for his liver. That would have doomed us all. On second thoughts, I realized we were too weak to move the mighty stone he set in the high doorway. So we stayed there in misery till dawn.

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Early the Dawn appeared, pink fingers blooming, and then he lit his fire and milked his ewes in turn, and set a lamb by every one. When he had diligently done his chores,

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he grabbed two men and made a meal of them.
 After he ate, he drove his fat flock out.
 He rolled the boulder out and back with ease,
 as one would set the lid upon a quiver.
 Then whistling merrily, the Cyclops drove
 his fat flocks to the mountain. I was left,
 scheming to take revenge on him and hurt him,
 and gain the glory, if Athena let me.
 I made my plan. Beside the pen there stood
 a great big club, green olive wood, which he
 had cut to dry, to be his walking stick.
 It was so massive that it looked to us
 like a ship's mast, a twenty-oared black freighter
 that sails across the vast sea full of cargo.
 I went and cut from it about a fathom,
 and gave it to the men, and ordered them
 to scrape it down. They made it smooth and I
 stood by and sharpened up the tip, and made it
 hard in the blazing flame. The cave was full
 of dung; I hid the club beneath a pile.
 Then I gave orders that the men cast lots
 for who would lift the stake with me and press it
 into his eye, when sweet sleep overtook him.
 The lots fell on the men I would have chosen:
 four men, and I was fifth among their number.

At evening he drove back his woolly flocks
 into the spacious cave, both male and female,
 and left none in the yard outside—perhaps
 suspecting something, or perhaps a god
 told him to do it. He picked up and placed
 the stone to form a door, and sat to milk
 the sheep and bleating goats in turn, then put
 the little ones to suck. His chores were done;
 he grabbed two men for dinner. I approached

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and offered him a cup of ivy wood,
 filled full of wine. I said,

'Here, Cyclops! You
 have eaten human meat; now drink some wine,
 sample the merchandise our ship contains.
 I brought it as a holy offering,
 so you might pity me and send me home.
 But you are in a cruel rage, beyond
 what anyone could bear. Do you expect
 more guests, when you have treated us so rudely?'

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He took and drank the sweet delicious wine;
 he loved it, and demanded more.

'Another!
 And now tell me your name, so I can give you
 a present as my guest, one you will like.
 My people do have wine; grape clusters grow
 from our rich earth, fed well by rain from Zeus.
 But this is nectar, god food!'

So I gave him
 another cup of wine, and then two more.
 He drank them all, unwisely. With the wine
 gone to his head, I told him, all politeness,

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'Cyclops, you asked my name. I will reveal it;
 then you must give the gift you promised me,
 of hospitality. My name is Noman.
 My family and friends all call me Noman.'

He answered with no pity in his heart,
 'I will eat Noman last; first I will eat
 the other men. That is my gift to you.'

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Then he collapsed, fell on his back, and lay there,
 his massive neck askew. All-conquering sleep
 took him. In drunken heaviness, he spewed
 wine from his throat, and chunks of human flesh.
 And then I drove the spear into the embers
 to heat it up, and told my men, 'Be brave!'
 I wanted none of them to shrink in fear.
 The fire soon seized the olive spear,
 green though it was, and terribly it glowed.
 I quickly snatched it from the fire. My crew
 stood firm: some god was breathing courage in us.
 They took the olive spear, its tip all sharp,
 and shoved it in his eye. I leaned on top
 and twisted it, as when a man drills wood
 for shipbuilding. Below, the workers spin
 the drill with straps, stretched out from either end.
 So round and round it goes, and so we whirled
 the fire-sharp weapon in his eye. His blood
 poured out around the stake, and blazing fire
 sizzled his lids and brows, and fried the roots.
 As when a blacksmith dips an axe or adze
 to temper it in ice-cold water; loudly
 it shrieks. From this, the iron takes on its power.
 So did his eyeball crackle on the spear.
 Horribly then he howled, the rocks resounded,
 and we shrank back in fear. He tugged the spear
 out of his eye, all soaked with gushing blood.
 Desperately with both hands he hurled it from him,
 and shouted to the Cyclopes who lived
 in caves high up on windy cliffs around.
 They heard and came from every side, and stood
 near to the cave, and called out, 'Polyphemus!
 What is the matter? Are you badly hurt?
 Why are you screaming through the holy night

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and keeping us awake? Is someone stealing
 your herds, or trying to kill you, by some trick
 or force?'

Strong Polyphemus from inside
 replied, 'My friends! Noman is killing me
 by tricks, not force.'

Their words flew back to him:
 'If no one hurts you, you are all alone:
 Great Zeus has made you sick; no help for that.
 Pray to your father, mighty Lord Poseidon.'

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Then off they went, and I laughed to myself,
 at how my name, the 'no man' maneuver, tricked him.
 The Cyclops groaned and labored in his pain,
 felt with blind hands and took the door-stone out,
 and sat there at the entrance, arms outstretched,
 to catch whoever went out with the sheep.
 Maybe he thought I was a total fool.
 But I was strategizing, hatching plans,
 so that my men and I could all survive.
 I wove all kinds of wiles and cunning schemes;
 danger was near and it was life or death.
 The best idea I formed was this: there were
 those well-fed sturdy rams with good thick fleece,
 wool as dark as violets—all fine big creatures.
 So silently I tied them with the rope
 used by the giant Cyclops as a bed.
 I bound the rams in sets of three and set
 a man beneath each middle sheep, with one
 on either side, and so my men were saved.
 One ram was best of all the flock; I grabbed
 his back and curled myself up underneath

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his furry belly, clinging to his fleece;
by force of will I kept on hanging there.
And then we waited miserably for day.

When early Dawn revealed her rose-red hands,
the rams jumped up, all eager for the grass.
The ewes were bleating in their pens, unmilked,
their udders full to bursting. Though their master
was weak and worn with pain, he felt the back
of each ram as he lined them up—but missed
the men tied up beneath their woolly bellies.
Last of them all, the big ram went outside,
heavy with wool and me—the clever trickster.
Strong Polyphemus stroked his back and asked him,

'Sweet ram, why are you last today to leave
the cave? You are not normally so slow.
You are the first to eat the tender flowers,
leaping across the meadow, first to drink,
and first to want to go back to the sheepfold
at evening time. But now you are the last.
You grieve for Master's eye; that wicked man,
helped by his nasty henchmen, got me drunk
and blinded me. Noman will not escape!
If only you could talk like me, and tell me
where he is skulking in his fear of me.
Then I would dash his brains out on the rocks,
and make them spatter all across the cave,
to ease the pain that no-good Noman brought.'

With that, he nudged the ram away outside.
We rode a short way from the cave, then I
first freed myself and then untied my men.
We stole his nice fat animals, and ran,
constantly glancing all around and back

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until we reached the ship. The other men
were glad to see us, their surviving friends,
but wept for those who died. I ordered them
to stop their crying, scowling hard at each.
I made them shove the fleecy flock on board,
and row the boat out into salty water.
So they embarked, sat on their rowing benches,
and struck their oar blades in the whitening sea.
When I had gone as far as shouts can carry,
I jeered back,

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'Hey, you, Cyclops! Idiot!
The crew trapped in your cave did not belong
to some poor weakling. Well, you had it coming!
You had no shame at eating your own guests!
So Zeus and other gods have paid you back.'

My taunting made him angrier. He ripped
a rock out of the hill and hurled it at us.
It landed right in front of our dark prow,
and almost crushed the tip of the steering oar.
The stone sank in the water; waves surged up.
The backflow all at once propelled the ship
landwards; the swollen water pushed us with it.
I grabbed a big long pole, and shoved us off.
I told my men, 'Row fast, to save your lives!'
and gestured with my head to make them hurry.
They bent down to their oars and started rowing.
We got out twice as far across the sea,
and then I called to him again. My crew
begged me to stop, and pleaded with me.

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'Please!

Calm down! Why are you being so insistent
and taunting this wild man? He hurled that stone

and drove our ship right back to land. We thought that we were going to die. If he had heard us, he would have hurled a jagged rock and crushed our heads and wooden ship. He throws so hard!

But my tough heart was not convinced; I was still furious, and shouted back again,

'Cyclops! If any mortal asks you how your eye was mutilated and made blind, say that Odysseus, the city-sacker, Laertes' son, who lives in Ithaca, destroyed your sight.'

He groaned, 'The prophecy!

It has come true at last! There was a tall and handsome man named Telemus, the son of Eurymus, who lived among my people; he spent his life here, soothsaying for us. He told me that Odysseus' hands would make me lose my sight. I always thought a tall and handsome man would visit me, endowed with strength and courage. But this weakling, this little nobody, has blinded me; by wine he got the best of me. Come on, Odysseus, and let me give you gifts, and ask Poseidon's help to get you home. I am his son; the god is proud to be my father. He will heal me, if he wants, though no one else, not god nor man, can do it.'

After he said these words, I answered him, 'If only I could steal your life from you, and send you down to Hades' house below,

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as sure as nobody will ever heal you, even the god of earthquakes.'

But he prayed holding his arms towards the starry sky, 'Listen, Earth-Shaker, Blue-Haired Lord Poseidon: acknowledge me your son, and be my father. Grant that Odysseus, the city-sacker, will never go back home. Or if it is fated that he will see his family, then let him get there late and with no honor, in pain and lacking ships, and having caused the death of all his men, and let him find more trouble in his own house.'

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Blue Poseidon granted his son's prayer. Polyphemus raised a rock far bigger than the last, and swung, then hurled it with immeasurable force. It fell a little short, beside our rudder, and splashed into the sea; the waves surged up, and pushed the boat ahead, to the other shore. We reached the island where our ships were docked. The men were sitting waiting for us, weeping. We beached our ship and disembarked, then took the sheep that we had stolen from the Cyclops out of the ship's hold, and we shared them out fairly, so all the men got equal portions. But in dividing up the flock, my crew gave me alone the ram, the Cyclops' favorite. There on the shore, I slaughtered him for Zeus, the son of Cronus, god of Dark Clouds, Lord of all the world. I burned the thighs. The god ignored my offering, and planned to ruin

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all of my ships and all my loyal men.
 So all day long till sunset we were sitting,
 feasting on meat and drinking sweet strong wine.
 But when the sun went down and darkness fell,
 we went to sleep beside the breaking waves.
 Then when rose-fingered Dawn came, bright and early,
 I roused my men and told them to embark
 and loose the cables. Quickly they obeyed,
 sat at their rowing benches, all in order,
 and struck the gray saltwater with their oars.
 So we sailed on, with sorrow in our hearts,
 glad to survive, but grieving for our friends."

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BOOK 10



The Winds and the Witch

"We reached the floating island of Aeolus,
 who is well loved by all the deathless gods.
 Around it, on sheer cliffs, there runs a wall
 of solid bronze, impregnable. Twelve children
 live with him in his palace: six strong boys,
 and six girls. He arranged their marriages,
 one sister to each brother. They are always
 feasting there with their parents, at a banquet
 that never ends. By day, the savor fills
 the house; the court reverberates with sound.
 At night they sleep beside the wives they love
 on rope beds piled with blankets.

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We arrived
 at that fine citadel. He welcomed me
 and made me stay a month, and asked for news
 of Troy, the Argive ships, and how the Greeks
 went home. I told him everything. At last
 I told him he should send me on my way.
 So he agreed to help me, and he gave me

'Dear friends! We are
experienced in danger. This is not
worse than the time the Cyclops captured us,
and forced us to remain inside his cave.
We got away that time, thanks to my skill
and brains and strategy. Remember that.
Come on then, all of you, and trust my words.
Sit on your benches, strike the swelling deep
with oars, since Zeus may grant us a way out
from this disaster also. Pilot, listen:
these are your orders. As you hold the rudder,
direct the ship away from that dark smoke
and rising wave, and head towards the rock;
if the ship veers the other way, you will
endanger us.'

They promptly followed orders.
I did not mention Scylla, since she meant
inevitable death, and if they knew,
the men would drop the oars and go and huddle
down in the hold in fear. Then I ignored
Circe's advice that I should not bear arms;
it was too hard for me. I dressed myself
in glorious armor; in my hands I took
two long spears, and I climbed up on the forecastle.
I thought that rocky Scylla would appear
from that direction, to destroy my men.
So we rowed through the narrow strait in tears.
On one side, Scylla; on the other, shining
Charybdis with a dreadful gurgling noise
sucked down the water. When she spewed it out,
she seethed, all churning like a boiling cauldron
on a huge fire. The froth flew high, to spatter
the topmost rocks on either side. But when
she swallowed back the sea, she seemed all stirred

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from inside, and the rock around was roaring
dreadfully, and the dark-blue sand below
was visible. The men were seized by fear.
But while our frightened gaze was on Charybdis,
Scylla snatched six men from the ship—my strongest,
best fighters. Looking back from down below,
I saw their feet and hands up high, as they
were carried off. In agony they cried
to me and called my name—their final words.
As when a fisherman out on a cliff
casts his long rod and line set round with oxhorn
to trick the little fishes with his bait;
when one is caught, he flings it gasping back
onto the shore—so those men gasped as Scylla
lifted them up high to her rocky cave
and at the entrance ate them up—still screaming,
still reaching out to me in their death throes.
That was the most heartrending sight I saw
in all the time I suffered on the sea.

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Free from the rocks of Scylla and Charybdis
we quickly reached the island of the god,
Hyperion's son Helios, the Sun God.
There were his cattle, with their fine broad faces,
and many flocks of well-fed sheep. While still
out on the sea in my black ship, I heard
the lowing of the cattle in their pens,
and bleating of the sheep. I kept in mind
the words of blind Tiresias the prophet
and Circe. Both had given strict instructions
that we avoid the island of the Sun,
the god of human joy. I told the men
with heavy heart,

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'My friends, I know how much
you have endured. But listen to me now.
Tiresias and Circe both insisted
we must avoid the island of the Sun,
the joy of mortals. They said dreadful danger
lurks there for us. We have to steer our ship
around it.'

They were quite downcast by this.
Eurylochus said angrily to me,
'You are unfair to us, Odysseus.
You may be strong; you never seem to tire;
you must be made of iron. But we men
have had no rest or sleep; we are exhausted.
And you refuse to let us disembark
and cook our tasty dinner on this island.
You order us to drift around all night
in our swift ship across the misty sea.
At night, fierce storms rise up and wreck men's ships,
and how can anyone escape disaster
if sudden gusts of wind from north or west
bring cruel blasts to break the ship, despite
the wishes of the gods? Let us submit
to evening. Let us stay here, and cook food
beside the ship. At dawn we can embark
and sail the open sea.'

That was his speech.
The other men agreed, and then I saw
a spirit must be plotting our destruction.
My words flew out.

'Eurylochus! You force me
to yield, since I am one and you are many.
But all of you, swear me a mighty oath:

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if we find any herd of cows, or flock
of sheep, do not be fool enough to kill
a single animal. Stay clear, and eat
the food provided by immortal Circe.'

They swore as I commanded. When they finished
making the oath, we set our well-built ship
inside the curving harbor, near freshwater.
The men got out and skillfully cooked dinner.
When they were satisfied with food and drink,
they wept, remembering their dear companions,
whom Scylla captured from the ship and ate.
Sweet sleep came down upon them as they cried.
When night was over, when the stars were gone,
Zeus roused a blast of wind, an eerie storm.
He covered earth and sea with fog, and darkness
fell down from heaven. When rose-fingered Dawn
appeared, we dragged the ship inside a cave,
a place Nymphs danced in, and we moored it there.
I gave a speech to my assembled men.

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'My friends, we have supplies on board. Let us
not touch the cattle, or we will regret it.
Those cows and fat sheep are the property
of Helios, the great Sun God, who sees
all things, and hears all things.' I told them this.
Reluctantly they yielded. But that month
the South Wind blew and never stopped. No other
was ever blowing, only South and East.
While the men still had food and wine, they kept
clear of the cows. They hoped to save their lives.
But when our ship's supplies ran out, the men
were forced to hunt; they used their hooks to catch
both fish and birds, whatever they could get,
since hunger gnawed their bellies. I strode off

to pray, in case some god would show me how
to get back home. I left my men behind,
and crossed the island, washed my hands, in shelter
out of the wind, and prayed to all the gods.
They poured sweet sleep upon my eyes.

Meanwhile,

Eurylochus proposed a foolish plan.
'Listen, my friends! You have already suffered
too much. All human deaths are hard to bear.
But starving is most miserable of all.
So let us poach the finest of these cattle,
and sacrifice them to the deathless gods.
If we get home to Ithaca, at once
we will construct a temple to the Sun God,
with treasure in it. If he is so angry
about these cows that he decides to wreck
our ship, and if the other gods agree—
I would prefer to drink the sea and die
at once, than perish slowly, shriveled up
here on this desert island.'

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All the others

agreed with him. They went to poach the best
of Helius' cattle, which were grazing
beside the ship. The men surrounded them,
and called upon the gods. They had plucked leaves
from oak trees—on the ship there was no barley.
They prayed, then killed them, skinned them, and cut off
the thighs, and covered up the bones with fat,
a double layer, with raw meat on top.
They had no wine to pour libations over
the burning offering, but they made do
with water, and they roasted all the innards.
And when the thighs were burned, the entrails sprinkled,

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they cut the other meat up into chunks
for skewers.

Sweet sleep melted from my eyes;
I rushed back to the ship beside the shore.
When I was close, the meaty smell of cooking
enfolded me. I groaned, and told the gods,

'O Zeus, and all you deathless gods! You blinded
my mind with that infernal sleep. My men
did dreadful things while I was gone.'

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Meanwhile,

Lampetia in flowing skirts ran off
to tell the Sun God we had killed his cows.
Enraged, he called the other gods.

'Great Zeus,

and all you other deathless gods, you must
punish Odysseus' men. They killed
my cattle! I delighted in those cows
all through each day, when I went up to heaven
and when I turned to earth. If they do not
repay me, I will sink down into Hades
and bring my bright light only to the dead.'

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Zeus answered, 'Helius! Please shine with us
and shine for mortals on life-giving earth.
I will immediately smite their ship
with my bright thunderbolt, and smash it up
in fragments, all across the wine-dark sea.'

I heard this from the beautiful Calypso,
who had been told by Hermes.

Back on shore
 beside my ship, I scolded each of them.
 It did no good; the cows were dead already.
 The gods sent signs—the hides began to twitch,
 the meat on skewers started mooing, raw
 and cooked. There was the sound of cattle lowing.
 For six days my men banqueted on beef
 from Helios. When Zeus, the son of Cronus,
 led in the seventh day, the wind became
 less stormy, and we quickly went on board.
 We set the mast up and unfurled the sails
 and set out on the open sea.

When we
 had left that island, we could see no other,
 only the sky and sea. Zeus made a mass
 of dark-blue storm cloud hang above our ship.
 The sea grew dark beneath it. For a moment
 the ship moved on, but then came Zephyr, shrieking,
 noisily rushing, with torrential tempest.
 A mighty gust of wind broke off both forestays;
 the tacking was all scattered in the hold.
 The mast was broken backwards, and it struck
 the pilot in the stern; it smashed his skull.
 His bones were crushed, his skeleton was smashed.
 He fell down like a diver from the deck;
 his spirit left his body. At that instant,
 Zeus thundered and hurled bolts to strike the ship;
 shaken, it filled with sulfur. All the men
 fell overboard, and they were swept away
 like seagulls on the waves beside the ship.
 The gods prevented them from reaching home.

I paced on board until the current ripped
 the ship's side from the keel. The waves bore off

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the husk, and snapped the mast. But thrown across it
 there was a backstay cable, oxhide leather.
 With this I lashed the keel and mast together,
 and rode them, carried on by fearsome winds.
 At last the tempest ceased, the West Wind lulled.
 I worried that the South Wind might compel me
 to backtrack, to the terrible Charybdis.
 All night I was swept backwards and at sunrise
 I came back to the dreadful rocks of Scylla
 and of Charybdis, gulping salty water,
 and overshadowed by the fig tree's branches.
 I jumped and clutched its trunk, batlike—unable
 to plant my feet, or climb. The roots were down
 too low; the tall long branches were too high.
 So I kept clinging on; I hoped Charybdis
 would belch my mast and keel back up. She did!
 As one who spends the whole day judging quarrels
 between young men, at last goes home to eat—
 at that same hour, the planks came bobbing up
 out of Charybdis. I let go my hands
 and feet and dropped myself way down to splash
 into the sea below, beside the timbers
 of floating wood. I clambered onto them,
 and used my hands to row myself away,
 and Zeus ensured that Scylla did not see me,
 or else I could not have survived. I drifted
 for nine days. On the evening of the tenth,
 the gods helped me to reach the island of
 the dreadful, beautiful, divine Calypso.
 She loved and cared for me. Why should I tell
 the story that I told you and your wife
 yesterday in your house? It is annoying,
 repeating tales that have been told before."

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she roused the newborn Dawn from Ocean's streams
to bring the golden light to those on earth.
Odysseus got up and told his wife,

"Wife, we have both endured our share of trouble:
you wept here as you longed for my return,
while Zeus and other gods were keeping me
away from home, although I longed to come.
But now we have returned to our own bed,
as we both longed to do. You must look after
my property inside the house. Meanwhile,
I have to go on raids, to steal replacements
for all the sheep those swaggering suitors killed,
and get the other Greeks to give me more,
until I fill my folds. But first I will
go to the orchard in the countryside
to see my grieving father. Then at dawn
the news will spread that I have killed the suitors.
Your orders, wife—though you are smart enough
to need no orders—are, go with your slaves
upstairs, sit quietly, and do not talk
to anyone."

He armed himself and called
the herdsmen and Telemachus, and told them
to put on armor too—breastplates of bronze.
Odysseus led all of them outside.
The light was bright across the earth. Athena
hid them with night and brought them out of town.

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BOOK 24



Restless Spirits

Then Hermes called the spirits of the suitors
out of the house. He held the golden wand
with which he casts a spell to close men's eyes
or open those of sleepers when he wants.
He led the spirits and they followed, squeaking
like bats in secret crannies of a cave,
who cling together, and when one becomes
detached and falls down from the rock, the rest
flutter and squeak—just so the spirits squeaked,
and hurried after Hermes, lord of healing.
On open roads they crossed the Ocean stream,
went past the rock of Leucas and the gates
of Helius the Sun, and skittered through
the provinces of dreams, and soon arrived
in fields of asphodel, the home of shadows
who have been worn to weariness by life.

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They found Achilles' ghost there, and Patroclus,
and Ajax, the most handsome of the Greeks
after unmatched Achilles. Agamemnon

had just arrived to join them, in deep grief
for his own death, and with him came the others
killed by Aegisthus and his bodyguards.
Achilles' ghost spoke first.

"O Agamemnon!

Men used to say that out of all the heroes,
Zeus, Lord of Lightning, favored you the most,
because you had command of a great army
in Troy where Greeks endured the pain of war.
But death, which no man living can avoid,
was destined to arrive at the wrong time.
If only you had died at Troy and won
the glory of your rank as a commander!
All of the Greeks and allies would have built
a tomb for you, and afterwards your son
would have received great honor. As it is,
it was your fate to die a dreadful death."

The ghost of Agamemnon answered him,
"Achilles, son of Peleus, you were
lucky to die at Troy, away from Argos.
The finest warriors of Greece and Troy
fought round your corpse and died. You lay a hero,
magnificent amid the whirling dust,
your days of driving chariots forgotten.
We fought all day, and would have fought forever,
but Zeus sent winds to stop us. Then we brought you
back to our ships, and laid you on a bier,
away from battle, and we bathed your skin
in heated water and anointed you
with oil. We wept for you and cut our hair.
Your mother heard the news, and with her nymphs
she came up from the waves. An eerie wailing
sounded across the sea. The men began

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to tremble, and they would have rushed on board,
if wise old Nestor had not made them stop.
He always had the best advice for us,
and said, 'My lords, stay here. It is his mother,
coming with her immortal water nymphs
to find her own dead son.' At this, the Greeks
regained their courage. The old Sea King's daughters
gathered around you weeping, and they dressed you
in clothes of the immortals. All nine Muses
sang lamentations in their lovely voices.
No one could keep from crying at the sound,
so moving was their song. The gods and men
were mourning seventeen long nights and days
and then we gave you to the pyre, and killed
many fat sheep and cattle for your corpse.
You burned in clothes from gods; you were anointed
with oil and honey. Troops of warriors
on foot and horseback, fully armed, went marching
around your pyre, and made a mighty din.
At last Hephaestus' flame consumed your flesh.
When morning came, we gathered your white bones,
Achilles, and anointed them with oil
and unmixed wine. Your mother gave an urn
of gold with double handles, which she said
Hephaestus made and Dionysus gave her.
Your white bones lay inside it, Lord Achilles,
mixed with the bones of your dead friend Patroclus.
We laid the urn beside Antilochus,
the friend you most respected after him.
The army of Greek warriors assembled,
and with all reverence we heaped a mound
out on the headland by the Hellespont,
large enough to be visible to those
at sea, both now and in the years to come.
Your mother asked the gods for splendid prizes

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and put them in the midst of an arena,
 so the best athletes could compete for them.
 You have seen many burials of heroes,
 when young men tie their tunics to compete.
 But you would have been startled at the riches
 that silver-footed Thetis brought for you.
 You were so dearly loved by all the gods.
 You did not lose your name in death. Your fame
 will live forever; everyone will know
 Achilles. As for me, what good was it
 that I wound up the war? When I came home
 Aegisthus and my wicked, fiendish wife
 murdered me. Zeus had planned it."

While they talked,

Hermes the guide came near them, with the suitors
 killed by Odysseus. The two great lords,
 astonished at the sight, rushed up to them,
 and Agamemnon's spirit recognized
 the son of his old friend, Menelaus,
 with whom he stayed in Ithaca. He said,

"Amphimedon! What happened to you all?
 Why have you all come down here to the land
 of darkness? You are all so young and strong;
 you must have been the best boys in your town.
 Maybe Poseidon raised great waves and winds
 to wreck your fleet? Or were you all attacked
 by men on land while you were poaching cows
 or flocks of sheep, or fighting for a city
 and women? You must tell me! We are friends.
 Do you remember when I visited
 your home, when Menelaus and myself
 were trying to persuade Odysseus
 to join the fleet and sail with us to Troy?"

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It took a whole damned month to cross the sea;
 we had to work so hard to sway that man,
 who sacked the city."

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Amphimedon's spirit
 answered, "Great General, Agamemnon, yes,
 I do remember everything you say.
 And I will tell, in every gruesome detail,
 the manner of our death. Odysseus
 was gone for many years. We came to court
 his wife, who had no wish to marry us,
 but would not tell us no or make an end.
 She planned black death for us, and tricked us, too.
 She set a mighty loom up in the hall,
 and wove a wide fine cloth, and said to us,
 'Young suitors, now Odysseus is dead.
 I know that you are eager for the wedding,
 but wait till I am finished with this cloth,
 so that my weaving will not go to waste.
 It is a shroud for when Laertes dies,
 so that the women in the town do not
 blame me because a man who gained such wealth
 was buried with no winding-sheet.' Her words
 convinced us. So by day she wove the cloth,
 and then at night by torchlight, she unwove it.
 For three long years she fooled us; when the hours
 and months had passed, the fourth year rolled around,
 and then a girl who knew the truth told us;
 and we found her unraveling her work.
 We made her finish it. When she had washed
 the marvelous huge sheet, she showed it to us,
 bright as the sun or moon. And then some spirit
 of ruin brought Odysseus from somewhere
 to Ithaca; he went out to the fields,
 to where the swineherd lived. His own dear son

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sailed in his black ship back from sandy Pylos.
 The two of them made plans to murder us.
 They showed up at the palace—first the boy,
 and then Odysseus propped on a stick
 and dressed in dirty rags. He seemed to be
 a poor old homeless man, who suddenly
 appeared, led by the swineherd. None of us
 could recognize him, even those of us
 who were a little older than myself. 160
 We hurled insulting words and missiles at him,
 and for a while he patiently endured
 abuse in his own home. But when the will
 of Zeus awakened him, with his son's help,
 he put the splendid weapons in the storeroom
 and locked the door. Then came his cunning plan:
 he told his wife to set for us the axes
 and bow. The competition meant our doom,
 the start of slaughter. None of us could string
 the mighty bow—we all were far too weak. 170
 But when it was his turn, we shouted out
 that nobody should give the bow to him,
 no matter what he said. Telemachus
 alone insisted that he ought to have it.
 At last Odysseus, with calm composure,
 took it and strung it easily, and shot
 all through the iron axes. Then he stood
 astride the threshold with a fearsome scowl,
 and started shooting fast. His arrow struck
 Antinous, our leader. With sure aim 180
 he shot his deadly arrows at more men;
 those nearest to him fell. It was apparent
 some god was helping them. Impelled by rage,
 they rushed around the palace killing us
 in turn. There was a dreadful noise of screaming
 and broken skulls; the whole floor ran with blood.

So, Agamemnon, we were killed. Our bodies
 still lie unburied in our killer's house.
 Our families at home do not yet know.
 They need to wash the black blood from our wounds 190
 and weep for us and lay our bodies out.
 This is the honor due the dead."

The ghost

of Agamemnon answered, "Lucky you,
 cunning Odysseus: you got yourself
 a wife of virtue—great Penelope.
 How principled she was, that she remembered
 her husband all those years! Her fame will live
 forever, and the deathless gods will make
 a poem to delight all those on earth
 about intelligent Penelope. 200
 Not like my wife—who murdered her own husband!
 Her story will be hateful; she will bring
 bad reputation to all other women,
 even the good ones."

So they spoke together,
 standing in Hades, hidden in the earth.

Meanwhile, Odysseus and his companions
 had left the town and quickly reached the farm,
 won by Laertes long ago—he fought
 hard for it, and his house was there; the slaves,
 who had to do his wishes, lived and slept 210
 and ate their food in quarters that surrounded
 the central house. One was from Sicily,
 the old slave woman who took care of him
 out in the countryside. Odysseus
 spoke to his slaves and to his son.

"Go in,
choose the best pig and kill it for our dinner.
And I will test my father, to find out
if he will know me instantly on sight,
or not—I have been absent for so long."

At that he gave his weapons to the slaves.
They quickly went inside. Odysseus
walked to the fruitful orchard on his quest.
He did not find old Dolius, the steward,
nor any of his slaves or sons—he had
led them to gather rocks to build dry-walls.
Odysseus' father was alone,
inside the well-built orchard, digging earth
to make it level round a tree. He wore
a dirty ragged tunic, and his leggings
had leather patches to protect from scratches.
He wore thick gloves because of thorns, and had
a cap of goatskin. He was wallowing
in grief. The veteran, Odysseus,
seeing his father worn by age and burdened
by desperate, heartfelt sorrow, stopped beneath
a towering pear tree, weeping. Then he wondered
whether to kiss his father, twine around him,
and tell him that he had come home again,
and everything that happened on the way—
or question him. He thought it best to start
by testing him with teasing and abuse.
With this in mind, Odysseus approached him,
as he was digging round the plant, head down.
His famous son stood at his side and said,

"Old man, you know your trade and take good care
of this neat garden. Every plant and vine,

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and tree—the figs, the pears, the olive trees—
and bed of herbs is nicely tended. But
I have to say something—please do not get
angry at me—you do not take good care
of your own self. You are unkempt, old man.
Your skin is rough and dirty and your clothes
are rags. Your master is neglecting you,
although you are not lazy. In your height
and face, you seem a leader, not a slave.
You look like someone who would bathe and eat
and sleep on fluffy pillows and fine sheets,
as is appropriate for older people.
But tell me this: whose slave are you? Whose garden
do you take care of? Also, have I come
to Ithaca, as somebody I met
was telling me just now? But he was not
a helpful man: when I was asking him
about a friend of mine, an old guest-friend,
whether he is alive or dead in Hades,
this fellow would not say, or even listen.
A while ago, in my own native land,
I had a guest to stay with me, who was
my dearest friend of all my visitors.
He said he was from Ithaca, and that
Laertes was his father. I had brought him
into my house, and welcomed him with warmth;
I can afford to be quite generous.
I gave him seven heaps of golden treasure,
a bowl made all of silver and inlaid
with flowers, twelve unfolded cloaks, and twelve
thick blankets, twelve fine mantles, and twelve tunics.
Also I gave him four well-trained slave women,
beautiful ones, whom he picked out himself."

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His father answered through his tears, "Yes, stranger,
 you have reached Ithaca. But cruel men
 have taken over here. You will receive
 nothing for all those gifts. If you had found him
 still living in this land, he would have matched
 your gifts and welcomed you with open arms
 before he sent you home. Initial kindness
 deserves due recompense. But tell me now,
 how long is it since that unlucky man
 visited you? Your guest was my own son!
 Perhaps fish ate him out at sea, so far
 from home and family; or birds and beasts
 ate him on land. His mother did not lay
 his body out and weep for him; nor I,
 his father; nor Penelope his wife,
 a wise and wealthy woman. She has not
 closed her own husband's eyes or given him
 a funeral. The dead deserve this honor.
 But tell me now, who are you? From what city?
 Who are your parents? Do you have a ship
 docked somewhere, which conveyed you here with friends
 and crew? Or did you sail as passenger
 on someone else's ship, which now is gone?"

Lying Odysseus replied, "I will
 tell you the truth completely. I am from
 Alybas, and I have a palace there.
 My name is Eperitus; I am son
 of King Apheidas, son of Polypemon.
 An evil spirit struck me and I came
 from Sicily against my will. My ship
 is docked away from town. It is five years
 since poor, unfortunate Odysseus
 came to my home. As he was setting out

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we saw good omens—birds towards the right—
 so we were hopeful we would meet again
 as friends, and share more gifts."

At this, a cloud
 of black grief wrapped itself around Laertes.
 He poured two handfuls of the ashy dust
 over his gray old head, and started sobbing.
 Odysseus felt heart-wrenched to see his own
 beloved father in this state; sharp pain
 pierced through his nostrils. He rushed up to him
 and threw his arms around him, kissing him,
 and saying,

320

"Father! It is me! I have
 been gone for twenty years, and now am home,
 in my own father's country. Stop your tears.
 I will explain, though we do not have long.
 I killed the suitors in my house; I took
 revenge for all the pain they caused."

Laertes
 answered, "If you are really my own son
 Odysseus come home, show me a sign;
 let me be sure of it."

330

Odysseus
 was quick to answer. "First, look here: the scar
 made by the boar's white tusk when I had gone
 to Mount Parnassus. You and Mother sent me,
 to see my grandfather, Autolycus,
 and get the gifts that he had promised me.
 Next I will tell you all the trees that grow
 in this fine orchard, which you gave to me.

When I was little, I would follow you
 around the garden, asking all their names.
 We walked beneath these trees; you named them all
 and promised them to me. Ten apple trees,
 and thirteen pear trees, forty figs, and fifty
 grapevines which ripen one by one—their clusters
 change as the weather presses from the sky,
 sent down by Zeus.”

At that, Laertes' heart
 and legs gave way; he recognized the signs
 Odysseus had given as clear proof.
 He threw both arms around his ruthless son,
 who caught him as he fainted. When his breath
 and mind returned, he said,

“O Father Zeus,
 you gods are truly rulers of Olympus,
 if it is true the suitors have been punished
 for all the monstrous things they did. But I
 am terrified the Ithacans may soon
 attack us here, and spread the news around
 to all the towns of Cephallenia.”

Scheming Odysseus said, “Do not fear.
 Come to the farmhouse, where I sent my boy
 to go with the two herdsmen, to prepare
 dinner as fast as possible.”

With this,
 the son and father walked towards the house.
 They found them serving generous plates of meat
 and mixing wine. The slave from Sicily
 washed brave Laertes, and she rubbed his skin

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with olive oil, and wrapped a handsome cloak
 around him. Then Athena, standing near,
 made him grow taller and more muscular.
 When he emerged, Odysseus was shocked
 to see him looking like a god. His words
 flew fast.

370

“Oh, Father! You look different!
 A god has made you taller and more handsome.”

Thoughtful Laertes said, “O Father Zeus,
 Athena, and Apollo! If I were
 as strong as when I took the sturdy fortress
 of Nericus, out on the mainland shore,
 when I was king of Cephallenia,
 I would have stood beside you yesterday,
 with weapons on my back, and fought with you
 against the suitors who were in our house!
 I would have brought so many of them down,
 you would have been delighted!”

380

So they spoke.
 The work of cooking dinner was complete,
 and they sat down on chairs and stools, and reached
 to take the food. The old slave Dolius
 approached them with his sons, who had been working.
 Their mother, the Sicilian old woman,
 had gone to call them. She took care of them,
 and also the old man, made weak by age.
 They saw Odysseus and stared, then stopped,
 astonished. But he spoke to reassure them.

390

“Old man, sit down and eat. The rest of you,
 put your surprise entirely out of mind.

We have been waiting ages; we are eager
to have our dinner here."

But Dolius

ran straight to him with arms outstretched, and took
Odysseus' wrist and kissed his hand,
and let his words fly out.

"My friend! You have
come home! We are so very glad to see you!
We never thought this day would come! The gods
have brought you here! A heartfelt welcome to you!
I pray the gods will bless you!—Does your wife
know you have come back home? Or should I send
a message?"

But Odysseus said coolly,
"Old man, she knows already. Do not bother."

So Dolius sat back down on his chair.
His sons were also clustering around
their famous owner, Lord Odysseus,
to welcome him and hold him in their arms.
Then they sat down in turn beside their father.
They had their meal together in the farmhouse.

Meanwhile, swift Rumor spread the news all through
the city, of the suitors' dreadful murder.
When people heard, they rushed from all directions
towards the palace of Odysseus,
with shouts and lamentations. Then they brought
the bodies from the house and buried them.
The ones from distant towns were sent back home
by ship. The mourners gathered in the square,

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heartbroken. When the people were assembled,
Eupeithes first stood up and spoke to them.
This man was inconsolable with grief
for his dead son Antinous, the boy
Odysseus killed first. His father wept,
tears falling as he spoke.

"This scheming man,
my friends, has done us all most monstrous wrongs.
First, he took many good men off to sail
with him, and lost the ships, and killed the men!
Now he has come and murdered all the best
of Cephallenia. Come on, before
he sneaks away to Pylos or to Elis,
we have to act! We will be shamed forever
unless we take revenge on him for killing
our sons and brothers. I would have no wish
to live; I would prefer to die and join
the boys already dead. We have to stop them
escaping overseas! Come on, right now!"

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He spoke in tears, and pity seized them all.
But Medon and the bard had woken up;
they came outside and stood among the crowd.
They all were terrified, and Medon said,

440

"Now listen, Ithacans. Odysseus
could not have done such things without the help
of gods. I saw a god myself, disguised
as Mentor, sometimes standing at his side,
giving him will to fight, and sometimes rushing
all through the hall to make the suitors scatter.
They fell like flies."

Pale terror seized them all.
Then Halitherses, an old warrior,
the only one to know both past and future,
stood up; he wished them well. He said to them,

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"Now hear me, Ithacans. My friends, it was
because of your own cowardice this happened.
You did not listen to me, or to Mentor,
when we were telling you to stop your sons
from acting stupidly. They did great wrong,
through their impulsiveness; they skimmed the wealth
of an important man, and disrespected
his wife, believing he would never come.
But listen now. We must not go and fight,
or we will bring more ruin on our heads."

460

At that, some stayed there, huddling together,
but more than half jumped up with shouts. They thought
Eupeithes had the right idea. They rushed
to arms, and strapped their gleaming armor on,
and gathered in a mass before the town.
Eupeithes was their leader—to his cost.
He thought he would avenge his murdered son.
In fact, he would not come back home; it was
his fate to die out there.

And then Athena
spoke to the son of Cronus.

470

"Father Zeus,
highest of powers! Tell what hidden thoughts
lie in you. Will you now make yet more war
and bitter strife, or join the sides in friendship?"

The Gatherer of Clouds replied, "My child,
why ask me this? The plan was your idea,
to have Odysseus come take revenge.
Do as you wish. But here is my advice.
He has already punished all the suitors,
so let them swear an oath that he will be
the king forever, and let us make sure
the murder of their brothers and their sons
will be forgotten. Let them all be friends,
just as before, and let them live in peace
and in prosperity."

480

Athena was
already eager; at these words she swooped
down from Olympus.

Meanwhile, they had finished
dinner, and battle-scarred Odysseus
said, "Somebody must go and see if they
are coming near." A son of Dolius
obeyed and went. As he stepped out, he stood
across the threshold, and he saw them all
near to the house. At once his words took wings.
He told Odysseus,

490

"Those men are near!
We have to arm, and fast!"

They quickly armed.
Odysseus, his son and their two slaves
made four, and Dolius had his six sons.
Laertes and old Dolius were also
needed as fighters, though they had gray hair.
When all of them were dressed in gleaming bronze,

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they opened up the gates and went outside;
 Odysseus was leading them. Athena
 came near, disguised as Mentor. When he saw her,
 weathered Odysseus was glad and turned
 towards Telemachus and said,

“Now, son,
 soon you will have experience of fighting
 in battle, the true test of worth. You must
 not shame your father’s family; for years
 we have been known across the world for courage
 and manliness.”

Telemachus inhaled,
 then said, “Just watch me, Father, if you want
 to see my spirit. I will bring no shame
 onto your family. You should not speak
 of shame.”

Laertes, thrilled, cried out, “Ah, gods!
 A happy day for me! My son and grandson
 are arguing about how tough they are!”

With glinting eyes, Athena stood beside him
 and said, “You are my favorite, Laertes.
 Pray to the bright-eyed goddess and her father,
 then lift and hurl your spear.”

As she said this,
 Athena breathed great energy inside him.
 Laertes quickly raised and hurled the spear,
 and struck Euphites through his bronze-cheeked helmet,
 which did not stop the weapon; it pierced through.
 Then with a thud he fell; his armor clanged

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around him on the ground. Odysseus
 charged the front line, his radiant son beside him;
 they hacked with swords and curving spears. They would
 have killed them all and made sure none of them
 could go back home—but then Athena spoke.
 Her voice held back the fighters.

530

“Ithacans!
 Stop this destructive war; shed no more blood,
 and go your separate ways, at once!”

Her voice
 struck them with pale green fear and made them drop
 their weapons. They were desperate to save
 their lives, and they turned back towards the city.
 Unwavering Odysseus let out
 a dreadful roar, then crouched and swooped upon them,
 just like an eagle flying from above.
 But Zeus sent down a thunderbolt, which fell
 in front of his own daughter, great Athena.
 She looked at him with steely eyes and said,

540

“Odysseus, you are adaptable;
 you always find solutions. Stop this war,
 or Zeus will be enraged at you.”

He was
 glad to obey her. Then Athena made
 the warring sides swear solemn oaths of peace
 for future times—still in her guise as Mentor.