



Old Western Culture

A Great Books Reader Series

THE EPICS

OLD WESTERN CULTURE READER

VOLUME 1

THE EPICS

OLD WESTERN CULTURE READER

VOLUME 1

THE EPICS

OLD WESTERN CULTURE READER

VOLUME 1



ROMAN ROADS PRESS

MOSCOW, IDAHO

The Epics: Old Western Culture Reader Vol. 1

First Edition

Copyright © 2022 by Roman Roads Press

Published by Roman Roads Press

Moscow, Idaho

info@romanroadspress.com | romanroadspress.com

New prose rendering of the Iliad by Wesley J. Callihan is based on the 1883 translation of Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Earnest Myers. New prose rendering of the Odyssey by Wesley J. Callihan is based on the 1879 version by Samuel Butcher and Andrew Lang.

Series Editor: Daniel Foucachon

Peer Review and Editors: Emily Callihan, Dr. Dale Grote, and Carissa Hale

Cover Design: Daniel Foucachon and Rachel Rosales

Interior Layout by Carissa Hale

Adaptions of John Flaxman's 1793 illustrations by Carissa Hale

Maps by Carissa Hale and Joey Nance

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by the USA copyright law.

The Epics: Old Western Culture Reader, Volume 1

Roman Roads Media, LLC

ISBN: 978-1-944482-86-2 (Hardback), 978-1-944482-94-7 (Paperback)

Version 2.0.0 December 2023

This is a companion reader for the *Old Western Culture* curriculum by Roman Roads Press. To find out more about this course, visit www.romanroadspress.com.

OLD WESTERN CULTURE

Great Books Reader Series

THE GREEKS

VOLUME 1	<i>The Epics</i>
VOLUME 2	<i>Drama & Lyric</i>
VOLUME 3	<i>The Histories</i>
VOLUME 4	<i>The Philosophies</i>

THE ROMANS

VOLUME 5	<i>The Aeneid</i>
VOLUME 6	<i>The Historians</i>
VOLUME 7	<i>Early Christianity</i>
VOLUME 8	<i>Nicene Christianity</i>

CHRISTENDOM

VOLUME 9	<i>Early Medievals</i>
VOLUME 10	<i>Defense of the Faith</i>
VOLUME 11	<i>The Medieval Mind</i>
VOLUME 12	<i>The Reformation</i>

EARLY MODERNS

VOLUME 13	<i>Rise of England</i>
VOLUME 14	<i>Politics and Poetry</i>
VOLUME 15	<i>The Enlightenment</i>
VOLUME 16	<i>The Novels</i>

THE *ILIAD*
&
THE *ODYSSEY*
OF HOMER

Prose rendering by Wesley Callihan



HOMER

CONTENTS

Foreword to the <i>Iliad</i> by Dr. Dale Grote	xiii
A Note About the Translation	xv
Maps of the <i>Iliad</i>	xvii
Maps of the <i>Odyssey</i>	xxv

The *Iliad*

Book I: The Wrath of Achilles	3
Book II: Preparation for Battle	19
Book III: Truce and Duel	43
Book IV: Battle Breaks Out	57
Book V: “The Aristeia of Diomedes”	73
Book VI: Hektor in Troy	97
Book VII: The Second Duel	111
Book VIII: “The Unfinished Battle”	125
Book IX: The Embassy to Achilles	141
Book X: “The Doloneia” or The Night Raid	161
Book XI: The Second Day of Battle	177
Book XII: The Trojan Attack on the Wall	201
Book XIII: Poseidon Interferes	215
Book XIV: Hera Interferes	239
Book XV: Apollo Interferes	253
Book XVI: The Death of Patroklos	273

Book XVII: The Battle for Patroklos's Body	297
Book XVIII: The Shield of Achilles	317
Book XIX: Achilles Returns	333
Book XX: The "Aristeia" of Achilles	345
Book XXI: The Battle with the River	359
Book XXII: The Death of Hektor	375
Book XXIII: Ceremonies for Patroklos	389
Book XXIV: The Recovery of Hektor's Body	413

The *Odyssey*

Book I: Athene Visits Telemachos	437
Book II: Telemachos Calls an Assembly	451
Book III: Telemachos Visits Nestor	465
Book IV: Telemachos Visits Menelaos	481
Book V: Odysseus Leaves Kalypso	505
Book VI: Nausikaa Finds Odysseus	519
Book VII: Odysseus Comes to the Phaiakians	529
Book VIII: Odysseus is Hosted by the Phaiakians	539
Book IX: The Kikones, Lotus-Eaters, and Kyklops	555
Book X: The Bag of Winds, Laistrygones, and Kirke	571
Book XI: Odysseus Visits Hades	589
Book XII: The Sirens, Skylla and Charybdis, and the Oxen of Helios	607
Book XIII: Odysseus Lands in Ithaka	621
Book XIV: Odysseus is Hosted by Eumaios	635
Book XV: Telemachos Returns to Ithaka	651

Book XVI: Odysseus and Telemachos are Reunited	667
Book XVII: Odysseus Comes to His Palace	681
Book XVIII: Odysseus Contends with the Suitors	699
Book XIX: Odysseus Talks with Penelope	711
Book XX: Telemachos Contends with the Suitors	729
Book XXI: The Contest of the Bow	741
Book XXII: The Battle with the Suitors	753
Book XXIII: Odysseus and Penelope are Reunited	767
Book XXIV: Odysseus and Laertes are Reunited— The Final Battle	779

FOREWORD TO THE *ILLIAD*

by Dr. Dale Grote

For as long as I have known him, Wes Callihan has not just spoken of his special affection for Homer, he has shown it. When he first saw the site of Troy on one of our joint tours to Greece and Turkey, he ran to the famed sloping wall and tried to embrace it. (I have pictures.) The plains of Ilium are hardly like the snowy mountains of Idaho, so what accounts for this? It cannot be that Homer invites us into a world we recognize as our own. The palace at Olympus has been boarded up for centuries. The sweep of human history as well as private destinies within it are under new management. We have a hard time identifying with Achilles now that pointless suffering in a meaningless world is ruled out in the Christian West. There must be something else that accounts for the unending hold Homer's epics have on our imaginations.

One of the many explanations, perhaps the central explanation, is that Homer was a master storyteller. Great stories, it goes without saying are meant not to be read, so much as they are to be heard. We "Greeked" readers say that the theme of both Homeric epics is the *kleos* of famous men. Our various translations of *kleos* get close to its general sense: "glory," "reputation," "magnificence," and so on. What they do not capture, however, is that *kleos* comes from the verb *kluō*, which means "to hear." The deeds of Achilles and Odysseus are what people hear about them, and they hear about them in stories. Vergil, it is said, taught us to read, but Homer taught us to listen. But no one will listen if the storyteller is botching his lines. Only a great storyteller can tell a great story in the right way, even if it is written down.

FOREWORD TO THE ILIAD

This is what Wes brings to his project. He is a masterful storyteller. That is easy to say, but I can prove it. On our first joint tour, we had returned to our hotel in Delphi for the night. After dinner, Wes gathered his ten or so Schola students in a stairwell for story time. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that *they* gathered around *him* for if I remember rightly they were the ones who insisted that he read to them. He sat on a small stool and read several short stories by Wodehouse. For more than an hour, they hardly so much as blinked, that is how caught up they were. I was too. It was marvelous. I thought, “How did he do that?” It seemed effortless. Then again, a gifted musician makes playing even the most challenging pieces look easy, and we all know that is not true: *Ars artem celare*, as the saying goes.

Here is another example. In the tenth or eleventh century, some bored Viking scratched his name on a balustrade in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul: “Halvdan was here.” In the years before Wes and I started collaborating on these tours, I would just point it out and say, “Look here. Viking runes from the tenth century.” Then we would shuffle on. After Wes joined the tours, the runes became one of the most popular sites in the building. He not only knew the story, he knew how to tell it. Even though I have heard the story many times, and even though I always forget everything about it—sorry, Wes—I will ask for a reprise when our tours resume just for the pleasure of hearing it.

I think you get the point. What Wes brings to his adaption of this old translation of the *Iliad* is the storyteller’s innumerable skills and intuitions about choosing just the right word, establishing an engaging cadence, rounding off phrases, slowing the pace when it needs to be slow and accelerating it when it needs to be accelerated, enriching the words with drama without overdoing it... We could think again of a pianist, who makes “chopsticks” just as compelling as a Chopin nocturne by adding art to it, something that is easily recognized but nearly impossible to define. Perhaps Wes will someday be persuaded to record his script and post the files so we can hear the story the way it was meant to be heard!

A NOTE ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

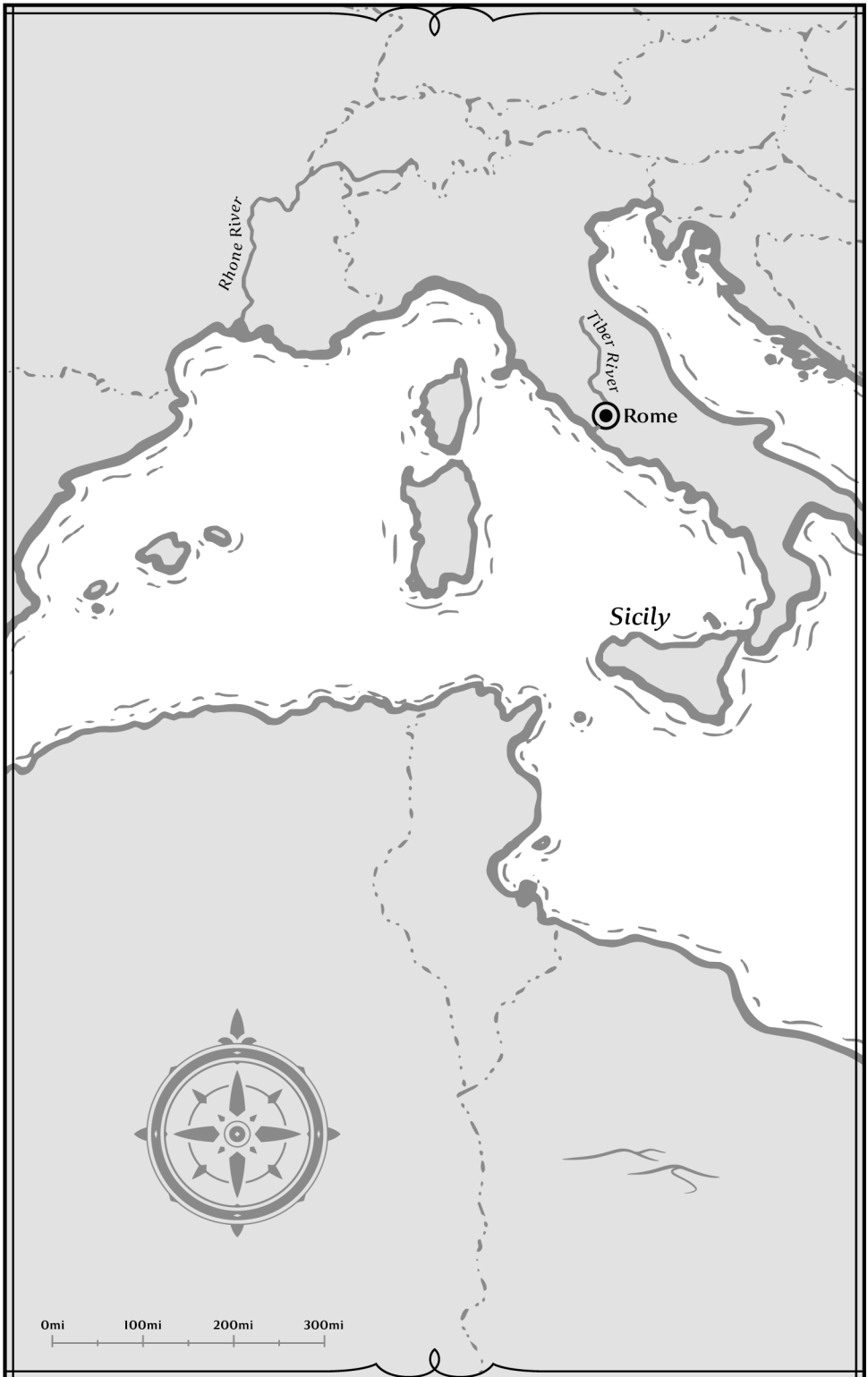
by Wesley J. Callihan

THE prose rendering of the *Iliad* is based on the 1883 translation of Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Ernest Myers; and the prose rendering of the *Odyssey* is based on the 1879 version by Samuel Butcher and Andrew Lang. Although these are accurate translations, the storytelling is obscured, sometimes to the point of incomprehension, by the archaic Elizabethan and Sir Thomas Mallory diction and style, which they thought suited the story but for the modern reader only creates problems. This new rendering attempts to preserve the accuracy but make the story far more readable. I have revised the text into contemporary American English (though on occasion archaic words were necessary) while attempting to preserve as much of the syntactical structure and style as possible; sometimes the revision is light, but more often it is radical, and if one were to compare this text with the original the connection might not be apparent at all. I have aimed to give a reading that is plain and direct, but still noble; you will find no attempt at casual, much less slangy, diction. This version of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is more than just a revision—it is a new version based on that older one. The reader will find a much more in-depth discussion of the principles behind this new rendering in the Introduction to the complete edition.

MAPS OF THE *ILIAD*

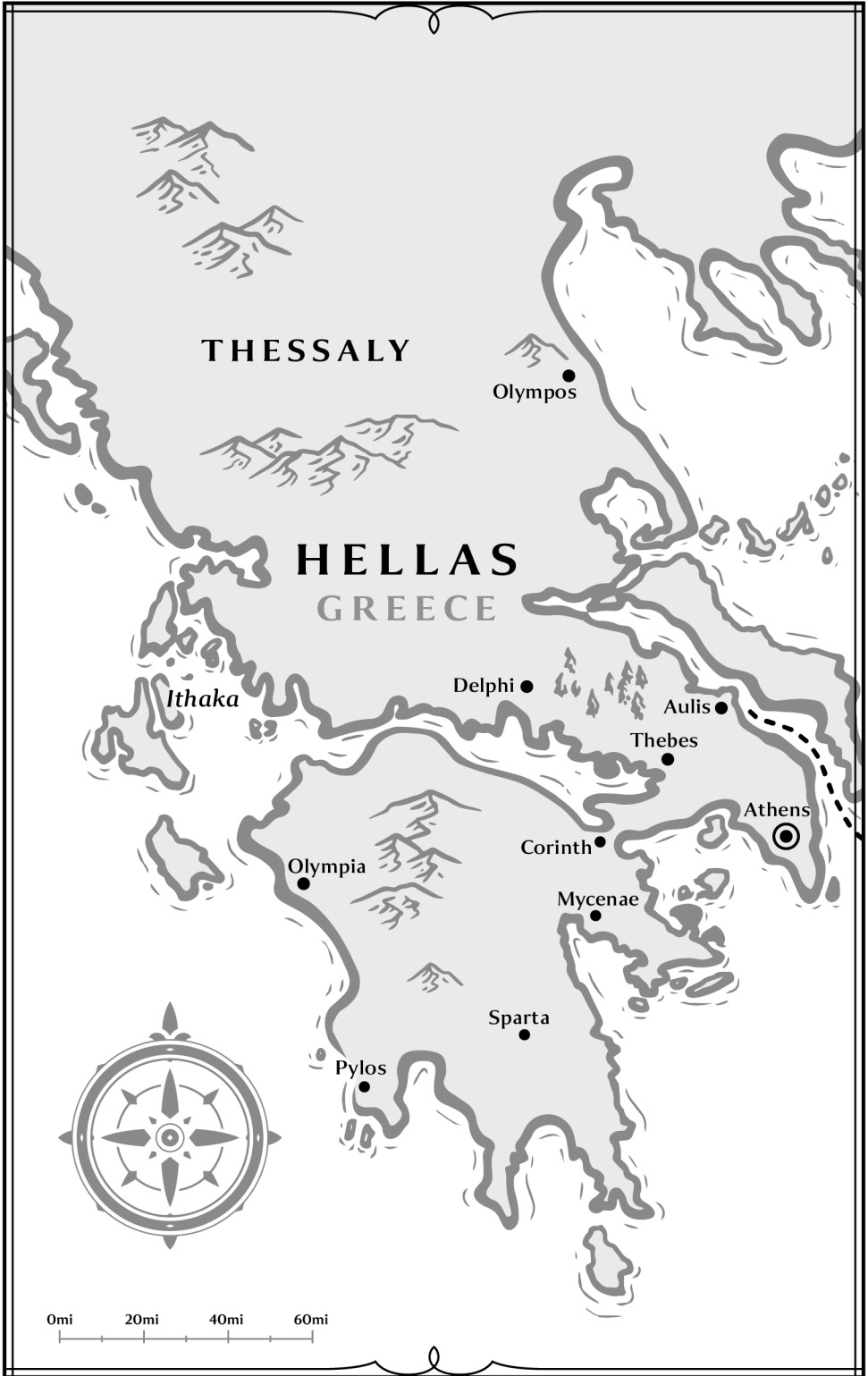


MAP 1

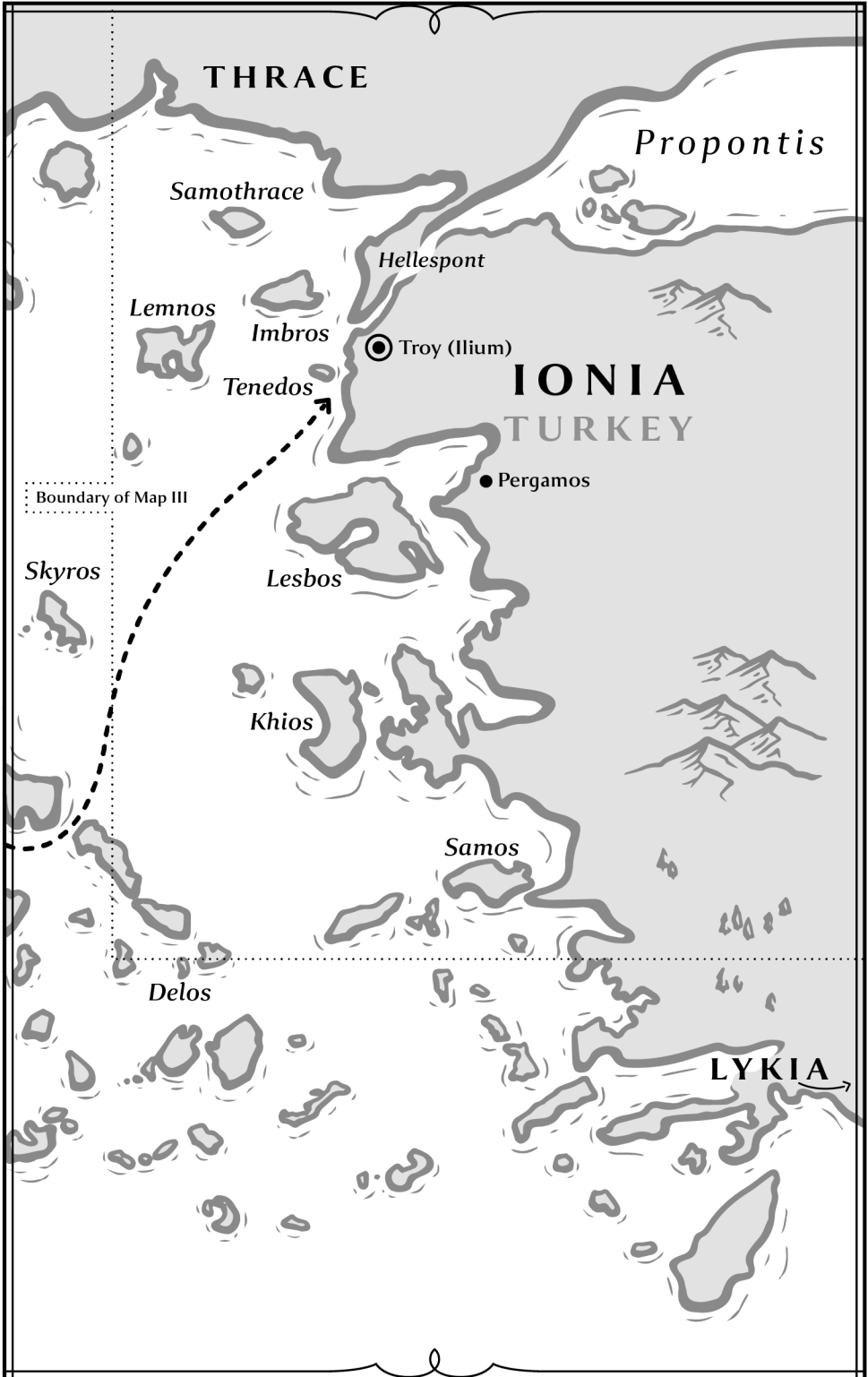


MAP 1



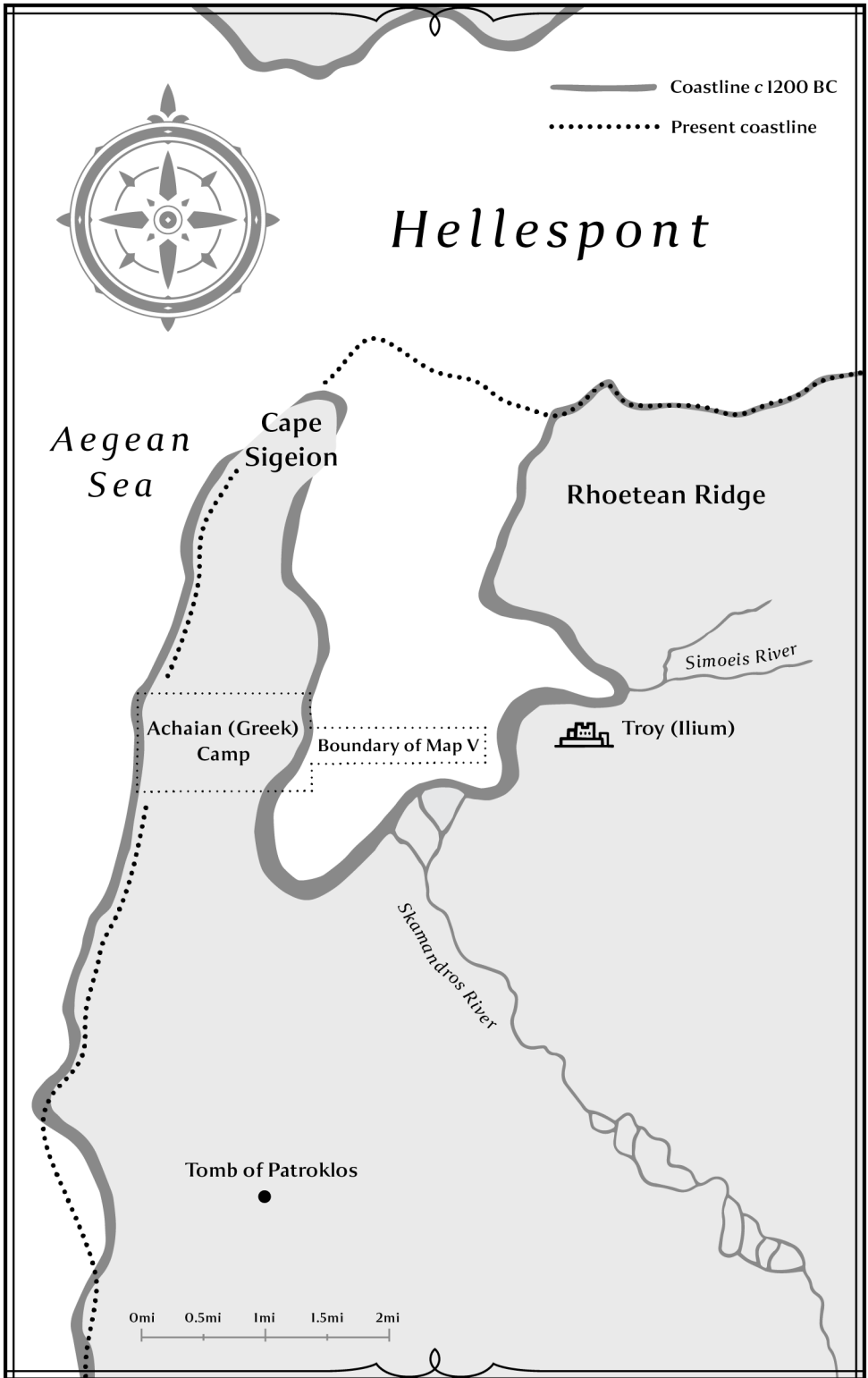


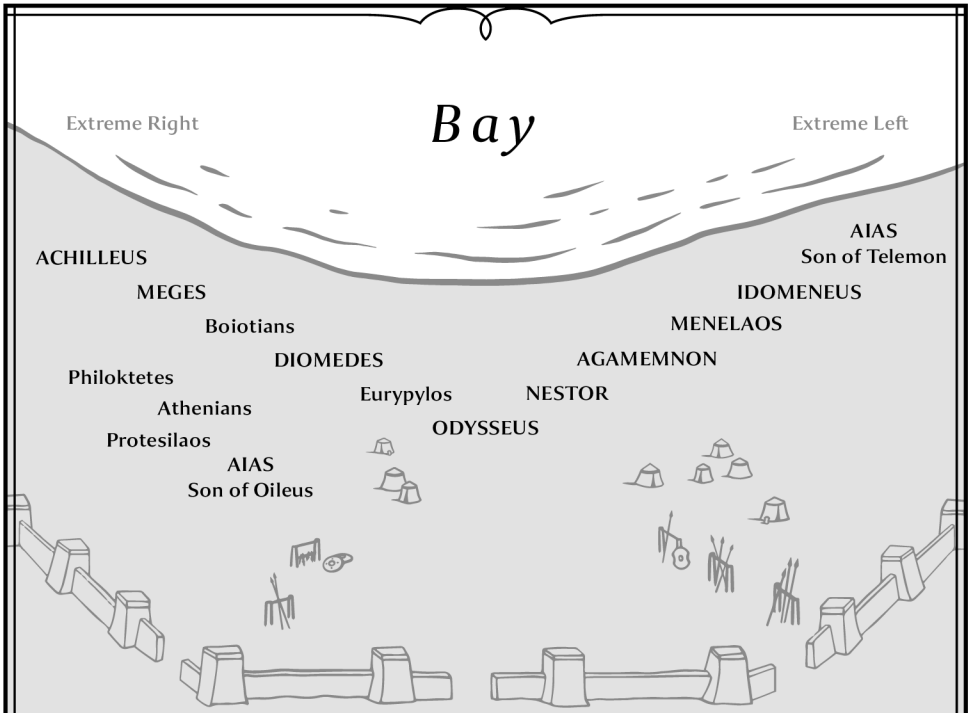
MAP 2



MAP 3







Recent research (archaeological and geological) in the area of ancient Troy strongly indicates that the Achaian camp was at the point indicated in map 4—that is, on the narrow Sigeion Peninsula on the west side of the bay, across the bay from the city. The distance by land between the city and the Achaian camp was about 3-4 miles. Most of the fighting would have taken place on the plain of the Scamander River at the south end of the bay between the camp and the city. The great fortification wall of the Achaians, described at the end of Book 7 and which figures largely in the fighting of Book 12, may have been a semi-circle around the Achaian ships and shelters, whose two ends touched the water of the bay, as pictured in Map 5. Alternatively, it may have stretched across the Peninsula south of the camp, its ends touching the Aegean on the west and the bay on the right, to defend against attacks by the Trojans from the city via the Scamander plain. In any case, the Trojans would not have attacked by water across the bay as there is no mention anywhere in Homer of a Trojan fleet. No matter where the wall was, according to Homer's description it would have had to be immensely long—at least a mile—in order to encompass 1,200 ships and 100,000 men.

MAPS OF THE *ODYSSEY*



MAP 1



MAP 1

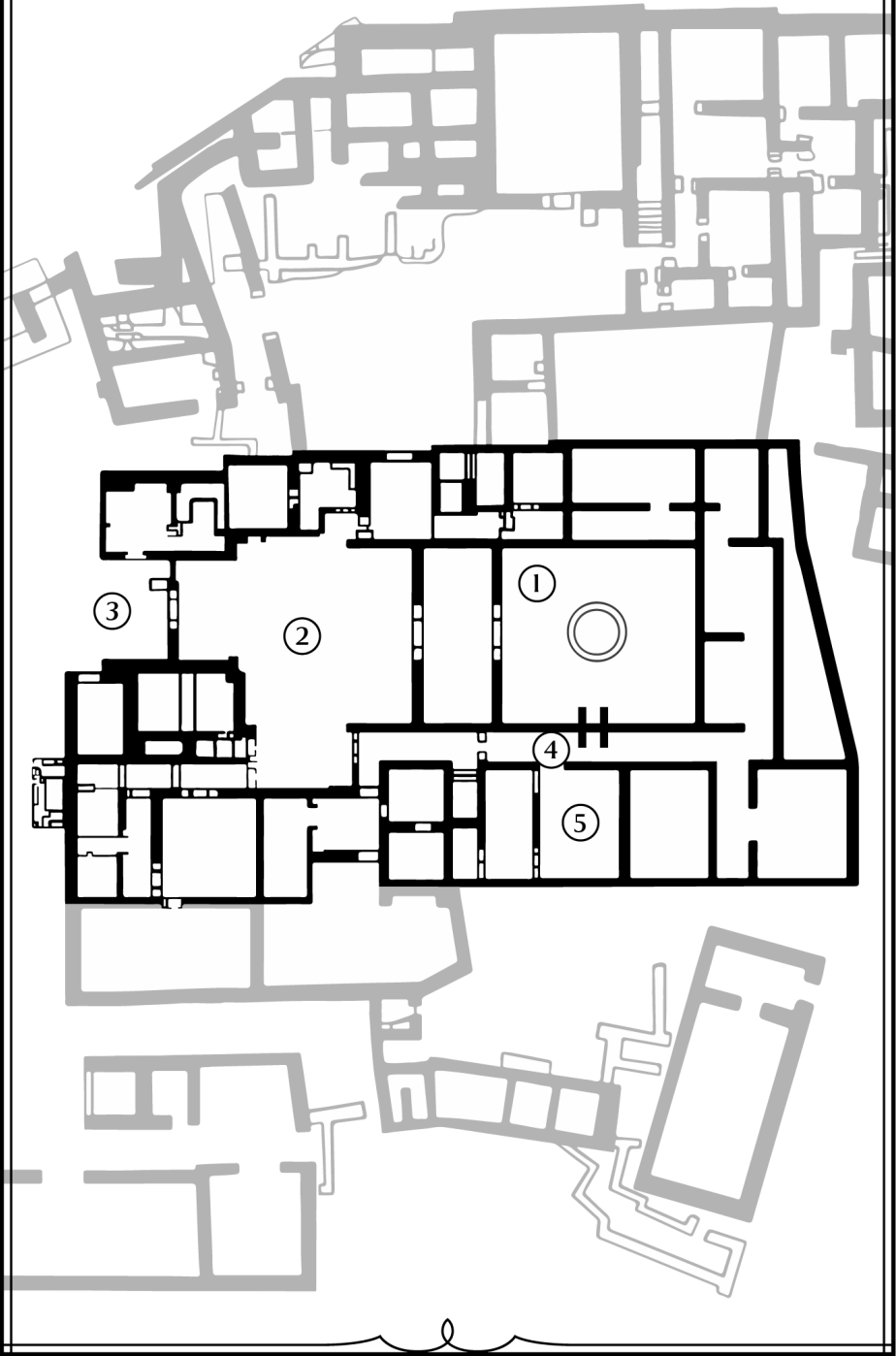


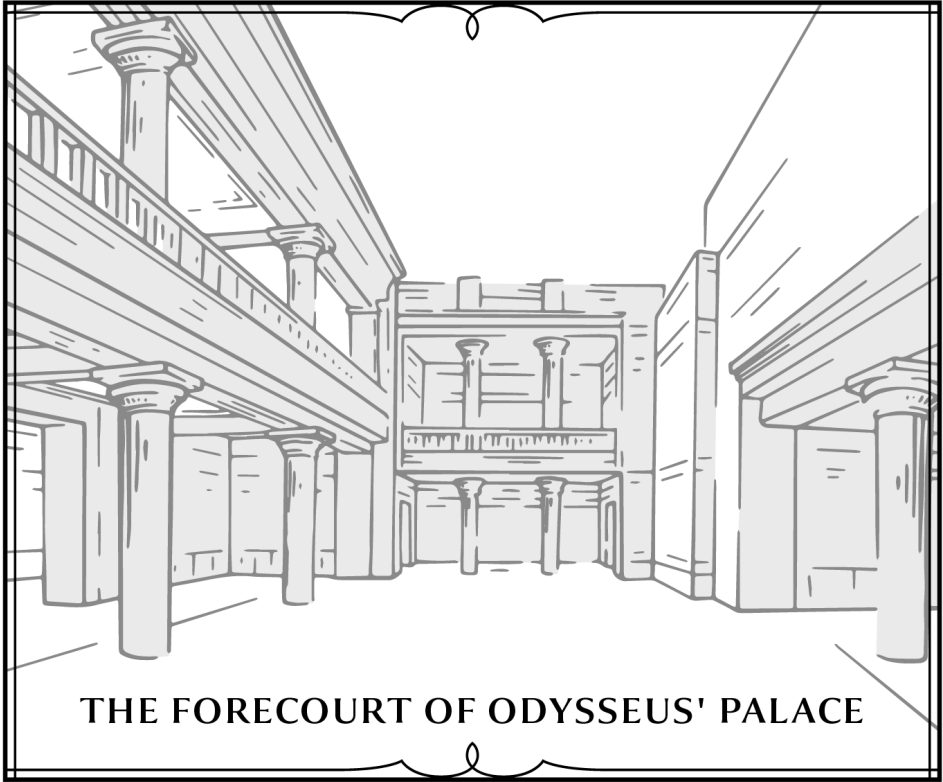
FLOORPLAN OF A MYCENAEAN PALACE COMPLEX

The palace complex of a Mycenaean kingdom, such as have been excavated at Mycenae and Pylos, was the heart of the kingdom and always followed a pattern involving a central room called the megaron or great hall with a columned entrance and a forecourt leading into it. There was a series of smaller rooms surrounding these main spaces, serving as storerooms for food, wine, and oil, and as bedchambers, offices, archives, workshops, baths, wardrobes, armories, and hallways. It was common to have a second floor. Beyond these rooms were workshops, animal sheds, and gear and fodder storage. The complex was built on a hilltop commanding a view of the countryside and was surrounded by massive walls with impressive entrance gates to intimidate invaders, and watchtowers on nearby hills gave warnings via signal fires. The complex had a secure water supply such as a well within the walls. The people of the kingdom occupied farms and villages around the palace complex and could take refuge in the palace complex in case of invasion. The palace complex was located near a harbor since the Mycenaeans were strongly oriented toward the sea and sea travel, the mountainous topography of Greece making overland travel difficult.

- ① Megaron, or Great Hall—see the description for Map 4.
- ② Forecourt—see the description for Map 3.
- ③ Entrance Gate
- ④ Staircase
- ⑤ Private Chamber—Penelope spends time here with weaving and other pastimes and comes down the staircase to talk to the suitors. Her bedchamber, though, was likely on the ground floor as the description by Odysseus of crafting one post of their bed from a rooted tree trunk would not work with a second floor bechamber.

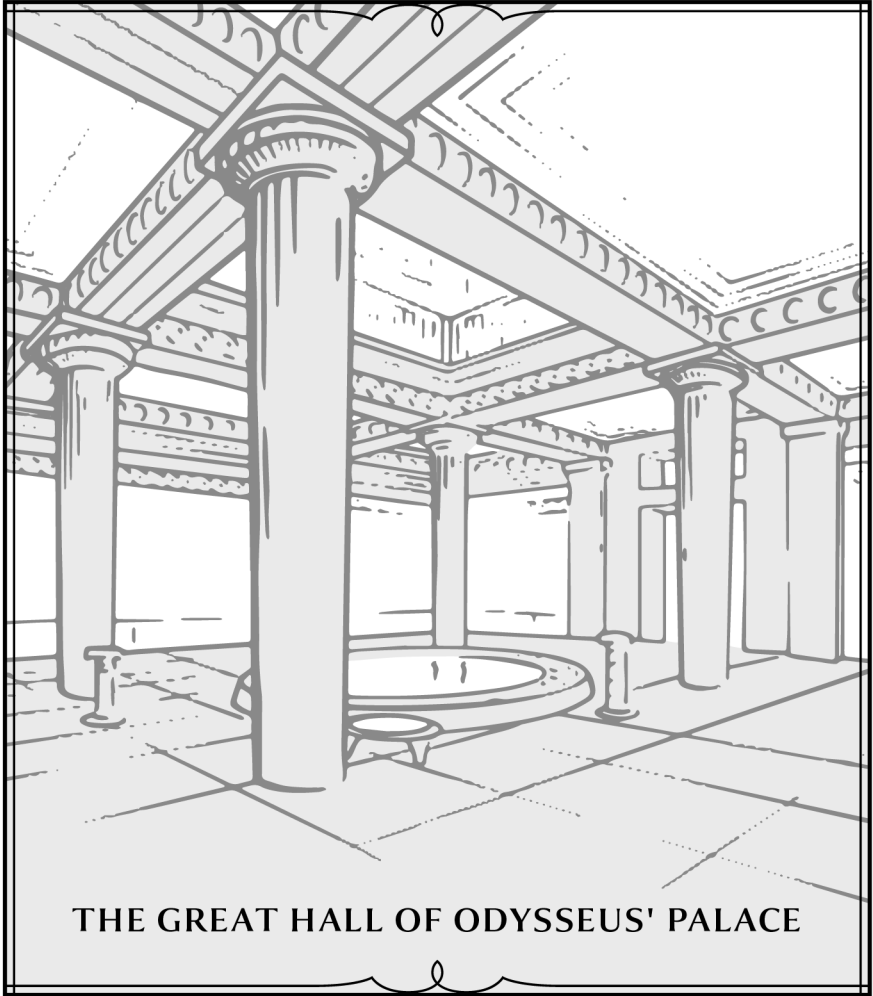
THE FLOORPLAN OF ODYSSEUS' PALACE





THE FORECOURT

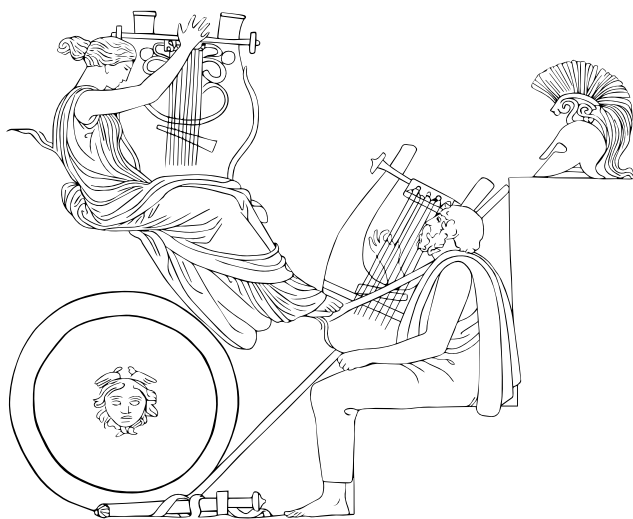
The forecourt with its entrance gate leading into the megaron is the location of the action in the middle of Book 17 where Odysseus sees his old dog Argos lying on a dunghheap outside the entrance gate, and again of the action at the beginning of Book 18 where Odysseus knocks out the arrogant old beggar Iros and drags him outside the palace. This forecourt may sometimes have been open to the sky but it may also have been roofed over. Its construction would be similar to that of the megaron, described in Map 4.



THE MEGARON, OR GREAT HALL

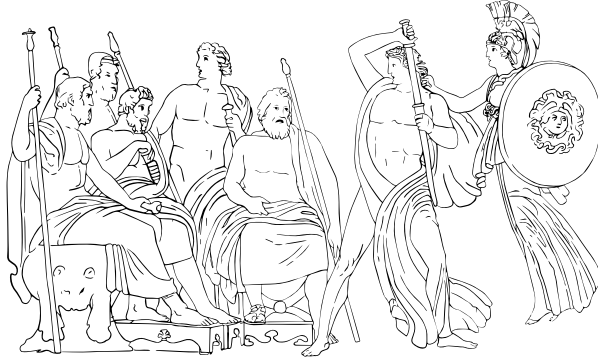
This room was at the heart of the palace complex and was the center of palace life in a Mycenaean kingdom. Here the king received visitors and heard news and supplications and here great feasts, religious and political ceremonies took

THE ILIAD



Homer Invoking the Muse

Book I: The Wrath of Achilles



Athene Suppressing the Fury of Achilles

The Quarrel

Sing, goddess, the ruinous wrath of Achilles, Peleus' son, that caused countless woes for the Achaians, hurled down to Hades many mighty souls of heroes, and made their bodies a feast for dogs and birds of prey; and so the will of Zeus was fulfilled from the time when strife first parted Atreus' son, the king of men, and noble Achilles.

Who among the gods brought the two together to fight in strife? Leto's and Zeus' son Apollo; for, in anger at the king, he sent a dreadful plague upon the army, so that the people began to perish, because the son of Atreus had dishonored Chryses the priest. For the priest had come to the Achaians' fast ships to win his daughter's freedom, and brought a great ransom, carrying in his hands the wreath of Apollo the Archer upon a golden staff, and entreated all the Achaians, and most of all the two sons of Atreus, commanders of the people: "Sons of Atreus and all you bronze-greaved Achaians, now may the gods who have homes on Olympus grant you to destroy the city of

Priam and to arrive safely home; but set my dear child free and accept the ransom in reverence to the son of Zeus, Apollo the Archer.”

Then all the other Achaians cried out in agreement, to reverence the priest and accept his splendid ransom; but it did not please the heart of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and he roughly sent him away and laid a stern order upon him, saying: “Do not let me find you, old man, among the hollow ships, neither lingering now or returning again later, lest the scepter and wreath of the god not help you. I will not set her free before old age comes on her in my house, in Argos, far from her country, plying the loom and serving my bed. So depart, and do not provoke me, that you may return safely.”

So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and obeyed his word and went silently along the shore of the loud-sounding sea. Then that aged man stood far off and prayed aloud to King Apollo, whom the lovely-haired Leto bore: “Hear me, God of the Silver Bow, who protects Chryse and sacred Killa and powerfully rules Tenedos, O Smintheus!¹ If ever I built a temple gracious in your eyes, or if ever I burnt for you the fat flesh of thighs of bulls or goats, fulfill for me my desire; let the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows.”

So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him and came down from the peaks of Olympus angry at heart, bearing on his shoulders his bow and covered quiver. And the arrows shook upon his shoulders in wrath as the god moved; and he descended like the night. Then he sat apart from the ships and let an arrow fly; and dreadful was the sound of the silver bow. First he attacked the mules and swift dogs, but afterward, aiming at the men his bitter arrows, he struck them; and many pyres of the dead continually burned.²

For nine days now the shafts of the god ranged through the host; but on the tenth, Achilles summoned the people to assembly, for the white-armed goddess Hera put in his mind that thought, be-

1 An epithet for Apollo, meaning (according to many ancient sources) “mouse-god”; there were festivals dedicated to Apollo in some parts of Asia Minor for his protection against the mice who destroyed crops.

2 Apollo’s anger in the form of a plague parallels Yahweh’s anger in the form of a plague in, among other places, the famous Old Testament passage in Numbers 25; there God’s anger is mentioned throughout the chapter, but the actual form it took is specifically described as a plague in verses 8 and 9.

cause she had pity on the Danaans when she saw them dying. Now, when they had gathered and met in assembly, then swift-footed Achilles stood up and spoke among them: “Son of Atreus, I think now that we shall return home again wandering, if we can even escape death, if war and pestilence together must ravage the Achaians. But come, let us now ask some prophet or priest, or an interpreter of dreams—for a dream too is from Zeus—who might tell us why Phoibos Apollo is so angry, whether he blames us because of some vow or sacrifice, if perhaps he would accept the aroma of lambs or unblemished goats, and so take away the pestilence from us.”

So he spoke and sat down; and there stood up before them Kalchas son of Thestor, most excellent by far of prophets, who knew things that were and that would be and that had been before, and guided the ships of the Achaians to Troy by his prophecy that Phoibos Apollo had given him. With good intent he addressed them and spoke: “Achilleus, dear to Zeus, you bid me to declare the anger of Apollo, the king that strikes from afar. Therefore I will speak; but swear that with all your heart you will aid me both by word and deed. For truly I think that I will provoke one who rules all the Argives with might and whom the Achaians obey. For a king is more mighty when he is angry with a lesser man; even though for a day he swallows his anger, yet he still keeps it in his heart till he satisfies it. Consider then, if you will keep me safe.”

And swift-footed Achilles answered and spoke to him: “Take courage, tell whatever prophecy you know; for by Apollo dear to Zeus, by whose worship you, O Kalchas, declare your prophecy to the Danaans, none of them, while I live on the earth, shall lay violent hands upon you, not even if you mean Agamemnon, who now considers himself to be greatest by far of the Achaians.”

Then the noble prophet took courage and spoke: “Apollo is angry neither because of a vow nor because of a sacrifice, but because of the priest whom Agamemnon dishonored and did not set free his daughter and did not accept the ransoms. Therefore the Archer has brought woes upon us, yes, and will continue. Nor will he ever remove the loathsome pestilence from the Danaans till we have given

the bright-eyed maiden to her father, unbought, unransomed, and have carried a holy sacrifice to Chryse; then might we persuade him with our propitiation.”

So he spoke and sat down, and then the hero, wide-ruling Agamemnon, son of Atreus, stood up before them, grieved; and his dark heart was greatly filled with rage, and his eyes were like flashing fire. Angrily eyeing Kalchas, he addressed him: “You seer of evil, never yet have you told me a thing that is pleasant. Evil is always the joy of your heart to prophesy, but never yet did you tell any good matter nor bring it to pass. And now with prophecy you declare among the Danaans that the Archer brings woes upon them because I would not take the splendid ransom for the maiden Chryseis, since I desire instead to keep her in my own house. Indeed, I prefer her to Klytaimnestra my wedded wife; in no way is she lacking beside her, neither in beauty nor stature nor wit nor skill. But even so I will give her back if that is better; I would rather see my people safe than perishing. Only prepare me a prize of honor immediately, lest I alone of all the Argives go unrewarded, which is improper; for you all see how my prize is departing from me.”

To him then answered swift-footed, godlike Achilles: “Most noble son of Atreus, of all men most covetous, how shall the great-hearted Achaians give you a reward? We know of no stock of common treasure, but whatever spoil we took from captured cities has been already distributed, and it is unfitting to beg all this back from the people. But yield the girl to the god, and we Achaians will pay you back threefold and fourfold, if ever Zeus grants us to sack some well-walled city of Troy.”

The ruler Agamemnon answered and said to him: “Strong as you are, great Achilles, you do not deceive me by treachery this way; you shall not outwit me or persuade me. Do you wish, in order to keep your reward, for me to sit vainly desiring one, and are you commanding me to give the girl back? But if indeed the great-hearted Achaians will give me a reward suited to my mind, let it be equal; but if they do not give it, then I myself will go and take your reward, or that of Aias or Odysseus, and lead it away; and he to whom I shall

come will be angry. But indeed we will consider these things later; now let us launch a black ship on the great sea and gather picked oarsmen and put in it a great sacrifice and embark Chryseis of the fair cheeks herself, and let one of our counselors be captain, Aias or Idomeneus or godlike Odysseus, or you, son of Peleus, most formidable of men, to make sacrifice for us and propitiate the Archer.”

Then Achilles, fleet of foot, looked at him scowling and said: “Ah me, you who are clothed in shamelessness, of crafty mind, how shall any Achaian be persuaded by your words to go on a journey or to fight the foe? Not because of the Trojan spearmen did I come to fight, for they have not wronged me; they never drove off my oxen or horses, nor did they ever destroy my harvest in deep-soiled Phthia, the nurse of men, seeing there lies between us a long space of shadowy mountains and sounding sea; but you, O shameless one, we followed here to make you glad, by earning reward at the Trojans’ hands for Menelaos and for you, dog-faced one! And you threaten to take my reward, for which I have labored much, which the sons of the Achaians gave me. Never do I win rewards like yours, when the Achaians sack any populous city of Trojan men; my hands bear the brunt of furious war, but when the division of spoil comes then your reward is far greater, and I return to the ships with some small thing of my own, when I have fought to exhaustion. Now I will depart to Phthia, seeing it is far better to return home on my sharp-prowed ships; nor am I inclined to remain here in shame to earn for you riches and wealth.”

Then Agamemnon, king of men, answered him: “Flee by all means, if your mind has been driven to do so. Nor do I for my part beg you to stay because of me. I have others by my side that will do me honor, and above all Zeus, Lord of counsel. You are most hateful to me of all kings, beloved of Zeus; you always love strife and wars and fightings. If you are very strong, perhaps a god gave this to you. Go home with your ships and companions and rule the Myrmidons; I care nothing for you, nor do I care about your anger. And this will be my threat to you: seeing Phoibos Apollo takes from me Chryseis, I will send her with my ship and my companions, but I will go myself

to your dwelling and take Briseis of the fair cheeks, your reward of honor, that you may well know how far greater I am than you, and so another may fear to declare himself equal to me and to rival me to my face.”

So he spoke, and grief came upon Peleus’ son, and his heart within his shaggy chest was divided in counsel, whether to draw his keen blade from his thigh and scatter the company and slaughter the son of Atreus, or to hold his anger and restrain his soul. While he agitated over these things in his mind and soul and was drawing his great sword from his sheath, Athena came to him from heaven, for the white-armed goddess Hera sent her, whose soul loved both alike and cared for them. She stood behind Peleus’ son and caught him by his golden hair, only visible to him, and none of the others saw her. Then Achilleus marveled, and turned round and immediately recognized Pallas Athene; and her eyes shone dreadfully. He spoke to her winged words and said: “Why have you come, O child of aegis-bearing³ Zeus? Is it to behold the insolence of Agamemnon, son of Atreus? But I will tell you, and I think it will come to pass: by his own arrogance he shall soon lose his life.”

Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene spoke to him again: “I came from heaven to allay your anger, if you will obey me, being sent forth by the white-armed goddess Hera, who loves and cares for you both equally in her soul. But come, cease from strife, nor draw the sword with your hand; indeed reproach him with words as may be. For this I declare, and this also will be fulfilled: hereafter three times as many splendid gifts shall come to you, because of this insolence; but restrain yourself, and obey us.”

And swift-footed Achilleus answered and said to her: “It is fitting indeed, O goddess, for a man to keep the words of you two, although angry at heart; for this is best. Whoever obeys the gods, to him they gladly listen.” He spoke and held his heavy hand on the silver hilt and thrust the great sword back into the sheath and was

3 The “aegis” is a terrifying device, usually conceived of as an animal skin or a shield with the head or face of Medusa, the snake-haired Gorgon, on it; it represents Zeus but is usually carried by Athene, his daughter, to symbolize her acting on her father’s behalf.

not disobedient to the speech of Athene; and she swiftly departed to Olympos, to the other gods in the palace of aegis-bearing Zeus.

Then Peleus' son spoke again with reviling words to Atreus' son and did not cease from anger: "You drunkard, with a dog's eyes and a deer's heart, at no time has your soul dared to be armed for war together with the people nor to lay ambush with the Achaian chiefs; this seems death to you. Truly it is much better to seize for yourself the gifts of any man throughout the wide army of the Achaians who speaks against you. You are a king devouring the people, since you rule worthless men; if it were not so, son of Atreus, this offense would be your last. But I will declare unto you and swear a great oath by this scepter that shall never more put forth leaves and branches, since it has left its trunk in the mountains, nor will it sprout again because the knife has stripped it of leaves and bark; and now the sons of the Achaians that minister justice bear it in their hands, who guard the laws from Zeus—so shall this be a mighty oath to you—truly shall a longing for Achilles come at some time upon all the sons of the Achaians; and then you will in no way be able to help them, in spite of all your grief, when many fall dying before manslaying Hektor. Then you will tear your heart within you for anger that you did not honor the best of the Achaians." So spoke the son of Peleus and dashed to earth the scepter studded with golden nails and sat down. But on the other side the son of Atreus raged.

Then in their midst rose up Nestor, pleasant of speech, the clear-voiced orator of the Pylions, he from whose tongue flowed speech sweeter than honey. Two generations of mortal men he had already seen perish that long ago had been born and nurtured with him in sacred Pylos, and he was king in the third. With good intention he addressed them and said: "Alas, truly great grief has come upon the land of Achaia. Indeed Priam would be glad and Priam's sons, and all the Trojans would rejoice in their hearts, if they should hear of this strife between you two that are chief of the Danaans in counsel and in battle.

"But listen to me; you are both younger than I. In former times I kept company with better men than you, and never did they make light of me. I never beheld such warriors, nor will I, as were

Peirithoös and Dryas, shepherd of the host, and Kaineus and Exadios and godlike Polyphemos, and Theseus son of Aigeus, like unto the immortals. They were the mightiest of all men upon the earth; the mightiest, and they fought with the mightiest, the wild beast-men of the mountains, and destroyed them utterly. And with these I kept company, having come from Pylos, from a far distant land, for they themselves summoned me. So I played my part in combat; and with them no man now living on earth could do battle. And they took to heart my counsels and hearkened to my voice. Even so you hearken also, for better it is to obey. You must not, though you are very great, seize the maiden from him, but leave her, as she was given at the first by the sons of the Achaians to be a reward of honor; nor must you, son of Peleus, think to strive with a king, might against might, since no ordinary honor is given to a sceptered king to whom Zeus has given glory. Though you are strong, and a goddess mother bore you, yet his is the greater place, for he is king over more. And you, son of Atreus, calm your anger; I beseech you to let go your anger with Achilles, who is a great bulwark from evil war for all the Achaians.”

Then Lord Agamemnon answered and said: “Truly, old man, all this that you say is according to right. But this man would be above all others; he would be lord of all and king among all and captain to all, but in those things I think none will obey him. Though the immortal gods made him a spearman, do they therefore permit him to speak such revilings?”

Then godlike Achilles abruptly answered him: “Truly I should be called a coward and worthless if I yield to you in everything you say. To others give your orders, not to me, for I think I will obey you no longer. I will tell you another thing, and turn it over in your mind. I for my part will by no means raise my hands to fight on account of the girl, neither with you nor with any other, since you have given but now take her away. But of all else that is mine beside my swift black ship you shall take nothing nor bear it away against my will. If you wish, come, make the attempt, that all these may know the truth; quickly your black blood will gush around my spear.”

So when these two had contended with violent words, they arose and dissolved the assembly beside the Achaian ships. The son of Peleus went his way to his tents and trim ships with Menoitios' son and his company, and the son of Atreus launched a fleet ship on the sea and picked twenty oarsmen for it and loaded the great sacrifice for the god and brought Chryseis of the fair cheeks and set her on board, and prudent Odysseus went to be their captain. Then they, having embarked, sailed over the watery ways.

Meanwhile the son of Atreus commanded the people to purify themselves. So they cleansed themselves and cast the defilements into the sea and sacrificed to Apollo unblemished great sacrifices of bulls and goats along the shore of the endless sea, and the swirling aroma rose to heaven with the smoke.

Thus they busied themselves throughout the host; but Agamemnon did not cease from the strife with which he had threatened Achilles at the first. He spoke to Talthybios and Eurybates, who were his heralds and diligent servants: "Go to the tent of Achilles, Peleus' son, and take Briseis of the fair cheeks by the hand and lead her here; and if he will not give her, then I will go myself, and more with me, and seize her; and that will be more grievous for him."

So saying he sent them forth and added threatening words. Unwillingly they went along the beach of the endless sea and came to the tents and ships of the Myrmidons. They found him sitting beside his tent and black ship; nor did he rejoice when he saw these two. They stood in fear and reverence before the king and said nothing, nor did they question him. But he knew in his heart and spoke to them: "Hail, heralds, messengers of Zeus and men. Come near. You are not guilty in my sight, but Agamemnon is, who sent you for the sake of the girl Briseis. Go now, Zeus-born Patroklos, bring forth the girl, and give her to them to lead away. But let these two themselves be witnesses before the blessed gods and mortal men, and against this cruel king, if at any time there should be need of me to ward off shameful destruction. For truly he rages with a ruinous mind, and has he thought at all to look ahead or behind, that the Achaians might fight safely for him beside the ships."

Achilleus' Appeal to Thetis

So he spoke, and Patroklos obeyed his dear companion and led from the tent Briseis of the fair cheeks and gave her to them to lead away. And these two went back again to the ships of the Achaians, and with them went the woman all unwilling. Then Achilles wept and sat himself apart from his companions on the shore of the grey water, gazing upon the wine-dark sea; he stretched forth his hands and prayed much to his dear mother: "Mother, since you have borne me to be short-lived, high-thundering Olympian Zeus should at least have granted me honor; but now he has not honored me even a little. Indeed Atreus' son, wide-ruling Agamemnon, has dishonored me; for he has taken away my reward of honor himself and keeps her."

So he spoke, shedding tears, and his noble mother heard him as she sat in the depths of the sea beside her old father. Instantly she rose from the grey sea, like a mist, and sat herself before him, shedding tears, and caressed him with her hand and spoke and called him by name: "Child, why do you weep? And why has sorrow overwhelmed your mind? Speak out, do not hide it in your mind, that we both may know it."

Then groaning heavily, Achilles, swift of foot addressed her: "You know; why should I tell these things to you when you know them all? We went to Thebe, the holy city of Eëtion, and we sacked it and carried here all the spoils. And the sons of the Achaians divided all these things well among them; and for the son of Atreus they set apart Chryseis of the fair cheeks. But Chryses, priest of Apollo the Archer, came to the swift ships of the bronze-greaved Achaians to win his daughter's freedom and brought a vast ransom, carrying in his hands the wreath of Apollo the Archer upon a golden staff, and made his petition to all the Achaians, and most of all to the two sons of Atreus, commanders of the host. Then all the other Achaians cried assent, to reverence the priest and accept his splendid ransom; yet the thing did not please the heart of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, but roughly he sent him away and laid a stern order upon him. So the

old man went back in anger; and Apollo heard his prayers, because he loved him greatly, and he aimed against the Argives his deadly arrows. So the people began to perish in multitudes, and the god's shafts ranged everywhere throughout the wide army of the Achaians. Then, having full knowledge, the prophet declared to us the oracle of the Archer. Immediately I urged propitiating the god; but anger seized Atreus' son and, quickly rising, he made a threatening speech, which has now been fulfilled. The bright-eyed Achaians are bringing her on their swift ship to Chryse and bear with them offerings to the king; and just now the heralds went and took from my tent the daughter of Briseus, whom the sons of the Achaians gave me. You therefore, if you are able, protect your son. Go to Olympos and beseech Zeus if at any time you have pleased his heart by any word or deed. For often I have heard you boasting in my father's halls when you said that you alone among the immortals warded off terrible destruction from the black-clouded son of Kronos, when the other Olympians wanted to bind him—Hera, Poseidon, and Pallas Athene. But you, goddess, came and freed him from his chains, having quickly summoned to high Olympos the hundred-armed one whom the gods call Briareus, but all men call Aigaion—for he is mightier even than his father. So he sat himself by the son of Kronos, exulting in glory, and the blessed gods feared him and did not bind Zeus. Remind him of this and sit by him and clasp his knees, and perhaps he may be willing to help the Trojans and might drive the stricken Achaians back to their ships' sterns and the sea, that they all may respect their king, and that even wide-ruling Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, may understand his crime, because he did no honor to the best of the Achaians."

Then Thetis, weeping, answered him: "Ah me, my child, why did I rear you, having borne you to such unhappiness? If only you could sit near the ships, tearless and unharmed, since your destiny is a short life and not long, but now you are soon doomed and most unhappy of all men. In an evil hour I bore you in our halls. But I will go myself to snow-clad Olympos to speak your words to Zeus, who delights in the thunder, if perhaps he may hearken to me. But stay now among your swift-going ships and be angry with the Achaians,

but refrain utterly from battle: for Zeus went yesterday to Okeanos, to the noble Ethiopians, for a feast, and all the gods followed him; but on the twelfth day he will return to Olympus, and then will I venture to Zeus's palace with the bronze threshold and will kneel before him, and I think I will persuade him."

So saying she went her way and left him there, vexed in spirit for the fair-girdled girl's sake, whom they had taken by force against his will; and meanwhile Odysseus came to Chryse with the holy and great sacrifice. When they had entered the deep harbor, they furled their sails and laid them in the black ship and lowered the mast by the forestays and settled it quickly into the crutch and rowed her with the oars to the anchorage. Then they cast out the anchors and made fast the cables, and they went on to the sea-beach and brought forth the great sacrifice for the Archer Apollo, and out came Chryseis from the seafaring ship. Then Odysseus of many counsels brought her to the altar and put her into her father's arms and addressed him: "Chryses, Agamemnon, king of men, sent me to bring you your daughter and to offer to Phoibos a holy great sacrifice on the Danaans' behalf, with which to propitiate the king who has brought sorrow and lamentation on the Argives."

So saying he put her in his arms, and he gladly received his dear child; and quickly they set in order for the god the holy great sacrifice around his well-built altar; next they washed their hands and took up the barley meal. Then Chryses lifted up his hands and prayed aloud for them: "Hearken to me, god of the silver bow, who stands over Chryse and holy Killa and rules Tenedos with might; even as once you heard my prayer and honored me and greatly afflicted the people of the Achaians, so now fulfill this desire of mine: remove from the Danaans immediately the loathsome pestilence."

So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him. When they had prayed and sprinkled the barley meal, first they drew back the victims' heads and slaughtered them and flayed them and cut slices from the thighs and wrapped them in fat, making a double fold, and laid raw portions upon them, and the old man burnt them on split wood and made an offering over them of gleaming wine; and at

his side the young men in their hands held five-pronged forks. When the thighs were burnt and they had tasted the vitals, they sliced all the rest and pierced it through with spits and roasted it carefully, then drew it all off again. When they had rested from the task and made ready the banquet, they feasted, nor was anything lacking which their hearts desired in the feast. But when they had put away the desire of eating and drinking, the young men filled the bowls brimming with wine and gave each man his portion after the drink-offering had been poured into the cups. So all day long they worshiped the god with music, singing a lovely hymn, the sons of the Achaians making music to the Archer; and his heart was glad to listen. When the sun went down and darkness came on them, they slept near the ship's cables. When rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, the child of morning, then they set sail for the wide camp of the Achaians; and Apollo the Archer sent them a favoring wind. They set up their mast and spread out the white sails, and the wind swelled the sail, and the dark wave sang loud around the stem as the ship made way, and she sped across the wave, completing her journey. Then when they had come to the wide camp of the Achaians, they drew up their black ship to land high upon the sands and set in line the long props beneath her; and they scattered themselves among their tents and ships.

But the Zeus-born son of Peleus, Achilles swift of foot, was angry as he sat by his swift-faring ships; he went neither to the assembly that is the hero's glory nor to war but pined away in his heart, remaining there, and longed for the war-cry and for war.

Thetis' Appeal to Zeus

Now when the twelfth dawn after that had come, then the immortal gods all went to Olympus together, led by Zeus. And Thetis did not forget her son's order, but she found Kronos' son of the far-sounding voice sitting apart from all on the topmost peak of many-ridged Olympus. So she sat herself before him and with her left hand clasped his knees and with her right took him by the chin

and, appealing to him, she addressed the king Zeus, son of Kronos: “Father Zeus, if ever I pleased you amongst the immortals, whether by word or deed, fulfill my desire: honor my son for me, he who is doomed to earliest death of all men; now Agamemnon, king of men, has dishonored him, for he has taken away his reward and keeps her himself. But honor him, Olympian Zeus who provides; give power to the Trojans until the Achaians honor my son and repay him with greater honor.”

So she spoke; but Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, said no word to her and sat long in silence. But as Thetis had clasped his knees, so she held him, clinging, and questioned him a second time: “Promise me now this thing truly and bow your head in assent; or else deny me, since there is nothing for you to fear, that I may know how dishonored I am among all.”

Then Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, groaning heavily, addressed her: “Indeed there will be ruinous results if you set me at odds with Hera, for she may provoke me with reproachful words. She always chides me, though in vain, amidst the immortal gods, and says that I assist the Trojans in battle. But depart now, lest Hera notice anything; and I will take care to fulfill these things. Come now, I will bow my head to you, that you may be persuaded; for that, on my part, is the surest sign amid the immortals; for my word is neither revocable nor false nor unfulfilled when I have bowed my head to it.” The son of Kronos spoke and nodded his dark brows, and the divine locks waved on the king’s immortal head; and he made great Olympus quake.

Thus the two parted, having consulted; she leapt then into the deep sea from bright Olympus, and Zeus went to his own home. All the gods together rose from their seats in the presence of their father; nor did anyone dare to await his coming, but all together stood up before him. So he sat himself there upon his throne; but Hera saw and was not unaware that the daughter of the Old Man of the Sea, Thetis the silver-footed, had taken counsel with him. Immediately she addressed Zeus the son of Kronos with biting words: “Now who among the gods, O crafty one, has devised plans with you? It is al-

ways dear to you to decide secret things, deliberating apart from me; nor have you ever been willing to tell me the things you propose.”

Then the father of gods and men answered her: “Hera, do not hope to know all my counsels; they would be harmful for you, even though you are my wife. But whatever it may be fitting for you to hear, no one either of gods or men will know it before you. But whatever things I may wish to take thought of apart from the gods, do not question or inquire into them.”

Then Hera, the ox-eyed⁴ queen, answered him: “Most dread son of Kronos, what word is this you have spoken? Before now I have not questioned you much nor inquired, but very privately you plan whatever things you may wish. But now I have feared greatly in my mind lest silver-footed Thetis, daughter of the Old Man of the Sea, may persuade you, for earlier she sat herself near to you and took hold of your knees. To her indeed I think you nodded assent that you would honor Achilles and destroy many beside the Achaians’ ships.”

Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, addressed her: “O watchful one, always indeed you suspect me, nor do I escape your notice. Yet you will be able to do nothing, but will be further from my heart; that will be the worse for you. But if this thing is so, then such must be my good pleasure. Sit down in silence and obey my words, lest all the gods that are in Olympos be no help to you against me, when I lay my invincible hands on you.”

He spoke, and Hera, the lovely-eyed queen, was afraid and sat in silence, curbing her heart; but throughout Zeus’s palace the gods of heaven were troubled. Then Hephaistos the famed craftsman began to address them, to do a kindness to his mother, white-armed Hera: “Truly this will be a sorry matter, nor tolerable any longer, if you two thus fight for mortals’ sakes and bring wrangling among the

4 “Ox-eyed” here and other places (e.g., also used of Klymene, one of Helen’s handmaidens in Book 3) means generally large, soft, liquid eyes—that is, it is simply an epithet of beauty, so it might be rendered, “lovely-eyed.” Athene is often called “grey-eyed” for the same reason, and it means the same thing, but the word for “grey-eyed” can also mean “owl-eyed.” Because of this, scholars used to assume that the ox and owl in the epithets for the goddesses were relics of a time when the gods were worshiped in animal form as in Egypt, but in fact there is no evidence for any such thing happening in any period in Greek (or pre-Greek) religion.

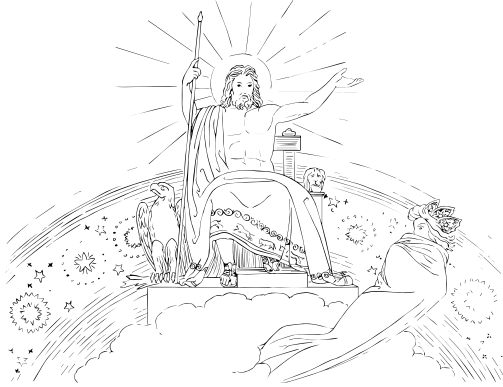
gods, nor will there be any more joy in the glorious feast, seeing that evil triumphs. So I counsel my mother, though she herself is wise, to do kindness to our dear Father Zeus, so that our father does not rebuke us again and disturb the feast. For if the Olympian of the Lightning wishes to dash us from our seats he can. For he is by far the mightiest. But soothe him with soft words; then the Olympian will be gracious to us.”

So he spoke and arose and placed in his dear mother’s hand the two-handled cup and spoke to her: “Endure, my mother, and bear up, though you are grieved, lest I see you, dear as you are, chastised before my eyes; and then I will not be able for all my sorrow to save you, for the Olympian is difficult to oppose. Once before this, when I wished to save you, he caught me by my foot and hurled me from the heavenly threshold; all day I fell and, at the setting of the sun, I fell in Lemnos and little life was in me. There the Sintian people received me after I fell.”

So he spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera smiled and, smiling, took the cup from her son’s hand. Then he poured wine to all the other gods from right to left, ladling the sweet nectar from the bowl. And irresistible laughter arose amid the blessed gods when they saw Hephaistos serving throughout the palace. So they feasted all day till the setting of the sun; neither was anything that their souls desired lacking in the banquet, nor in the beautiful lyre that Apollo held, nor in the Muses singing with sweet antiphonal voices.

Now when the bright light of the sun had set, they each, wishing to rest, went to his own house, where the famous Hephaistos, in both hands equally clever, had made a house for each one with his cunning skill; and Zeus the Olympian, Lord of the lightning, went to his bed where he always took his rest, whenever sweet sleep came upon him. There he went up and slept, and beside him was Hera of the golden throne.

Book II: Preparation for Battle



Zeus Sending the Evil Dream to Agamemnon

Agamemnon Tests the Army

All the other gods and the chariot-driving men slept all night, but sweet sleep did not hold Zeus; rather he was pondering in his mind how to honor Achilles and destroy many beside the Achaians' ships. And this seemed to his mind the best counsel, to send upon Agamemnon son of Atreus a ruinous dream. And, having called him, he spoke to him winged words: "Go now, ruinous Dream, to the Achaians' swift ships; enter the tent of Agamemnon son of Atreus and tell him every word plainly as I command you. Bid him call to arms the flowing-haired Achaians with all speed, for now he may take the wide-wayed city of the Trojans. For the immortals that dwell in the halls of Olympos are no longer divided in counsel, since Hera has prevailed upon all by her entreating, and sorrows hang over the Trojans."

So he spoke, and the Dream departed when he had heard the words. Immediately he came to the Achaians' swift ships and went to Agamemnon son of Atreus and found him sleeping in his tent, and ambrosial slumber had been poured all around him. Then he stood

over his head in the likeness of Nestor, son of Neleus, whom above all the elders Agamemnon honored; in his likeness the divine Dream addressed him: “Are you sleeping, son of warlike Atreus, tamer of horses? To sleep all night is not fitting for a counselor, to whom people are entrusted and so many cares belong. But now understand me quickly, for I am a messenger to you from Zeus, who though he is far off cares greatly for you and pities you. He commands you to arm the flowing-haired Achaians with all speed, for now you may take the wide-wayed city of the Trojans. For the immortals that dwell in the halls of Olympus are no longer divided in counsel, since Hera has prevailed upon all by her entreating, and sorrows hang over the Trojans. But keep this in mind, do not let forgetfulness come upon you when honeyed sleep leaves you.”

So spoke the Dream and departed and left him there, believing in his mind things that were not to be fulfilled. For indeed he thought he would take Priam’s city that very day; foolish man, for he did not know the plans that Zeus had in mind, who was determined to bring yet more grief and wailing on Trojans and Danaans alike throughout the course of furious fights. Then he woke from sleep, and the heavenly voice was in his ears. So he sat upright and put on his soft tunic, fair and bright, and flung around him his great cloak, and beneath his white feet he bound his fair sandals, and over his shoulders hung his silver-studded sword, and he grasped the sceptre of his fathers, imperishable for ever, and he made his way among the strongly-armored Achaians’ ships.

Now the goddess Dawn went to high Olympus, foretelling daylight to Zeus and all the immortals, and the king commanded the clear-voiced heralds to summon to the assembly the flowing-haired Achaians. So they did, and the men gathered swiftly. But first the council of the great-hearted elders met beside the ship of King Nestor, born in Pylos. And Agamemnon, who had assembled them, put forth his clever counsel: “Listen, my friends. A dream from heaven came to me in my sleep through the sweet night and was most like great Nestor in shape and appearance and size. And it stood over my head and commanded me saying: ‘Are you sleeping, son of wise

Atreus, tamer of horses? To sleep all night long is not proper for one who is a counselor, to whom people are entrusted and so many cares belong. But now listen closely to me, for I am a messenger to you from Zeus, who though he is far off has great care and pity for you. He commands you to swiftly call to arms the flowing-haired Achaians, for now you may take the wide-wayed city of the Trojans. For the immortals that dwell in the palaces of Olympus are no longer divided in counsel, since Hera has turned the minds of all by her beseeching, and over the Trojans sorrows hang by the will of Zeus. And keep this in your heart.’ So spoke the dream and then flew away, and sweet sleep left me. So come now, let us call to arms the sons of the Achaians. But first I will speak to them to test them, as is proper, and command them to flee in their ships; but you all on one side and another speak to hold them back.”

So he spoke and sat down, and then Nestor, king of sandy Pylos, stood up among them. With goodwill toward them he spoke out and said: “My friends, captains and rulers of the Argives, had any other of the Achaians told us this dream we might consider it false and turn away from it; but he who saw it calls himself the greatest among us. So come, let us call to arms as best we can the sons of the Achaians.”

So he spoke and led the way from the council, and all the other sceptered chiefs rose with him and obeyed the shepherd of the host, and the people hurried to them. Just as when dense swarms of bees continually issue from the hollow rock and fly, clustering among the flowers of spring, and on every hand fly in bunches, so from ships and tents along the level beach marched the many nations by companies to the assembly ground. And in their midst Rumor, messenger of Zeus, blazed among them, urging them along; and so they gathered. And the assembly was in an uproar, and the land echoed as the host sat down, and there was turmoil. Nine heralds restrained them with shouting, hoping they might restrain themselves and listen to their kings, the offspring of Zeus. And finally, with great difficulty, the people were settled on their benches and ceased from their noise.

Then King Agamemnon stood, bearing his sceptre that Hephaistos had elaborately worked. Hephaistos gave it to King Zeus, son

of Kronos, and then Zeus gave it to the messenger-god, the slayer of Argus; and King Hermes gave it to Pelops, the charioteer, and Pelops in turn gave it to Atreus, shepherd of the people. And Atreus, dying, left it to Thyestes, rich in flocks, and Thyestes in turn left it to Agamemnon to bear, to be lord over many islands and all Argos. He leaned on it and spoke these words to the Argives: “My friends, Danaan warriors, men of the company of the god of war, Zeus the son of Kronos has ensnared me with a terrible delusion; he is hard of heart, because earlier he promised and pledged to me that I would not return home till I had destroyed strong-walled Troy; but I find that he had planned a cruel trick, for he now commands me to return to Argos dishonored, with the loss of many of my people. This is what seems most to please mighty Zeus, who has brought down many cities, and shall bring down many more, for his power is greatest. This will be shameful to hear even for those that come after us; how so fine and great a people of the Achaians warred in this way a pointless war and fought weaker enemies, and yet no end to it can be seen. For if we were minded, both Achaians and Trojans, to swear a solemn truce and to number ourselves, and if the Trojans should gather together all who dwell in the city, and we Achaians should organize ourselves in companies of tens, and every company chose a Trojan to pour their wine, many companies would still lack a cup-bearer, by so much do we sons of the Achaians outnumber the Trojans who dwell within that city. But there are also allies from many other cities, warriors who wield the spear, and they also oppose all my efforts to waste the populous citadel of Troy. Nine years have already passed away in Zeus’s plan, and our ships’ timbers have rotted and the tackle is loose; while at home our wives and little children sit in our halls waiting for us. And yet the task for which we came is utterly unfulfilled. So come, let us all do as I command. Let us flee with our ships to our beloved homelands; for we will never capture wide-wayed Troy.”

So he spoke and stirred the spirit in the breasts of all throughout the multitude, as many as had not heard the council. And the assembly swayed like high sea-waves of the Ikarian main that east wind

and south wind raise, rushing upon them from the clouds of Father Zeus; and just as when the west wind comes to stir a deep cornfield with violent blast, and the grain bows down, so all the assembly was stirred, and with shouting they hurried toward the ships; and the dust from beneath their feet rose high. And each man urged his neighbor to seize the ships and drag them into the bright salt sea and clear the launching-ways, and the noise went up to the sky of their hurrying homeward, and they began to take the props from beneath the ships.

Then the Argives would have fulfilled their return against the will of fate, but Hera spoke a word to Athena: “For shame, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, unwearied maiden! Shall the Argives flee homeward to their beloved native land over the sea’s broad back? But they would leave to Priam and the Trojans Helen of Argos, for whose sake many an Achaian has perished in Troy, far away from his beloved native land. But you, go now among the host of the strong-armored Achaians; with your gentle words restrain the men, and do not let them drag their curved ships down to the salt sea.”

So she spoke, and the bright-eyed goddess Athena did not disregard her but went darting down from the peaks of Olympus and came swiftly to the fast ships of the Achaians. There she found Odysseus, equal to Zeus in counsel, standing and not even touching his decked black ship, for grief had entered his heart and soul. And bright-eyed Athena stood by him and said: “Heaven-born son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus, will you fling yourselves upon your benched ships to flee homeward to your beloved native land? But you would leave to Priam and the Trojans Helen of Argos, for whose sake many an Achaian has perished in Troy, far from his beloved native land. Go now among the host of the Achaians without delay and with gentle words restrain the men and do not let them drag their curved ships down to the salt sea.”

So she spoke, and he knew the voice of the goddess speaking to him, and he went running, throwing off his cloak, which his herald picked up, Eurybates of Ithaca, who waited on him. And he went to meet Agamemnon son of Atreus and from his hand took the sceptre of his forefathers, imperishable forever, and made his way along the

ships of the armored Achaians. Whenever he found one that was a captain and an influential man, he stood by his side, and restrained him with gentle words: “Good sir, it is not right to be frightened like a coward; sit down and make all your men sit down. For you do not yet know clearly what the purpose of Atreus’ son is; he is merely testing, and soon he will be hard on the sons of the Achaians. And did we not all hear what he spoke in the council? Beware lest in his anger he do harm to the sons of the Achaians. For the souls of heaven-born kings are proud, because their honor is from Zeus, and the god of counsel loves them.” But any man of the people he saw shouting, he struck with his sceptre and rebuked him with loud words: “Sir, be still and listen to the words of others that are your betters; you are no warrior, but a weakling, counting for nothing in battle or in council. We Achaians cannot all be kings here. A multitude of masters is not a good thing; let there be one master, one king, to whom the son of clever-counseling Kronos has granted the sceptre and sovereignty to rule over you.”

So masterfully he ranged through the army, and they hurried back to the assembly from ships and tents with a great noise as when a wave of the loud-sounding sea roars on the long beach and the deep ocean resounds.

Now all the rest sat down and remained orderly on the benches, but Thersites, with the uncontrolled speech, still chattered on. His mind was full of many disorderly words, designed to strive against the chiefs vainly and improperly, in order to make the Argives laugh. And he was more ugly than any man who came to Troy. He was bandy-legged and lame in one foot, with both shoulders hunched down over his chest; and his head was deformed, and a sparse stubble grew on it. He was hateful to Achilles above all and to Odysseus, for he constantly reviled them. Now with shrill shouting he heaped abuse upon great Agamemnon. The Achaians were angry at him and indignant in their souls. But with loud shouts he spoke and reviled Agamemnon: “Son of Atreus, why are you discontented and what more do you want? Surely your tents are full of bronze and many women are in your tents, the chosen spoils that we Achaians give you first

of all, whenever we take a town. Can it be that you still want more gold as well, which one of the horse-taming Trojans may bring from Troy to ransom his son, whom perhaps I or some other Achaian have led captive; or else some young girl, to lie with, whom you may keep apart for yourself? But it is not proper for one that is their captain to bring the sons of the Achaians to sorrow. You soft fools, base things of shame, you women of Achaia and men no more, let us depart for home with our ships, and leave this fellow here in Troy-land to gorge him on rewards of honor, so that he may know whether our aid helps him or not. Now he has even dishonored Achilles, a far better man than he; for he has taken away his reward of honor and keeps it by his own violent act. Certainly there is no wrath at all in Achilles' mind, but he is patient; otherwise this dishonor, you son of Atreus, would be your last."

So Thersites spoke, reviling Agamemnon, shepherd of the host. But noble Odysseus came straight to his side and, looking sternly at him, with hard words rebuked him: "Thersites, reckless in words, shrill orator though you are, restrain yourself, and do not aim to strive single-handedly against kings. For I think that no mortal man of the Achaians who came to Troy is worse than you. Therefore it would be best that you not revile against kings as you talk, and utter revilings against them, watching for a chance to depart. We do not yet know clearly how these things will turn out, whether we sons of the Achaians shall return home, for better or worse. Now you revile continually at Agamemnon son of Atreus, shepherd of the host, because the Danaan warriors give him many gifts, and so you talk tauntingly. But I will tell you plainly, and what I say shall certainly be brought to pass: if I find you again raving as now you are, then may Odysseus' head no longer remain on his shoulders, nor may I any more be called father of Telemachos, if I do not take you and strip your garments from you, your mantle and tunic that cover your nakedness, and send you weeping to the swift ships and drive you out of the assembly with shameful blows."

So he spoke and with his staff struck his back and shoulders, and he bent over and a big tear fell from him, and a bloody welt rose

up from his back beneath the golden sceptre. Then he sat down and was confounded and in pain wiped away the tear with a helpless look. But the rest, though they had been miserable, laughed happily at him, and one would speak to another standing by: “Truly, Odysseus has done countless good things already, standing foremost in wise counsel and ordering battle well, but this is by far the best thing he has done among the Argives: he has stopped this foolish railer from his ramblings. Never again, certainly, will his proud soul make him revile the kings with slanderous words.”

So said the multitude; but Odysseus, destroyer of cities, rose up with the sceptre in his hand. And by his side bright-eyed Athena in the likeness of a herald commanded the multitude to keep silence so that the sons of the Achaians, both the nearest and the farthest, might hear his words together and pay attention to his counsel. With good intention he spoke to them and said: “Son of Atreus, surely now the Achaians are inclined to consider you the most despised among all mortal men, O king, nor will they fulfill the promise that they made to you when they were venturing here from horse-pasturing Argos; that you should not return till you had laid waste to strong-walled Troy. For like young children or widow women they wail to each other about returning home. Surely this is toil to make a man depart disheartened. For he that stays away but one single month far from his wife in his benched ship frets himself when winter storms and the furious sea imprison him; but for us, the ninth year of our stay here is upon us in its course. Therefore I do not marvel that the Achaians should fret beside their beaked ships; nevertheless it is shameful to wait so long and then to depart empty. Be patient, friends, and wait a while, until we learn whether Kalchas is a true prophet or not. For this certainly we know well in our hearts, and you all are witnesses of it, as many of you as the fates of death have not borne away. It was as if it were only yesterday or the day before that the Achaians’ ships were gathering in Aulis, full of trouble for Priam and the Trojans; and around a spring from which flowed sparkling water, beneath a lovely plane-tree, we were offering on the holy altars unblemished great sacrifices to the immortals, when a great omen was seen: a ter-

rible snake, blood-red on its back, whom the god of Olympos himself had sent forth to the light of day, sprang from beneath the altar and darted to the plane-tree. Now there was a brood of a sparrow there, tender little ones, upon the highest branch, nestling beneath the leaves; there were eight of them, and the mother of the little ones was the ninth, and the snake swallowed them as they cheeped pitifully. And the mother fluttered around, wailing for her dear little ones; but he coiled himself and caught her by the wing as she shrieked. When he had swallowed the sparrow's little ones and the mother also, the god who revealed him made of him a sign; for the son of wily-counseling Kronos turned him to stone, and we stood by and marveled to see what was done. So when the dread omen broke in upon the great sacrifices for the gods, then Kalchas immediately prophesied and said: 'Why are you silent, you flowing-haired Achaians? Zeus the counselor has shown us this great sign, late to come, and of late fulfillment, but the fame of it shall never die. Just as the serpent swallowed the sparrow and her little ones, eight of them and the mother who was the ninth, so we will wage war there that many years, but in the tenth year we will take the wide-wayed city.' So said the prophet; and now all these things are being fulfilled. So stand fast where you are, all you strong-armored Achaians, until we have taken the great city of Priam."

So he spoke, and the Argives shouted aloud, and all round the ships echoed terribly to the voice of the Achaians as they praised the saying of godlike Odysseus. And then lordly Nestor of Gerenia spoke among them: "Indeed you hold assembly like silly boys that have no concern for deeds of war. What will come of our covenants and our oaths? Let all counsels be cast into the fire and all plans of warriors and the pure drink-offerings and the right hands of fellowship in which we trusted. For we are vainly striving with words, nor can we find any strategy at all, in spite of our long stay here. Son of Atreus, as before, keep your steadfast purpose and lead the Argives amid the violent fray; and as for these, let them perish, the one or two Achaians that take secret counsel to depart to Argos before they know whether the promise of aegis-bearing Zeus is a lie or not. Yes,

for I say that the mighty son of Kronos pledged us his word that day when the Argives embarked upon their fast ships, bringing to the Trojans death and fate; for by his lightning upon our right side he showed signs of good. Therefore let no man hasten to go home till each has lain by some Trojan's wife and paid back his suffering and groans for Helen's sake. But if any man is excessively eager to go home, let him lay his hand upon his decked black ship, that before all men he may encounter death and fate. But you, my king, take good counsel yourself, and listen to another man giving it; the word that I speak, whatever it might be, shall not be cast away. Separate your warriors by tribes and by clans, Agamemnon, that clan may give aid to clan and tribe to tribe. If you do so, and the Achaians listen to you, then you will know who among your captains and who of the common men is a coward, and also who is brave; for they will fight according to their character. In this way you will know whether it is by divine command that you do not take the city, or by the baseness of your warriors and their poor skill in battle."

And Lord Agamemnon answered and said to him: "Indeed you have again outdone the sons of the Achaians in speech, old man. Ah, Father Zeus and Athena and Apollo, if only among the Achaians I had ten counselors like this then the city of King Priam would soon bow beneath our hands, captive and wasted. But aegis-bearing Zeus, the son of Kronos, has brought sorrows upon me, in that he has cast my lot amid empty wranglings and strifes. For indeed I and Achilles fought over a girl using violent words, and I was first to be angry; but if we can only be at one in council, then there will be no more putting off the day of evil for the Trojans, not for a moment. But now go to your meal, that we may begin battle. Let each man sharpen his spear well and arrange well his shield, and let him give his swift-footed horses their meal, and make sure of his chariot in every way, and give thought to battle, so that all day long we may contend in hateful war. For there will be no interruption or rest, except when the coming of night separates the fury of warriors. The covering of every man's shield will be wet with sweat, and his hand will grow weak on the spear, and every man's horse will sweat as he pulls the polished char-

iot. And whoever I see considering staying far away from the fight beside the beaked ships, for him there will be no hope to escape the dogs and birds of prey.”

So he spoke, and the Argives shouted aloud, like a wave on a steep shore, when the south wind comes and stirs it, even on a jutting rock, that is never left at peace by the waves of all winds that rise from this side and that. And every man sacrificed to one of the everlasting gods, praying for escape from death and the tumult of battle. But Agamemnon, king of men, slew a fat bull of five years to the mightiest son of Kronos and called the elders, the princes of the Achaian host, Nestor first and King Idomeneus, and then the two Aiantes¹ and Tydeus’ son and Odysseus, equal to Zeus in counsel. And Menelaos of the loud war-cry came to him without being called, for he knew in his heart how his brother toiled. Then they stood around the bull and took the barley-meal. And Agamemnon made his prayer in their midst and said: “Zeus, most glorious, most great, god of the storm-cloud, who dwells in the heaven, grant that the sun not set upon us nor the darkness come near till I have laid low upon the earth Priam’s palace, besmirched with smoke, and burnt its doorways with consuming fire and torn off Hektor’s chest his jacket cleft with the blade; and about him may many of his comrades bite the earth lying prone in the dust.”

So he spoke, but the son of Kronos would not grant him fulfillment yet; he accepted the sacrifice, but made toil to increase greatly.

Now when they had prayed and sprinkled the barley-meal, they drew back the bull’s head and cut its throat and flayed it and cut slices from the thighs and wrapped them in fat, making a double fold, and laid raw slices on them. And they burnt these on split wood stripped of leaves and pierced the vitals on sticks and held them over Hephaistos’s flame. When the thighs were burnt and they had tasted the vitals, then they sliced all the rest and pierced it through with spits and roasted it carefully and then took it all off again. So when they

1 “Aiantes” refers to the two men called Aias—great Aias, son of Telamon, a gigantic warrior; and lesser Aias, son of Oileus, a small, fast archer. They fight together often, and this word is a convenient plural for them.

had rested from the task and had made the banquet ready, they feasted, nor was anything held back from them in the fair banquet.

But when they had put away from them the desire for food and drink, then lordly Nestor of Gerenia opened his words to them: “Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, let us not hold long conversation here any longer nor delay any longer the work that the god puts in our hands; but come, let the heralds of the mail-clad Achaians make a proclamation to the people and gather them from throughout the ships; and let us go together through the wide host of the Achaians, that we may rouse sharp warfare more quickly.”

So he spoke and Agamemnon, king of men, did not disregard him. Immediately he commanded the clear-voiced heralds to summon the flowing-haired Achaians to battle; so they did and the men gathered quickly. And the kings, the children of Zeus that were around Atreus’ son, eagerly arranged them, and bright-eyed Athena stood in the middle, holding the holy aegis that does not know age or death and upon which wave a hundred tassels of pure gold, all expertly woven and each one worth a hundred oxen. With this she passed dazzlingly through the Achaian people, urging them forward; and in every man’s heart she stirred up strength to battle without ceasing and to fight. So war was made sweeter to them than to depart in their hollow ships to their dear native land. Just as ravaging fire kindles an endless forest on a mountain’s peaks and the blaze is seen from far off, so as they marched the dazzling gleam from the innumerable bronze went through the sky and up to the heavens.

And as the many kinds of feathered birds, wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans, on the Asian meadow by Kaÿstrios’ stream, fly here and there rejoicing in their plumage and with loud cries settle, and the meadow resounds, even so the many tribes of warriors poured out from ships and tents into the Skamandrian plain. And the earth echoed terribly beneath the tread of men and horses. So they stood in the flowery Skamandrian plain, unnumbered as leaves and flowers in season. And as the many tribes of thick flies that hover about a herdsman’s homestead in the spring season, when milk drenches the pails, so in number stood the flowing-haired Achaians

on the plain before the Trojans, eager to tear them apart. And just as the goatherds easily divide the ranging flocks of goats when they mingle in the pasture, so their captains marshaled them on this side and that, to enter into the fray, and in their midst Lord Agamemnon, his head and eyes like Zeus whose joy is in the thunder, and his waist like Ares and his chest like Poseidon. Just as a bull stands out foremost amid the herd, for he is preeminent amid the pasturing cattle, so Zeus made the son of Atreus on that day preeminent among many and chief amid heroes.

Catalog of Ships

Tell me now, you Muses that dwell in the mansions of Olympos—seeing that you are goddesses and are near and know all things, while we hear only a rumor and know nothing—who were the captains of the Danaans and their lords? But the common sort I could not number or name, no, not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, and an unwearied voice and a heart of bronze within me, if the Muses of Olympos, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, did not put into my mind all that came to Troy. So I will tell the ships and all their captains in order.

Peneleos and Leitos were captains of the Boiotians, and also Arkesilaos and Prothoenor and Klonios; these are those who dwelt in Hyria and rocky Aulis and Schoinos and Skolos and Eteonos full of ridges, Thespeia and Graia and Mykalessos with wide meadows; and that dwelt about Harma and Eilesion and Erythrai, and they that held Eleon and Peteon and Hyle, Okalea and the established fortress of Medeon, Kopai and Eutresis and Thisbe the haunt of doves; and they of Koroneia and grassy Haliartos, and that possessed Plataia and that dwelt in Glisa, and that possessed the established fortress of lesser Thebes and holy Onchestos, Poseidon's bright grove; and that possessed Arne rich in vineyards, and Mideia and sacred Nisa and Anthedon on the farthest borders. From these came fifty ships,

and in each one embarked a hundred and twenty young men of the Boiotians. And those that dwelt in Aspledon and Orchomenos of the Minyai were led by Askalaphos and Ialmenos, sons of Ares, whom Astyoche conceived of the mighty god in the palace of Aktor son of Azeus, having entered her upper chamber, a stately maiden; for mighty Ares lay with her secretly. And with them sailed thirty hollow ships.

And the Phokians were led by Schedios and Epistrophos, sons of great-hearted Iphitos son of Naubolos; these were they who possessed Kyparissos and rocky Pytho and sacred Krisa and Daulis and Panopeus, and those who dwelt about Anamoreia and Hyampolis, yes, and those who lived by the goodly river Kephisos and possessed Lilaia by Kephisos' springs. And with them thirty black ships followed. So they marshaled the ranks of the Phokians diligently, and had their position hard by the Boiotians on the left.

And the fleet son of Oileus was captain of the Lokrians, Aias the lesser, who was not so huge as Telamonian Aias but much smaller. He was little, with a linen corslet, but with the spear he far outdid all the Hellenes and Achaians. These were they that dwelt in Kynos and Opoeis and Kalliaros and Bessa and Skarphe and lovely Augeiai and Tarphe and Thronion, near the streams of Boagrios. And with Aias forty black ships of the Lokrians that dwell over against holy Euboia followed.

And the Abantes breathing fury, they who possessed Euboia and Chalkis and Eretria and Histiaia rich in vines, and Kerinthos by the sea and the steep fortress of Dion, and those who possessed Karystos, and those who dwelt in Styra, all these were led by Elephenor of the stock of Ares, even the son of Chalkodon, and captain of the proud Abantes. And with him followed the fleet Abantes with hair flowing behind, spearmen eager with ashen shafts stretched forth to tear the corslets on the chests of their enemies. And with him forty black ships followed.

And those who possessed the great citadel of Athens, the domain of Erechtheus the high-hearted, whom earlier Athena daughter of Zeus fostered when Earth, the grain-giver, gave birth to him; and

she gave him a resting-place in Athens in her own rich sanctuary; and there the sons of the Athenians worship him with bulls and rams as the years turn in their courses—these also were led by Menestheus son of Peteos. And there was no man on the face of earth that was like him for the commanding of horsemen and warriors who bear the shield. Only Nestor rivaled him, for he was older by birth. And fifty black ships followed him.

And Aias led twelve ships from Salamis and brought them and set them where the battalions of the Athenians stood.

And those who possessed Argos and Tiryns of the great walls, Hermione and Asine that enfold the deep gulf, Troizen and Eïonai and Epidauros full of vines, and the youths of the Achaians who possessed Aigina and Mases, these were led by Diomedes of the loud war-cry and Sthenelos, dear son of famous Kapaneus. And third with them came Euryalos, a godlike warrior, the son of King Mekisteus, son of Talaos. But Diomedes of the loud war-cry was lord over all. And with them eighty black ships followed.

And of those who possessed the established fortress of Mykene and wealthy Corinth and established Kleonai and dwelt in Orneai and lovely Araithyrea and Sikyon, where Adrestos was king at the beginning; and of those who possessed Hyperesia and steep Gonoëssa and Pellene and dwelt about Aigion and through all the coastland and about broad Helike, of those Lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus, led a hundred ships. With him followed the most and the greatest people by far; and in their midst he himself was clad in flashing bronze, glorious, and was preeminent among all warriors, because he was greatest and led people far greatest in number.

And of those who possessed Lakedaimon lying low amid the rifted hills and Pharis and Sparta and Messe, the haunt of doves, and dwelt in Bryseiai and lovely Augeiai, and of those too who possessed Amyklai and the sea-coast fortress of Helos, and who possessed Laas and dwelt about Oitylos, of these the king's brother was leader, Menelaos of the loud war-cry, leader of sixty ships, and these were arrayed separately. And he himself marched among them confident in

his zeal, urging his men to battle: and his heart most of all was set to take vengeance for his strivings and groans for Helen's sake.

And of those who dwelt in Pylos and lovely Arene and Thryon, the fording-place of Alpheios, and in established Aipy, and were inhabitants of Kyparisseis and Amphigeneia and Pteleos and Helos and Dorion—where the Muses met Thamyras the Thracian and made an end of his singing as he was traveling from Oichalia, from Eurytos the Oichalian; for he said with boasting that he would conquer even if the Muses themselves would sing against him, the daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus; but they in their anger wounded him; in addition they took from him the high gift of song and made him forget his harping—of all these lordly Nestor of Gerenia was leader, and ninety hollow ships sailed with him.

And of those who possessed Arkadia beneath the steep mountain of Kyllene, beside the tomb of Aipyros, where there are warriors who fight hand to hand; and of those who dwelt in Pheneos and Orchomenos abounding in flocks, and Rhipse and Stratia and windy Enispe, and that possessed Tegea and lovely Mantinea, and possessed Stymphalos and dwelt in Parrhasia, of these Ankaioi's son, Lord Agamemnon, was leader of sixty ships; and in each ship embarked many Arkadian warriors skilled in battle. For Agamemnon, king of men, himself gave them beached ships with which to cross the wine-dark sea, for seafaring matters did not concern them.

And those also who inhabited Bouprasion and goodly Elis, as much as Hyrmine and Myrsinos upon the borders and the Olenian rock and Alesion contained between them, of these men there were four captains, and ten swift ships followed each one, and many Epeians embarked upon them. Some were led by Amphimachos and Thaplios, of the lineage of Aktor, one the son of Kteatos and one of Eurytos; and of some stalwart Diores, son of Amarynkeus, was captain; and of the fourth company godlike Polyxeinos, son of King Agasthenes Ageias' son, was captain.

And those of Doulichion and the holy Echinian Isles that lie beyond the sea over against Elis, these were led by Meges, the peer of Ares, called Phyleides for he was begotten by lordly Phyleus, dear

to Zeus; he had earlier changed his habitation to Doulichion because of anger against his father. And with him forty black ships followed.

And Odysseus led the great-hearted Kephallenians, those who possessed Ithaka and Neriton with quivering foliage, and who dwelt in Krokyleia and rugged Aigilips, and those who possessed Zakynthos and who dwelt in Samos, and possessed the mainland and dwelt in the regions across from the isles. These Odysseus, the peer of Zeus in counsel, led, and with him followed twelve ships with vermilion prows.

And Thoas, the son of Andraimon, was captain of the Aitolians, those who dwelt in Pleuron and Olenos and Pylene and Chalkis on the sea-shore and rocky Kalydon. For the sons of great-hearted Oineus were no more, neither did he still live, and golden-haired Meleagros, to whom all had been committed for him to be king of the Aitolians, was dead. And with Thoas forty black ships followed.

And of the Cretans Idomeneus the famous spearman was leader, of those who possessed Knossos and Gortyna of the great walls, Lyktos and Miletos and chalky Lykastos and Phaistos and Rhytion, all established cities; and of all others that dwelt in Crete of the hundred cities. Of these men Idomeneus the famous spearman was leader, and Meriones, peer of the man-slaying war-god. With these eighty black ships followed.

And Tlepolemos, Herakles' son great and tall, led from Rhodes nine ships of the lordly Rhodians, who dwelt in Rhodes in a threefold ordering, in Lindos and Ialysos and chalky Kameiros. These were led by Tlepolemos the famous spearman, who was born to great Herakles by Astyocheia, whom he had brought away from Ephyrā by the river Selleïs, when he had destroyed many cities of strong men, beloved of Zeus. When Tlepolemos had grown to manhood within the strong palace walls, soon he slew his own father's dear uncle, an old man now, Likymnios of the stock of Ares. Then he quickly built ships and gathered many people together and fled across the sea, because the other sons and grandsons of great Herakles threatened him. So he came to Rhodes a wanderer, enduring hardships, and his people settled according to kinship in three tribes and were loved by

Zeus who is king among gods and men; and Kronion poured upon them exceedingly great wealth.

Nireus, furthermore, led three trim ships from Syme—Nireus son of Aglaia and King Charopos, Nireus the most handsome man that came up under Troy of all the Danaans, after the noble son of Peleus. Nevertheless he was a weakling, and a scanty host followed him.

And of those who possessed Nisyros and Krapathos and Kasos and Kos, the city of Eurypylos, and the Kalydnaian Isles, Pheidippos and Antiphos were leaders, the two sons of King Thessalos son of Herakles. With them were arrayed thirty hollow ships.

Now all furthermore who dwelt in the Pelasgian Argos and inhabited Alos and Alope and Trachis and possessed Phthia and Hellas the home of lovely women, and were called Myrmidons and Hellenes and Achaians; of all these, a full fifty ships, Achilles was captain. But these did not think of noisy war; for there was no one to organize them for battle. For swift-footed glorious Achilles lay idle among the ships, angry for the sake of a girl, Briseis of the lovely hair, whom he had won from Lyrnessos and the walls of Thebe, and overthrew Mynes and Epistrophos, warriors that bore the spear, sons of King Euenos, Selepios' son. For her sake Achilles lay sorrowing; but he was soon to arise again.

And of those who possessed Phylake and flowery Pyrasos, Demeter's sanctuary, and Iton mother of flocks, and Antron by the sea-shore and Pteleos couched in grass, of all these warlike Protesilaos was leader while he lived; but long before this the black earth held him fast. His wife with tear-stained face was left alone in Phylake, and his bridal chamber half built; for a Dardanian warrior slew him as he leapt from his ship first of all the Achaians. Yet his men were not leaderless, though they grieved for their leader; for Podarkes of the stock of Ares commanded them. He was son of Phylakos' son Iphikles, the lord of many flocks, brother of great-hearted Protesilaos and younger than he: but the other was the older and braver, Protesilaos, that mighty man of war. So the host did not lack a leader, only they yearned for their noble dead. With him followed forty black ships.

And of those who dwelt in Pherai by the Boibeian coast, in Boibe and Glaphyrai and established Iolkos, of them, eleven ships, Admetos' dear son was leader, Eumelos whom Alkestis, fair among women, bore to Admetos, she who was most beautiful to look upon of the daughters of Pelias.

And of those who dwelt in Methone and Thaumakia, and possessed Meliboia and rugged Olizon, of these, seven ships, Philoktetes was leader, the cunning archer; and in each ship sailed fifty oarsmen skilled to fight powerfully with the bow. But their captain lay enduring great pain in the isle of lovely Lemnos, where the sons of the Achaians left him sick of a terrible wound from a deadly water-snake. There he lay suffering; yet the Argives were soon to think beside their ships of King Philoktetes. Still, his men were not leaderless, though they grieved for their leader, because Medon marshaled them, Oileus' illegitimate son, whom Rhene bore to Oileus, destroyer of cities.

And of those who possessed Trikke and terraced Ithome and who possessed Oichalia, city of Eurytos the Oichalian, of these Asklepios' two sons were leaders, the cunning physicians Podaleirios and Machaon. And with them were arrayed thirty hollow ships.

And of who possessed Ormenios and the fountain of Hypereia and possessed Asterion and the white crests of Titanos, of these Eurypylos was leader, Euaimon's glorious son; and with him, forty black ships followed.

And of those who possessed Argissa and dwelt in Gyrtone, Orthe, and Elone, and the white city of Oloösson, of these unflinching Polypoites was captain, son of Peirithoös that immortal Zeus had begotten: and famed Hippodameia conceived Polypoites by Peirithoös on that day when he took vengeance on the shaggy wild people and thrust them out from Pelion and drove them to the Aithikes. And Polypoites did not rule alone, but with him was Leonteus of the stock of Ares, son of high-hearted Koronos Kaineus' son. And with them forty black ships followed.

And Gouneus from Kyphos led twenty-two ships, and following him were the Enienes and unflinching Perrhaibians that had built their homes near wintry Dodona and dwelt on the soil around love-

ly Titaressos that pours his fair-flowing stream into Peneios. Yet he does not mingle with the silver pools of Peneios but flows on over him like oil, seeing that he is an offspring from the water of Styx, the dread river of the oath.

And the Magnetes were led by Prothoös son of Tenthredon, those who dwelt around Peneios and Pelion covered with trembling leaves. Swift Prothoös led these, and with him forty black ships followed.

So these were the leaders of the Danaans and their captains. Now tell me, O Muse, who among them was first and foremost, both of warriors and horses that followed the sons of Atreus. Of horses those of Pheres' son were by far the most handsome, those that Eumelos drove, swift as birds, similar in coat and age, matched to the measure of a leveling line across their backs. These were reared in Percia by Apollo of the silver bow, two mares carrying onward the terror of battle. But far the best of the warriors was Telamonian Aias, while the anger of Achilles continued; for Achilles was greatest of all, he and his horses that bore him, even Peleus' noble son. But he lay idle among his seafaring ships, in great anger against Agamemnon, Atreus' son, shepherd of the host; and his people along the seashore sported with throwing rings and with javelins and archery; and the horses, each beside his own chariot, stood idle, champing clover and parsley from the marsh, and their lords' chariots lay well covered up within the tents, while the men yearned for their warrior chief, and wandered here and there through the camp and did not fight.

So they marched then as though all the land were burning with fire; and the earth groaned beneath them as at the wrath of Zeus whose joy is in the thunder, when he lashes the earth around Typhoeus in the country of the Arimoi, where men say 'Typhoeus' couch is. In such a manner the earth groaned aloud at their tread as they went: and speedily they advanced across the plain.

Now swift Iris the wind-footed went to the Trojans, a messenger from aegis-bearing Zeus, with a grievous message. They were assembled at Priam's gate, gathered all together both young men and old. And swift-footed Iris stood close by and spoke to them; and

she made her voice like the voice of Polites son of Priam, who was the sentinel of the Trojans and was accustomed to sit trusting in his swiftness upon the burial mound of Aisyetes of old and there on the top would wait the movements of the Achaians out from their ships. In his likeness, swift-footed Iris spoke to Priam: “Old man, endless words are still pleasant to you as before in the days of peace; but war without rest is upon us. Indeed I have often before now gone into battles of the warriors, yet I have never seen so grand an army and so great; for in the very likeness of the leaves of the forest or the sands of the sea they are marching along the plain to fight against the city. But Hektor, I command you beyond all else to do as I shall say. Seeing that the allies are very many throughout Priam’s great city, and diverse men, being scattered abroad, have diverse tongues; therefore let each one give the word to those whom he commands, and let him lead them forth and marshal his countrymen.”

So she spoke, and Hektor knew the voice of the goddess, and immediately he dismissed the assembly, and they rushed to arms. And the gates were thrown open wide, and the army burst forth, infantry and horsemen, and a mighty din arose.

Now there is in front of the city a steep mound standing apart in the plain, with an open space around it on this side and that; and men call this “Batieia” but the immortals call it “the tomb of lithe Myrina.” There the Trojans and their allies arranged their battalions. Amid the Trojans, great Hektor of the glancing helm was leader, the son of Priam; with him the greatest hosts by far and the grandest were arrayed, eager spearmen. But the Dardanians were led by the princely son of Anchises, Aineias, whom bright Aphrodite conceived to Anchises among the ridges of Ida, a goddess wedded to a mortal. And he was not alone; with him were Antenor’s two sons, Archelochos and Akamas, well-skilled in all the ways of war.

And of those who dwelt in Zeleia beneath the distant foot of Ida, the men of wealth that drink the dark waters of Aisepos, even the Trojans; of these Lykaon’s glorious son was leader, Pandaros, to whom Apollo himself gave the bow.

And of those who possessed Adresteia and the land of Apaisos and possessed Pityeia and the steep hill of Tereia, of these Adrestos was captain, and Amphios of the linen corslet, the two sons of Merops of Perkote, that beyond all men knew prophecy and would have prevented his children from marching to murderous war. But they ignored him, for the fates of black death led them on.

And those who dwelt about Perkote and Praktion and possessed Sestos and Abydos and bright Arisbe, these were led by Hyrtakos' son Asios, a prince of men—Asios son of Hyrtakos, whom his tall sorrel steeds brought from Arisbe from the river Selleëis.

And Hippothoös led the tribes of the Pelasgians that fight with spears, those who inhabited deep-soiled Larissa. These were led by Hippothoös and Pylaios of the stock of Ares, twin sons of Pelasgian Lethos, son of Teutamios.

And the Thracians were led by Akamas and the hero Peiroös, even all those whom the strong stream of Hellespont hems in. And Euphemos was captain of the Kikonian spearmen, the son of Troizenos Keas' son, beloved of Zeus.

But Pyraichmes led the Paionians with curving bows, from far away in Amydon, from the broad stream of Axios—Axios whose water is the fairest that flows over the face of the earth.

And Pylaimones with the rugged heart led the Paphlagonians from the land of the Enetoi, where wild mules come from. These people were those who possessed Kytoros and dwelt about Sesamos and inhabited their famed dwellings around the river Parthenios and Kromna and Aigialos and lofty Erythinoi.

And the Halizones were led by Odios and Epistrophos, from far away in Alybe, where the birthplace of silver is.

And the Mysians were led by Chromis and Ennomos the soothsayer, yet with all his prophecies he did not ward off black fate, but was conquered by the hand of the swift-footed son of Aiakos in the river, when he made havoc of the Trojans there, and also of the rest.

And Phorkys and godlike Askanios led the Phrygians from far Askania, and these were eager to fight in the battle-throng.

And the Maionians were commanded by Mesthles and Antiphos, Talaimenes' two sons, whose mother was the Gygaian sea. So these led the Maionians, whose birthplace was under Tmolos.

But Nastes led the Karians, rough of speech, who possessed Miletos and the mountain of Phthiron, with vast foliage, and the streams of Maiandros and the steep crest of Mykale. These were led by Amphimachos and Nastes, the glorious children of Nomion. And he came, indeed, to battle with golden attire like a girl—foolish man: that did not hold back in any way ruinous destruction, but he was conquered by the hands of the swift-footed grandson of Aiakos in the river, and wise-hearted Achilleus carried away his gold.

And Sarpedon and blameless Glaukos led the Lykians from far away in Lykia by the eddying Xanthos.

Book III: Truce and Duel



The View From the Walls

The First Duel Arranged

Now when they were arranged, each company with their captains, the Trojans marched with clamor and shouting, like birds when there rises up to the skies a clamor of cranes which flee from the coming of winter and sudden rain and fly noisily towards the streams of ocean, bearing slaughter and fate to the Pigmy men, and in early morning give cruel battle. But on the other side marched the Achaians in silence, breathing courage, eager at heart to give help, man to man.

Just as when the south wind sheds mist over the crests of a mountain, mist unwelcome to the shepherd, but to the robber better than night, and a man can see no further than he casts a stone, even so thickly arose the gathering dust-clouds at their tread as they went; and speedily they advanced across the plain.

So when they had now come close to each other to attack, god-like Alexandros became a champion for the Trojans, wearing upon his shoulders a panther skin and curved bow and sword; and he brandished two bronze-headed spears and challenged all the cap-

tains of the Argives to fight him man to man in mortal combat. But when Menelaos, dear to Ares, saw him coming in the forefront of the multitude with long strides, then just as a lion is glad when he comes upon a great carcass, a horned stag, or a wild goat that he has found, being hungry, and so he devours it greedily, even though the swift hounds and eager youths attack him; even so was Menelaos glad when his eyes beheld godlike Alexandros; for he wished to take vengeance upon the evildoer. So immediately he leapt in his armor from his chariot to the ground.

But when godlike Alexandros saw him appear among the champions, his heart was shaken, and he shrank back into the host of his comrades, avoiding death. And just as a man who has seen a serpent in a mountain glade jumps backward and trembling seizes his feet beneath him, and he retreats back again, and paleness takes hold of his cheeks, even so did godlike Alexandros for fear of Atreus' son shrink back into the throng of lordly Trojans. But Hektor saw and scolded him with scornful words: "Weak Paris, most fair in appearance, you woman-mad deceiver, if only you had never been born or had died unwed. Yes, that would have been my desire, and it would have been far better than to be our shame like this and looked at in scorn by all men. I think that the flowing-haired Achaians laugh, thinking that a prince is our champion only because he is handsome; but in his heart there is no strength nor any courage. Are you indeed such a one that in your seafaring ships you sailed over the deep with the company of your trusty comrades, and while consorting with strangers you bring back a fair woman from a far country, one that was by marriage daughter to spear-bearing warriors, that she might be a terrible mischief to your father and city and all the realm, but to our enemies a rejoicing and to yourself a hanging of the head? And can you not indeed stand up to Menelaos, dear to Ares? You might see what sort of warrior he is whose lovely wife you took. Your lyre will not help you nor the gifts of Aphrodite, nor your handsome hair and face, when you grovel in the dust. But the Trojans are true cowards: otherwise before this you would have been stoned by the people for all the evil you have done."

And godlike Alexandros answered him: “Hektor, you rebuke me moderately and not beyond measure—your heart is always keen, just as an axe that pierces a beam at the hand of a man that shapes a ship’s timber with skill, and so the man’s blow is strengthened; just so is your heart undaunted in your breast. Do not cast in my teeth the lovely gifts of golden Aphrodite; the gods’ glorious gifts that they give of their own good will are not to be flung aside, for no man can win them by his own desire. But now if you would have me do battle and fight, make the other Trojans sit down and also all the Achaians, and set me and Menelaos, dear to Ares, in the midst, to fight for Helen and all her wealth. And whichever of us shall conquer and gain the upper hand, let him take all the wealth fairly, and the woman, and bear them home. And let the rest pledge friendship and sure oaths; then you may live on in deep-soiled Troy, and let them depart to Argos, pasture-land of horses, and Achaia, home of fair women.”

So he spoke, and Hektor rejoiced greatly to hear his words, and went into the midst and restrained the battalions of the Trojans, with his spear grasped by the middle; and they all sat down. But the flowing-haired Achaians kept shooting at him, aiming with arrows and casting stones. But Agamemnon, king of men, cried aloud: “Refrain, you Argives; do not shoot, you sons of the Achaians; for Hektor of the glancing helm has set himself to say something.”

So he spoke, and they refrained from battle and quickly became silent. And Hektor spoke between the two armies: “Hear from me, Trojans and well-greaved Achaians, the words of Alexandros, for whose sake strife has come about. He bids the other Trojans and all the Achaians to lay down their great armor on the rich earth, with himself and Menelaos, dear to Ares, in the middle to fight alone for Helen and all her wealth. And whichever one shall vanquish and gain the upper hand, let him take all the wealth fairly, and the woman, and bear them home; but let all of us pledge friendship and sure oaths.”

So he spoke, and they all kept silence and were still. Then in their midst Menelaos of the loud war-cry spoke: “Listen now to me, too; for grief has entered into my heart most of all; and I think that the parting of Argives and Trojans has come at last; seeing that you

have endured many ills because of my quarrel and the first sin of Alexandros. And for whichever of us death and fate are prepared, let him lie dead, and you all be parted speedily. Bring two lambs, one white ram and one black ewe, for earth and sun; and let us bring one for Zeus. And call here great Priam, that he may pledge the oath himself, seeing he has sons that are arrogant and faithless, lest anyone by transgression do violence to the oath of Zeus; for young men's hearts are ever lifted up. But wherever an old man enters in, he looks both before and behind, from which the best issue shall come for either side."

So he spoke, and Achaians and Trojans were glad, thinking that they should have rest from the grievous war. So they withdrew their chariots to the ranks, and alighted and removed their weapons. And these they laid upon the earth close to each other, and there was very little space between. And Hektor sent two heralds to the city with haste, to bring the lambs, and to call Priam. And Lord Agamemnon sent forth Talthybios to go to the hollow ships, and commanded him to bring a ram; and he was not disobedient to noble Agamemnon.

"Teichoskopia"¹ (The View from the Walls)

Now Iris went with a message to white-armed Helen in the likeness of her husband's sister, the spouse of Antenor's son, she whom Lord Helikaon, Antenor's son, had as wife, Laodike the fairest favored of Priam's daughters. And in the hall she found Helen weaving a great purple web of double fold and embroidering on it many battles of horse-taming Trojans and mail-clad Achaians that they had endured for her sake at the hands of Ares. So fleet-footed Iris stood by her side and said: "Come here, dear sister, that you may see the wonderful doings of horse-taming Trojans and mail-clad Achaians. They who before waged sorrowful war upon each

1 Quotation marks enclosing titles of sections or of entire books indicates an ancient, traditional title, going back in most cases to the third century B.C. or earlier.

other on the plain, eager for deadly battle, sit now in silence, and the tall spears are planted by their sides. But Alexandros and Menelaos, dear to Ares, will fight with their tall spears for you; and you will be declared the dear wife of him who conquers.” So spoke the goddess, and put into her heart sweet longing for her former husband and her city and parents.

Immediately she veiled her face in shining linen and hurried from her chamber, letting a round tear fall; not unattended, for there followed with her two handmaidens, Aithre daughter of Pittheus and ox-eyed Klymene. Then she came right away to the place of the Skaian gates. And those who were with Priam and Panthoös and Thymoites and Lampos and Klytios and Hiketaon of the stock of Ares, Oukalegon and Antenor, twain sages, being elders of the people, sat at the Skaian gates. These had now ceased from battle because of old age, yet they were excellent orators, like grasshoppers that sit in a forest upon a tree and utter their soft voices, even so sat the elders of the Trojans upon the tower. Now when they saw Helen coming to the tower they softly spoke winged words to each other: “It is little wonder that Trojans and well-greaved Achaians should suffer hardships for such a woman for so long; she is marvelously like the immortal goddesses to look upon. Yet even so, though she be so fair, let her go upon their ships and not stay to vex us and our children after us.”

So they spoke, and Priam lifted up his voice and called to Helen: “Come here, dear child, and sit before me, that you may see your former husband and your kinsmen and your friends. I do not hold you to blame; no, I hold the gods to blame who brought on me the sorrowful war of the Achaians. Now tell me who is this huge hero, this Achaian warrior so grand and great. Truly there are others taller by a head; yet my eyes have never beheld a man so handsome or so regal; for he is like a king.”

And Helen, fair among women, spoke and answered him: “You are honorable and noble to me, dear father of my lord; if only sorrowful death had been my pleasure when I followed your son here and left my home and my kinsfolk and my daughter in her girlhood

and the lovely company of my friends. But that was not so, and so I grieve with weeping. Now will I tell you what you ask of me. This is the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, one that is both a magnificent king and mighty spearman. And he was my husband's brother to me, ah shameless me; if anyone was ever like this."

So she spoke, and the old man marveled at him, and said: "Ah, happy son of Atreus, child of fortune, blest of heaven; now I know that many sons of the Achaians are subject to you. Before all this, I traveled to Phrygia, the land of vines, and there I saw that the men of Phrygia, those of the nimble steeds, were very many, even the people of Otreus and godlike Mygdon, that were then encamped along the banks of Sangarios. For I too being their ally was numbered among them on the day that the Amazons came, the peers of men. Yet even they were not as numerous as these sharp-eyed Achaians."

Next the old man saw Odysseus, and asked: "Come now, tell me about this man too, dear child, who is he, shorter by a head than Agamemnon son of Atreus, but broader of shoulder and of chest to behold? His armor lies on the rich earth, and he himself, like a ram, ranges the ranks of warriors. Yes, I would compare him to a thick-fleeced ram ordering a great flock of ewes."

Then Helen, born of Zeus, answered him: "This is Laertes' son, crafty Odysseus, who was raised in the realm of Ithaka, rugged though it is, and skilled in all the ways of cleverness and cunning device."

Then wise Antenor answered her: "Lady, indeed the thing you say is true, for earlier great Odysseus came here also on an embassy for you, in the company of Menelaos, dear to Ares; and I entertained them and welcomed them in my halls, and learned the character of both and their wise devices. Now when they mingled with the Trojans in the assembly, while everyone stood up, Menelaos surpassed them all by the width of his broad shoulders; but when both sat down, Odysseus was the more stately. And when they began to weave the web of words and counsel before all, then Menelaos spoke fluently, in few words, but very clearly, seeing he was not long of speech, nor random, though in years he was the younger. But whenever Odysseus, full of wiles, rose up, he stood and looked down, with eyes fixed upon

the ground, and did not wave his staff either backwards or forwards, but held it stiff, like to a man of no understanding; one would think him sullen and nothing but a fool. But when he uttered his great voice from his chest, and words like the snowflakes of winter, then no mortal man could contend with Odysseus; then we did not marvel to behold Odysseus' appearance."

Then thirdly the old man saw Aias, and asked: "Who is this other Achaian warrior, grand and great, head and shoulders taller than the other Archives?"

And long-robed Helen, fair among women, answered: "This is huge Aias, bulwark of the Achaians. And on the other side amidst the Cretans Idomeneus stands like a god, and about him are gathered the captains of the Cretans. Often Menelaos, dear to Ares, entertained him in our house when he came from Crete. And now I see all the other sharp-eyed Achaians, whom I could easily identify and tell their names; but two captains of the host I cannot see—Kastor, tamer of horses, and Polydeukes, the skillful boxer, my own brothers, whom the same mother bore. Either they did not come in the company from lovely Lakedaimon; or they came here in their own seafaring ships, but now will not enter into the battle of the warriors, for fear of the scorn and revilings that I deserve." So she spoke; but the life-giving earth held them fast there in Lakedaimon, in their dear native land.

The First Duel

Meanwhile the heralds were bearing through the city the holy oath-offerings, two lambs and strong-hearted wine, the fruit of the earth, in a goat-skin bottle. And the herald Idaios bore the shining bowl and golden cups, and came to the old man and summoned him and said: "Rise, son of Laomedon. The captains of the horse-taming Trojans and mail-clad Achaians call on you to go down into the plain, that you may pledge a trustworthy oath. But Alexandros and Menelaos, dear to Ares, will fight with their long spears for the

lady's sake; and let lady and treasure go with him that conquers. And may we that are left pledge friendship and trustworthy oaths and dwell in deep-soiled Troy, and they shall depart to Argos, pasture-land of horses, and Achaia, home of fair women."

So he spoke, and the old man shuddered and ordered his companions to yoke the horses; and they with speed obeyed. Then Priam mounted and drew back the reins, and by his side Antenor mounted the splendid chariot. So the two drove the swift horses through the Skaian gates to the plain. And when they had come to the Trojans and Achaians, they went down from the chariots upon the rich earth, and marched into the midst of Trojans and Achaians. Then immediately Agamemnon, king of men, rose and up rose Odysseus the man of wiles; and the lordly heralds gathered together the holy oath-offerings of the gods and mingled the wine in a bowl and poured water over the princes' hands. And the son of Atreus put out his hand and drew his knife that hung always beside his sword's great sheath and cut the hair from off the lambs' heads; and then the heralds divided it among the captains of the Trojans and Achaians. Then in their midst Atreus' son lifted up his hands and prayed aloud: "Father Zeus, who rules from Ida, most glorious, most great, and you Sun, who sees all things and hears all things, and you Rivers and you Earth and you that in the underworld punish men who swear falsely; be witnesses, and watch over the faithful oath. If Alexandros slays Menelaos, then let him have Helen to himself and all her possessions; and we will depart on our seafaring ships. But if golden-haired Menelaos slays Alexandros, then let the Trojans give back Helen and all her possessions and pay the Argives the restitution that is right, something that will be remembered among men to come. But if Priam and Priam's sons do not pay the restitution to me when Alexandros falls, then will I fight on for the price of evil and remain here till I fulfill the purpose of this war."

So he spoke and cut the lambs' throats with the pitiless knife.² He laid them gasping upon the ground, their breath failing, for he had taken their strength from them; and next they drew the wine from the bowl into the cups and poured it out and prayed to the gods that live forever. And many Achaians and Trojans would say: "Zeus most glorious, most great, and all you immortal gods, whichever people be first to sin against the oaths, may their brains be poured out upon the earth just like this wine, theirs and their children's; and let their wives be made subject to strangers."

So they spoke, but the son of Kronos did not yet grant fulfillment. And in their midst, Priam of the seed of Dardanos uttered his words: "Listen to me, Trojans and well-greaved Achaians. Indeed I will return to windy Ilios, seeing that I cannot in any way bear to behold with my eyes my dear son fighting with Menelaos, dear to Ares. But Zeus knows, and all the immortal gods, for which of the two the doom of death is appointed."

So spoke the godlike man and laid the lambs in his chariot and entered into it himself and drew back the reins; and by his side Antenor mounted the splendid chariot. So they departed back again to Ilios; and Hektor son of Priam and great Odysseus first measured out a space, and then they took the lots and shook them in a bronze-bound helmet, to know which of the two should first cast his spear of bronze. And the people prayed and lifted up their hands to the gods; and many of the Achaians and Trojans would say: "Father Zeus, who rules from Ida, most glorious, most great; whoever it is that brought this trouble upon both peoples, grant that he may die and enter the house of Hades; that so for us peace may be assured and trustworthy oaths."

So they spoke; and great Hektor of the glancing plume shook the helmet, looking behind him and immediately the lot of Paris leapt out. Then the people sat down by ranks where each man's high-

2 This passage illustrates the widespread practice of sacrifice in the Ancient Near East, not only for moral transgression (as in Book 1 where Agamemnon propitiates Apollo with a sacrifice as well as returning the priest's daughter), but as a covenant guarantee as here. The parallels with Old Testament sacrificial practices of both kinds are striking and instructive.

stepping horses and well-wrought armor lay. And upon his shoulders glorious Alexandros donned his beautiful armor—he who was lord to Helen of the lovely hair. First upon his legs he set his greaves, beautiful, fastened with silver ankle-clasps; next upon his breast he donned the corslet of his brother, Lykaon, and fitted it upon himself. And over his shoulders he cast his silver-studded sword of bronze and then a shield great and sturdy. And on his mighty head he set a wrought helmet of horsehair crest, over which the plume nodded fiercely, and he took a strong spear fitted to his grasp. And in the same way warlike Menelaos donned his armor.

So when they had armed themselves on either side in the throng, they strode between Trojans and Achaians, fierce in appearance, and wonder came on those who beheld, both on the Trojans, tamers of horses, and on the well-greaved Achaians. Then they took their stand near each other in the measured space, brandishing their spears in anger each against the other. First Alexandros hurled his far-shadowing spear and smote the son of Atreus' round shield; but the bronze did not break through, for its point was turned in the stout shield. Next Menelaos son of Atreus lifted up his hand to cast and prayed to Father Zeus: "King Zeus, grant me revenge on him who was first to do me wrong, on great Alexandros, and subdue him at my hands; so that many men who shall come after may shudder to wrong his host who has shown him kindness."

So he spoke and poised his far-shadowing spear and hurled and smote on the round shield of the son of Priam. Through the bright shield went the ponderous spear and through the wrought breastplate it pressed on; and right next to his side the spear tore the tunic, but he swerved and escaped black death. Then the son of Atreus drew his silver-studded sword and lifted up his hand and smote the helmet-ridge; but the sword shattered upon it into three pieces, or four, and fell from his hand. At that the son of Atreus looked up to the wide heaven and cried: "Father Zeus, surely none of the gods is crueller than you. Indeed I thought to have gotten vengeance on Alexandros for his wickedness, but now my sword breaks in my hand, and my spear sped from my grasp in vain, and I have not struck him."

Paris and Helen

So saying, he leapt upon him and caught him by his horsehair crest and, swinging him round, dragged him towards the well-greaved Achaians; and he was strangled by the embroidered strap beneath his soft throat, drawn tight below his chin to hold his helmet. Now Menelaos would have dragged him away and won unspeakable glory, but Zeus's daughter Aphrodite was swift to see, and she tore apart for him the strap of slaughtered ox's hide; so the helmet came away empty in his strong hand. At that Menelaos threw it with a swing toward the well-greaved Achaians, and his trusty comrades took it up; and he himself sprang back again eager to slay him with his spear of bronze. But Aphrodite snatched up Paris, easily as a goddess might, and hid him in thick darkness and set him down in his fragrant perfumed chamber; and she herself went to summon Helen. She found her on the high tower, and around her the Trojan women thronged. So with her hand she plucked her perfumed raiment and shook it and spoke to her in the likeness of an aged woman, a wool-comber that was accustomed to work the fair wool for her when she dwelt in Lakedaimon, whom also she greatly loved. So in her likeness fair Aphrodite spoke: "Come here; Alexandros summons you to go home. There he is in his chamber and inlaid bed, radiant in beauty and dress; you would not think he had just come from fighting his foe, but rather to have been to the dance or from the dance to be just resting and sitting down."

So she spoke and stirred Helen's soul within her breast; and when she now saw the fair neck and lovely breast and sparkling eyes of the goddess, she immediately marveled and spoke a word and called upon her name: "Strange queen, why do you want to beguile me now? Indeed you will lead me further on to some one of the peopled cities of Phrygia or lovely Maionia, if there too perhaps you have some other darling among mortal men, because even now Menelaos has conquered great Alexandros and will lead me, accursed me, to his home. Therefore you come here with deceitful intent. Go

and sit by his side and depart from the way of the gods; do not let your feet ever bear you back to Olympos, but continue to be vexed for his sake and guard him till he makes you his wife or perhaps his slave. But I will not go there—that would be an evil thing—to decorate his bed; all the women of Troy will blame me after that; and I have unspeakable griefs within my soul.”

Then in anger bright Aphrodite spoke to her: “Do not provoke me, rash woman, lest in my anger I desert you and hate you even as I love you beyond measure now, and lest I devise sorrowful hatred between both, between Trojans and Achaians, and so you would perish terribly.”

So she spoke, and Helen, born of Zeus, was afraid and went wrapped in her bright radiant raiment, silently, and the Trojan women did not see her; and the goddess led the way.

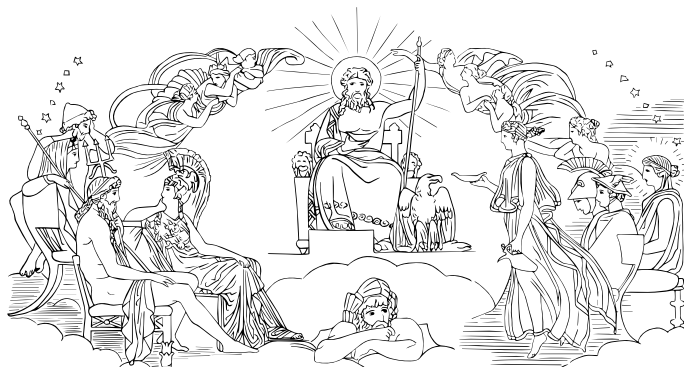
Now when they came to the beautiful house of Alexandros, the handmaidens turned immediately to their tasks, and the fair lady went to the high-roofed chamber; and laughter-loving Aphrodite, the goddess, took a chair and brought it for her and set it in front of Paris. There Helen took her seat, the child of aegis-bearing Zeus, and with her eyes turned aside spoke and chided her lord: “You came back from battle; if only you had perished there, vanquished by that great warrior that was my former husband. Indeed you once boasted that you were a better man than Menelaos, dear to Ares, in the might of your arm and your spear. But go now, challenge Menelaos, dear to Ares, to fight you again face to face. But no—I bid you to refrain, nor fight with golden-haired Menelaos, man to man, nor attack him recklessly, lest you fall to his spear soon.”

And Paris answered her and said: “Do not chide my soul, lady, with cruel taunts. For now indeed Menelaos has conquered me with Athene’s aid, but another day I may do the same to him; for we too have gods with us. But come now, let us enjoy love upon our couch; for desire has never before so enwrapped my heart—not even when first I seized you from lovely Lakedaimon and sailed with you on my sea-faring ships and in the isle of Kranae talked with you upon your couch in love—as I love you now and sweet desire takes hold upon

me.” So saying, he led the way to the couch, and the lady followed with him.

So they laid themselves upon their fretted couch; but the son of Atreus meanwhile strode through the host like a wild beast, if anywhere he might set eyes on godlike Alexandros. But none of the Trojans or their famed allies could show Alexandros to Menelaos, dear to Ares. Yet indeed they in no way hid him out of kindness, even if any could have seen him; for he was hated by all as they hated black death. So Agamemnon, king of men, spoke among them there: “Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies. Now victory has been declared for Menelaos, dear to Ares; give back Helen of Argos and the possessions with her, and pay the restitution as is right, such that will be remembered by men hereafter.” So said the son of Atreus, and all the Achaians assented.

Book IV: Battle Breaks Out



The Gods hold Assembly

The Truce Broken

Now the gods sat by Zeus and held assembly on the golden floor, and in the midst the lady Hebe poured them their nectar; they with golden goblets toasted one another and gazed upon the city of the Trojans. Then Kronos' son attempted to provoke Hera with vexing words and spoke maliciously: "Menelaos has two goddesses for his helpers, Hera of Argos and Alalkomenean Athene. Yet they sit apart and take their pleasure in watching, but beside that other man, laughter-loving Aphrodite always stands and wards off fate from him, and now she has saved him when he thought he would perish. But truly the victory goes to Menelaos, dear to Ares; so let us take thought how these things shall be; whether once more we shall arouse evil war and the dread battle-din or put friendship between the foes. Furthermore, if this were welcome to all and well-pleasing, the city of King Priam may yet remain inhabited, and Menelaos may take back Helen of Argos."

So he spoke, but Athene and Hera, who were sitting near him and devising evils for the Trojans, murmured at it. Now Athene

held her peace and said nothing, in anger at Father Zeus, and fierce wrath had hold of her, but Hera's breast did not contain her anger, and she spoke: "Most dread son of Kronos, what word is this you have spoken? How can you desire to make my labor empty and of no effect, and the sweat of my toil that I sweated, when my horses were wearied with my summoning of the host, to be the plague of Priam and his sons? Do as you wish, but we other gods do not approve you at all."

Then in great anger Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer spoke to her: "Good lady, how have Priam and Priam's sons done you such great wrong that you are furiously minded to sack the well-founded citadel of Ilios? Perhaps if you were to enter within the gates and long walls and devour Priam raw, and his sons and all the Trojans, then you might calm your anger. Do as you have in mind, but let this quarrel not be to me and you a terrible conflict between us. And this also will I say to you, and you must lay it to heart: whenever I too become eager to lay waste a city where there is a race of men that are dear to you, do not hinder my wrath, but let me be, even as I yield to you freely, yet with unwilling soul. For of all cities beneath the sun and starry heaven that are the dwelling of mortal men, holy Ilios was most honored within my heart, and Priam and the people of Priam of the good ashen spear. For never did my altar lack the proper feast, even drink-offering and burnt-offering, the worship that is our due."

Then Hera, the ox-eyed queen, answered him: "Certainly there are three cities that are dearest to me: Argos and Sparta and wide-wayed Mykenai; these you may lay waste whenever they are found hateful to your heart; I will not come forward for them, nor do I begrudge them to you. For even if I become jealous and would forbid you to overthrow them, yet my jealousy will do no good, seeing that you are stronger by far than I. Still my labor too must not be made of no effect; for I also am a god, and my lineage is even as yours, and Kronos the crooked counselor begot me to the place of honor in double manner, by birthright, and because I am called your spouse, and you are king among all the immortals. Let us indeed yield to each other in this, I to you and you to me, and the rest of the im-

mortal gods will follow us. And speedily command Athene to go to the fierce battle din of Trojans and Achaians and to bring about that the Trojans may first begin to do violence to the Achaians in their triumph, despite the oaths.”

So she spoke, and the father of men and gods did not disregard her; immediately he spoke to Athene winged words: “Go speedily to the host, to the midst of Trojans and Achaians, and undertake that the Trojans may first begin to do violence to the Achaians in their triumph, despite the oaths.”

So he spoke and roused Athene who was already set to do it; and from Olympos’ heights she darted down. Just as the son of Kronos, the crooked counselor, sends a star, an omen for mariners or a wide host of men, brightly shining, and from it are scattered a multitude of sparks, even so sped Pallas Athene to earth and leapt into their midst; and astonishment came on those who saw, on horse-taming Trojans and well-greaved Achaians. And many would say, looking at his neighbor: “Surely either terrible war and the fierce battle din will return again; or else Zeus establishes peace between the foes, he that is the dispenser of battle to men.” Thus would many of the Achaians and Trojans say.

Then the goddess entered the throng of Trojans in the likeness of a man, Antenor’s son Laodokos, a stalwart warrior, and sought for godlike Pandaros, if perhaps she might find him. Lykaon’s son she found, the noble and stalwart man standing and around him the stalwart ranks of the shield-bearing host that followed him from the streams of Aisepos. So she came near and spoke winged words: “Will you hearken to me, wise son of Lykaon? Then take heart to shoot a swift arrow at Menelaos, and you will win favor and glory before all the Trojans and before Prince Alexandros most of all. Surely from him, first of any, you would receive glorious gifts, if perhaps he sees Menelaos, Atreus’ warrior son, downed by your arrow and brought to the grievous funeral pyre. Go now, shoot at glorious Menelaos, and vow to Apollo, the Son of light, the Lord of archery, to sacrifice a grand and great sacrifice of first-born lambs when you have returned to your home in the city of holy Zeleia.”

So spoke Athene and persuaded his fool's heart. Immediately he unsheathed his polished bow of the horn of a wild ibex that he himself had some time before struck beneath the breast as it came forth from a rock, while he waited in a hiding place, and had pierced it in the chest, so that it fell backward on the rock. Now from its head sprang horns of sixteen palms; these the artificer, the worker in horn, joined cunningly together and polished them all well and set gold on the tip of it. So when he had strung it well, he laid it down and rested it upon the ground; and his staunch comrades held their shields before him, lest the warrior sons of the Achaians should attack them first, before Menelaos, Atreus' warrior son, was struck. Then he opened the lid of his quiver and took out a feathered arrow, never yet shot, a source of grievous pains; and then he laid the bitter dart upon the string and vowed to Apollo, the Son of light, the Lord of archery, to sacrifice a grand and great sacrifice of first-born lambs when he had returned to his home in the city of holy Zeleia. Then he took the notch and string of oxen's sinew together, and drew, bringing to his breast the string and to the bow the iron head. So when he had now bent the great bow into a circle, the horn twanged, and the string sang aloud, and the keen arrow leapt, eager to wing its way amid the throng.

But the blessed gods immortal did not forget you, Menelaos; and especially the daughter of Zeus, the driver of war, who stood before you and warded off the piercing arrow. She turned it a little aside from the flesh, just as a mother drives away a fly from her child that lies in sweet slumber, and with her own hand guided it where the golden buckles of the belt were clasped and the doubled breastplate met them. So the bitter arrow landed on the firm belt; through the inwrought belt it sped and through the curiously wrought breastplate it pressed on and through the thigh-plate he wore to shield his flesh, a barrier against arrows; and this shielded him best, yet it passed on even through this. Then the arrow grazed the warrior's outermost flesh, and immediately the dark blood flowed from the wound.

As when some woman of Maionia or Karia stains ivory with purple, to make a cheek-piece for horses, and it is laid up in the trea-

sure chamber, though many a horseman begs to wear it, but it is laid up to be a king's boast, both an adornment for his horse and a glory for his charioteer, even so, Menelaos, were your well-muscled thighs stained with blood and your legs and your fair ankles beneath.

At this Agamemnon, king of men, shuddered when he saw the black blood flowing from the wound. And Menelaos, dear to Ares, likewise shuddered; but when he saw how the wrapping thread and barbs were outside the wound, his spirit revived in his breast again. Then Lord Agamemnon moaned deeply and spoke among them all, holding Menelaos by the hand; and his comrades were moaning: "Dear brother, it seems to me I pledged these oaths to your death, setting you forth to fight the Trojans alone in front of the Achaians, seeing that the Trojans have so struck you and trampled under foot the trustworthy oaths. Yet in no way is an oath of no effect, and the blood of lambs and pure drink-offerings and the right hands of fellowship in which we trusted. For even if the Olympian does not bring about the fulfillment immediately, yet in the end he fulfills, and men pay dearly, even with their own heads and their wives and little ones. Yes, certainly I know this in my heart and soul; the day shall come for holy Ilios to be laid low, and Priam and the people of Priam of the good ashen spear; and Zeus, the son of Kronos, enthroned on high, who dwells in the heavens, shall himself brandish over them all his threatening aegis in indignation at this deceit. Then all this shall not be in vain; yet I will have great sorrow for you, Menelaos, if you die and fill up the lot of life. Yes, in utter shame I would return to thirsty Argos, seeing that the Achaians will immediately think of their native land, and so we would leave to Priam and the Trojans their boast, Helen of Argos herself. And the earth will rot your bones as you lie in Troy with your task unfinished, and many an arrogant Trojan will say as he leaps upon the tomb of glorious Menelaos: 'If only Agamemnon might fulfill his wrath in every matter like this, just as now he led here the host of the Achaians for nothing, and has gone home again to his dear native land with empty ships and has left noble Menelaos behind.' This is what men shall say hereafter: in that day let the wide earth gape open for me."

But golden-haired Menelaos encouraged him and said: “Be of good courage, do not dismay the host of the Achaians. The sharp arrow did not land upon a deadly spot; my glistening belt in front stopped it, and the tunic of mail beneath, and the thigh-plate that the coppersmiths fashioned.”

Then Lord Agamemnon answered him and said: “If only it might be so, dear Menelaos. But the physician shall feel the wound and lay on it drugs that will ease your harsh pains.”

So saying he spoke to godlike Talthybios, his herald: “Talthybios, with all speed call Machaon here, the hero son of Asklepios the noble physician, to see Menelaos, Atreus’ warrior son, whom one well-skilled in archery, some Trojan or Lykian, has wounded with a bow-shot, to his glory and our grief.”

So he spoke, and the herald heard him and did not disregard him and went his way through the host of mail-clad Achaians to find the hero Machaon. He found him standing and about him the stalwart ranks of the shield-bearing host that followed him from Trike, pasture land of horses. So he came near and spoke his winged words: “Arise, son of Asklepios. Lord Agamemnon calls you to see Menelaos, captain of the Achaians, whom one well-skilled in archery, some Trojan or Lykian, has wounded with a bow-shot, to his glory and our grief.”

So saying, he aroused his spirit in his breast, and they went their way amid the throng, through the wide host of the Achaians. And when they had come where golden-haired Menelaos lay wounded, and all the captains gathered around him in a circle, the godlike hero came and stood in their midst and quickly drew out the arrow from the clasped belt; and as it was drawn forth the keen barbs were broken backwards. Then he loosened the glistening belt and the tunic of mail underneath and the thigh-plate that the coppersmiths had fashioned; and when he saw the wound where the bitter arrow had struck, he sucked out the blood and cunningly spread on the wound soothing drugs, such as Cheiron in his good will had given to his father.

“Epipoleis” (The Review of the Army)

While these were tending Menelaos of the loud war-cry, the ranks of shield-bearing Trojans came on; so the Achaians donned their arms again and turned their attention to the fray. Now you would not see noble Agamemnon slumbering, nor cowering, nor unready to fight, but very eager for glorious battle. He left his horses and his chariot adorned with bronze; and his attendant, Eurymedon, the son of Ptolemaios, the son of Peiraios, kept the snorting steeds off to one side; and he immediately commanded him to have them close at hand whenever weariness should come upon his limbs with commanding so many men; and thus on foot he ranged through the ranks of warriors. And whoever of all the swift-horsed Danaans he found eager, he stood by them and by his words encouraged them: “You Argives, do not relax in any way your spirited valor; for Father Zeus will be no helper of liars, but as these were first to transgress against the oaths, so shall their own tender flesh be eaten by the vultures, and we shall bear away their dear wives and little children in our ships, once we take the stronghold.”

But whoever he found shrinking from hateful battle, these he rebuked strongly with angry words: “You Argives, warriors of the bow, you men of dishonor, have you no shame? Why do you stand dazed like fawns that are weary with running over the long plain and so stand still, and no valor is found in their hearts at all? Just so you stand dazed and do not fight. Is it that you wait for the Trojans to come near where your good ships’ sterns are drawn up on the shore of the grey sea, to know if Kronion will indeed stretch his arm over you?”

So masterfully he ranged through the ranks of warriors. Then he came to the Cretans as he went through the throng of warriors; and these were arming around wise Idomeneus amid the foremost, valiant as a wild boar; and Meriones meanwhile was urging on his rear-most battalions. Then Agamemnon, king of men, rejoiced to see them, and spoke to Idomeneus with kindly words: “Idomeneus, above all the swift-horsed Danaans I honor you, whether in war or in

tasks of other sort or in the feast, when the chieftains of the Argives mingle in the bowl the gleaming wine of the counselors. For even though all the other flowing-haired Achaians drink one allotted portion, yet your cup always stands full even as mine, to drink as often as your soul bids you. Now rouse yourself to war like the one you have always claimed to be.”

And Idomeneus, the captain of the Cretans, answered him: “Atreus’ son, indeed I will be a trusty comrade to you just as at the beginning I promised and gave my pledge; but urge on all the flowing-haired Achaians, that we may fight with all speed, seeing the Trojans have broken the oaths. But in spite of that, death and sorrow shall be their destiny from now on, because they were the first to transgress against the oaths.”

So he spoke, and Agamemnon moved on, glad at heart. Then he came to the Aiantes as he went through the throng of warriors; and these two were arming, and a cloud of foot soldiers followed them. Just as when a goatherd from an outlook sees a cloud coming across the deep before the blast of the west wind, and to him being far off it seems always blacker, like pitch, as it goes along the deep, and brings a great whirlwind, and he shudders to see it and drives his flock into a cave, in the same way the closely pressed battalions of young men, beloved of Zeus, moved by the side of the Aiantes into furious war, battalions in a dark line, bristling with shields and spears. And Lord Agamemnon rejoiced to see them and spoke to them winged words and said: “Aiantes, leaders of the mail-clad Argives, to you two, seeing it is not proper to urge you, I give no order; for you yourselves bid your folk to fight forcefully. Ah, Father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, if only all had a similar spirit in their breasts; then King Priam’s city would soon bow captive and wasted beneath our hands.”

So saying he left them there and went to others. Then he found Nestor, the clear-voiced orator of the Pylians, arranging his comrades and urging them to fight, around great Pelagon and Alastor and Chromios and Lord Haimon and Bias, shepherd of the host. And first he arrayed the horsemen with horses and chariots and behind them the many brave foot soldiers to be a bulwark of battle; but the cow-

ards he drove into the midst, that every man, though he did not want to, yet was forced to fight. First he laid commands upon the horsemen; these he ordered to hold in their horses and not to be entangled in the throng: “Let no man, trusting in his horsemanship and manliness, be eager to fight the Trojans alone before the rest, nor let him draw back, for that way you will be weakened. But whenever a warrior from his own chariot can come at a chariot of the foe, let him thrust forth with his spear; this is the far better way. Thus did men of old time lay low cities and walls, because they had this mind and spirit in their breasts.”

So the old man commanded them, being well-skilled in battles from of old. And Lord Agamemnon rejoiced to see him and spoke to him winged words and said: “Old man, if only your limbs might obey you and your strength be unabated, just as your spirit is in your breast. But the common destiny of age is heavy upon you; if only it had come upon some other man, and you were among the young.”

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: “Atreus’ son, indeed I too would wish to be as on the day when I slew noble Ereuthalion. But the gods by no means grant men all things at once. As I was then a youth, so old age now comes upon me. Yet even so I will remain among the horsemen and urge them by counsel and words; for that is the right of elders. But the young men shall wield the spear, those who are more youthful than I and have confidence in their strength.”

So he spoke, and Atreus’ son moved on, glad at heart. He found Menestheus the charioteer, the son of Peteos, standing still, and round him were the Athenians, masters of the battle-cry. And close by stood crafty Odysseus, and round about him the ranks of Kephallenians, no feeble folk, stood still; for their troops had not yet heard the battle-cry, seeing the battalions of horse-taming Trojans and Achaians had just begun to move; so these stood still, waiting till some other column of the Achaians should advance to attack the Trojans and begin the battle. But when Agamemnon, king of men, saw it, he rebuked them and spoke to them winged words, saying: “O son of King Peteos, beloved of Zeus, skilled in evil wiles, cunning of

mind, why do you stand holding back, and waiting for others? You should think it right to stand in your place amid the foremost and to face the fiery battle; for you are the first to hear my bidding to the feast, as often as we Achaians prepare a feast for the counselors. Then you are glad to eat roast meat and drink your cups full of honey-sweet wine as long as you wish. But now would you gladly see the fighting, but only if ten columns of Achaians were in front of you fighting with the pitiless sword.”

But Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at him and said: “Atreus’ son, what word is this that has escaped the barrier of your lips? How can you say that we are slack in battle? When once our Achaians launch furious war on the Trojans, tamers of horses, then you will, if you think of it, behold Telemachos’ dear father mingling with the champions of the Trojans, the tamers of horses. But what you say is empty as air.”

Then Lord Agamemnon spoke to him smiling, seeing that he was angry, and took back his words: “Heaven-born son of Laertes, Odysseus full of devices, I neither rebuke you beyond measure nor urge you on; for I know that your heart within your breast is kindly disposed; for your thoughts are as my thoughts. Go now, we will make amends later; if any ill word has been spoken now, may the gods bring it all to no effect.”

So saying he left them there and went on to others. He found the son of Tydeus, high-hearted Diomedes, standing still with his horses and chariot well ordered; and by him stood Sthenelos son of Kapaneus. Lord Agamemnon saw him and rebuked him and spoke to him winged words and said: “Ah me, son of wise Tydeus, tamer of horses, why do you hold back, why do you gaze at the field of battle? Tydeus was not accustomed to holding back, but rather to fighting his enemies far in front of his dear comrades, as those men say who saw him at the task; for I never met him or saw him, but men say that he was preeminent among all. Indeed he came to Mykenai, not in hostility, but as a guest with godlike Polyneikes to raise for himself an army for the war that they were waging against the holy walls of Thebes; and they sought earnestly that valiant allies might be given

them, and our people were eager to grant them this and made assent to their entreaty, but Zeus showed omens of evil and turned their minds. So when they had departed and had come on their way and had reached Asopos deep in rushes, who makes his bed in grass, there the Achaians appointed Tydeus to be their ambassador. So he went and found the multitude of the sons of Kadmos feasting in the palace of mighty Eteokles. Yet lordly Tydeus, even though a stranger, was not afraid to be alone amid the multitude of the Kadmeians, but challenged them all to feats of strength, and in every one he vanquished them easily; so ready a helper was Athene to him. But the Kadmeians, the drivers of horses, were angry, and as he traveled back again, they set a strong ambush, fifty young men, whose leaders were two, Maion son of Haimon, like the immortals, and Autophonos' son Polyphontes, staunch in battle. Yet even on these Tydeus brought shameful death; he slew them all, except one that he sent home again; Maion he sent away in obedience to the omens of heaven. Such was Tydeus of Aitolia; but he fathered a son that in battle is worse than he; only in chattering is he the better."

So he spoke, and stalwart Diomedes made no answer, but showed respect even to the rebukes of the king he revered. But the son of glorious Kapaneus answered him: "Atreus' son, do not utter falsehood, since you know how to speak truly. We vow that we are better men by far than our fathers were; we seized the heart of Thebes the seven gated, though we led a smaller host against a greater wall, because we followed the omens of the gods and the strong help of Zeus; but they perished by their own evils. So do not hold our fathers in the same honor as us."

But stalwart Diomedes looked sternly at him and said: "Brother, stay silent and obey my words. I do not begrudge that Agamemnon, shepherd of the host, should urge on the well-greaved Achaians to fight; to him the glory will cling if the Achaians lay the Trojans low and take holy Ilios; and his will be the great sorrow if the Achaians are laid low. So come, let us turn our thoughts to furious valor."

Fighting Begins

He spoke and leapt in his armor from the chariot to earth, and the bronze on the breast of the captain rang terribly as he moved; at that sound fear might have come upon even a stout-hearted man.

Just as when on the echoing beach the sea-waves lift themselves up in close succession before the driving of the west wind; out on the deep they first raise their heads, and then break upon the land and bellow aloud and race with arching crests about the promontories and spew the foaming spray far, just so in close array moved the battalions of the Danaans without pause toward battle. Each captain gave his men the word, and the rest went silently; you would not think that all the great host following them had any voice within their breasts; in silence they feared their captains. On every man glittered the pictured armor in which he went clothed. But as for the Trojans, like sheep beyond number that stand in the courtyard of a man of great wealth, to be milked for their white milk, and bleat without ceasing to hear their lambs' cry, just so arose the clamor of the Trojans through the wide host. For they did not have all the same speech or one language, but their tongues were mingled, because they were brought from many lands. The Trojans were urged on by Ares, and the Achaians by bright-eyed Athene and Terror and Rout and Strife whose fury is never exhausted, sister and friend of murderous Ares; her demeanor is lowly at first, but later she holds high her head in heaven and her feet walk upon the earth. She now threw universal hatred into their midst, as she moved through the throng and increased the sorrowing of men.

Now when they came together and met upon one spot, then they clashed shield and spear and fury of bronze-clad warrior; the heavy shields pressed on each other, and a mighty din arose. Then the voice of groaning and the voice of triumph of the slayers and the slain were heard together, and the earth streamed with blood. Just as when the torrents of winter flow down the mountains to join together and unite their furious floods within the deep ravine from

their great springs, and the shepherd hears the roaring far off among the hills, just so from the joining of battle there came forth shouting and struggle.

Antilochos first slew a Trojan warrior in full array, valiant among the champions, Echepolos, son of Thalysias; he was the first that he smote upon the ridge of his crested helmet, and he drove the spear into his brow, and the point of bronze went into the bone; darkness clouded his eyes, and he crashed like a tower amid the thick fighting. As he fell, Lord Elephenor, Chalkodon's son, captain of the great-hearted Abantes, caught him by the foot and dragged him from beneath the arrows, eager to quickly rob him of his armor. Yet his attempt only lasted for a moment; great-hearted Agenor saw him dragging away the corpse and, where his side was left uncovered by his shield as he bent down, there he struck him with the bronze-tipped spear-shaft and unstrung his limbs. So his life departed from him, and over his corpse the struggle of Trojans and Achaians grew hot; like wolves they leapt at one another, and man lashed at man.

Next Telamonian Aias smote Anthemion's son, the vigorous youth Simoeisios, whom earlier his mother bore beside the banks of Simoeis on the way down from Ida where she had followed her parents to see their flocks. Therefore they called him Simoeisios, but he did not repay his dear parents the reward for their nurture; brief was his span of life because of the spear of great-hearted Aias that laid him low. For as he went he was struck on his right breast beside the nipple; straight through his shoulder passed the spear of bronze, and he fell to the ground in the dust like a poplar tree, one that has grown up smooth in the lowland of a great marsh, and its branches grow upon the top of it; a tree which a wagon maker felled with gleaming steel, to bend into a wheel rim for a fine chariot, and so it lies drying by a river's banks. In the same way heaven-born Aias slew Simoeisios, son of Anthemion; then Antiphos of the glancing corslet, Priam's son, made a cast at him with his keen javelin across the throng. He missed, but smote Odysseus' valiant comrade, Leukos, in the groin as he drew the corpse toward him, so that he fell upon it and the body dropped from his hands. Then Odysseus was furious at heart for his

slaying and strode through the forefront of the battle harnessed in flashing bronze and went and stood close by and glanced around him and cast his bright javelin; and the Trojans shrank before the hero's mighty throwing. He did not throw vainly but smote Demokoön, Priam's bastard son who had come to him from tending his swift mares in Abydos. Odysseus, furious for his comrade's sake, smote him with his javelin on one temple; and through both temples the point of bronze pierced, and darkness clouded his eyes, and he fell with a crash, and his armor clanged upon him. Then those fighting in front and glorious Hektor drew back, and the Argives shouted aloud and dragged the bodies to them and then pressed still further onward. But Apollo looked down from Pergamos and was angry and with a shout called to the Trojans: "Arise, Trojans, tamers of horses; do not yield to the Argives in battle; their flesh is not stone or iron as though it would resist the piercing bronze when they are struck. Furthermore Achilles, son of Thetis of the fair hair, is not fighting, but back among the ships brooding on his bitter anger."

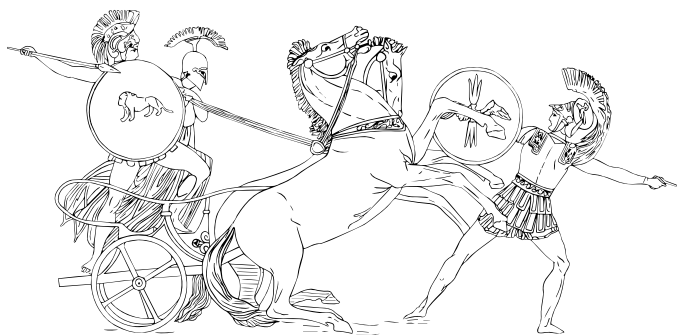
So spoke the fearsome god from the city walls; and the Achaians likewise were urged on by Zeus's daughter, the Triton-born, most glorious, as she passed through the throng wherever she saw them weakening.

Next Diores son of Amarynkeus was caught in the snare of fate; for he was struck by a jagged stone on the right leg close to the ankle, and the one who threw it was the captain of the men of Thrace, Peiros son of Imbrasos who had come from Ainos. The pitiless stone utterly crushed the two sinews and the bones; he fell back in the dust and stretched out both his hands to his dear comrades, gasping out his soul. Then he who struck him, Peiros, sprang at him and pierced him with a spear beside the navel; so all his bowels spilled out on the ground, and darkness clouded his eyes. But even as Peiros left him, Thoas of Aitolia struck his chest with a spear above the nipple, and the point stuck in his lung. Then Thoas came close and yanked out from his breast the ponderous spear and drew his sharp sword, with which he struck him in the middle of his abdomen, and took his life. Yet he did not strip off the armor; for his comrades, the men

of Thrace that wear the top-knot, stood around, their long spears in their hands, and although he was great and valiant and proud, they drove him away from them and he gave ground reeling. So the two captains were stretched in the dust side by side, the captain of the Thracians and the captain of the mail-clad Epeians; and around them were many others similarly slain.

Now no one would enter in and make light of the battle any longer, even if a man still unwounded by an arrow or thrust of keen bronze might roam in the midst, being led by Pallas Athene by the hand and guarded by her from the flying shafts. For that day many Trojans and many Achaians were laid side by side upon their faces in the dust.

Book V: “The Aristeia of Diomedes”



Diomedes Casting his Spear Against Ares

Diomedes Kills Pandaros

But now Pallas Athene gave might and courage to 'Tydeus' son Diomedes, for him to be foremost among all the Argives and win glorious renown. She kindled unquenchable flame from his helmet and shield, like the star of summer that glitters brightly above all others after it has bathed in the ocean stream. In the same way she kindled flame from his head and shoulders and sent him into the midst, where men thronged the thickest.

Now there was among the Trojans a man named Dares, rich and noble, priest of Hephaistos; and he had two sons, Phegeus and Idaios, well-skilled in the art of battle. These detached themselves and assaulted him face to face, attacking him from their chariot while he was on foot on the ground. And when they had come close in the attack on each other, first Phegeus hurled his far-shadowing spear; and over the son of 'Tydeus' left shoulder the spear point passed and did not strike his body. Then the son of Tydeus made a spearcast, and the javelin did not speed from his hand in vain, but struck his breast between the nipples and thrust him from the chariot. Then Idaios

sprang away, leaving his beautiful chariot, and did not dare to stand over his slain brother or else he himself would not have escaped black fate, but Hephaistos guarded him and saved him in a veil of darkness, in order that his aged priest would not be completely broken with sorrow. And the son of great-hearted Tydeus drove away the horses and gave them to his men to take to the hollow ships. But when the great-hearted Trojans saw the sons of Dares, how one had fled and one was slain beside his chariot, the spirit of all was stirred. But bright-eyed Athene took violent Ares by the hand and spoke to him and said: “Ares, Ares, blood-stained scourge of mortals, you stormer of walls, can we not leave the Trojans and Achaians to fight now, whoever it might be that Father Zeus causes to win? But let us two withdraw and escape the wrath of Zeus.”

So saying she led violent Ares from the battle. Then she made him sit down beside loud Skamandros, and the Danaans pushed the Trojans back. Each one of the captains slew his man; first Agamemnon, king of men, thrust from his chariot the lord of the Halizonians, great Odios; for as he turned to flight, Agamemnon thrust his spear into his back between his shoulders and drove it through his breast. And he fell with a crash, and his armor clanged upon him.

And Idomeneus slew Phaistos, son of Boros the Maionian, who came from deep-soiled Tarne. As he was mounting his chariot, spear-famed Idomeneus pierced him with his long spear through his right shoulder; and he fell from the car and hateful darkness took hold of him.

Then Idomeneus’ attendants stripped him of his armor; and Skamandrios, son of Strophios, cunning in the chase, fell to the keen-pointed spear of Menelaos, son of Atreus; Skamandrios the mighty hunter, whom Artemis herself had taught to shoot all kinds of wild things that the mountain forest breeds. But now Archer Artemis was no help to him, nor was all his marksmanship in which he used to excel, but spear-famed Menelaos, son of Atreus, smote him with his spear as he fled before him, in his back between his shoulders, and pierced through his breast. So he fell prone and his armor clanged upon him.

And Meriones slew Phereklos, son of Tekton, who was Harmon’s son, whose hands were cunning to make all kinds of clever work; for Pallas Athene loved him more than all men. He also had built for Alexandros the trim ships, source of evils, that were made the bane of all the Trojans and of himself, because he did not know the oracles of heaven. Him Meriones pursued and, overtaking him, struck him in the right buttock, and right through passed the point straight to the bladder beneath the bone; and he fell to his knees with a cry, and death overshadowed him.

Then Meges slew Pedaïos, Antenor’s son, who was a bastard; yet lovely Theano had nurtured him carefully like her own children, to please her husband. Phyleus’ spear-famed son came near him and with his keen spear struck him upon the sinew of the head; and right through between the teeth the point of bronze cleft the tongue’s root. So he fell in the dust and bit the cold bronze with his teeth.

And noble Hypsenor, son of high-hearted Dolopion, that was appointed Skamandros’ priest and was held in honor like to a god by the people, was pursued by Eurypylos, Euaimon’s son, as he fled before him and was smitten on the shoulder with a sword-thrust, and his heavy arm was shorn away. Bleeding profusely, the arm fell upon the earth; and over his eyes came gloomy death and forceful fate.

So these toiled in the violent fray; but as for the son of Tydeus, a man could not tell with whom he was joined, whether he was with the Trojans or with the Achaians. For he stormed across the plain like a winter torrent in full flood that in its swift course destroys the dikes; the long lines of causeways cannot hold it in, nor can the fences of fruitful orchards prevent its sudden coming when the rain of heaven drives it; and so in multitudes the fair works of the sons of men perish before it. Thus before the son of Tydeus the close-packed battalions of the Trojans were overthrown, and they could not stand against him in spite of their numbers.

But when Lykaon’s glorious son Pandaros noticed him storming across the plain, overthrowing battalions before him, soon he bent his crooked bow, aiming at the son of Tydeus, and struck him as he sped onwards, hitting the plate of his armor close by his right

shoulder; the bitter arrow pierced straight through, and the armor was stained with blood. Then Lykaon's glorious son shouted loudly: "Rouse yourselves, great-hearted Trojans, drivers of horses; the best man of the Achaians is wounded, and I do not think that he shall long survive my violent spear, if truly King Apollo, the son of Zeus, has sped me here from Lykia."

So he spoke boasting; but the other was not vanquished by the swift arrow, only he fell back and stood before his horses and his chariot and spake to Sthenelos, son of Kapaneus: "Hurry and come down from your chariot, dear son of Kapaneus, and pull from my shoulder the bitter arrow."

So he spoke, so Sthenelos leapt from his chariot to earth and stood beside Diomedes and drew the swift shaft straight through, out of his shoulder, and the blood sprang up through the soft tunic. At that, Diomedes of the loud war-cry prayed: "Hear me, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, unwearied maiden! If ever in good will you stood by my father in the heat of battle, now be in the same way kind to me, Athene. Grant me to slay this man, and bring within my spear-cast him who shot me and now boasts over me, thinking that I shall not long see the bright light of the sun."

So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athene heard him and made his limbs nimble, his feet and his hands too, and came near and spoke winged words: "Be courageous now, Diomedes, to fight the Trojans; for I have put into your breast your father's undaunted courage, just as it was in lordly Tydeus, wielder of the shield. Furthermore I have taken from your eyes the mist that was on them before, that you may easily discern god and man. Therefore if any god comes here to test you, do not fight face to face with any of the immortal gods—except if Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, enters the battle, you must strike her with the keen bronze."

So saying, bright-eyed Athene went her way and the son of Tydeus returned and entered the forefront of the battle; even though already his soul had been eager to do battle with the Trojans, yet now triple courage came upon him, as upon a lion whom some shepherd in the field guarding his woolly sheep has wounded when the lion

leaped into the fold, yet has not overcome him; he has aroused the lion's strength and then cannot beat him back, but the lion lurks inside the sheep-pen, and the abandoned flock is frightened; so the sheep huddle in heaps, one upon the other, and the lion in his fury leaps out of the high sheep-pen; just so mighty Diomedes mingled with the Trojans in fury.

There he slew Astynoös and Hypeiron, shepherd of the host; the one he pierced above the nipple with his bronze-clad spear, the other he struck with his great sword upon the collarbone beside the shoulder and severed the shoulder from neck and back. He left them there and pursued Abas and Polyidos, sons of old Eurydamas, dreamer of dreams; yet he discerned no dreams for them when they left him, but stalwart Diomedes destroyed them. Then he went after Xanthos and Thoön, sons of Phainops, both young men; but their father was worn out in great old age and fathered no other son for his possessions after him. Then Diomedes slew them and took away the precious life of the two and for their father left only weeping and great distress, since he would not welcome them alive from war; and kinsmen divided his wealth among them.

Then he caught two sons of Priam, son of Dardanos, riding in one chariot, Echemmon and Chromios. As a lion leaps among the cattle and breaks the neck of a cow or heifer grazing in a woodland pasture, so Tydeus' son threw both of them furiously from their chariot against their will and after that plundered them of their weapons; and the horses he gave to his comrades to drive to the ships.

Aineias saw him wreaking havoc on the ranks of warriors and went his way along the battle-line amid the hurtling of spears, seeking godlike Pandaros, hoping to find him. Lykaon's noble and stalwart son he found and stood before him and spoke a word to him: “Pandaros, where now are your bow and your winged arrows and the fame which no man of this land rivals, nor any in Lykia, boasting to be your better? Come now, lift your hands in prayer to Zeus and fire your spear at this man, whoever he is that lords it here and has already brought upon the Trojans great mischief, seeing he has unstrung the knees of many a brave man; unless it is some god who

is angry because of sacrifices; the wrath of God is a terrible thing to fall on men.”

And Lykaon’s glorious son answered him: “Aineias, counselor of the bronze-greaved Trojans, in everything he is like the wise son of Tydeus; I discern him by his shield and crested helmet and by the look of his horses; yet I do not know for certain that it is not a god. But if it is the man I think, indeed the wise son of Tydeus, then he is not so furious without the help of a god, but rather some immortal stands beside him with a cloud wrapped about his shoulders and has turned my swift spear aside from him just as it hit. For already I have fired my spear at him and struck his right shoulder right through the breastplate of his armor, yes, and I thought to hurl him headlong to Hades, yet I did not vanquish him; surely it is some angry god. And I have no horses at hand nor any chariot on which to mount—yet in Lykaon’s halls are eleven glorious chariots, newly made, with gear all fresh, and cloths spread over them; and beside each one stands a yoke of horses, champing white barley and grain. Moreover, Lykaon the aged spearman at my departure gave me a solemn order in our well-built house: he commanded me to mount horse and chariot to lead the Trojans in the violent combat; but I did not obey him—that would have been far better!—but I spared the horses lest in the great crowd of men they should lack the customary fodder that had been used to feed them. So I left them and came on foot to Ilios, trusting to my bow; and now my bow does not help me! Already I have aimed at two princes, Tydeus’ and Atreus’ sons, and I struck both and surely drew blood, yet it only roused them the more. It was an evil hour in which I took my curved bow from the peg on that day when I led my Trojans to lovely Ilios, to please noble Hektor. But if I return and my eyes behold my native land and wife and great lofty-roofed palace, then may some foreigner immediately cut off my head if I do not break this bow with my hands and cast it upon the blazing fire; its service is as worthless to me as air.”

Then Aineias, captain of the Trojans, answered him: “No, do not talk this way; nothing shall be made right until we have gone with horses and chariot to face this man and tested him with weapons.

Come then, mount upon my chariot that you may see what the horses of Tros are like, well-skilled for following or for fleeing here and there very swiftly across the plain; they will bring us to the city safe and sound, even if Zeus afterward gives victory to Diomedes, son of Tydeus. Come then, take the whip and shining reins, and I will stand upon the chariot to fight—or else you go up against him, and I will see to the horses.”

Then Lykaon’s glorious son answered him: “Aineias, you yourself take the reins and your own horses; they will pull the curved chariot better if guided by their accustomed charioteer, if it happens that we must flee from Tydeus’ son, lest they go wild from fear and will not take us from the fight for not hearing your voice, and the son of great-hearted Tydeus attack us and slay us both and drive away the sure-footed horses. So you yourself drive your chariot and your horses, and I will await his attack with my sharp spear.” So saying, they mounted upon the well-wrought chariot and eagerly drove the swift horses against the son of Tydeus. And Sthenelos, the glorious son of Kapaneus, saw them and quickly spoke to the son of Tydeus winged words: “Diomedes, son of Tydeus, dear to my heart, I behold two powerful warriors eager to fight against you, full of might beyond measure. The one is well-skilled in the bow, Pandaros, and he furthermore boasts himself to be Lykaon’s son; and Aineias boasts that he is born of great-hearted Anchises, and his mother is Aphrodite. Come now, let us draw back a little in the chariot; do not rage so much, I pray you, in the forefront of battle, lest perhaps you lose your life.”

Then powerful Diomedes looked sternly at him and said: “Do not speak to me any word of flight, for I do not think that you shall at all persuade me; it is not in my blood to fight a sneaking fight or to cower down; my force is steadfast still. I have no mind to mount the chariot; no, just as I am I will go to face them; Pallas Athene commands me not to be afraid. And as for these, their swift horses shall not take them both back from us again, even if one or the other escapes. And this also I tell you, and you take it to heart: if Athene rich in counsel grants me this glory, to slay them both, then

you keep my swift horses here and bind the reins tight to the chariot rim; and be quick to leap onto Aineias' horses and drive them out from the Trojans and in among the well-greaved Achaians. For they are from that breed which far-seeing Zeus gave to Tros as recompense for his child Ganymedes, because they were the best of all horses beneath the daylight and the sun. That stock Anchises, king of men, stole from Laomedon, secretly breeding mares with them. From them some stock were born for him in his palace, indeed six; four he kept himself and reared them at the stall, and the other two he gave to Aineias, deviser of rout. If we could seize them, we would win great renown."

In this way they talked to one another, and soon those other two came near, driving their swift horses. Lykaon's glorious son spoke first: "O strong-souled and cunning son of proud Tydeus, indeed my swift arrow did not vanquish you; so now will I make trial to see if I can hit you with my spear."

He spoke and poised and hurled his far-shadowing spear and smote upon the son of Tydeus' shield; right through it sped the point of bronze and reached the breastplate. So Lykaon's glorious son shouted loudly: "You are struck through the belly utterly, and I think you will not long hold up your head; you will bring me great renown."

But mighty Diomedes, unafraid, answered him: "You have missed and not hit; but I think you two will not cease till one or the other has fallen and satisfied Ares, the stubborn god of war, with your own blood."

So he spoke and threw; and Athene guided the spear to his nose beside the eye, and it pierced through his white teeth. So the hard bronze cut through his tongue at the root and the point came out by the base of the chin. He fell from his chariot, and his splendid armor gleaming clanged upon him, and the swift-footed horses swerved aside; so there his soul and strength were unstrung.

Then Aineias leapt down with shield and long spear, fearing lest perhaps the Achaians might take the corpse from him; and he stood over him like a lion confident in his strength and held before him his spear and the circle of his shield, eager to slay whoever should

come to face him, crying his terrible war-cry. Then the son of Tydeus grasped in his hand a stone with a mighty effort—a stone such as two men, as men are now, would not be able to lift; yet he easily lifted it alone. With it he smote Aineias on the hip where the thigh turns in the hip-joint, and this men call the “cup-bone.” So he crushed his cup-bone, and broke both sinews, and the jagged stone tore apart the skin. Then the hero stayed fallen upon his knees and with his stout hand leaned on the ground; and the darkness of night covered his eyes. And now Aineias, king of men, might have perished, except that Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, his mother who conceived him by Anchises as he tended the cattle, was quick to see. Around her dear son she wrapped her white arms and spread before his face a fold of her radiant garment, to be a protection from the arrows, lest any of the swift-horsed Danaans might hurl a spear into his breast and take away his life.

So she bore her dear son away from battle; but the son of Kapaneus did not forget the order that Diomedes of the loud war-cry had laid upon him; he drew back his own sound-footed horses away from the tumult, binding the reins tight to the chariot-rim, and leapt onto the sleek-coated horses of Aineias and drove them away from the Trojans to the bronze-greaved Achaians and gave them to Deïpylos his dear comrade whom he admired above all who were companions of his age, because he was like-minded with him; and he urged him to drive them to the hollow ships. Then the hero mounted his own chariot and took the shining reins and promptly drove his sure-footed horses eagerly in quest of the son of Tydeus.

Diomedes Wounds Aphrodite

Now the son of Tydeus had made an assault with his pitiless weapon on the Cyprian,¹ knowing that she was a cowardly goddess

1 “The Cyprian” refers to Aphrodite, who was born on the island of Cyprus.

and not one who has mastery in the battle of the warriors—she was no Athene nor Enyo, waster of cities. Now when he had pursued her through the dense throng and come upon her, then great-hearted 'Tydeus' son thrust with his keen spear and leapt on her and wounded the skin of her weak hand; the point pierced straight through the ambrosial raiment that the Graces themselves had woven her and into the flesh, above the beginning of the palm. Then the goddess' immortal blood flowed, the *ichor* that flows in the blessed gods; for they eat no bread and drink no gleaming wine and therefore they are bloodless and are called immortals. So with a great cry she let her son fall; Phoibos Apollo took him into his arms and saved him in a dark cloud, lest any of the swift-horsed Danaans might hurl the spear into his breast and take away his life. But over her Diomedes of the loud war-cry shouted from afar: "Stay away, daughter of Zeus, from war and fighting. Is it not enough that you bewitch feeble women? But if you insist on mingling in battle, indeed I think that you will soon shudder at the name of battle, even hearing it from afar."

So he spoke, and she departed in amazement and was terribly troubled; and wind-footed Iris took her and led her from the throng tormented with her pain, and her fair skin was stained. There she found wild Ares sitting, on the battle's left side; and his spear rested upon a cloud, and his swift steeds were there too. Then she fell on her knees and with immediate prayer begged her dear brother for his golden-ribboned horses: "Dear brother, save me and give me your horses, that I may hurry to Olympos, where the dwelling of the immortals is. I am terribly afflicted with a wound where a mortal struck me, the son of Tydeus, who now would fight even with Father Zeus."

So she spoke, and Ares gave her his golden-ribboned horses; and she mounted on the chariot, grieved at heart. By her side mounted Iris and in her hands grasped the reins and lashed the horses to start them; and they flew onward with no hesitation. In this way they soon came to the dwelling of the gods, steep Olympos. There wind-footed swift Iris freed the horses from the chariot and stabled them and set ambrosial forage before them; but fair Aphrodite fell upon the knees of her mother, Dione. She took her daughter in her

arms and stroked her with her hand and spoke and called her name: “Who now of the sons of heaven, dear child, has treated you so badly, as though you were a criminal in everyone’s sight?”

Then laughter-loving Aphrodite answered her: “Tydeus’ son, high-hearted Diomedes, has wounded me because I was saving from the battle my dear son Aineias, who is dearest to me by far of all men. For the fierce battle-cry is no longer only for Trojans and Achaeans, but the Danaans are now fighting even the immortals.”

Then the fair goddess Dione answered her: “Take heart, my child, and bear up under your pain; for many of us that inhabit the mansions of Olympus have suffered from men bringing terrible woes upon them. Ares suffered when Otos and stalwart Ephialtes, sons of Aloeus, bound him in a strong prison-house; indeed he lay bound in a vessel of bronze for thirteen months. Then Ares, who loves battle, might have perished, except that the step-mother of Aloeus’ sons, fair Eëriboia, gave news of it to Hermes, and he rescued Ares who was already miserable; for the terrible prison-house was wearing him out. In the same way Hera suffered when Amphitryon’s stalwart son smote her on the right breast with a three-barbed arrow, so that unquenchable pain took hold of her too. And dreadful Hades suffered from a swift arrow like the rest, when this same man, the son of aegis-bearing Zeus, smote him in Pylos amidst the dead and left him in anguish. And he went to the mansion of Zeus and to high Olympus, grieved at heart, pierced through with anguish; for the arrow was driven into his stout shoulder and vexed his soul. But Paieon spread soothing drugs upon the wound and healed him; seeing that indeed he was not of mortal substance. A headstrong man and violent in deeds, who never thought about his evil doings and with his archery vexed the gods that dwell in Olympus. So this man was sent upon you by the bright-eyed goddess Athene; foolish man, for the heart of Tydeus’ son does not know that no one who fights with immortals will live long, nor will his children babble upon his knees at his returning from war and the terrible fray. Therefore the son of Tydeus, though he is very mighty, should beware lest one better than you encounter him, and then Aigialeia, wise daughter of Adrestos,

would wake all her household from sleep with lamentations, wailing for her wedded lord, the best man of the Achaians, she that is the brave wife of horse-taming Diomedes.”

So saying, with both hands she wiped the *ichor* from the arm; her arm was eased, and the terrible pangs soothed. But Athene and Hera saw this and with bitter words provoked Zeus, the son of Kronos. The bright-eyed goddess Athene was the first to speak: “Father Zeus, will you be angry with me for what I will say? Indeed I suspect that the Cyprian was urging some Achaian woman to join the Trojans whom she loves so greatly; and stroking one of the fair-robed women of Achaia, she tore her delicate hand on the golden brooch.”

So she spoke, and the father of gods and men smiled and called golden Aphrodite to him and said: “The works of war are not given to you, my child; you must instead pursue the loving tasks of wedlock, and swift Ares and Athene will take care of these other things.”

Heroes Fight

Now while they spoke this way in conversation with each other, Diomedes of the loud war-cry leapt upon Aineias, knowing full well that Apollo himself had spread his arms over him; yet he did not reverence even the great god, but still was eager to slay Aineias and strip from him his glorious armor. So three times he leapt on him, desiring to slay him, and three times Apollo beat back his glittering shield. But when for the fourth time he sprang at him like a god, then Apollo the Archer spoke to him with a terrible shout: “Think, son of Tydeus, and stay back, and do not desire to match your courage with gods, seeing that there is no comparison between the race of immortal gods and that of men that walk upon the earth.”

So he spoke, and Tydeus’ son fell back a short way, to avoid the wrath of Apollo the Archer. Then Apollo set Aineias away from the throng in holy Pergamos, where his temple stood. There Leto and Archer Artemis healed him in the great sanctuary and gave him glory;

but Apollo of the silver bow made a phantom image of Aineias and in the same armor as his; and over the phantom, Trojans and great Achaians each struck violently at the others’ round shields with fluttering tassels over their breasts. Then Phoibos Apollo said to violent Ares: “Ares, blood-stained bane of mortals, you stormer of walls, will you not follow after this man and withdraw him from the battle, this son of Tydeus, who now would fight even with Father Zeus? First in close fight he wounded the Cyprian in her hand close by the wrist, and then he sprang upon me like a god.”

So saying he sat himself upon the height of Pergamos, and baleful Ares entered among the Trojan ranks and aroused them in the likeness of fleet Akamas, captain of the Thracians. On the heaven-nurtured sons of Priam he called saying: “O you sons of Priam, the heaven-nurtured king, how long will you allow your people to be slain by the Achaians? Will it be until they fight right around our well-built gates? The warrior whom we esteemed like great Hektor, Aineias, son of Anchises, great of heart, lies low. Come, let us save our brave comrade from the tumult.”

So saying, he roused the spirit and soul of every man. At that, Sarpedon furiously rebuked noble Hektor: “Hektor, where has the courage gone that you had before? Indeed you said that without armies or allies you would hold the city with only your sisters’ husbands and your brothers; but now I cannot see any of these; they are cowering like hounds around a lion, and we who are fighting are your only allies. Indeed, being an ally I have come from very far; Lykia beside eddying Xanthos is far off, where I left my dear wife and infant son and left my great wealth that everyone in need covets. Yet in spite of all that, I urge on my Lykians, and I myself am eager to fight my man, though there is nothing that is mine that the Achaians might plunder or harass. But you stand still, you do not even urge all your hosts to remain and guard their wives. Beware lest, as though tangled in meshes of all-ensnaring flax, you be made for your foes a prey and a spoil, and they quickly lay waste your well-peopled city. It would be well to give thought to all these things both night and day and to beseech the captains of your far-famed allies to hold on unflinchingly, and that way you will put away from you their violent rebukes.”

So spoke Sarpedon, and his words stung Hektor to the heart. Immediately he leapt from his chariot in his armor to the earth and, brandishing two keen spears, went everywhere through the host, urging them to fight, and roused the dread battle-cry. So they were rallied and stood to face the Achaians; and the Argives withstood them in close array and did not flee. Even as a wind carries the chaff around the sacred threshing-floors when men are winnowing, at that time when golden-haired Demeter in a rush of wind divides grain and chaff, and the chaff-heaps grow white, so now the Achaians grew white with the falling dust which in their midst the horses' hooves beat up into the bronze heaven, as the fight was joined again, and the charioteers wheeled round. So they bore onward the fury of their hands; and impetuous Ares drew round them a veil of night to aid the Trojans in the battle, ranging everywhere; and so he fulfilled the request of Phoibos Apollo of the golden sword, who urged him rouse the Trojans' spirit when he saw that Pallas Athene had gone; for she was a helper to the Danaans. And Apollo himself sent forth Aineias, shepherd of the hosts, from his rich sanctuary and put courage into his heart. So Aineias took his place amid his comrades, and they were glad to see him coming among them alive and sound and full of great courage. But they did not question him at all, prevented by all the toil stirred up by the god of the silver bow, and Ares, bane of men, and Strife raging insatiably.

And on the other side the Aiantes and Odysseus and Diomedes stirred the Danaans to fight, and these did not fear either the Trojans' violence or assaults, but stood fast like clouds that Kronos son sets in still air on the mountain tops, not moving, while the might of the north wind sleeps, along with all the violent winds that blow with keen breath and scatter apart the shadowing clouds. Even so the Danaans withstood the Trojans steadfastly and did not flee. And the son of Atreus ranged through the throng, exhorting them constantly: "My friends, be men and be courageous of heart, and shun dishonor in one another's eyes amid the stress of battle. When men shun dishonor, more are saved than slain, but for those that flee there is neither glory nor safety."

So saying, he threw his javelin swiftly and struck a leading warrior, great-hearted Aineias’ comrade Deïkoön, son of Pergasos, whom the Trojans held in the same honor as Priam’s sons, because he was quick to do battle amid the leading men. Lord Agamemnon struck him with his javelin upon the shield, and it did not stop the spear, but the point passed through, so that he drove it through the belt deep into his belly, and he fell with a crash, and his armor clanged upon him.

Then Aineias slew two champions of the Danaans, the sons of Diokles, Krethon and Orsilochos, whose father dwelt in well-founded Phere, a wealthy man, whose lineage was of the river Alpheios, which flows in a broad stream through the land of the Pylans; Alpheios fathered Orsilochos to be king of many men, and Orsilochos fathered great-hearted Diokles, and to Diokles were born twin sons, Krethon and Orsilochos, well-skilled in all the ways of war. Now when these were grown they carried their army on their black ships to Ilios, land of horses, to win back repayment for Atreus’ sons, Agamemnon and Menelaos; but now the consequences of death surrounded them. Just as two lions on the mountain tops are nurtured by their mother in the deep forest thickets, and they harass the cattle and fine sheep and wreak havoc on the farmsteads of men till they in turn are slain by the hands of men with keen bronze, so were these two men conquered by Aineias’ hands and fell like tall pine trees.

But Menelaos, dear to Ares, had pity on them in their fall and strode through the battlefield, harnessed in flashing bronze, brandishing his spear, and Ares stirred his courage, intending for him to fall beneath Aineias’ hand. But Antilochos, great-hearted Nestor’s son, saw him, and strode also through the battlefield, because he feared greatly for the shepherd of the host, lest anything happen to him and make all their work come to nothing. So those two were now holding forth their hands and sharp spears each against the other, eager to do battle, when Antilochos came and stood close by the shepherd of the host. But Aineias did not face them, keen warrior though he was, when he saw the two men standing side by side; so those two dragged away the corpses to the Achaians’ army, and left the unfortunate two in their comrades’ arms, and they themselves turned back and fought on in the battlefield.

They then slew Pylaimenes, equal to Ares, captain of the great-hearted Paphlagonians, bearers of the shield. As he stood still, Atreus' son, spear-famed Menelaos, pierced him with his javelin, striking him upon the collar-bone, and Antilochos threw at Mydon, his squire and charioteer, Atymnios' brave son, as he was turning the stout-hooved horses, and with a stone struck his elbow in the middle. So the reins white with ivory fell from his hands to earth into the dust. Then Antilochos sprang on him and drove the sword into his temple, and he fell gasping from the well-wrought chariot headlong in the dust on his head and shoulders. Awhile he stood there, having landed on deep sand until his horses trampled him and toppled him to earth into the dust, and Antilochos lashed them on and drove them to the Achaians' camp.

But Hektor saw them across the ranks and sprang on them with a shout, and the battalions of the Trojans followed him in all their might, and Ares led them on and dread Enyo, she bringing the pitiless chaos of war, while Ares wielded in his hands his monstrous spear and ranged now before Hektor's face and now behind him.

Then Diomedes of the loud war-cry shook when he saw him; and just as a man, struck helpless as he crosses a great plain, comes upon a swift-streaming river flowing on to the sea and, seeing it boil with foam, springs backwards, in the same way the son of Tydeus shrank back and spoke to the men: "Friends, we're amazed that great Hektor is a mighty spearman and bold man of war, yet there is always beside him some god who fends off destruction, just as now Ares is there beside him in the likeness of a mortal man. So keep facing the Trojans but give ground backwards and do not be anxious to fight strongly with gods."

So he spoke, and the Trojans came very close upon them. Then Hektor slew two that had known well the joy of battle, riding in one chariot, Menesthes and Anchialos. And the great Telamonian Aias had pity on them as they fell, and came close by and threw with his shining javelin and struck Amphios, son of Selagos, who dwelt in Paisos, a wealthy man, rich in meadow land, but fate had brought him to help Priam and his sons. Telamonian Aias struck him upon

his war belt, and deep into his belly the far-shadowing spear stuck and he fell with a crash. Then glorious Aias ran at him to strip him of his armor, and the Trojans rained on him sharp, glittering javelins, and his shield caught many of them. But he set his heel on the corpse and pulled out the bronze spear, yet he could not strip from his shoulders all the glorious armor, being overwhelmed by spears. Furthermore, he feared the proud Trojans’ stout defense, since there were many brave men thrusting their spears toward him, so in spite of his greatness, courage, and pride, they thrust him back, and he was shaken and withdrew.

So these men toiled on in violent battle. And Tlepolemos son of Herakles, valiant and tall, was driven by strong destiny against godlike Sarpedon. When the two had come close to each other, the son and grandson of Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer, then Tlepolemos spoke first to the other: “Sarpedon, counselor of the Lykians, why must you be sneaking around here, since you are a man unskilled in battle? Men lie when they say that you are the son of aegis-bearing Zeus, since you are found greatly lacking compared to those men who in earlier days were born of Zeus. What a mighty man they say Herakles was, my own father, the steadfast lion-hearted one, who long ago came here for Laomedon’s mares with only six ships and a small company of men, yet they sacked the city of Ilios and made her streets empty. But your spirit is cowardly and your people are dying. I think that in no way do you come from Lykia to be a help to the Trojans, in spite of your great strength, but you will be conquered by my hand and pass through the gates of Hades.”

Then Sarpedon, captain of the Lykians, answered him: “Tlepolemos, indeed he overthrew holy Ilios because of the folly of the proud man Laomedon, who rewarded his good deed with harsh rebuking and did not pay him the horses for which he had come so far. As for you I say that slaughter and black death shall come about here at my hands; vanquished by my spear, you shall yield to me my glory and your life to Hades of the glorious horses.”

So spoke Sarpedon, and Tlepolemos lifted his ash spear, and both their long javelins sped from their hands together. Sarpedon

struck the middle of his neck, and the terrible point passed right through, and the darkness of night fell on his eyes and shrouded him; and Tlepolemos with his long spear struck Sarpedon's left thigh, and the point sped through furiously, grazing the bone, but his father fended off destruction.

So his courageous comrades carried away godlike Sarpedon from the battle, but the long spear dragging was heavy on him, and in their hurry no one noticed it or took thought to draw the ashen spear out from his thigh so he could stand upright, such difficulty they had in tending him. And on the other side the bronze-greaved Achaians carried Tlepolemos from the battle. And noble Odysseus of the patient soul observed it, and his heart was stirred within him. Then he wondered in mind and soul whether first to pursue the son of Zeus the loud thunderer or take the lives of the common sort of the Lykians. But it was not destined to great-hearted Odysseus to slay with his sharp blade the mighty son of Zeus, so Athene turned his fury upon the multitude of the Lykians. Then he killed Koiranos and Alastor and Chromios and Alkandros and Halios and Noemon and Prytanis, and noble Odysseus would have slain still more Lykians, but great Hektor of the shining helmet quickly observed him and strode through the forefront of the battle, harnessed in flashing bronze, and brought terror to the Danaans. But Sarpedon, the son of Zeus, was glad to see him coming and spoke to him in his pain: "Son of Priam, do not let me be left here as a prey to the Danaans, but help me; otherwise my life will depart from me in your city, since I would not return home to my dear native land, to make glad my dear wife and infant son."

So he spoke, but Hektor of the shining helmet said nothing to him, but rushed on, eager with all speed to drive back the Argives and take the lives of many. So his noble comrades helped godlike Sarpedon to sit beneath a great oak tree of aegis-bearing Zeus, and valiant Pelagon, who was his dear comrade, pulled the ashen spear out of his thigh, and his spirit failed him and mist covered his eyes. But then he breathed again, and the breath of the north wind blew around him and brought him back to life from the terrible fainting of his soul.

Now the Argives in the face of Ares and strong-armored Hektor neither turned around toward their black ships, nor charged forward in battle, but continually fell back, when they knew that Ares was amongst the Trojans. And now who was first to be slaughtered, and who was last, by Hektor son of Priam and brazen Ares? God-like Teuthras, and after him Orestes the charioteer, and Trechos, spearman of Aitolia, and Oinomaos and Helenos, son of Oinops, and Oresbios with gleaming tassels, who lived in Hyle and had much concern about his wealth, which lay close beside the Kephisian lake, and near him lived all the Boiotians, dwellers in a very fertile country.

Diomedes Wounds Ares

Now when the white-armed goddess Hera saw them wreaking havoc on the Argives in the crush of battle, she spoke winged words to Athene: “O for shame, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, unwearied maiden! Was it for nothing we pledged our word to Menelaos, that he should not go home until he had laid waste strong-walled Ilios, if we let deadly Ares rage this way? Come, let the two of us remember our own strong courage.”

So she spoke, and the bright-eyed goddess Athene did not disobey her. So Hera, the queen of the gods, daughter of great Kronos, went her way to harness the gold-helmeted horses, and Hebe quickly attached to the chariot the curved wheels of bronze, eight-spoked, upon their axle of iron. Their wheel is golden, indestructible, and the bronze tires are fitted upon them, marvelous to see, and the hubs are of silver, turning on either side. And the chariot is lashed tightly with gold and silver cords, and two rails run around it. And the silver chariot pole stood out; she bound the yoke to the end of it and set on that the golden harness and breast straps, and Hera led the swift horses beneath the yoke, and she longed for strife and the battle-cry.

And Athene, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, dropped down at her father’s threshold her woven, multi-colored robe, which she

herself had made and her hands had crafted, and put on the tunic of Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, and clothed herself in her armor for dreadful battle. Around her shoulders she threw the terrifying tasseled aegis, on which is Panic as a crown all around it, and Strife is on it, and Valor and horrible Onslaught too, and on it is the dreadful monstrous Gorgon's head, fearful and grim, the sign of aegis-bearing Zeus. Upon her head she set the two-crested golden helmet with fourfold plating, decked with images of the fighting men of a hundred cities. Upon the flaming chariot she set her foot and grasped her heavy spear, great and stout, with which she vanquishes the ranks of men, heroes with whom she of the terrifying father is angry. Then Hera swiftly whipped the horses with the lash, and, moving by themselves, the gates of heaven groaned on their hinges, the gates of the heavens which are guarded by the Hours, to whom is entrusted great heaven and Olympus to throw open the thick clouds or to close them. There through the gates they guided their horses, who bore the lash patiently.

And they found the son of Kronos sitting apart from all the gods on the highest peak of many-ridged Olympus. Then the white-armed goddess Hera reined in her horses and questioned most high Zeus, the son of Kronos, and said: "Father Zeus, are you not angry with Ares for these violent deeds? How great and noble a company of Achaians he has destroyed recklessly and chaotically, to my sorrow. But here in peace the Cyprian and Apollo of the silver bow sit at ease, having set loose this mad one who knows no law. Father Zeus, will you be angry at me if I strike Ares and chase him from the battle in shame?"

And Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, answered and said to her: "Go, set upon him Athene the spoiler, who most is sure to bring terrible pain upon him."

So he spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera did not disobey him and lashed her horses. They eagerly flew on between earth and starry heaven. As far as a man sees with his eyes into the haze of distance as he sits on an outlook and gazes over the wine-dark sea, so far leapt the loudly neighing horses of the gods. Now when

they came to Troy and the two flowing rivers, to where Simoeis and Skamandros join their streams, there the white-armed goddess Hera stopped her horses and let them loose from the chariot and poured thick mist around them, and Simoeis made ambrosia spring up for them to graze on. So the goddesses went their way with steps like turtledoves, being eager to bring help to the men of Argos. And when they had come where the most and the bravest stood, thronging around mighty Diomedes tamer of horses like devouring lions or wild boars whose strength never fails, then the white-armed goddess Hera stood and shouted in the likeness of great-hearted and bronze-voiced Stentor, whose cry was as loud as the cry of fifty other men: “Shame on you, Argives, you low shameful things, so brave in appearance! While noble Achilles was in the battle, then the Trojans did not even come out of their Dardanian gate, for they dreaded his terrible spear. But now they fight far from their city here at the hollow ships.”

So saying she roused the spirit and soul of every man. And the bright-eyed goddess Athene sprang to the side of the son of Tydeus. That noble man she found beside his horses and chariot, cooling the wound that Pandaros with his javelin had caused, for his sweat irritated it because of the broad strap of his round shield. He was vexed because of it and his arm was weary, so he was lifting the strap and wiping away the dark blood. Then the goddess laid her hand on his horses’ yoke and said: “Truly, Tydeus fathered a son little like him. Tydeus was short of build, but a man of war; yes, even when I did not want him to fight or even show himself, when he left the Achaians on an embassy to Thebes, to the midst of the crowd of the Kadmeians, I urged him to feast in their halls in peace, but he, maintaining the courage of his soul as always, challenged the young men of the Kadmeians and conquered them all with ease, so staunch a helper I was to him. Now I stand beside you and guard you and with all my heart urge you to fight the Trojans, yet either weariness with so much fighting has entered into your limbs, or discouraging terror has taken hold of you. If that is so, you are no son of Tydeus, the wise son of Oineus.”

Then steadfast Diomedes answered her and said: “I know you, goddess, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, therefore with all my heart I will tell you my thought and not hide it. Disheartening terror has not taken hold on me, nor any faintness, but I keep in mind your command that you gave me. You forbade me to fight face to face with the blessed gods, unless Zeus’ daughter Aphrodite enter the battle, and then I was to wound her with the sharp bronze. Therefore I have now held myself back and have commanded all the Argives likewise to gather together here, for I see Ares dominating the battle.”

Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene answered him: “Diomedes, son of Tydeus, joy of my heart, do not fear Ares or any other of the immortals, so great a helper will I be to you. Go now, first guide your sure-footed horses toward Ares and strike at him hand to hand and do not be in awe of violent Ares, raving there, a curse incarnate, the renegade that recently in conversation with me and Hera swore to fight against the Trojans and help the Argives, but now fights alongside the Trojans and has forgotten his word.”

So speaking, with her hand she pulled back Sthenelos and pushed him from the chariot to earth, and instantly he leaped down, and the goddess eagerly mounted the chariot beside noble Diomedes’ side. The oaken axle creaked loud with its burden, bearing the dreadful goddess and the mighty man. Then Pallas Athene grasped the whip and reins, and immediately she guided the sure-footed horses against Ares.

Now he was stripping the armor from huge Periphas, Ochesios’ glorious son, the most valiant by far of the Aitolians. Ares was in the act of stripping blood-stained Periphas when Athene donned the helmet of Hades, so that terrible Ares would not see her. Now when Ares, the scourge of mortals, saw noble Diomedes, he left huge Periphas lying there, where he had first slain him and taken away his life, and made straight at Diomedes, tamer of horses. Now when they had come near each other, Ares leaned over the yoke and horses’ reins and thrust with his spear of bronze, eager to take away Diomedes’ life. But the bright-eyed goddess Athene with her hand seized the spear and deflected it up over the chariot, to expend itself in vain.

Next Diomedes of the loud war-cry attacked with spear of bronze, and Pallas Athene drove it home against Ares’ lower belly, where his tassels were hanging. There Diomedes struck him and wounded him, tearing through his fair skin, and he wrenched out the spear again. Then brazen Ares bellowed as loud as nine thousand warriors, or ten thousand, cry in battle as they join in the struggle and chaos. At that, fear and trembling took hold of Achaians and Trojans at the mighty bellowing of battle-thirsty Ares.

Just as gloomy mist appears from the clouds when after heat a stormy wind arises, so to Tydeus’ son, Diomedes, brazen Ares appeared amid the clouds, rising to wide heaven. Swiftly he came to the gods’ dwelling, steep Olympos, and sat beside Zeus, son of Kronos, with grief at heart, and showed the immortal blood flowing from the wound, and piteously spoke to him in winged words: “Father Zeus, are you not angry to see these violent deeds? Cruelly we gods always suffer by one another’s actions as we try to help men. We are all in conflict with you, because you fathered that reckless and evil maiden, whose mind is always on wicked deeds. For all the other gods that are in Olympos obey you, and we are all subject to you, but you never rebuke her in word or deed, but you encourage her, because this cursed one is your own offspring. Just now she has urged on Tydeus’ son, haughty Diomedes, to rage furiously against the immortal gods. First he wounded the Cyprian in close fight, in the wrist of her hand, and then he attacked me—me!—with the power of a god. Nevertheless my swift feet carried me away, or else I would have suffered a lengthy agony there amid the grisly heaps of dead, or I would have lived on in weakness from the wounds of the spear.”

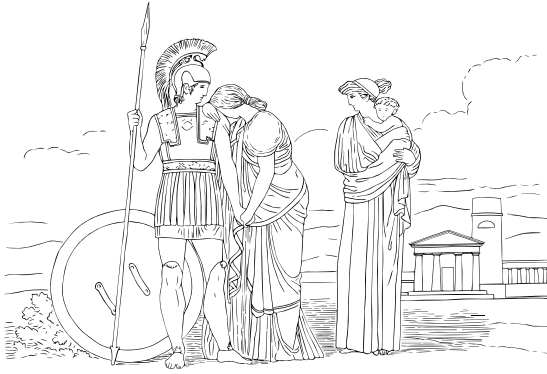
Then Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer looked sternly at him and said: “No, you renegade, do not sit by me and whine. You are the most hateful to me of all the gods who live on Olympos. You always love conflict and wars and battles. Truly your mother Hera’s spirit is intolerable and unyielding; I can scarcely control her with words. So I think that it was by her prompting that you are in this plight. Yet I can no longer bear to see you in pain; you are my offspring, and to me your mother bore you. But if you had been born of any other

god for this kind of violence long before now you would have been thrown lower than all the sons of heaven.”

So he spoke and commanded Paiëon to heal him. And Paiëon put healing drugs on the wound and healed him, since he was in no way mortal. Just as fig juice swiftly thickens white milk, which begins as liquid but curdles quickly as a man stirs it, so he swiftly healed violent Ares. And Hebe bathed him and clothed him in beautiful garments, and he sat down by Zeus, son of Kronos, rejoicing in his strength.

Then the two went back again to the mansion of great Zeus, Hera of Argos and Alalkomenean Athene having stopped Ares, the scourge of mortals, from his manslaughtering.

Book VI: Hektor in Troy



The Meeting of Hektor and Andromache

Greek Success Continues

So the grim struggle of Trojans and Achaians was left to itself, and the battle swayed often this way and that across the plain, as they aimed against each other their bronze-clad spears, between the streams of Simoeis and Xanthos.

First Aias, son of Telamon, bulwark of the Achaians, broke a battalion of the Trojans and brought his comrades relief, striking a warrior who was a leader among the Thracians, Eussoros' son Akamas, the noble and great. He struck him upon his thick-crested helmet-ridge and drove into his forehead, so that the point of bronze pierced into the bone, and darkness shrouded his eyes.

Then Diomedes of the loud war-cry slew Axylos, Teuthras' son, who lived in well-built Arisbe, a man of substance respected by all, for his dwelling was by the roadside and he entertained all men. Nevertheless, of all these there was no one to meet the enemy first and save him from sudden destruction, but Diomedes took the life of both him and Kalesios, his squire, who was the driver of his chariot. So they went down to the underworld.

And Euryalos slew Dresos and Opheltios, and pursued Aisepos and Pedasos, whom long before the fountain-nymph Abarbare bore to noble Boukolion. Now Boukolion was the son of proud Laomedon, his eldest born, fathered on an unwed mother. As Boukolion tended his flocks he had lain with the nymph in love, and she conceived and bore twin sons. But the strength of these and their glorious limbs Mekistios' son now unstrung, and he stripped the armor from their shoulders. And stubborn Polypoites slew Astyalos, and Odysseus with a spear of bronze laid low Pidytes of Perkote, and so did Teukros to noble Aretaon. Then Ableros was killed by the shining spear of Antilochos, Nestor's son, and Elatos was killed by Agamemnon, king of men; he had lived beside the banks of fair-flowing Satnioeis in steep Pedasos. And Leitos the warrior caught Phylakos as he fled, and Eurypylos slew Melanthios.

Now Menelaos of the loud war-cry captured Adrestos alive, for his horses took flight across the plain and, stumbling in a tamarisk thicket, broke the curved chariot at the pole's foot; the horses went on towards the city where the rest were fleeing in fear, and their master tumbled out of the chariot beside the wheel, prone in the dust upon his face. Then Atreus' son Menelaos came beside him holding his far-shadowing spear. Adrestos grabbed him by his knees and begged him: "Take me captive, son of Atreus, and accept a worthy ransom; many a treasure is stored up in my father's rich palace, bronze and gold and wrought iron. From all that treasure my father would give you a ransom beyond description if he could just hear that I am alive at the ships of the Achaians."

So he spoke, and moved the spirit in Menelaos' breast. And he had almost given him to his squire to lead him to the Achaians' fleet ships, but Agamemnon came running to meet him and spoke a word of rebuke to him: "Noble Menelaos, why are you so gentle with the enemy? Have such good deeds been done to you in your house by the Trojans? Let not one of them escape sheer destruction at our hands, not even the man-child that the mother bears in her womb; do not let even him escape, but let all perish together out of Ilios, uncared for and unknown." So spoke the hero and changed his brother's

mind with the argument of justice; so with his hand he thrust the hero Adrestos away from him, and King Agamemnon struck him in the side, and he toppled over, and Atreus' son planted his heel on his chest and wrenched out his ashen spear.

Then Nestor called to the Argives with a far-reaching shout: "My friends, Danaan warriors, men of Ares' company, let no man hang back thinking of plunder and how he may bring the greatest load of treasure to the ships, but let us slaughter the enemy. Afterwards you can strip the corpses around the battlefield of their spoil at your leisure."

So he spoke and stirred the spirit and soul of every man. Now the Trojans would have been chased again by the Achaians, dear to Ares, up into Ilios, overcome in their weakness, but Priam's son Helenos, far the best of prophets, stood beside Aineias and Hektor and spoke to them: "Aineias and Hektor, since the burden of war between Trojans and Achaians lies heaviest on you, because in every situation you are the leaders in fighting and counsel, stand your ground and marshal the men everywhere to rally them in front of the gates before they flee to their women's arms and become a laughingstock to the enemy. Then when you have roused all our battalions we will stand here and fight the Danaans, though we are terribly weary, for our duty weighs on us heavily. But you, Hektor, go into the city and speak to our mother; let her gather the elderly women to bright-eyed Athene's temple in the upper city and with her key open the doors of the holy house, and let her lay the robe, that seems to her the most beautiful and greatest in her hall and more precious to her, upon the knees of lovely-haired Athene and vow to her to sacrifice in her temple twelve fat cattle that have never been yoked, if she will have mercy on the city and the Trojans' wives and little children. Then perhaps she might hold back Tydeus' son from holy Ilios, the furious spearman, the mighty deviser of terror, who truly I think has proved himself the mightiest of the Achaians. Never did we fear in this way Achilles, prince of men, whom they say is born of a goddess; no, this man whom we see now is furious beyond measure; no one can match him for power."

So he spoke, and Hektor did not disobey his brother's word, but leapt immediately from his chariot in his armor to earth and, brandishing two sharp spears, passed everywhere through the ranks, rousing them to battle, and stirred up the dread war-cry. So they were rallied and stood to face the Achaians, and the Argives gave ground and ceased from slaughter and thought that some immortal had descended from starry heaven to bring the Trojans help, since they had rallied so suddenly. Then Hektor called to the Trojans with a far-reaching shout: "O high-souled Trojans and you far-famed allies, be men now, my friends, and keep violent courage in your minds, while I depart to Ilios and urge the elders of the council and our wives to pray to the gods and vow to them great sacrifices."

So saying, Hektor of the shining helmet departed, and the black ox-hide clashed on either side against his ankles and his neck, even the rim that ran uttermost about his embossed shield.

Now Glaukos, son of Hippolochos, and Tydeus' son met in the middle ground between the two enemies, eager to do battle. And when the two had come close to attack each other, Diomedes of the loud war-cry first spoke to him: "What mortal man are you, noble warrior? For I have never seen you before now, yet you far outshine all other men in your steadfastness, since you stand up to my far-shadowing spear. Unfortunate are the fathers whose sons face my might. But if you are some immortal come down from heaven, I will not fight with heavenly gods. Even Dryas' son, mighty Lykourgos, did not last long when he fought with heavenly gods, he that before had chased through the noble land of Nysa the nursing mothers who followed frenzied Dionysos, and they all threw their wands on the ground, struck with murderous Lykourgos' ox-goad. Then Dionysos fled and plunged beneath the salt sea-wave, and Thetis took him to her bosom, frightened, for a mighty trembling had seized him at his foe's rebuke. But the gods that live at ease were angry with Lykourgos, and Kronos' son blinded him, and he did not live long, because he was hated by all the immortal gods. So neither would I be willing to fight the blessed gods. But if you are among mortals who eat the fruit of the field, come close, that you may quickly enter the clutches of destruction."

Then Hippolochos' glorious son answered him: "Great-hearted son of Tydeus, why do you ask about my generation? Like the generations of leaves, so are those also of men; the wind scatters the leaves on the earth, and the forest buds and puts forth more again, when the season of spring is near; so in the generations of men one grows and another ceases. Yet if you wish, you may have an answer, so that you may surely know my lineage, about which many men have knowledge. There is a city, Ephyre, in the heart of Argos, pasture-land of horses, and there lived Sisypheos, who was craftiest of men, Sisypheos the son of Aiolos; he fathered a son, Glaukos, and Glaukos fathered noble Bellerophon. The gods granted this man beauty and admirable manhood, but Proitos planned evil for him in his heart and, being far more powerful, drove him from the land of the Argives, whom Zeus had made subject to his scepter. Now Proitos' wife, noble Anteia, lusted after him, to be joined with him in secret love, but she could not persuade wise Bellerophon at all, because of the uprightness of his heart. Then she spoke falsely to King Proitos: 'Either you will die, Proitos, or else you must kill Bellerophon, who wished to be joined with me in love against my will.' So she spoke, and anger took hold of the king at what he heard. He held off from killing him, for his soul was ashamed, but he sent him to Lykia and gave him tokens of evil, engraving many things in a folded tablet, and commanded him to show these to Anteia's father, so that he might be killed. So he journeyed to Lykia by the sure convoy of the gods. When he came to Lykia and the stream of Xanthos, then the king of wide Lykia honored him with all his heart; for nine days he entertained him and slaughtered nine oxen. And when on the tenth day rosy-fingered dawn appeared, then he questioned him and asked to see what token he had brought from his son-in-law, Proitos. Now when he had received from him Proitos' evil token, first he commanded him to slay Chimaira, the unconquerable. She was born of gods and not men, a lion in front and a serpent in back and a goat in the middle, and she breathed the terrible ferocity of blazing fire. But he slew her, obedient to the signs of heaven. Next he fought with the famed Solymoi; this, he said, was the mightiest battle of warriors he had ever entered.

And thirdly he slew the Amazons, women the equal of men. And as he returned from there, the king planned another cunning plot; he picked from wide Lykia the bravest men and set an ambush. But these never returned home, for noble Bellerophon slew them all. So when the king now knew that he was the brave offspring of a god, he kept him there, and promised him his daughter and gave him the half of all the honor of his kingdom. Furthermore, the Lykians gave him a domain better than the rest, lovely with vineyards and fields to possess. And his wife bore to wise Bellerophon three children, Isandros and Hippolochos and Laodameia. With Laodameia lay Zeus, the Lord of counsel, and she bore godlike Sarpedon, the warrior with weapons of bronze. But when Bellerophon himself came to be hated by all the gods, then he wandered alone in the Aleian plain, devouring his own soul, and avoiding the paths of men; and his son Isandros was slain by Ares, hungry for battle, as he fought against the famed Solymoi, and his daughter was slain in anger by gold-gleaming Artemis. But Hippolochos fathered me, and from him I declare myself to have come; he sent me to Troy and commanded me urgently to be always the best and to excel all other men and not to put to shame the lineage of my fathers who were of noblest blood in Ephyre and in wide Lykia. This is the lineage and blood from which I claim to come.”

So he spoke, and Diomedes of the loud war-cry was glad. He planted his spear in the bounteous earth and with gracious words spoke to the shepherd of the people: “Surely then you are my guest-friend from old times through my father, for noble Oineus of long ago entertained great Bellerophon in his halls and hosted him for twenty days. Furthermore, they gave each to the other grand gifts of friendship: Oineus gave a belt bright with purple, and Bellerophon a gold two-handled goblet, which I left in my palace when I came. But of Tydeus I remember nothing, since I was still small when he left me, when the Achaian army perished at Thebes. Therefore now I am a guest-friend to you in the middle of Argos, and you in Lykia whenever I journey to your land. So let us avoid each other’s spears amid the conflict; there are multitudes of Trojans and their famous

allies for me to slay, whoever it might be that God grants to me and my feet to overtake, and for you there are a multitude of Achaians, to slay whomever you can. But let us make an exchange of arms between us, so that these others may know that we vow ourselves to be guest-friends by lineage.”

So the two spoke and, leaping from their cars, clasped each the other by the hand and pledged their friendship. But now Zeus, son of Kronos, took the wits from Glaukos, because he exchanged his golden armor for bronze, the price of a hundred oxen for the price of nine.

Hektor in Troy

Now when Hektor came to the Skaian gates and to the oak tree, there came running around him the Trojans’ wives and daughters, asking about sons and brothers and friends and husbands. At that he urged them all to pray to the gods, but sorrow hung over many.

Then he came to Priam’s beautiful palace, adorned with polished colonnades; in it were fifty chambers of polished stone, built close to one another, where Priam’s sons and their wives slept, and for his daughters on the other side within the courtyard were twelve roofed chambers of polished stone built close to one another, where Priam’s sons-in-law and their modest wives slept. Then his bountiful mother came there to meet him, bringing with her Laodike, the loveliest of her daughters to look on, and she clasped his hand and spoke to him by name: “My son, why have you left the violent battle to come here? Surely the evil sons of the Achaians press hard in the fight about your city, so your spirit has brought you here to come and stretch forth your hands to Zeus from the citadel. But wait till I bring you honey-sweet wine, so that you can pour an offering to Zeus and the immortals first, and then you yourself will be refreshed if you will drink. When a man is weary, as you are, fighting for your men, wine refreshes his strength.”

Then great Hektor of the shining helmet answered her: “Bring me no honey-sweet wine, my lady mother, lest you cripple my courage and I forget my strength. Furthermore, I fear to make an offering of gleaming wine to Zeus with unwashed hands, as no one should pray to the son of Kronos, god of the storm-cloud, defiled with blood and filth. But you go to the temple of Athene, Gatherer of Spoil, with offerings and call together the aged wives, and the robe that seems to you the most gracious and greatest in your palace and most precious to you, lay that upon the knees of lovely-haired Athene and vow to her to sacrifice in her temple twelve fat cattle that have never been yoked, and perhaps she will have mercy on the city and the Trojans’ wives and little children. Maybe she will hold back the son of Tydeus from holy Ilios, the furious spearman, the mighty cause of terror. So go to the temple of Athene, Gatherer of Spoil, and I will go after Paris, to summon him, and perhaps he will listen to me. I wish the earth would suddenly swallow him up! The Olympian nurtured him to become a sorrowful evil to the Trojans and to great-hearted Priam and to Priam’s sons. If I could only see him going down to the gates of death, then my heart might forget its sorrow.”

So he spoke, and she went into the hall and called to her hand-maidens, and they gathered the aged wives throughout the city. Then she herself went down to her fragrant chamber where her embroidered robes were, the work of Sidonian women, whom godlike Alexandros himself brought from Sidon, when he sailed over the wide sea, on that journey in which he brought home high-born Helen. Of these robes Hekabe took one for an offering to Athene, the one that was greatest and loveliest for adornment and shone like a star and lay deepest of all. Then she went her way, and the multitude of aged wives hurried after her.

Now when they came to the temple of Athene in the citadel, the doors were opened for them by fair-cheeked Theano, Kisseus’ daughter, wife of horse-taming Antenor; the Trojans had made her priestess of Athene. Then they lifted all their hands to Athene with cries of lament, and fair-cheeked Theano took the robe and laid it on the knees of lovely-haired Athene and lifted up her voice also

and prayed to the daughter of great Zeus: “Lady Athene, savior of the city, noble among goddesses, break Diomedes’ spear and grant furthermore that he himself may fall before the Skaian gates. For that we will immediately sacrifice to you in your temple twelve fat cattle that have never been yoked, if you will have mercy on the city and the Trojans’ wives and little children.” So she spoke, praying, but Pallas Athene denied the prayer.

In this way the women were praying to the daughter of great Zeus, while Hektor came to Alexandros’ fair palace, which he himself had built with the best carpenters in deep-soiled Troy-land; these made him his chamber and hall and courtyard close to Priam and Hektor, in the upper city. Hektor, dear to Zeus, entered in, and his hand grasped his spear, eleven cubits long. The bronze spear point glittered before his face, and a ring of gold ran around it. And he found Paris in his chamber busied with his glorious armor, his shield and breastplate, and handling his curved bow. Helen of Argos sat among her serving women and assigned lovely handiwork for her handmaidens to craft. When Hektor saw him he rebuked him with scornful words: “Demented man! You do badly to cherish this bitterness in your heart. The people are perishing around the city and the high wall in battle, and for your sake the battle-cry and war are kindled around this city; you yourself would rebuke another man if you saw him shrinking back from hateful battle. Go up, then, lest the city soon be scorched with raging fire.”

And godlike Alexandros answered him: “Hektor, since you properly rebuke me and not beyond measure, I will tell you, and you may lay it to heart and listen to me. It is not so much because of anger and indignation at the Trojans that I sit here in my chamber, but rather I give in to my sorrow. Even now my wife has persuaded me with soft words and urged me back into battle, and furthermore, even I myself think it would be better, for the victory shifts from side to side. Wait awhile and let me put on my armor of war, or else you go on and I will follow and overtake you.”

So he said, but Hektor of the shining helmet did not answer a word. But Helen spoke to Hektor with gentle words: “My brother, I am only an evil-doing and despicable dog, and I wish that on the

day when my mother gave birth to me a foul storm-wind had caught me away to a mountain, or a billow of the loud-sounding sea, where the billow might have swept me away before all these things came to pass. However, since the gods brought about all these evil things this way, I wish then that I had been married to a better man, one who understood dishonor and the rebukes of men. But as for this man, he neither has now nor will he ever have a sound heart, and I think he will reap the fruit of that. But now come in and sit here upon this bench, my brother, since your heart has borne the heaviest of the trouble, for the sake of me, dog that I am, and for the sin of Alexandros, upon whom Zeus is bringing terrible doom. In days to come we may be a song in the ears of men who will come long after us.”

Then great Hektor of the shining helmet answered her: “Do not urge me to sit, Helen, though you love me; you will not persuade me. Already my heart is set on helping the men of Troy, who are longing for me since I am not with them. But rouse this man, and let him hurry to overtake me while I am still in the city. For I will go to my own house to see my people and my dear wife and infant boy, for I do not know if I shall return home to them again, or if the gods will soon destroy me at the hands of the Achaians.”

So spoke Hektor of the shining helmet, and he departed. And soon he came to his well-built house. But he did not find white-armed Andromache in the halls; she with her boy and fair-robed handmaiden had taken her stand upon the tower, weeping and wailing. And when Hektor did not find his noble wife in the house, he came and stood upon the threshold and spoke to the serving women: “Tell me now truly, my serving women. Where did white-armed Andromache go from the hall? Has she gone out to my sisters or to my brothers’ fair-robed wives or to Athene’s temple, where all the lovely-haired Trojan women sacrifice to the dreadful goddess?”

Then a busy housemaid spoke in answer to him: “Hektor, since you ask us the truth, she has not gone to any of your sisters or your brothers’ lovely-robed wives, nor to Athene’s temple, where all the fair-tressed Trojan women are sacrificing to the dreadful goddess; she went to the great tower of Ilios, because she heard the Trojans

were hard pressed, and the Achaians were achieving a great victory. So she rushed to the wall as in a frenzy, and the nursemaid with her carries the child.”

So the housemaid spoke, and Hektor rushed from his house back by the same way down the well-built streets. When he had passed through the great city and had come to the Skaian gates, through which he was used to going out to the plain, his dearly-won wife came running to meet him, Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eëtion. Eëtion lived beneath wooded Plakos, in Thebe under Plakos, and was king of the men of Kilikia, and his daughter was the wife of bronze-greaved Hektor. So she met him now, and with her came the handmaid, carrying close to her the little child, Hektor’s beloved son, like a beautiful star. Him Hektor called Skamandrios, but all the people called him Astyanax, for Hektor alone was the salvation of Ilios.

Now he smiled and gazed at his boy silently, and Andromache stood by his side, weeping, and clasped his hand in hers and spoke and called him by name: “Dear husband, this strength of yours will destroy you, and you have no pity for your infant boy or for sorrowful me who will soon be your widow. For soon the Achaians will all attack you and slay you. It would be better for me to go down to the grave if I lose you, for there will never again be any comfort for me, only sorrow, when you have met your fate. I have no father or mother; my father was slain by great Achilles, for he devastated the populous city of the Kilikians, high-gated Thebe, and slew Eëtion, though he did not despoil his body, for he was ashamed to do that, but he burned him in his inlaid armor and raised a barrow over him, and all about were elm trees planted by the mountain nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus. And my seven brothers within our halls, all these on the same day went down to the house of Hades, for swift-footed great Achilles slew them all amidst their ambling cattle and white-fleeced sheep. And my mother, who was queen beneath wooded Plakos, he brought here with the other spoils, but afterward accepted a massive ransom to set her free, but in her father’s halls she was struck down by the Archer Artemis. No, Hektor, you are father and mother to me, yes, and brother, as well as my noble husband. So

have pity and remain here upon the tower, lest you make your child an orphan and your wife a widow. And assemble your men by the fig tree, where the city could be scaled and the wall is vulnerable. Three times, the strongest who are with the Aiantes and famed Idomeneus and the sons of Atreus and the son of Tydeus came here and tried to enter, because someone skilled in prophecy revealed it to them, or their own spirit urges them on.”

Then great Hektor of the shining helmet answered her: “Indeed I do consider all these things, my wife, but I would be deeply ashamed before the Trojans and their Trojan women with their trailing robes if like a coward I shrink away from battle. Furthermore, my own soul forbids me, since I have trained to be always courageous and to fight at the head of the Trojans, winning for my father and for myself great glory. Yes, certainly I know all this in my heart and soul; the day shall come for holy Ilios to be laid low, and Priam and the people of Priam of the good ashen spear. Yet the anguish of the Trojans in that day, and Hekabe’s and King Priam’s anguish, and the loss of my brothers and the many brave men who shall fall in the dust before their enemies does not trouble me so much as does your anguish on the day when some bronze-greaved Achaian shall lead you away weeping and rob you of the light of freedom. You will live in Argos and work the loom at another woman’s command and carry water from the fountain Messeis or Hypereia, treated wickedly, and kept all against your will. And then someone seeing you weeping shall say: ‘This is the wife of Hektor, who was foremost in battle of the horse-taming Trojans when men fought at Ilios.’ This is how they will talk, and you will suffer fresh grief having no husband to fend off the day of slavery. But may I be dead and buried deep in the earth before I hear your crying and see you carried off into slavery.”

So spoke glorious Hektor and stretched out his arms to his boy. But the child shrunk back, crying, to the bosom of his fair-girdled nurse, frightened at his dear father’s appearance and in terror at the bronze and horsehair crest that he saw waving fiercely from the helmet’s top. Then his dear father laughed aloud, as did his noble mother; immediately glorious Hektor took the helmet from his head and

laid it, gleaming, upon the earth, then kissed his dear son and held him gently in his arms, and he spoke in prayer to Zeus and all the gods: “O Zeus and all you other gods, grant that my son may prove someday to be like me, preeminent among the Trojans, and as great in might, and be a great king of Ilios. Then might men say of him: ‘Far greater is he than his father’ as he returns home from battle, and may he bring with him blood-stained spoils from the enemy he has slain, and may his mother’s heart be glad.”

So he spoke and laid his son in his beloved wife’s arms, and she took him to her fragrant bosom, smiling tearfully. And her husband felt pity to see her tears and caressed her with his hand and spoke and called her by name: “Dear one, I beg you not to be excessively sorrowful, for no man shall hurl me to Hades unless it is my fate. Only destiny is inescapable, whether a man be cowardly or courageous, once he is born. So go to your house and see to your own tasks, the loom and spindle, and urge your handmaidens to do their work, but men’s duty is in war, and mine most of all men that live in Ilios.”

So spoke glorious Hektor, and took up his horsehair-crested helmet, and his beloved wife departed to her home, shedding large tears as she often looked back. Soon she came to the well-built house of man-slaying Hektor and found there her many handmaidens, and loud weeping was stirred up in them all. So they wept for Hektor, while he still lived, within his own house, for they were certain that he would never come back to them from battle, nor escape the fury of the hands of the Achaians.

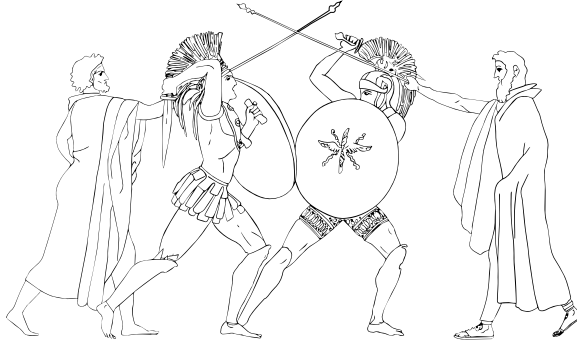
Hektor and Paris

Paris also did not linger for long in his great house, but dressed himself in his glorious armor, decked with bronze, and hurried through the city, confident in the swiftness of his feet. Just as when a stabled horse, well-fed at the manger, breaks his tether and gallops joyously across the plain to the sweetly-flowing stream where

he loves to bathe and holds his head high, and his mane floats about his shoulders, and he feels his glorious strength, and lightly his limbs carry him to the places where mares are pastured; in the same way Priam's son Paris, glittering in his armor like the shining sun, strode down from high Pergamos laughing, and his feet carried him swiftly. Soon he overtook his brother, noble Hektor, just as he was turning away from the spot where he had lingered with his wife.

Godlike Alexandros spoke to Hektor first: "Dear brother, surely I have delayed you in your hurry by my lingering since I did not come immediately as you asked." And Hektor of the shining helmet answered him and said: "Brother, no right-thinking man could make light of your conduct in battle, since you are powerful, but you are willfully careless and pay no attention; and my heart is grieved within me because of this, for I hear shameful words about you from the Trojans, who are suffering much because of you. But let us be going; all this will we work out later, if Zeus ever grants us to offer to the everlasting gods the cup of thanksgiving for deliverance in our halls, when we have chased out of Troy-land the bronze-greaved Achaians."

Book VII: The Second Duel



Hektor and Aias Separated by the Heralds

So spoke glorious Hektor and went out through the gates, and with him went his brother, Alexandros, and their souls were eager for fight and the battle. Just as the god gives to sailors the fair wind they long for when they have grown weary of rowing with polished oars, and their limbs are aching from the toil, so these two appeared to the Trojans, who had longed for their return.

Then Paris slew King Areithoös' son, Menesthios, dwelling in Ame, whom Areithoös of the war-club and ox-eyed Phylomedousa begat; and Hektor with his sharp spear smote Eïoneus' neck beneath his bronze helmet-rim and unstrung his limbs. And Glaukos, son of Hippolochos, captain of the men of Lykia, threw his spear at Iphinoös, the son of Dexios, through the crush of battle as he sprang up behind his swift mares, and struck his shoulder; he fell from his chariot to earth and his limbs were unstrung.

Now when the goddess bright-eyed Athene saw them wreaking havoc on the Argives in the crush of battle, she darted down from the peaks of Olympos to holy Ilios. But Apollo rose to meet her, for he saw her from Pergamos and wanted victory for the Trojans. So the two met by the oak tree. Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke to her first:

“Why have you come so eagerly from Olympos, daughter of great Zeus, and why has your high heart sent you? Surely it is to give the Danaans unequal victory in battle, since you have no mercy on the Trojans, who are perishing. But if you will listen to me, it would be much better; let us stop the labor of battle for this day; afterward they shall fight again, till they reach the goal of laying waste Ilios, since that is what seems best to your hearts, goddesses immortal.”

And the goddess bright-eyed Athene answered: “So be it; I came from Olympos to the midst of the Trojans and Achaians with this same thought. But how do you think to stop the fighting of the warriors?” And King Apollo, son of Zeus, answered: “Let us rouse the courageous heart of horse-taming Hektor, and perhaps he will challenge some one of the Danaans in single fight, man to man, to meet him in deadly combat. So the bronze-greaved Achaians will be eager to stir up one of their own to fight man to man with noble Hektor.”

So he spoke, and the bright-eyed goddess Athene did not disobey him. Now Helenos, Priam’s beloved son, understood in his spirit their resolve that the gods in counsel had approved, and he went to Hektor and stood beside him and spoke a word to him: “Hektor, son of Priam, peer of Zeus in counsel, will you listen to me? For I am your brother. Make the other Trojans sit, and all the Achaians also, and you yourself challenge whomever is best of the Achaians to meet you man to man in deadly combat. It is not yet your destiny to die and meet your doom. For I heard this from the voice of the gods that are from everlasting.”

So he spoke, and Hektor rejoiced greatly to hear his saying and went into the midst and restrained the battalions of the Trojans with his spear grasped by the middle, and they all sat down, and Agamemnon made the bronze-greaved Achaians sit. And Athene and Apollo of the silver bow also, in the likeness of vultures, sat upon a tall oak, holy to aegis-bearing Father Zeus, rejoicing in their warriors, and the ranks of them all sat close together, bristling with shields and plumes and spears. Just as the ripple of the newly risen west wind spreads across the sea and the water grows black beneath it, so the ranks of Achaians and Trojans sat on the plain. And Hektor spoke between

both armies: “Listen to me, Trojans and bronze-greaved Achaians, that I may speak what my mind in my breast commands me. Kronos’ son, enthroned on high, did not accomplish our oaths of truce, but his intention and will for both our people is evil, until either you take fair-towered Troy or yourselves be destroyed beside your seafaring ships. But in the midst of you are the chief men of all the Achaians; therefore, now let the man whose heart urges him to fight with me come here from among you all to be your champion against noble Hektor. And this I vow, with Zeus as our witness, if that man slays me with the long-edged sword, let him strip my body of my armor and carry it to the hollow ships, but give back my body to my home, that Trojans and Trojans’ wives may honor me in my death by burning it. But if I slay him and Apollo grants me glory, I will strip him of his armor and carry it to holy Ilios and hang it upon the temple of the Archer Apollo, but his corpse I will bring back to the well-decked ships, so that the flowing-haired Achaians may entomb him and build him a burial mound beside the wide Hellespont. So someone of the men born in years to come shall say, as he sails in his benched ship over the wine-dark sea, ‘This is the burial mound of a man that died in days of old, a champion whom glorious Hektor slew.’ So shall a man say hereafter, and my glory shall never die.”

So he spoke, and they all were silent and held their peace; they were ashamed to refuse him, but they feared to meet him. But at last Menelaos stood up and spoke amongst them and, rebuking them, he reproached them, and groaned deep in his heart: “Ah me, you vain threateners, you women of Achaia and not men, surely all this shall be a cause for shame, evil on evil, if none of the Danaans now goes to meet Hektor. May you all turn to earth and water, each man sitting there disheartened, helplessly shameful; I myself will arm to meet him; the threads of victory are guided by the immortal gods on high.”

So he spoke and put on his glorious armor. And now, O Menelaos, the end of life would have appeared for you at Hektor’s hands since he was far stronger, except the princes of the Achaians leaped up and stopped you. And Atreus’ son himself, wide-ruling Agamemnon, took him by his right hand and spoke a word and called him by

name: “You are acting madly, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, but it is not time for this kind of madness. Hold back, even though it pains you, and do not think, for the sake of indignation, to fight with one better than you, with Hektor Priam’s son, whom others beside you fear. Even Achilles dreads meeting this man in battle, in which the warrior finds glory, and Achilles is far better than you. So go and sit in the company of your fellow men; the Achaians shall put forth another champion against him. Though he is fearless and hungry for turmoil, I think that he shall be willing to rest his knees, if he escapes from the fury of war and terrible fray.”

So spoke the hero and persuaded his brother’s heart with wise counsel; and he obeyed. So at that his men gladly took his armor from his shoulders, and Nestor stood up and spoke amid the Argives: “For shame, surely terrible lamentation comes on the land of Achaia; surely old Peleus, driver of chariots, would groan sorrowfully, that orator and noble counselor of the Myrmidons, who long ago questioned me in his house, and rejoiced greatly, asking about the lineage and birth of all the Argives. If he heard now that those same men were all cowering before Hektor, then he would lift his hands to the immortal gods, urgently praying that his soul might depart from his limbs down to the house of Hades. Ah, if only Father Zeus and Athene and Apollo would grant that I were young as when beside swift-flowing Keladon the Pylans gathered together to battle and the Arkadians that wield the spear, beneath the walls of Pheia, near the streams of Iardanos. Then Ereuthalion, a man equal to the gods, stood up as their champion, bearing upon his shoulders the armor of King Areithoös—noble Areithoös who was called by men and fair-girdled women the Club-Fighter, because he did not fight with bow and long spear, but with an iron club destroyed the battalions. Lykurgos slew him by deceit, not by strength, in a narrow pass, where his mace of iron could not save him from destruction; before that, Lykourgos had come upon him unaware and pierced him through his middle with his spear, and he was hurled backward upon the earth. Then Lykurgos stripped him of his weapons that brazen Ares had given him, and afterward carried them himself into the melee of war.

But when Lykourgos grew old within his halls, he gave them to Ereuthalion, his beloved follower, to wear. So with his arms upon him he challenged all our best, but they trembled terribly and were afraid, and no man had courage, but my sturdy heart roused up to meet him confidently, though I was youngest of everyone. So I fought with him and Athene granted me glory. He was the tallest and strongest of the men that I have slain; in his huge bulk he lay spread this way and that. If only young like that and my strength were sound, then Hektor of the shining helmet would soon have his combat! But out of all of those of you who are leaders of the host of the Achaians, no man has the courage to meet Hektor face to face.”

So the old man rebuked them, and nine men in all stood up. First of all rose Agamemnon, king of men, and after him rose Tydeus’ son, stalwart Diomedes, and after them the Aiantes, clothed with violence and might, and after them, Idomeneus and Idomeneus’ brother-in-arms, Meriones, equal to Enyalios, slayer of men, and after them Eurypylos, Euaimon’s glorious son, and up rose Thoas, Andraimon’s son, and noble Odysseus. So all these were eager to fight with noble Hektor. And lordly Nestor of Gerenia spoke among them again: “Now cast the lot from first to the last, for the one to be chosen, for indeed he shall do good for the bronze-greaved Achaians; yes, and he shall benefit his own soul, if he escapes from the fury of war and terrible fighting.”

So he spoke, and each man marked his lot and tossed it into the helmet of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, and all the men prayed and lifted up their hands to the gods, each one saying as they looked up to wide heaven: “O Father Zeus, grant that the lot fall upon Aias or Tydeus’ son, or else on the king of Mykene, rich in gold.”

So they spoke, and lordly Nestor of Gerenia shook the helmet, and out sprang the lot that all hoped for, the lot of Aias. The herald carried it everywhere through the throng, showing it from right to left to all the leaders of the Achaians, but no one recognized it, and every man denied it was his. But when he came, bearing it everywhere through the throng, to him who had marked it and cast it in the helmet, glorious Aias, then he held out his hand, and the herald

stood by him and gave it to him. And Aias saw and recognized the mark on the lot and rejoiced in his heart. He threw it on the ground by his foot and spoke: “My friends, indeed the lot is mine. Yes, and I am glad at heart, because I think that I shall defeat noble Hektor. But come now, while I put on my armor for battle, all of you pray meanwhile to Kronos’ son, King Zeus, in silence to yourselves, so that the Trojans do not hear you—no, rather, pray openly if you wish, for we have no fear of any man at all. For no one shall chase me by force, against my will, nor by warcraft, since I was not born and nurtured in Salamis to be lacking in that skill.”

So he spoke, and they prayed to Kronos’ son, King Zeus, and each man would speak in this way, looking up to wide heaven: “O Father Zeus, who rules from Ida, most glorious, most great, grant to Aias victory and the winning of great glory. But if indeed you love Hektor so much and care for him, grant unto either man equal power and honor.”

So they spoke, while Aias put on his flashing bronze. And when he had now covered his body with all his armor, then he marched like huge Ares, when he goes to battle amongst heroes whom Kronos’ son sets to fight in the fury of heart-consuming battle. Just so huge Aias rose up, bulwark of the Achaians, with a smile on his grim face, and went with long strides of his feet beneath him, shaking his far-shadowing spear. Then the Argives rejoiced to see him, but terrible trembling came upon the Trojans, on the limbs of every man, and Hektor’s own heart pounded in his chest. But he could not now in any way flee or shrink back into the crowd of warriors, since he had challenged him to battle. And Aias came near bearing his tower-like shield of bronze, with the sevenfold oxhide, that Tychios had wrought him skillfully, Tychios far best of leather workers, who had his home in Hyle and who made him his shining shield, of sevenfold hides of stout bulls, and covered the seven with bronze. This shield Telamonian Aias carried in front of his chest and stood near Hektor and spoke to him threateningly: “Hektor, now indeed you shall know well, man to man, what kind of princes the Danaans have among them, besides Achilles, render of men, the lion-hearted. But he sits

amid his beaked seafaring ships in terrible anger at Agamemnon, shepherd of the host, yet we are such as to face you, yes, and there are many of us. So begin the struggle and the combat.”

And great Hektor of the shining helmet answered him: “Aias of the seed of Zeus, son of Telamon, chieftain of the people, do not taunt me as though I were some puny boy or woman who does not know deeds of battle. But I well know wars and slaughterings. I know how to use my stout shield, turning it to right and left; this I think is sound warcraft. And I know how to charge into the chaos of swift chariots and how to join in Ares’ furious dance in close battle. However, I do not intend to strike you, being such a man as you are, by catching you unaware, but rather openly, if perhaps I may be able to strike you.”

He spoke and poised his far-shadowing spear and hurled it and smote Aias’ terrible shield of sevenfold hide upon the outermost bronze, the eighth layer that was on it. Through six folds of hide the stubborn bronze pierced, but in the seventh hide it stopped. Next heaven-sprung Aias hurled his far-shadowing spear and smote the circle of the shield of Priam’s son. Through the bright shield the violent spear passed, and it pierced on through the beautifully-wrought breastplate, and right next to his side tore his tunic, but he swerved aside and escaped black death. Then both together pulled out their long spears with their hands and attacked like snarling lions or wild boars whose might is anything but feeble. Then Priam’s son smote the shield’s middle with his spear, but the bronze did not break through, for the point was bent back, but Aias leapt on him and pierced his shield. The spear went straight through and staggered him as he attacked and tore its way to his neck, so that the dark blood gushed up. Yet even then Hektor of the shining helmet did not cease from fighting, but gave a little ground and with his strong hand seized a stone lying upon the plain, black and rugged and huge. He hurled it and smote Aias’ terrible shield of sevenfold oxhide in the middle, on the raised center, and the bronze clanged.

Next Aias lifted a far greater stone and swung and hurled it, using tremendous might. He smote the shield and burst it inwards

with the rock like a millstone and buckled Hektor's knees, and he was stretched out on his back, pressed into his shield. But Apollo immediately raised him up. And now they would have been fighting hand to hand with swords, but the heralds came, messengers of gods and men, one from the Trojans and one from the mail-clad Achaians, Talthymbios and Idaios, both discreet men. Between the two they held up their staffs, and herald Idaios, skilled in wise counsel, spoke a word: "Fight no more, dear sons, nor do battle, since Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, loves you both, and both are men of war; that we all know well. But night is already upon us; it is well to obey the demands of night."

Then Telamonian Aias answered and said to him: "Idaios, urge Hektor to speak those words; he himself challenged all our best men to combat, so let him be the first, and I will certainly follow what he says."

Then great Hektor of the shining helmet said to him: "Aias, since God gave you great size and might and wisdom, and with the spear you are excellent above all the Achaians, let us now cease from combat and battle for the day. But later we will fight again until God judge between us, giving to one of us the victory. But night already is upon us; it is well to obey the demands of night, so that you may bring cheer to all the Achaians beside their ships, and especially your relatives and friends, and I throughout the great city of King Priam will bring good cheer to the Trojan men and women with trailing robes, who I know will enter the holy assembly with prayer. But come, let us give each other glorious gifts, so that men, Achaians and Trojans alike, will say, 'These, having fought for the sake of heart-consuming conflict, parted again reconciled in friendship.'"

So he spoke and gave him his silver-studded sword, with its scabbard and well-shaped sword-belt, and Aias gave his belt brightly dyed with purple. So they parted, and one went to the Achaian host, and one went to the throng of Trojans. And these rejoiced to behold him come to them alive and sound, having escaped from the fury of Aias and his mighty hands and safe beyond hope, and they brought

him to the city. And on the other side the bronze-greaved Achaians brought Aias to noble Agamemnon, exulting in his victory.

So when these had come to the tents of the son of Atreus, then Agamemnon, king of men, slaughtered on their behalf an ox, a male of five years old, for the most mighty son of Kronos. They skinned and prepared it and divided it all and sliced it carefully and pierced it through with spits and roasted it carefully and then took it off again. Then as soon as they had rested from the task and had made the meal ready, they began the feast, and no one lacked enough at the plentiful banquet. And the hero, son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, gave to Aias long slices of the backstrap to honor him.

Burial of the Dead and Building of the Wall

And when they had put from them the desire for food and drink, then the old man, Nestor, whose longtime wisdom had always proved most excellent, with good intention began to weave the web of counsel and to speak out among them, saying: “Son of Atreus and you other princes of the Achaians, since that many flowing-haired Achaians are dead, and keen Ares has spilled their dark blood around fair-running Skamandros, and their souls have gone down to the house of Hades, therefore it is fitting for you to make the turmoil of the Achaians cease, and with the daybreak we will assemble to bring here the corpses with oxen and mules. So let us burn them a little way from the ships, so that each man may carry their bones home to their children, whenever we return again to our native land, and let us heap one burial mound around the pyre, piling it high on the plain for all of them together, and upon it quickly build high towers, a defensive wall for our ships and for ourselves. In the midst of it let us make gates strongly-founded, so that there may be a way through them to drive chariots. And outside of it let us dig a deep moat close to it, to encircle it and to hinder horses and foot soldiers, in case the battle of the lordly Trojans becomes weighty on us later.”

So he spoke, and all the chiefs approved. But meanwhile in the high city of Ilios there was an assembly of the Trojans, fierce and confused, beside Priam's gate. Discreet Antenor began to speak to them: "Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies, so that I may tell you what my soul within my breast commands me. Come, let us give Helen of Argos and the wealth with her to the sons of Atreus to take away. Now we fight in guilt, breaking the oaths of faith; therefore I have no hope of seeing any good fulfilled for us, unless we do this."

So he spoke, and sat down, and among them Alexandros, lord of lovely-haired Helen, stood up; he answered and spoke winged words: "Antenor, these words from you no longer please me. Yet you have it in you to craft other sayings better than this. But if indeed you say this seriously, then truly the gods themselves have destroyed your wits. But I will speak out amid the horse-taming Trojans and declare outright that I will not give back my wife. But all of the wealth I brought from Argos to our home I am willing to give back and to add to it more from my own treasure."

So he spoke and sat down, and among them Priam, of the seed of Dardanos, equal to the gods in wisdom, stood up among them. With good intention toward them he began to speak to them and said: "Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies, so that I may tell you what my soul within my breast commands me. Now eat your supper throughout the city as you have always done and remember to keep watch, and every man be vigilant. And at dawn let Idaios go to the hollow ships to tell Atreus' sons, Agamemnon and Menelaos, the words of Alexandros, the cause of all this strife, and likewise to ask them whether they are willing to refrain from tumultuous war till we have burned our dead; afterwards will we fight again, till heaven separates us and gives to one side or the other victory."

So he spoke, and they listened carefully to him and obeyed. Then all throughout the army the ranks, each taking turn, took their supper. And at dawn Idaios made his way to the hollow ships. He found the Danaans in assembly, the men of Ares' company, beside the stem of Agamemnon's ship, and the loud-voiced herald stood in their midst and said unto them: "Son of Atreus and you other princes

of the Achaians, Priam and all the noble Trojans have commanded me to tell you, if perhaps it might find favor and acceptance with you, the words of Alexandros, the cause of all this strife. The wealth that Alexandros brought in his hollow ships to Troy—if only he had perished first!—he is willing to give back, and to add more to it from his own treasure. But the wedded wife of glorious Menelaos he says he will not give back, even though the Trojans urge him to do it. Furthermore they command me to ask whether you are willing to refrain from tumultuous war until we have burned our dead. Afterwards will we fight again, till heaven separates us and gives to one side or the other victory.”

So he spoke, and they all remained silent and were still. At last Diomedes of the loud war-cry spoke out in their midst: “Let no man accept Alexandros’ treasure, or even Helen herself; it is obvious, even to a witless man, that destruction already hangs over the Trojans.”

So he spoke, and all the sons of the Achaians shouted, applauding the saying of horse-taming Diomedes. Then Lord Agamemnon spoke to Idaios: “Idaios, you yourself hear the voice of the Achaians and how they answer you, and it seems good to me. But concerning the dead, I do not begrudge you to burn them. For there should be no delay of the swift propitiation of fire for dead bodies. And let Zeus, the loud-thundering Lord of Hera, be witness for our oaths.”

So saying, he lifted up his scepter in the sight of all the gods, and Idaios departed back to holy Ilios. Now the Trojans and Dardanians sat in assembly, gathered all together to wait till Idaios returned, and he came and stood in their midst and declared his message. Then they readied themselves quickly for the tasks, some to bring back the dead, and some to seek wood. And on their part, the Argives also hurried from their well-decked ships, some to bring the dead and some to seek wood.

Now the early sun was shining on the fields as he climbed heaven from the deep stream of gently-flowing Ocean, when both sides met together. It was difficult to tell the dead men apart, but they washed from them the clotted blood with clean water and, weeping hot tears, lifted them upon the wagons. But great Priam commanded them not

to wail aloud, so in silence they piled the corpses on the pyre, heart-broken, and when they had burned them with fire they returned to holy Ilios. And in the same way on their side the bronze-greaved Achaians heaped the corpses on the pyre, heartbroken, and when they had burned them with fire they returned to the hollow ships.

And when it was not yet day, but still the twilight of the end of night, then those people of the Achaians who had been chosen gathered together around the pyre and made one mound over it, piling it up from the plain, and on it they built a wall and lofty towers, a bulwark for their ships and for themselves. In the midst of it they made gates solidly founded, so that there might be a way to drive chariots through them. And outside the wall they dug a deep moat beside it, wide and deep, and planted sharpened stakes in it.

In this way the flowing-haired Achaians labored, and the gods sat by Zeus, the Lord of lightning, and marveled at the massive construction of the mail-clad Achaians. And Poseidon, Shaker of Earth, spoke to them: “O Father Zeus, is there any man throughout the boundless earth that will declare to the immortals his mind and counsel any more? Do you not see how the flowing-haired Achaians have again built a wall for themselves in front of their ships, and dug a moat around it, but have not made sacrifices to the gods? Indeed the reputation of this wall shall reach as far as the dawn spreads, and men will forget the wall that I and Phoibos Apollo built with great effort for the hero Laomedon.”

And Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer said to him, deeply troubled: “For shame, far-swaying Shaker of Earth, for this thing you have spoken. Some other god might well fear this construction, one who is far weaker than you in the strength of his hands, but your fame shall spread as far as the dawn spreads. Come now, after the flowing-haired Achaians have departed on their ships to their dear native land, then break this wall in pieces and scatter it all into the sea, and cover the great sea-beach over with sand again, so that this great wall of the Achaians comes to nothing.”

These two talked together this way, and the sun went down, and the work of the Achaians was finished, and they slaughtered oxen

amid the huts and took supper. And many ships from Lemnos, carrying wine, drew near, sent by Jason's son Euneos, whom Hypsipyle bore to Jason, shepherd of the people. And especially for Atreus' sons, Agamemnon and Menelaos, Jason's son gave a great cargo of wine, a thousand measures. So the flowing-haired Achaians bought wine for themselves, some for bronze and some for gleaming iron, and some with hides and some with whole cattle, and some with captives, and they set a rich feast before themselves. Then all night long the flowing-haired Achaians feasted, and in the city the Trojans and allies did so also, and all night long Zeus, the Lord of counsel, signaled evil things to come with terrible thunderings. Then pale fear took hold on them, and they poured wine from their cups onto the earth, and none dared to drink anything till he had poured a drink-offering to the mighty son of Kronos. Then they laid themselves down to rest and received the blessing of sleep.

Book VIII: “The Unfinished Battle”



Hera and Athene Going to Assist the Greeks

The Golden Scales

Now yellow-robed Dawn was spreading over all the earth, and Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, called an assembly of the gods on the highest peak of many-ridged Olympus, and he himself addressed them, and all the gods listened: “Hear me, all you gods and all you goddesses, so that I may tell you what my heart within my breast commands me. Let none of you attempt, whether goddess or god, to hinder my words; all of you approve it together, so that I may accomplish these things swiftly. Whomever I see inclined to go, apart from the rest of the gods, to help Trojans or Danaans, he shall return to Olympus disciplined shamefully, or I will take and cast him into misty Tartaros, very far away, where the deepest gulf under the earth is; there are the gate of iron and the threshold of bronze, as far below Hades as heaven is high above the earth. Then shall he know by how far I am mightiest of all the gods. Go ahead and try this, you gods, that you all may know. Fasten a rope of gold from heaven, and all you gods and goddesses take hold of it; you could not drag Zeus, the supreme counselor, from heaven to earth, even though you tried strenuously. But if I myself wished, I could drag you up with the sea and earth too. Then I would bind the rope around a peak of Olym-

pos, and everything would be hung in the air, I am so far beyond gods and men in strength.”

So he spoke, and they all remained silent and were still, astonished at his words, for he spoke powerfully. But at last the bright-eyed goddess Athene said to them: “O our father, son of Kronos, supreme of lords, we well know that your might is unbending; yet still we pity the Danaan spearmen, who will now perish and suffer a sorrowful fate. Yet we will refrain from battle as you command us, but we will give counsel to the Argives to help them so that they do not all perish from your anger.”

Then Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer smiled at her and said: “Take heart, dear child, Triton-born. I do not speak entirely in anger, but I am moved to be kind to you.”

So saying, he harnessed to his chariot his bronze-shod horses, swift of foot, with flowing manes of gold, and dressed himself with gold and grasped the well-crafted golden whip and mounted his chariot and lashed the horses to start them; unreluctant, they sped on between earth and starry heaven. So he came to many-fountained Ida, the mother of wild beasts, to Gargaron, where his own domain and fragrant altar are. There the father of men and gods halted his horses and freed them from the chariot and threw a thick cloud about them, and he sat on the mountaintops, rejoicing in his glory, to observe the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaians.

Now the flowing-haired Achaians ate hurriedly among the tents, and afterward they armed themselves. Likewise the Trojans on their side armed themselves throughout the town; they were a smaller army, yet they were eager to fight in battle, out of necessity, for the sake of their children and wives. And the gates were opened wide and the army rushed forth, foot soldiers and horsemen, and a mighty din arose.

So when they had come together in one place, then their shields and spears clashed with the fury of the bronze-clad warriors; the heavily studded shields pressed against each other, and a tremendous din arose. Then the voice of groaning of the slain and the voice of triumph of the slayer mixed together were heard, and the earth streamed with blood.

Trojan Successes

Now while it was still morning and the glorious day grew, the spears fell violently from both sides and the men fell. But when the sun straddled midheaven, then the Father balanced his golden scale and put in it two fates of death which lay men out, one for horse-taming Trojans and one for mail-clad Achaians. And he lifted the scale by the middle, and the Achaians’ day of destiny sank down. So the Achaians’ fates lay on the bountiful earth, and the Trojans’ fates were lifted up to wide heaven. And the god thundered aloud from Ida and sent his blazing flash amid the host of the Achaians, and they saw and were astonished, and pale fear took hold upon them all.

Then Idomeneus lost heart to stand firmly, and Agamemnon too, and the Aiantes, men of Ares’ company, could not stand their ground either. Only Nestor of Gerenia, warden of the Achaians, stood fast, but not by intention, but because he was losing his horse, which noble Alexandros, lovely-haired Helen’s lord, had struck with an arrow upon the top of the crest where the front hairs of horses grow upon the skull, and there is the most vulnerable spot. So the horse leaped in pain, and the arrow sank into his brain, and he brought confusion on the other horses as he twisted on the spear. While the old man leaped down and with his sword began to chop loose the harness, Hektor’s swift horses came through the chaos, carrying the bold charioteer, Hektor.

And now the old man would have lost his life, except that Diomedes of the loud war-cry was quick to notice. He shouted fiercely, summoning Odysseus: “Heaven-born son of Laertes, clever Odysseus, where are you fleeing with your back turned, like a coward in the crowd? Beware; as you flee someone might plant a spear between your shoulders. No, stand your ground, till we thrust back from the old man his furious enemy.”

So he spoke, but much-enduring noble Odysseus did not hear him, but rushed by to the hollow ships of the Achaians. Yet the son of Tydeus, though only one man, mingled amid the fighters in the forefront and took his stand in front of the horses of the old man,

Neleus' son, and spoke winged words to him and said: "Old man, indeed young warriors are attacking you hard, and your strength is lessening, and old age weighs heavily on you, and your henchman is a weakling and your horses are slow. Come then, mount upon my chariot, so that you may see what the horses of Tros are like, well-trained for following or fleeing here and there swiftly across the plain, these horses that recently I took from Aineias, who inspires fear. Let our men tend your horses, and let us drive these straight against the horse-taming Trojans, so that even Hektor may know whether my spear rages in my hands too."

So he spoke, and lordly Nestor took into his hands the shining reins and lashed the horses, and soon they drew close to Hektor. Then Tydeus' son threw at him as he charged straight upon them; he missed him, but he struck Eniopeus, great-hearted Thebaios' son, his attendant who drove his chariot, in the chest beside the nipple while he was holding the reins. So he fell out of the chariot, and his swift-footed horses swerved aside, and there his soul and spirit were undone. Then terrible grief took hold of Hektor's soul for the sake of his charioteer. Yet he left him lying there, though he grieved for his comrade, and drove in quest of another bold charioteer. And his horses did not lack a master for long, for soon he found Iphitos' son, bold Archeptolemos, and he commanded him to mount behind his swift horses, and put the reins into his hands.

Then destruction would have come and deeds beyond remedy would have been done, and they would have been penned in Ilios like sheep, if the father of gods and men had not been swift to notice. So he thundered terribly and threw his white lightning and hurled it to the earth before Diomedes' horses, and there arose a terrible flame of sulphur burning, and the two horses were terrified and cowered beside the chariot. And the shining reins dropped from Nestor's hands, and he was afraid at heart and spoke to Diomedes: "Son of Tydeus, turn your sure-footed horses to flight. Do you not see that victory from Zeus is not with you? Now Kronos' son grants glory to this Hektor, for the time; later he shall grant it to us, perhaps, if he wishes. A man may not fend off the will of Zeus in any way, even if he is exceedingly valiant; Zeus indeed is far mightier."

Then Diomedes of the loud war-cry answered him: “Yes indeed, old man, all this you say is right. But this is the grievous thought that enters my heart and soul: Hektor some day shall say as he speaks among the Trojans, ‘The son of Tydeus ran to the ships in flight at my appearance.’ So he shall boast; in that day let the wide earth open and swallow me.”

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: “Ah me, son of wise Tydeus, that you should speak this way! Even if Hektor calls you a weakling and coward, the Trojans will not listen to him, nor will the Dardanians, nor will the wives of the great-hearted men of Troy who carry the shield, the wives whose vigorous husbands you have laid low in the dust.”

So he spoke, and he turned the sure-footed horses to flight, back through the tumult, and the Trojans and Hektor with a great roar rained their terrifying spears upon them. And great Hektor of the shining helmet shouted loudly toward him: “Son of Tydeus, the swift-horsed Danaans used to honor you with the best place, and food, and full goblets, but now they will disdain you; you are no better than a woman after all. Depart, you rag doll. You will not climb our towers with me shrinking back, nor carry our wives away on your ships; long before that I will deal out your fate.”

So he spoke, and the son of Tydeus was torn in his mind, whether or not to wheel his horses around and fight him face to face. Three times he made up his mind, but three times Zeus, the Lord of counsel, thundered from Ida’s peaks and gave to the Trojans a sign, the turning of the course of battle. And Hektor with a loud shout called to the Trojans: “Trojans and Lykians and Dardanians who love close fighting, be men, my friends, and keep in mind violent courage. I perceive that the son of Kronos with good intentions grants me victory and great glory and to the Danaans destruction. Fools, who devised these walls, weak and not worth our attention; they will not withstand our fury, and our horses shall lightly leap over the moat they dug. But when I have once come among their hollow ships, then remember to bring fire, so that I may burn the ships and slaughter these Argive men amid their ships in the confusion and smoke.”

So he spoke and shouted to his horses and said: “Xanthos and Podargos and Aithon and noble Lampos, now pay back the care you received, the abundance that Andromache, great-hearted Eëtion’s daughter, set before you of honey-hearted wheat and mingled wine to drink to your heart’s desire, before even me who calls himself her husband. Pursue now swiftly, so that we may seize Nestor’s shield, the fame of which reaches to heaven, how it is made of gold throughout, armbands and all, and that we may seize furthermore from horse-taming Diomedes’ shoulders his richly decorated breastplate that Hephaistos wrought cunningly. If we could only take these, then I might hope to make the Achaians embark on their swift ships this very night.”

So he spoke boastfully, and Queen Hera was indignant and stirred on her throne and made high Olympos quake, and she said to the great god Poseidon: “For shame, far-swaying Shaker of Earth. Even your heart in your breast has no pity for the Danaans dying. Yet they bring to you many gracious offerings in Helike and Aigai; wish victory for them! If only we who are on the Danaans side wished to drive the Trojans back and restrain far-seeing Zeus, then he would be frustrated as he sits there alone on Ida.”

Then the Lord, the Shaker of Earth, was exceedingly troubled and answered: “Hera, headstrong in speech, what is this that you are saying? I am not one who would like to see us all in conflict with Zeus, the son of Kronos, for he indeed is far mightier.”

So they spoke to each other, and now all of the space between the ships and the moat and wall was full of horses and shield-bearing warriors pent up together; for Hektor, Priam’s son, equal to swift Ares, had pent them in now that Zeus granted him glory. And now he would have burned the trim ships with blazing fire, but Queen Hera put it in Agamemnon’s heart to stir himself and swiftly rouse the Achaians. So he went his way along the tents and ships of the Achaians, holding a great cloak of purple in his strong hand, and stood by Odysseus’ black ship which carried mighty burdens, which was in the midst of the camp, so that a voice could be heard at either end, whether to the tents of Aias, son of Telamon, or of Achilles,

for these had pulled their trim ships up at the farthest ends, trusting to their courage and to the strength of their hands. Then he shouted in a piercing voice and called to the Danaans loudly: “Shame on you Argives, you pitiful, shameful things, so brave in appearance! Where are our boastings when we said that we were the bravest, the boasts you uttered proudly when you were in Lemnos, as you ate your fill of the meat of tall-horned oxen and drank goblets overflowing with wine and said that every man would stand in war to face a hundred, yes, even two hundred Trojans? Yet now we cannot match even one, this Hektor who soon will burn our ships with the flames of fire. O Father Zeus, did you ever blind with such blindness and rob of great glory any mighty king? Yet I think that as I sailed on my mad journey here in my benched ship I never passed by a lovely altar dedicated to you, but upon every one I burnt fat and thighs of oxen, being eager to destroy great-walled Troy. No, Zeus, fulfill this hope of mine: grant that we ourselves at least might flee and escape, and let the Achaians not be vanquished by the Trojans.”

So he spoke, and the Father had pity on him as he wept and granted him that his people should be saved and not perish. Immediately he sent an eagle, the surest sign among winged birds, holding in his claws a fawn, the young of a swift deer; he let the fawn fall beside the lovely altar of Zeus, where the Achaians sacrificed to Zeus, Lord of all oracles. So when they saw that the bird was from Zeus, they sprang back to their attack upon the Trojans and remembered again the joy of battle.

Now no man of the Danaans, in spite of their great number, could boast that he had guided his horses forth before Tydeus’ son and driven them across the trench and fought man to man; the son of Tydeus was the first by far to slay a warrior of the Trojans in full battle dress, Agelaos, son of Phradmon. Now he had turned his horses to flee, but as he wheeled, the other man plunged the spear into his back between his shoulders and drove it through his breast. So he fell from his chariot, and his armor clanged upon him.

And next came Atreus’ sons, Agamemnon and Menelaos, and after them the Aiantes, filled with violent courage, and after them

Idomeneus and Idomeneus' brother-in-arms, Meriones, equal of Enyalios, slayer of men, and after them Eurypylos, Euaimon's glorious son. And ninth came Teukros, stretching his back-bent bow, and took his stand behind the shield of Aias, son of Telamon. Aias would stealthily withdraw the shield, and Teukros would see his chance, and when he had shot and struck one in the throng, then that man would fall and give up the ghost, and Teukros would return, and as a child beside his mother, come close to great Aias, who hid him with the shining shield.

Now who was first of the Trojans to be slain by noble Teukros? Orsilochos was first, then Ormenos and Ophelestes and Daitor and Chromios and godlike Lykophontes and Amopaon, Polyaimon's son, and Melanippos; all these in turn he laid out upon the bountiful earth. And Agamemnon, king of men, rejoiced to see him wreaking havoc with his stout bow on the battalions of the Trojans. And he came and stood by his side and spoke to him, saying: "Teukros, dear heart, son of Telamon, prince of the host, keep on shooting like this, for perhaps you may turn out to be the salvation of the Danaans and the glory of your father, Telamon, who nurtured you when you were little, and reared you in his house, though you were a bastard, raise him to honor now, though he is far away. Furthermore, I will tell you something which shall indeed be fulfilled. If aegis-bearing Zeus and Athene grant to me to destroy the ancient city of Ilios, I will bestow the reward of honor to you next after me, whether it be a tripod or two horses with their chariot or a woman for your bed."

And noble Teukros answered and said to him: "Most noble son of Atreus, why do you urge me when I am so eager already? Truly with such strength as I feel in me I do not hold back, but ever since we drove them toward Ilios I watch for the chance to slay the enemy with my bow. I have now shot eight long-barbed arrows, and all are buried in the flesh of young men swift in battle; it is only this mad dog that I cannot strike."

He spoke and shot another arrow from his string directly toward Hektor, and his heart was eager to smite him. But he missed him again, and his arrow struck the chest of noble Gorgythion, Priam's

good son, who had been born of a woman married off from the home of Aisyme, lovely Kastianeira, with beauty like the gods. Just as in a garden a poppy, heavy with fruit and the spring rains, drops its head to one side, in the same way Gorgythion’s head, heavy with his helmet, dropped down.

And Teukros shot another arrow from the string, straight against Hektor, and his heart was eager to smite him. Yet he missed once again, for Apollo turned the arrow away. But Archeptolemos, Hektor’s bold charioteer, was struck on the breast beside the nipple as he rushed into battle. So he fell from his chariot, and his swift-footed horses swerved aside, and there his soul and spirit were undone. Then terrible grief took hold of Hektor’s soul for his charioteer’s sake; yet he left him, though he grieved for his comrade, and commanded Kebriones his brother, being close by, to take the chariot reins, and he heard and obeyed. And he himself leaped to the earth from the shining chariot, with a terrible shout, and in his hand he picked up a stone and went straight for Teukros, and his heart longed to strike him. Now Teukros had picked out from his quiver a sharp arrow and put it to the string, but just as he drew it back, Hektor of the shining helmet smote him with the jagged stone, as he aimed eagerly against him, right beside his shoulder, where the collar-bone separates neck and breast, and where the most vulnerable spot is, and his bow string broke, and his hand from the wrist down grew numb, and he stayed fallen upon his knee, and his bow dropped from his hand. But Aias saw his brother’s fall and ran and stood above him and hid him with his shield. Then two trusty comrades bent down to him, Mekisteus, son of Echios and noble Alastor, and carried him, groaning terribly, to the hollow ships.

And once again the Olympian roused the spirit of the Trojans. So they drove the Achaians straight toward the deep trench, and among the foremost Hektor went, exulting in his strength. Just as when a hound behind a wild boar or lion, with swift feet pursuing him, snaps at him, at his side or buttock, and watches for him as he turns, so Hektor pressed hard against the flowing-haired Achaians, slaying the slower ones, and they fled on. But when they had passed,

fleeing, through the wall and trench, many had fallen under the Trojans' hands; then they stopped and remained beside the ships, calling to each other, and, lifting up their hands to all the gods, each man prayed urgently. But Hektor wheeled his lovely-maned steeds this way and that, and his eyes were like the eyes of the Gorgon or of Ares, the curse of mortals.

Zeus Stops the Goddesses

Now at the sight of them, the white-armed goddess Hera had compassion and soon spoke winged words to Athene: "For shame, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, shall we two not give any more thought to the Danaans who perish for the last time? Now they will fill up the measure of evil destiny and be destroyed by one man's onslaught, since he is furious now beyond endurance, this Hektor, son of Priam, and indeed has already done many terrible things."

And the bright-eyed goddess Athene answered her: "Yes indeed, may this fellow lose his strength and his life and perish at the Argives' hands in his native land; but my own father is furious, with evil intentions, stubborn, full of evil, hindering my purposes. Nor does he remember all those many times that I saved his son when nearly overcome by the task laid on him by Eurystheus. For he would cry sorrowfully toward heaven, and Zeus would send me swiftly forth from heaven to help him. If I had only known all this in the wisdom of my heart when Eurystheus sent him to the house of Hades, the Keeper of the Gate, to bring from Erebus the hound of hated Hades, then he would not have escaped the steep stream of the water of Styx. But now Zeus hates me, and he fulfills the desires of Thetis, who kissed his knees and with her hand held his beard, begging him to honor Achilles, destroyer of cities. Indeed, the day may come when he shall again call me his bright-eyed darling. But now make ready our swift-footed horses, while I enter the palace of aegis-bearing Zeus and clothe myself in my armor for battle, so that

I may see if Priam’s son Hektor of the shining helmet shall be happy to see two amid the battle. Surely many a Trojan shall likewise feed the dogs and birds with their own fat and flesh, fallen dead at the ships of the Achaians.”

So she spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera did not ignore her. So Hera, the goddess queen, daughter of great Kronos, went her way and harnessed the golden-clad horses, and Athene, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, dropped down at her father’s threshold her woven, many-colored robe, which she herself had made and her hands had fashioned, and she put on the tunic of Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, and dressed herself in her armor for terrible battle. She set her foot upon the flaming chariot and grasped her heavy spear, great and stout, with which she vanquished the ranks of men, heroes with whom she of the great father is angry. Then Hera swiftly whipped the horses with the lash. The gates of heaven opened, self-moving, groaning upon their hinges—the gates of heaven guarded by the Hours to whom are entrusted great heaven and Olympus, to blow away the thick clouds or bring them on. There through the gates they guided their horses, who patiently bore the whip.

But when Father Zeus saw all this from Ida, he was terribly angry and swiftly sent golden-winged Iris to carry a message: “Go your way, swift Iris, and turn them back and do not allow them to face me, for not in a pleasant way would we join in combat. For I will declare this, and it will be fulfilled: I will maim their swift horses pulling the chariot, and I will hurl them out of the chariot and will break it in pieces; they shall not be healed of the wounds caused by my thunderbolt in the space of ten years, that the bright-eyed one may know the result of striving against her father. But I am not so indignant or angry with Hera, since it is always her way to go against me, no matter what I decree.”

So he spoke, and storm-footed Iris arose to carry the message and departed from the mountains of Ida to high Olympus. And at the very entrance of the gates of many-folded Olympus she met them and stopped them and she gave them the words of Zeus, saying: “Where are you rushing? Why are your hearts furious within

your breasts? The son of Kronos forbids you to help the Argives. For this is what the son of Kronos threatens, just as he will fulfill it: that is, he will maim your swift horses in the chariot, and he will hurl you out of the chariot and break the chariot in pieces, and not in the space of ten years will you be healed of the wounds that the thunderbolt shall cause, in order that you, bright-eyed goddess, may know the result when you strive against your father. But with Hera he is not so indignant or angry, since she is always trying to thwart him, whatever he has decreed. But you are most bold indeed, reckless vixen, if you dare to lift your huge spear in the face of Zeus.”

So spoke storm-footed Iris and departed, but Hera spoke to Athene and said: “Come, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, I truly would not have us war against Zeus any more for the sake of mortals. Let one man die and another live as the lot falls. As for Zeus, let him consider for himself in his heart and render judgment for Trojans and for Danaans, as he thinks best.”

So saying, she turned back her sure-footed horses. Then the Hours unyoked their beautifully-maned horses and tethered them to their mangers full of ambrosia and leaned the chariots against the shining walls of the gateway, and the goddesses sat on their golden thrones amidst the throng of all the gods and were grieved in their hearts. And Father Zeus drove his smooth-wheeled chariot and horses from Ida to Olympus and came into the assembly of the gods. The noble Shaker of the Earth unyoked the horses for him too and set the chariot upon its stand and spread a cloth over it, and far-seeing Zeus himself sat upon his golden throne, and beneath his feet great Olympus quaked. Only Athene and Hera sat apart from Zeus and spoke no word to him or questioned him. But he was aware of this in his heart and said: “Why are you angry, Athene and Hera? Surely you are not weary of wreaking havoc in glorious battle with the Trojans, for whom you cherish such bitter hate! However that might be, since that my might is so great and my hands invincible, all the gods that are in Olympus could not turn me back, and as for you two, trembling would have taken hold of your fair limbs before you ever saw war and its terrible deeds. For this I will declare, and just so would

it have been fulfilled: once struck with my thunderbolt, you would never have returned on your chariots back to Olympos where the gods live.”

So he spoke, and Athene and Hera muttered as they sat by him devising evils for the Trojans. Now Athene kept silent and said nothing, for anger at Father Zeus, and fierce anger took hold of her. But Hera’s heart could not contain her anger, and she spoke: “Most dread son of Kronos, what is this you have said? We know well that your might is in no way small, yet we still pity the Danaan spearmen, who shall now perish and fill up the measure of sorrowful fate. Yet we will refrain from battle, if you command us, but we will give counsel to the Argives, of whatever kind will help them, so that they do not all perish from your anger.”

And Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer answered and said: “O Hera, ox-eyed queen, in the morning you shall see the most mighty son of Kronos wreaking even more havoc on the great army of Argive spearmen, if you can stand it, for reckless Hektor shall not refrain from battle till Peleus’ swift-footed son has arisen beside the ships, on that day when these Argives shall fight amid the sterns of the ships in most terrible stress, around fallen Patroklos. Such is the doom sent from heaven. And I care nothing for your anger, not even if you go to the farthest bounds of earth and sea, where Iapetos and Kronos sit and never have the pleasure of the beams of Hyperion the sun-god, nor in any breeze, but deep Tartaros surrounds them. Though you should wander till you go even that far, still I would care nothing for your anger, since there is nothing more shameful than you.”

So he spoke, but white-armed Hera said no word to him. And the sun’s bright light dropped into Ocean, drawing black night across Earth, the grain-giver. Against the Trojans’ will daylight departed, but the coming of murky night was welcome, three times prayed for, to the Achaians.

Nightfall and Trojan Watchfires

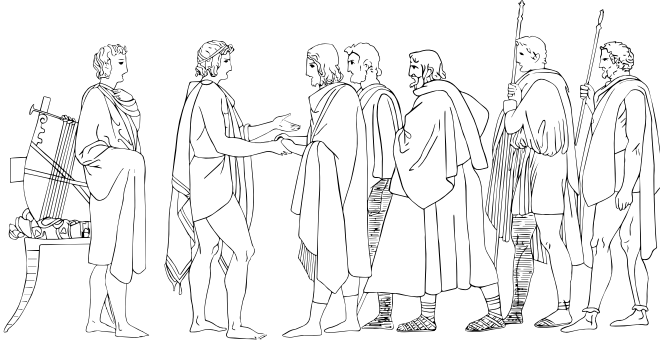
Now glorious Hektor assembled the Trojans, taking them away from the ships, beside the eddying river, in an open space where they found a spot clear of the dead bodies. And they came down from their chariots to hear the word that Hektor, dear to Zeus, proclaimed. He held in his hand his spear, eleven cubits long; before his face gleamed the spear-head of bronze, and a ring of gold ran round about it. He leaned on the spear and spoke to the Trojans, saying: "Listen to me, Trojans and Dardanians and allies. I thought just now that we would make havoc of the ships and all the Achaians and depart back again to windy Ilios, but dusk came too soon, and that is what has now saved the Argives and the ships beside the beach of the sea. So let us yield now to black night, and make our supper ready; unyoke from the chariots your fair-maned horses and set fodder beside them. And from the city quickly bring oxen and sheep and provide yourselves with honey-hearted wine and with grain from your houses and gather wood too, so that all night long until early-springing dawn we may burn many fires, and the gleam may reach to heaven, lest perhaps by night the flowing-haired Achaians strive to take flight over the broad back of the sea. Truly they must not embark upon their ships easily, but see that many of them have a wound to nurse at home, being struck with an arrow or keen-pointed spear as he leaps upon his ship, so that many other men may dread to wage grievous war on the horse-taming men of Troy. And let the heralds, dear to Zeus, proclaim throughout the city that young maidens and old men of grey heads camp round the city on the battlements, built by the gods, and let each woman burn a great fire in her hall and set a vigilant watch, lest an ambush enter the city when the host is absent. Let it be as I proclaim, Trojans; let the sound counsel that I have spoken stand. I will say more at dawn amongst the horse-taming men of Troy. I pray with good hope to Zeus and all the gods that we may drive away these dogs carried here in their black ships by the fates. Nevertheless, for this night we will guard ourselves, and at daybreak,

arrayed in our armor, let us awake sharp battle at the hollow ships. I will know whether ‘Tydeus’ son, stalwart Diomedes, shall thrust me from the ships back to the wall, or I shall lay him low with my spear and bear away his bloody spoils. Tomorrow he shall prove his valor—he shall prove whether he can stand the onslaught of my spear. But he among the foremost shall lie stricken, I think, and many of his comrades too shall lie dead around their lord at the rising of tomorrow’s sun. If only I were immortal and ageless all my days and honored as Athene and Apollo are honored, as surely as this day brings evil to the Argives.”

So Hektor spoke, and the Trojans thundered applause. And they freed their sweating horses from the yoke and tethered them with cords, each man beside his chariot; and from the city they quickly brought oxen and sheep with speed and provided themselves with honey-hearted wine and grain from their houses and gathered wood too, and they sacrificed to the immortals great sacrifices. And from the plain the winds bore up to heaven the sweet smell. But the blessed gods took no pleasure in it and refused it, for they deeply hated holy Ilios and Priam and the people of Priam of the good ashen spear.

But with high hopes the Trojans sat all night along the pathways of the battle, and their watchfires burned in multitudes. Just as when in the heavens the stars around the bright moon shine clearly, when the air is still, and all the peaks appear and the tall headlands and glades, and from heaven the infinite air spills out, and all the stars are seen, and the shepherd’s heart is glad—in the same way the watchfires that the Trojans kindled in front of Ilios shone in multitudes between the ships and the streams of Xanthos. A thousand fires burned in the plain, and fifty men sat by the side of each one in the gleam of blazing fire. And the horses champed white barley and spelt and, standing by their chariots, they waited for Dawn to take her throne.

Book IX: The Embassy to Achilles



The Embassy to Achilles

So the Trojans kept watch. But the Achaians were gripped by terrible panic and by freezing fear, and all their best men were stricken to the heart with unbearable grief. Just as two winds stir up the sea, the home of fishes, the north wind and the west wind that blow from Thrace, coming suddenly, and the dark wave suddenly lifts up its crest and casts much seaweed out along the shore—just so were the Achaians’ spirits troubled in their breasts.

But the son of Atreus was stricken to the heart with sorrowful grief and went about commanding the clear-voiced heralds to summon every man by name to the assembly, but not to shout loudly, and he himself took the lead in the work. So they sat sorrowfully in assembly, and Agamemnon stood up, weeping like a fountain of dark water that from a craggy cliff pours down its black stream; in the same way with deep groaning he spoke among the Argives and said: “My friends, leaders and captains of the Argives, Zeus, son of Kronos, has strongly bound me in terrible blindness of soul. He is hard of heart, because earlier he promised and gave his pledge that I would not leave until I had devastated strong-walled Ilios, but now he has played a cruel trick and wants me to return in dishonor to

Argos with the loss of many of my people. Such seems to me to be the desire of most mighty Zeus, who has laid low the kings of many cities; yes, and he will do so to many more, for his power is highest. So come, let us all do as I suggest; let us flee with our ships to our dear native land, for now we shall never take wide-wayed Troy.”

So he spoke, and they all held their peace and kept quiet. For a long time the sons of the Achaians were silent with grief, but at last Diomedes of the loud war-cry spoke among them and said: “Son of Atreus, I will be first to argue with your folly, where it is right, here in the assembly, O king; do not be angry with me for it. It was my courage that you blamed most of all among the Danaans, and you said that I was no man of war but a coward, and all this the Argives know, both young and old. But the son of crooked-counseling Kronos has blessed you only halfway; he granted you to have the honor of the scepter above all men, but he did not give you courage, where the highest power is. Do you think that the sons of the Achaians are indeed cowards and weaklings as you say? If your own heart is set on departing, then go; the way is before you, and your ships stand beside the sea, the multitude that followed you from Mykenai. But all the other flowing-haired Achaians will stay here until we devastate Troy. In fact, let all the rest also flee on their ships to their dear native land; yet we two, I and Sthenelos, will fight till we achieve the goal of Ilios; for we have come with the help of the gods.”

So he spoke, and all the sons of the Achaians shouted aloud, applauding the words of horse-taming Diomedes. Then lordly Nestor arose and said among them: “Son of Tydeus, in battle you are exceedingly powerful, and in council you are the best among your equals in years; none of all the Achaians will make light of your word nor speak against it; but you have not said all that needs to be said. Furthermore, you are a young man indeed, and might even be my son, my youngest-born, yet you wisely counsel the princes of the Achaians, because you speak rightly. But listen: I who proclaim myself older than you will speak forth and explain the whole matter, and no man shall despise my words, not even Lord Agamemnon. A tribeless, lawless, homeless man is the man who loves bitter civil strife. Neverthe-

less, let us yield now to black night and make our meal ready, and let the watchmen arrange themselves along the deep-dug moat outside the wall; this command I give to the young men. But you, son of Atreus, lead the way, for you are the highest king; lay out a feast for the councilors, for that is your role and appropriate for you. Your huts are full of the wine that the ships of the Achaians bring you every day from Thrace across the wide sea; all entertainment is for you to see to, since you are king over many. In the great assemblies, you should listen to him who gives the most excellent counsel. All the Achaians have great need of whatever is good and prudent, because close by the ships our enemies are burning their watch-fires in multitudes; what man can rejoice at that? This night shall either destroy or save our people.”

So he spoke, and they gladly listened to him and obeyed. Out went the watchmen in their gear, around Thrasymedes, Nestor’s son, shepherd of the people, and Askalaphos and Ialmenos, sons of Ares, and Meriones and Aphareus and Deïpyros and Kreion’s son, noble Lykomedes. There were seven captains of the watchmen, and with each went a hundred young men carrying their long spears in their hands, and they took up their posts midway between the moat and the wall, and each man kindled a fire and prepared his meal.

Then the son of Atreus gathered the counselors of the Achaians and led them to his dwelling and spread before them an abundant feast. So they reached out their hands to the good things that lay before them. And when they had put away from them the desire for food and drink, then the old man, Nestor, began to weave his counsel, for his memory of old time was considered the best. With good intention toward them, he spoke to them and said: “Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, in your name I will end and with your name begin, because you are king over many peoples, and to your hand Zeus has entrusted both scepter and law, that you may take counsel on behalf of your people. So it is proper for you even more than others both to speak and to listen and to accomplish what another man says, when that man’s heart urges him to speak for your benefit. Wherever you lead, all will follow you, so I will speak as it

seems best to me. No other man shall have a better idea than this one that I have had in mind since the day when you, O heaven-sprung king, went and took the girl Briseis away from angry Achilles' hut without our approval. In fact, I very strongly tried to dissuade you, but you gave in to your proud spirit, and you dishonored a man of valor whom even the immortals honored, for you took and kept from him his reward for valor. Still, let us now consider how we may appease him and persuade him with gifts of friendship and kindly words."

Agamemnon's Offer

And Agamemnon, king of men, answered and said to him: "Old sir, you are not wrong to accuse my folly. I was a fool, I do not deny it. He whom Zeus loves in his heart is worth many men, just as now he honors this man and destroys the people of the Achaians. But since I was a fool in that I yielded to my blameworthy passion, I will make amends and give a recompense beyond words. In the midst of you all I will name the excellent gifts: seven tripods, untouched by fire, and ten talents of gold and twenty gleaming cauldrons and twelve sturdy horses, winners in the race, that have taken prizes by their speed. Not lacking in wealth or unrewarded with precious gold would be that man whose riches were as great as the prizes my sure-footed horses have carried off for me. And I will give seven women, skilled in excellent handiwork, women of Lesbos whom I picked out from the spoils the day that he himself took strong-walled Lesbos, women surpassing all other women in beauty. These will I give him, and with them shall be the one I took from him, the daughter of Briseus. Furthermore, I will swear a great oath that I never went to her bed nor lay with her as is the way of men and women. All these things shall be set before him immediately; and if hereafter the gods grant us to lay waste the great city of Priam, then let him come in when we Achaians divide the spoil and load his ship full of gold and bronze and choose for himself twenty Trojan women, the fairest there are after Helen of

Argos. And if we return to that richest of lands, Achaian Argos, he shall be my son, and I will hold him in equal honor with Orestes, my young boy who is nurtured in great abundance. I have three daughters in my well-built hall, Chrysothemis and Laodike and Iphianassa; let him take whichever of them he wishes, without a bride-price, to Peleus' house; and I will add a great dowry such as no man ever yet gave with his daughter. And I will give him seven well-populated cities, Kardamyle and Enope and grassy Hire and holy Pherai and Antheia, deep in meadows, and lovely Aipeia and Pedasos, land of vineyards. And all are close to the salt sea, on the farthest border of sandy Pylos; men dwell there who abound in flocks and cattle, men who will worship him with their gifts as though he were a god, and beneath his sway they will fulfill all his fruitful commands. All this I will accomplish if only he will cease from his anger. Let him yield; I think Hades is not capable of being softened or overcome, and therefore he is most hateful of all the gods to us mortals. So let him be ruled by me, since I am the greater king and know that I am older in years."

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered and said: "Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, these gifts which you offer King Achilles are not to be lightly esteemed. So come then, let us send forth some chosen men to go quickly to the dwelling of Peleus' son Achilles. Whomever I choose, let them agree to do this. First let Phoinix, dear to Zeus, lead the way, and after him great Aias and noble Odysseus; and let Odios and Eurybates accompany them as heralds. And now bring water for our hands and urge everyone to keep holy silence, so that we may pray to Zeus, the son of Kronos, in hopes that he will have mercy on us."

So he spoke, and his words were very pleasing to all. Immediately the heralds poured water on their hands, and the young men filled the bowls with drink and gave to each man his portion after they had poured the offering from the cups. And when they had made the offering and drunk to their hearts' content, they went out from the dwelling of Agamemnon, son of Atreus. And lordly Nestor of Gerenia gave

them full instructions, looking at each one, and most of all at Odysseus, about how they should attempt to prevail on Peleus' noble son.

So the two¹ went along the shore of the loud-sounding sea, making urgent prayer to the Earth-Embracer, the Shaker of the Earth, that they might prevail easily on the great heart of the descendant of Aiakos. So they came to the shelters and ships of the Myrmidons, and found their king taking pleasure in a loud lyre, beautiful, of fine workmanship, with a silver crossbar upon it; one that he had taken from the spoils when he laid waste to Eëtion's city. He was delighting his soul in it and singing the glories of heroes. And opposite him sat Patroklos, alone in silence, watching till Aiakos' grandson should stop singing. So the two came forward, and noble Odysseus led the way, and they stood before him, and Achilles sprang up amazed with the lyre in his hand and left the seat where he was sitting, and Patroklos arose also when he saw the men. Then swift-footed Achilles greeted them and said: "Welcome! Truly you who have come are my friends. My need is great, and you are the dearest of the Achaians to me in my anger."

So spoke noble Achilles and brought them in, and made them sit on stools and on carpets of purple; and he spoke to Patroklos, who was close by: "Bring out a larger bowl, son of Menoitios; mix stronger drink and prepare for each man a cup, for these who are under my roof are the dearest of men."

So he spoke, and Patroklos obeyed his dear friend. He laid down a great butcher block in the firelight and put onto it a sheep's back

1 The word "two" is not a mistake but is actually in the original Greek, though there are clearly five members of the embassy to Achilles who have been mentioned (Odysseus, Phoenix, Aias, and the two heralds). In Homeric Greek, there is, besides the singular form for verbs (used when one agent does the action of a verb) and the plural form (when two or more agents are involved), a dual form used for specifically two agents. It's not common in Homer but it is the form used here for the verb "to go" and it is used several times in the paragraph—and then Homer stops using it. This problem is inextricably wound up in the never-ending debates about whether Homer composed by using previously-existing traditional stories or fragments (which in this case might have involved embassies of only two men and Homer forgetting to change the verb or simply bowing to the weight of verbal tradition even when he added more men to the story—this is one among many theories) or whether everything he wrote was original (in which case he simply made a mistake—but why?). I could have simplified things by changing the word to "three" or "they" but this is more fun—and because leaving the "mistake" in is more Homeric.

and that of a fat goat and a great hog's backbone, rich with fat. And Automedon held them for him while Achilles carved the meat. He sliced the meat well and pierced it through with spits, and Menoitios' son, that godlike hero, made the fire burn high. Then when the fire was burned down and the flame waned, he scattered the embers and laid the spits over them, resting them on the spit-racks, when he had sprinkled them with holy salt. Then when he had roasted the meat and distributed it in the platters, Patroklos took bread and placed it out on the table in lovely baskets, and Achilles distributed the meat. And he sat opposite godlike Odysseus, on the other wall, and told his comrade Patroklos to make the sacrifice to the gods. So he tossed the first pieces into the fire. Then they reached out their hands to the good things in front of them.

Odysseus' Speech and Achilles' Answer

And when they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, Aias nodded to Phoinix. But noble Odysseus noticed it and filled a cup with wine and toasted Achilles: "Hail, O Achilles! We do not lack a glorious feast either in the shelter of Agamemnon or now in yours; there is abundance for feasting to our heart's content, but our thoughts are not about the delicious feast; no, we see terrible destruction, beloved of Zeus, and are afraid. Now it is not certain whether we will save the benched ships or see them destroyed, if you do not show your might. The high-hearted Trojans and their illustrious allies have pitched their camps very close to our ships and fortification wall, and they have kindled many campfires throughout their army, and they are sure that they will no longer be held off but will fall upon our black ships. And Zeus, son of Kronos, shows them signs on the right hand by lightning, and Hektor rejoices greatly in his power and rages furiously, trusting in Zeus, and does not care about either god or man, for a tremendous madness has possessed him. He prays for bright Dawn to shine forth quickly, for he has

declared that he will cut off the flags from the tops of our ships and will set fire to the hulls with devouring flame, and so to wreak havoc on the Achaians bewildered by the smoke. So I am very afraid in my heart that the gods will fulfill his boasts, and that our fate will be to be destroyed here in Troy-land, far from Argos, pasture-land of horses. Arise, then, if you are willing even at this last moment to save the suffering sons of the Achaians from the war-thunder of the Trojans. You yourself will grieve soon, and when the damage is done there will be no way to find a cure for it. Instead, while there is time, consider how to ward off the evil from the Danaans. My friend, surely your father Peleus gave to you a command on the day he sent you to Agamemnon from Phthia: ‘My son, Athene and Hera will give you strength if they wish; but you must restrain the proud spirit in your breast, for gentle-mindedness is better. Keep away from disaster-causing strife, so that the Argives may honor you even more, both young and old.’ In this way the old man commanded you, but you have forgotten. Yet yield now, and give up your terrible anger; Agamemnon offers you worthy gifts if you will cease from your anger. Listen to me, and I will tell you all the gifts that Agamemnon promised you in his shelter: seven tripods, untouched by fire, and ten talents of gold and twenty gleaming cauldrons and twelve stout horses, winners in the race, that have taken prizes by their speed. No one would lack wealth, or be poor in gold, who owned riches as great as the prizes Agamemnon’s horses have carried off for him. And he will give seven women, skilled in excellent handiwork, women of Lesbos whom he himself chose from the spoils the day that you yourself captured Lesbos, women surpassing all other women in beauty. These he will give to you, and with them shall be the one whom earlier he took from you, the daughter of Briseus; moreover he will swear a great oath that he never went to her bed nor lay with her as is the way of men and women. All these things shall be set immediately before you; and if hereafter the gods grant us to lay waste the great city of Priam, then you shall come in when we Achaians divide the spoil, and load your ship full of gold and bronze and choose for yourself twenty Trojan women, the fairest there are after Helen of Argos.

And if we return to that richest of lands, Achaian Argos, you shall be his son, and he will hold you in equal honor with Orestes, his young boy who is nurtured in great abundance. He has three daughters in his well-built hall, Chrysothemis and Laodike and Iphianassa; take whichever of them you wish, without a bride-price, to Peleus' house; and he will add a great dowry such as no man ever yet gave with his daughter. And he will give you seven well-populated cities, Kardamyle and Enope and grassy Hire and holy Pherai and Antheia, deep in meadows, and lovely Aipeia and Pedasos, land of vineyards. And all are close to the salt sea, on the farthest border of sandy Pylos; men dwell there who abound in flocks and cattle, men who will worship you with their gifts as though you were a god, and beneath your sway they will fulfill all your fruitful commands. All this Agamemnon will accomplish if only you will cease from your anger. But even if Agamemnon is too hateful to your heart, both he and his gifts, have pity on all the Achaians who faint from weariness throughout the army; they will honor you as a god, for truly you will earn extremely great glory at their hands. You might now even slay Hektor, for he would come very close to you in his deadly madness, because he thinks that there is no man like him among the Danaans whom the ships brought here."

Swift-footed Achilles answered and said to him: "Heaven-sprung son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, openly I must now declare to you my answer, just as I am thinking and as it must be, so that you may not sit before me and coax me this way and that. For as hateful to me as the gates of hell is that man who hides one thing in his heart but utters another. So I will speak what seems best to me. I do not think that Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shall persuade me, nor shall the other Danaans, since we have received no thanks for continually fighting with the enemy without rest. He who remains at home has an equal share with him who fights his hardest, and both the coward and the brave are held in equal honor. Death comes equally to the idle and to the one who works constantly. I have had no profit for all the suffering of soul I have endured, always risking my life in battle. Just as a hen brings her unfeathered chicks each morsel of food when she finds it, but gets very little herself, in the same way

I used to stand watch many a sleepless night and pass many bloody days in battle, warring with others for the sake of their women. I have laid waste twelve cities of men from my ships and eleven from land, throughout deep-soiled Troy-land, I tell you; out of all these I took many valuable treasures and brought them all to Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and he, staying behind among the fast ships, would take them and hand out a little but keep most for himself. Some he gave to be rewards of honor to the princes and the kings, and theirs are left untouched; but from me out of all the Achaians he took my beloved woman and keeps her. Let him sleep beside her and take his pleasure! But why must the Argives make war on the Trojans? Why has the son of Atreus gathered his people and led them here? Is it not for the sake of lovely-haired Helen? But are the sons of Atreus the only mortal men who love their wives? Surely whatever man is good and sound of mind loves his own wife and cherishes her, just as I loved mine with all my heart, even though she was only a captive because of my spear. But now that he has taken my reward of honor from my arms and has deceived me, let him not tempt me, for I know him very well; he will not succeed. No, Odysseus, let him take counsel with you and all the princes to ward off from the ships the consuming fire. Indeed without my aid he has accomplished many things; he has built a wall and dug a moat around it wide and deep and set sharp stakes in it; yet even so he cannot stop murderous Hektor's might. But so long as I was fighting among the Achaians, Hektor had no desire to conduct his battle far from the city wall, but only came as far as the Skaian gates and the oak tree; there once he awaited me alone and barely escaped my attack. But now, since I have no desire to fight with noble Hektor, tomorrow I will make a sacrifice to Zeus and all the gods and provision my ships well when I have launched them on the salt sea, and then, if you wish and care about the matter at all, you will see my ships sailing at break of day over the Hellespont, the fishes' home, and my men eagerly at the oars; and if the great Shaker of the Earth grants me a good journey, on the third day I shall reach deep-soiled Phthia. There my great possessions remain which I left when I came here only to suffer; and I will bring yet more

gold and ruddy bronze from here, and lovely-robed women, and dark iron, at least all that were my share; only my reward of honor which Agamemnon gave me has been taken back again in his spitefulness, that so-called Lord Agamemnon, son of Atreus. Tell him everything I have said, publicly, so that all the Achaians may also be angry at him, in case he hopes to trick yet some other Danaan, for he is always clothed in shamelessness. Indeed he would not dare to look in my face, though he is brazen as a dog. I will not counsel with him nor conduct any dealings, because he has utterly betrayed me and done wickedly. But he will never again take me in with his smooth speech; this once is enough. Let him leave quietly; Zeus, the Lord of counsel, has taken away his wits. His offered gifts are hateful to him and he is nothing to me. Not even if he gave me ten times, or twenty, of all that now is his and all that may come to him, even all the treasure of Orchomenos or Egyptian Thebes where the treasure-houses are stored fullest—Thebes of the hundred gates, out of each of which ride two hundred warriors with horses and chariots—no, nor even gifts as countless as the sand or dust—not even with this will Agamemnon persuade me until he has paid me back for all the bitterness he has caused me. And the daughter of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, I will never wed, not even if she were the rival of golden Aphrodite for beauty and matched bright-eyed Athene in handiwork—not even then would I wed her. Let him choose another one of the Achaians that is his equal and more kingly than I am. For if the gods indeed preserve me and I come to my home, then Peleus himself will find for me a wife. There are many Achaian girls throughout Hellans and Phthia, daughters of the princes who guard their cities; whoever of these that I wish I will make my beloved lady. Very often my noble soul was moved to take from there a wife, a helpmeet for me, and to delight in the possessions that the old man Peleus possesses. For I do not consider to be worth my life all the wealth that men say was possessed by the well-peopled city of Ilios in peaceful days of old, before the sons of the Achaians came, nor all the treasure that the stone threshold of the archer Phoibos Apollo encompasses in rocky Pytho. For cattle and fair flocks can be gained by battle, and tripods

and chestnut horses by buying, but to bring back a man's life neither battle nor buying helps when once it has passed the barrier of his lips. For this my goddess mother tells me, Thetis the silver-footed, that two fates are bearing me toward death. If I stay here and besiege the Trojans' city, then my returning home is taken from me, but my fame shall be imperishable; but if I go home to my dear native land, my high fame is taken from me, but my life will endure a long while, and death will not soon reach me. Moreover I would counsel you all to set sail homeward, since you will never reach your goal of conquering high Ilios; it is certain that far-seeing Zeus holds his hand over her and that her people are courageous. So go your way and give my answer to the princes of the Achaians, as is the function of elder counselors, so that they may plan in their hearts some other, better counsel, something that will save their ships and the people among the hollow ships, since this plan they have created is no help to them because of my anger. But let Phoinix now stay with us and rest, so that he may come with me on my ships to our dear native land tomorrow, if he wishes; for I will not take him against his will."

Phoinix's Speech and Achilles' Answer

So he spoke, and they all held their peace and were still and were amazed at his words, for he had rejected them forcefully. But at last the old King Phoinix spoke to them, bursting into tears, because he was terribly afraid for the ships of the Achaians, and he said: "If indeed you are considering leaving, glorious Achilles, and have no desire at all to save the fast ships from consuming fire because of the anger in your heart, how can I be left alone without you, dear son? The old King Peleus sent me to you on the day he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon, when you were only a youth still unskilled in combat and in debate where men show themselves strongest. So he sent me to teach you all these things, to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds. So I do not wish to be left alone by you, dear

son, not even if god himself were to decide to take years off my life and make me fresh and young as in the day when first I left Hellas, the home of lovely women, fleeing from the conflict with my father, Amyntor, the son of Ormenos. He was terribly angry with me because of his lovely-haired concubine, whom he loved, and, in so doing, wronged his wife. So my mother begged me continually at my knees to sleep with the concubine, so that she might come to despise the old man. I listened to her and did the deed; but my father was immediately aware of it and cursed me furiously and called upon the terrifying Furies to see to it that no dear son sprung from my body should ever sit on my knees. The gods—yes, Zeus of the underworld himself and dreadful Persephone—fulfilled his curse. Then I plotted to slaughter him with the sharp sword, but some immortal stopped my anger, calling to my mind the voice of the people and the reproaches of all men, lest I should be called a father-slayer among the Achaians. Then the soul in my breast could no longer bear to remain in the halls of my furious father. But my friends and my kinsmen gathered around me with many prayers and kept me there within the halls and slaughtered many fine sheep and shambling cattle with crooked horns; and many swine rich with fat were stretched out to be singed over the flames of Hephaistos, and wine from that old man's jars was drunk without limit. For nine nights they slept, all around me; they kept watch in turn, and the fires were never allowed to die down, one beneath the colonnade of the fenced courtyard and another in the porch in front of the chamber doors. But when the tenth dark night came upon me, then I broke through the carefully constructed chamber doors and ran out and leaped lightly over the courtyard fence, unseen by watchmen and serving-girls. Then I fled far through Hellas' wide meadows and came to deep-soiled Phthia, mother of flocks, and to King Peleus. He welcomed me kindly and cherished me as a father cherishes his only son, his young heir to great possessions; and he made me rich and put me over many people, and I dwelt in the farthest part of Phthia and was king over the Dolopians. Yes, I reared you to this greatness, godlike Achilles, with my heart's love; you would go to the feasts with no one else but me,

nor would you eat anything in the great hall till I had set you upon my knees and fed you with the tasty morsels I cut off for you first and raised the wine cup to your lips. How often you stained the tunic on my breast with the wine you spit up in your infant helplessness! I suffered much for you and worked hard for you, aware that the gods refused to give me any offspring of my own body, but I made you my son, godlike Achilles, in order that you might save me from ruin.

“Therefore, Achilles, curb your pride; it is unseemly for you to have a pitiless heart. No, the gods themselves can bend, and they are higher in majesty and honor and might. Men, whenever they transgress and sin, can soften the hearts of the gods by incense and reverent vows and drink offerings and burnt offerings. Moreover, contrite prayers are the daughters of great Zeus, stumbling and wrinkled, with down-cast eyes, and their task is to follow after Sin. For Sin is strong and swift of foot, and so she outruns all prayers and goes ahead of them all over the earth making men fall, and the Prayers follow behind to heal the harm. Now whoever reverences Zeus’ daughters when they draw near to him, they bless him and hear his prayers; but when a man denies them and stubbornly rejects them, then they depart and pray to Zeus, the son of Kronos, that more sin might come upon that man, that he might fall and pay the price.

“No, Achilles, see to it that you give the reverence to the daughters of Zeus that bend the heart of all right-minded men. For if the son of Atreus had not offered you gifts and promised more later but continued to be furiously angry, then I would not be the man to urge you to give up your anger and save the Argives, even though they need you badly. But now he both offers you many gifts immediately and promises more later and has sent great heroes to plead with you, the best men chosen from throughout the people of the Achaians and that are the dearest of all Argives to me. Do not dishonor their petitions nor their journey here, even though before this it was not wrong for you to be angry. In the same way we have heard the stories of those heroes of old: no matter how often furious anger would come upon them, they could be won over by gifts and persuaded by words.

“I have in mind a story from long ago, not from recent days, just as it happened, and I will tell it to you all who are my friends. The Kouretes and the staunch Aitolians fought and slaughtered each other over the city of Kalydon, the Aitolians defending lovely Kalydon and the Kouretes eager to lay it waste in war. For Artemis of the golden throne had brought a plague upon them, in anger that Oineus had not offered her the first-fruits of the rich harvest of his garden land; for all the other gods had been given their share of great sacrifices, but he had not given them to the daughter of great Zeus, whether he had forgotten or not noticed, and in this he sinned grievously in his heart. So the Archer-goddess was furious and sent against him a ferocious wild boar, white-tusked, that continually caused terrible damage to Oineus’ garden land; he uprooted and leveled many a tall fruit tree, root and branch. But Meleagros, the son of Oineus, slew him, having gathered together from many cities huntsmen and hounds; for the boar could not be slain by only a few men, he was so powerful, and he sent many men to the sorrowful funeral pyre. But the goddess caused a great turmoil between the Kouretes and the great-hearted Aitolians over him and over the boar’s head and shaggy hide. So long as Meleagros, dear to Ares, fought, things went badly with the Kouretes, and they dared not face him outside their city walls, in spite of their great numbers. But when Meleagros was suddenly overcome by anger, the kind that swells the hearts of others also in their breasts no matter how wise of mind they are, then in anger of heart at his dear mother, Althaia, he lingered beside his wedded wife, fair Kleopatra, daughter of Marpessa, who herself was the lovely daughter of Euenos and of Idas, the strongest of men that then lived upon the earth—it was he who took his bow to face the god Phoibos Apollo for the sake of the lovely girl nicknamed Alkyone by her father and mother in their house, because her mother wept like the sad halcyon bird when the Archer Phoibos Apollo snatched her away. By Kleopatra’s side Meleagros lay, brooding on his terrible anger, being furious because of his mother’s curses. For she, grieving over the death of her brothers, prayed urgently to the gods and beat violently on the fertile earth with her fists, while she knelt on her knees and drenched

her bosom with tears, calling on Hades and dread Persephone to cause her son to die. And Erinys, who walks in darkness, whose heart knows no pity, heard her from Erebos.

“Now the thunder of the enemy at their gates had rapidly risen, and the noise of the battering of towers; so the elders of the Aitolians sent the best of the sacred priests and begged Meleagros to come out and save them, promising a mighty gift; they told him to choose for himself a fine domain of fifty acres, half vineyards and half cropland, to be marked out from where the plain of beautiful Kalydon was richest. And old lordly Oineus begged him urgently and stood at the threshold of his high-roofed chamber and shook the locked doors to beseech his son; his sisters and his lady mother also begged him urgently, but he refused them all the more; his friends who were nearest and dearest to him of all men also begged him urgently. Yet they still did not persuade the heart in his breast until his own chamber was being furiously attacked as the Kouretes were climbing the towers and setting fire to the city. Then his own lovely-robed wife begged Meleagros with sorrowful cries and described all the horrors that come upon men whose city is captured: the warriors are slain, the city is devastated with fire, and the children and the lovely-robed women are led away as captives to strangers. At last his soul was stirred as he listened to the terrible tale, and he went out and put on his glittering armor. So he saved the Aitolians from the evil that day, following his own will; but the Aitolians did not pay him the many promised gifts. Still he drove off the destruction. But do not let your heart be inclined that way, nor let even the gods guide you that way, dear son, for it would be a terrible thing to save the ships only when they are burning. No, come for the gifts; the Achaians will honor you like a god. But if you enter the baneful battle too late for the gifts, you will not be held in honor, even if you fend off the battle.”

Then swift-footed Achilles answered and said to him: “Phoenix, my father, old beloved one of Zeus; I do not need that kind of honor. For I consider that I have been honored by the judgment of Zeus, which shall remain upon me here among my beaked ships as long as breath remains in my body and my limbs are strong. More-

over I will say this thing to you and you must take it to heart; do not trouble my soul by weeping and lamenting just to please the son of Atreus; it is unseemly for you to value him lest I cease to value you. It would be better for you to join me in vexing him who vexes me. Be king with me and share my kingdom, and let these others take the message back. You remain here and rest in a soft bed, and at dawn we will decide whether to depart for our own people or to stay.”

Aias’ Speech and Achilles’ Answer

He spoke and nodded his brow silently toward Patroklos to spread for Phoinix a thick couch, so that the others would think about leaving the shelter more quickly. Then Aias, Telamon’s godlike son, spoke to them and said: “Heaven-sprung son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, let us leave here; for I do not think the purpose of our mission will be fulfilled by this journey, and we must quickly give the news, even though it is by no means good, to the Danaans that even now sit waiting. Achilles has worked up his proud soul into a fury within himself—the stubborn and merciless man, who cares nothing about the love of his friends, though they honored him beyond all men among the ships. A man accepts recompense from his brother’s murderer or for his dead son, and then the man-slayer stays in his own land for a great price, and the kinsfolk and their proud souls are appeased when they have taken the recompense. But as for you, the gods have put within your breast an implacable and evil spirit because of one single girl. And now we offer you seven girls, by far the best of them all, and many other gifts besides; have a kindly spirit and have respect to your home, because we are guests under your roof, sent by the multitude of the Danaans, and we would gladly be nearest and dearest to you beyond all other Achaians, as many as they are.”

And swift-footed Achilles answered and said to him: “Aias, offspring of Zeus, son of Telamon, prince of the people, you seem

to speak all this after my own mind; but my heart swells with anger whenever I think about these things, about how the son of Atreus mistreated me so arrogantly in the midst of the Argives, as though I were some worthless stranger. But go and declare my message; I will not think about bloody war until wise Priam's son, noble Hektor, comes to the Myrmidons' huts and ships, slaying the Argives, and sets the ships on fire. But I think that Hektor, as eager for battle as he is, shall be kept away from my own shelter and ships."

So he spoke, and each man took a two-handled cup and poured out a drink offering, and then they went back along the line of ships, and Odysseus led the way. And Patroklos bid his friends and hand-maidens quickly spread a thick couch for Phoinix; and they obeyed and spread a couch as he commanded, with fleeces and rugs and fine cloths of linen. Then the old man laid himself down and waited for bright Dawn. And Achilles slept in the corner of the sturdily-built shelter, and by his side lay a woman that he had brought from Lesbos, Phorbas' daughter, fair-cheeked Diomedes. And on the other side lay Patroklos, and by his side lay lovely-robed Iphigeneia, whom noble Achilles gave him when they took steep Skyros, the city of Enyeus.

Now when those others had come to the shelters of the son of Atreus, the sons of the Achaeans stood up on both sides and toasted them in golden cups and questioned them, and Agamemnon, king of men, asked them first: "Come now, tell me, highly-honored Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans: will he save the ships from the consuming fire, or did he refuse, and does anger still grip his proud spirit?"

And steadfast noble Odysseus answered him: "Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, he has no desire to quench his anger, but is more full of fury than ever and spurns you and your gifts. He urges you to consider for yourself amongst the Achaeans how to save the ships and people of the Achaeans. And as for himself he threatens that at daybreak he will launch upon the sea his trim, well-benched ships. Furthermore, he said that he would counsel all to sail for home, because you will never reach your goal of conquering high Ilios, for certainly far-seeing Zeus holds his hand over her and her people are brave. This is what he said, and here are my compan-

ions, Aias and the two heralds, both honest men, who will agree with my words. But the old man Phoinix remained there to rest, as Achilles urged him, hoping he will follow him with his ships to his dear native land tomorrow if he wishes, for he will not force him to go.”

So he spoke, and they all held their peace and were quiet, amazed at his words, for he had spoken very strongly. For a long time the sons of the Achaians were silent with grief, but at last Diomedes of the loud war-cry spoke out among them: “Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, if only you had never petitioned Peleus’ glorious son with those countless gifts; he is always proud, but now you have encouraged him far more in his arrogance. Nevertheless, we will let him be, whether he stays or goes; sooner or later he will fight, whenever the heart within him urges him and the god stirs him up. Come now, let us all do as I say: all of you go to your rest, full of food and drink as your heart’s desire, for that is where courage and strength are, but when lovely rosy-fingered Dawn appears, speedily arrange your people and horsemen in front of the ships, and urge them on, and you yourselves fight in the lead.”

So he spoke, and all the princes shouted assent, applauding the words of Diomedes, tamer of horses. Then they poured out drink offerings, and every man went to his shelter and there laid himself to rest and took the blessing of sleep.

Book X:
“The Doloneia”
(The Night Raid)



Diomedes and Odysseus Returning with the Spoils of Rhesos

The Achaians Propose a Raid

Now beside the ships the other leaders of the Achaian people were sleeping all night long, overcome by soft slumber, but Agamemnon son of Atreus, shepherd of the people, was not held by sleep, for he debated many things in his mind. Just as when the Lord of lovely-haired Hera throws lightning, fashioning either an inexpressibly mighty rain or hail or snow, when the flakes sprinkle all the ploughed lands, or perhaps opening the wide mouth of bitter war; in the same way, Agamemnon groaned often in his breast, from the very depths of his heart, and his spirit trembled within him. Whenever he looked toward the Trojan plain, he was amazed at the many fires that blazed in front of Ilios and at the sound of flutes and pipes and the noise of men; but whenever he glanced at the ships and the people of the Achaians, then he tore his hair from his head, looking to Zeus above, and his noble heart groaned deeply. And in his soul this seemed to him the best counsel, to go first of all to Nestor, son of Neleus, in hopes that he might contrive with him some sound plan

that would ward off the evil from all the Danaans. Then he rose and put on his jacket about his breast, and beneath his shining feet he bound on fine sandals and then draped himself in the tawny skin of a great lion, a skin that reached to his feet, and he grasped his spear.

In the same way, trembling fear took hold on Menelaos—for sleep did not settle on his eyelids either—lest something should happen to the Argives, who indeed for his sake had come over the wide waters to Troy-land with fierce war on their minds. First he covered his broad shoulders with a spotted leopard's skin, then he raised up and set on his head a helmet of bronze, and he took a spear in his strong hand. Then he went on his way to rouse his brother, who mightily ruled over all the Argives, as a god is honored by the people. He found him by the stern of the ship, buckling his gear on his shoulders, and his arrival was encouraging to his brother. Then Menelaos of the loud war-cry said to him: "Why are you arming, dear brother? Are you sending out any of your comrades to spy on the Trojans? I am deeply afraid that no one will undertake this deed for you, to go and spy on the enemy alone in the sweet night; he would have to be a man with a very sturdy heart."

Then the Lord Agamemnon answered him and spoke: "You and I need good counsel, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, counsel that will help to save the Argives and their ships, since Zeus' heart has turned against us again. Surely he has set his heart on Hektor's sacrifices rather than on ours. For I have never seen nor heard anyone tell of one man devising so many terrible deeds in one day as Hektor, dear to Zeus, has done to the sons of the Achaians by himself, though he is neither the son of a god or goddess. He has done things that I think will be a long-lasting sorrow to the Achaians, so much evil has he done. But go now, run swiftly to the ships, and summon Aias and Idomeneus, while I will go to noble Nestor and urge him to rise, in hopes that he will be willing to go to the sacred company of the watchmen and give them orders. For they would listen to him above all others, for his own son is chief among them, he and Meriones, brother-in-arms of Idomeneus, for we entrusted this position to them most of all."

Then Menelaos of the loud war-cry answered him: “How do you intend these words with which you have commanded and urged me? Am I to remain there with them, waiting till you come, or come back to you when I have delivered to them your message?”

Then the king of men, Agamemnon, answered him again: “Remain there lest we miss each other as we go, for there are many paths through the camp. But call aloud, wherever you go, and urge men to wake, naming each man by his lineage and his father’s name, and give them all the honor they are due and do not be proud-hearted. No, rather let us be working hard ourselves, for Zeus laid on us from birth this heavy burden.”

So he spoke and sent his brother away, having clearly laid on him his orders. Then he himself went to find Nestor, the shepherd of the host, and found him by his shelter and black ship in his soft bed. Beside him lay his beautifully-decorated arms, a shield and two spears and a shining helmet. Beside him lay his glittering war belt, which the old man would put on when he armed for war, the bane of men, and led out his people, for he did not yield to sorrowful old age. He raised himself on his elbow, lifting his head, and spoke to the son of Atreus, asking him: “Who are you who goes alone by the ships, through the camp in the darkness, when other men are sleeping? Are you looking for one of your mules or one of your comrades? Speak up and do not sneak up on me silently. What do you need?”

Then the king of men, Agamemnon, answered him: “O Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, you must know Agamemnon, son of Atreus, whom above all men Zeus has given heavy burdens, so long as my breath remains in me and my knees can move. I am here because sweet sleep does not rest on my eyes; war and the troubles of the Achaians burden me. I greatly fear for the sake of the Achaians, and my heart is shaken and tossed to and fro and pounds in my breast, and my knees tremble. But if you wish to do something, since sleep does not come on you either, let us go to the watchmen to see whether they are overcome with exhaustion and are sleeping and have forgotten to keep watch. Hostile men camp close by, and for all we know they are eager even to do battle at night!”

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: “Most renowned son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, surely wise-counseling Zeus will not fulfill all Hektor’s plans or thoughts; no, I think Hektor will have even more trouble if only Achilles will turn back his heart from his furious anger. Indeed I will follow you, but let us rouse others too, the renowned spearman, son of Tydeus, and Odysseus and swift Aias and the strong son of Phyleus. But it would be well if someone were to go and call great Aias and Idomeneus the prince also, for their ships are furthest away and not at all nearby. But I blame Menelaos, dear and honored though he is, yes, even if it makes you angry with me, and I will not hide my thought that he is sleeping and has left to you all the work; he also should be laboring among the leaders and urging them, for now an unbearable need has come upon us.”

And the king of men, Agamemnon, answered him again: “Old man, on another day I would agree with you in blaming him this way, for often is he slack and unwilling to work, giving in to unreadiness or carelessness and looking to me and expecting my help. But tonight he woke far before me and came to me, and I sent him on to call those men you have mentioned. So let us go, and we will find them in front of the gates among the watchmen, for I ordered them to gather there.”

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: “Then none of the Argives will be angry with him or disobey him, when he orders anyone and gives commands.”

So he spoke and put on his jacket, and beneath his shining feet he bound strong shoes and buckled around him a purple cloak with thick and wide folds. And he took a strong spear with a sharp bronze point, and he went out among the ships of the well-armored Achaians. The lordly Gerenian Nestor first roused from sleep Odysseus, the equal of Zeus in counsel, and immediately the call of Nestor’s voice washed over him, and he came out of his shelter and spoke to them, saying: “Why are you wandering alone among the ships and through the camp in the sweet night? What great need has come upon you?”

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: “Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, crafty Odysseus, do not be angry, for great trouble besets the Achaians. No, come with us, that we may rouse others too, everyone from whom it is right to hear counsel whether we should flee or fight.”

So he spoke, and crafty Odysseus came out of his shelter and cast a shield decorated over his shoulders and went after them.

And they went to find Diomedes, son of Tydeus, and they found him outside his shelter with his weapons, and around him his comrades were sleeping with their shields beneath their heads, but their spears were driven into the ground erect on the spikes of the butt ends, and the bronze shone from far, like the lightning of Father Zeus. That great hero was asleep, and under him was the hide of an ox of the field, but beneath his head was stretched a shining carpet. Lordly Nestor of Gerenia went and stood beside him and stirred him with a touch of his foot and roused him, rebuking him to his face, saying: “Wake, son of Tydeus, why do you sleep all night long? Do you not know that the Trojans from the heights above the plain are now camped near the ships and only a small space keeps them apart?”

So he spoke, and Diomedes sprang swiftly up out of sleep and spoke to him with winged words: “You are tough, old man, and you never stop working. Are there not younger sons of the Achaians who might go around among the people to rouse each of the kings when they are needed?”

Lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: “Indeed, my son, all this that you say is true. I do have noble sons, and there are many among the people whom we could send to call the others. But a very great need has beset the Achaians. For all of us now it stands on a razor’s edge, whether we will have sorrowful destruction or life. But come now, if indeed you pity me, rouse swift Aias and the son of Phyleus, for you are younger than I.”

So he spoke, and Diomedes threw around his shoulders the skin of a great fiery lion, one that reached to his feet, and he grasped his spear and started on his way and roused the others from their place and led them on.

Now when they had come among the assembled watchmen, they did not find the leaders of the watchmen asleep, but they all sat wide awake with their weapons. And just as hounds keep careful guard around the sheep in a fold, having heard a bold wild beast that comes through the woods among the hills, and a great clamor of hounds and men rises around him, and sleep vanishes from them, in the same way sweet sleep vanished from their eyes as they watched through the evil night, for they were constantly looking toward the plains whenever they heard the Trojans moving.

And the old man was glad when he saw them and encouraged them with his speech and, calling out to them, he spoke winged words: “Just as you are doing, dear sons, keep watch and do not let sleep take any man, lest we become a cause of rejoicing to those who hate us.”

So saying, he hurried through the moat, and they followed with him, the kings of the Argives who had been called to the council. And with them went Meriones and the glorious son of Nestor, for they called them to share in their counsel. So they went out beyond the deep moat and sat down in the open where the plain was clear of fallen dead men, where fierce Hektor had turned back from destroying the Argives, when night had covered all. There they sat down and offered their counsel to each other, and lordly Nestor of Gerenia began his discourse: “O friends, is there no man who would trust to his own daring spirit, to go among the great-hearted Trojans, if perhaps he might catch some straggler of the enemy or perhaps hear some conversation among the Trojans and what things they devise among themselves, whether they are eager to remain there by the ships, away from the city, or will retreat again to the city, now that they have defeated the Achaians? All this such a man might learn and come back to us unharmed; his fame would be great under heaven among all men, and a noble gift would be given to him. For every one of the best men who rule beside their ships will give him a black ewe, with her lambs around her feet—no possession would compare—and he will be present at all our feasts and banquets.”

So he spoke, and they were all silent at that, keeping still, but Diomedes of the loud war-cry spoke to them: “Nestor, my heart and

brave spirit urge me to enter the camp of the enemy, the Trojans, near by; but if some other man will go with me, there will be more comfort and more courage. If two go together, one will have insight into how things may be best managed before the other; but if one goes alone, even if he is careful, his wits and judgment are limited.”

So he spoke, and there were many who wished to go with Diomedes. The Aiantes, men like the war-god, were willing, and Meriones was willing, and so was the son of Nestor, and Menelaos, the renowned spearman, son of Atreus, yes, and powerful Odysseus too was willing to steal into the camp of the Trojans, for his heart within him was always daring. But Agamemnon, king of men, spoke out among them: “Diomedes, son of Tydeus, joy of my heart, you shall choose your companion, whoever you wish, the best of the men here, for many are eager. But do not leave a better man behind, out of reverence for another, and give yourself the worse companion by giving in to regard for lineage, if one has more royal heritage.”

So he spoke, but was fearful for the sake of fair-haired Menelaos. But Diomedes of the loud war-cry answered: “If indeed you urge me to choose my own companion, then how could I neglect godlike Odysseus, whose heart is eager, and whose spirit is manly in all kinds of hardships, and Pallas Athene loves him? If he comes with me, we could both come back even out of a raging fire, for he excels in cleverness.”

Then steadfast noble Odysseus answered him: “Son of Tydeus, do not praise me too much, nor blame me either, for you speak among the Argives who know all these things well. But let us be going, for truly the night is waning, and dawn is near, and the stars have traveled far, and the night has advanced more than two parts, but the third part still remains.”

So they spoke, and they put on their great armor. Thrasymedes, steadfast in war, gave to the son of Tydeus a two-edged sword (for his own was left by his ship) and a shield, and on his head set a helmet of bull’s hide, without a peak or crest, the kind that is called a skull-cap and guards the heads of stalwart youths. And Meriones gave to Odysseus a bow and a quiver, and a sword, and on his head

set a helmet made of leather, and the inside was worked with many stiff leather cords, but on the outside the white teeth of a boar with flashing tusks were arranged, thickly set on all sides, well and cleverly, and in the middle a felt cap was fixed. This cap Autolykos had stolen long before from Amyntor, son of Ormenos, out of Eleon, breaking into his well-built house; and he gave it to Amphidamas of Kythera to take to Skandeia, and Amphidamas gave it for a guest-gift to Molos, who gave it to his own son, Meriones, to wear, and now it was given to guard Odysseus' head.

When these two had put on their terror-inspiring armor, they set out and left all the leaders of the army there. Then Pallas Athene sent to them an omen on their right, a heron near their path, and they did not see it with their eyes through the darkness of night, but they heard its shrill cry. And Odysseus was glad because of the omen of the bird and prayed to Athene: "Hear me, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, who always stands by me in trouble, and who sees all my movements; now again more than ever be kind to me, Athene, and grant that we return with glory to the ships, having done great things which will be sorrow to the Trojans."

Next Diomedes of the loud war-cry also prayed: "Hear me also, child of Zeus, tireless maiden, and go with me as you did with my father, noble Tydeus, into Thebes, when he went there as a messenger from the Achaians. He left the well-armored Achaians beside the Asopos and bore a sweet-sounding message to the Kadmeians in that place; but on his return he devised terrible deeds with you, noble goddess, for you stood by him eagerly. In the same way now stand willingly by me and protect me. I will sacrifice to you a young heifer, with a broad brow, that no man has ever yoked. I will paint her horns with pure gold and sacrifice her to you."

So they spoke in their prayers, and Pallas Athene heard them. And when they had prayed to the daughter of mighty Zeus, they went on their way through the dark night, like two lions, amidst the slaughter and the slain men, through the armor and the black blood.

The Trojans Propose a Raid

Nor did Hektor let the stout-hearted Trojans sleep, but he called together all the best of them, all who were princes and leaders of the Trojans, and put forth a carefully worked out plan: “Who among you would promise and fulfill this deed for me in return for a great gift? His reward will be more than enough. For I will give a chariot and two horses with arching necks, the best that there are at the swift ships of the Achaians, to whoever will dare to do the thing, and he will win glory for himself. And the deed is this: to go near the fast ships and find out whether they are guarded, as usual, or whether our enemies are planning among themselves to flee, since they are already defeated by us and are careless about guarding them, being worn out by exhaustion.”

So he spoke, but they were all silent and kept still. Now there was a man among the Trojans named Dolon, the son of Eumedes, the godlike herald, and he was rich in gold and rich in bronze: and indeed he was ugly in appearance, but swift footed; he was an only son among five sisters. He spoke a word to the Trojans and to Hektor: “Hektor, my heart and brave spirit urge me to go near the fast ships and spy out everything. But I ask you to hold up your staff and swear to me that you will indeed give me the horses and the bronze-covered chariots that carry the noble son of Peleus. I will not prove to be a poor spy, nor will I disappoint your hope. For I will go straight to the camp, until I come to the ship of Agamemnon, where the princes are sure to be holding council about whether to fight or flee.”

So he spoke, and Hektor took the staff in his hand and swore to him: “Now let Zeus himself be witness, the loud-thundering Lord of Hera, that no other man of the Trojans shall mount those horses; but you, I declare, shalt rejoice in them forever.”

So he spoke and swore a useless oath and stirred up Dolon to go. Immediately he threw over his shoulders his crooked bow and put over it the skin of a grey wolf, and on his head put a helmet of ferret-skin and took a sharp javelin and went on his way to the ships

from the army. But he was never going to come back from the ships and bring news to Hektor.

When he had left the throng of men and horses, he went out eagerly on his way, but Odysseus of the seed of Zeus was aware of him as he approached and said to Diomedes: “Look, here is some man, Diomedes, coming from the camp, I do not know whether as a spy to our ships, or to plunder some of the fallen dead men. But let us allow him to pass by us a little way on the plain, and then we will attack him and capture him quickly, and if it happens that he outruns us in the swiftness of his feet, you keep him always hemmed in towards our ships and away from his camp, rushing at him with your spear, so that he does not escape to his city.”

Dolon Captured and Allies Slaughtered

So they spoke and, turning aside from the path, they lay down among the dead bodies, and Dolon ran swiftly past them in his witlessness. But when he was as far off as the length of a furrow made by mules—for they are far better than cattle for pulling the well-crafted plough through the deep fallow—these two ran after him, and he stood still when he heard the sound, thinking in his heart that they were friends coming from among the Trojans to bring him back at Hektor’s order. But when they were about a spear-throw away, or even less, he realized that they were enemies and stirred his swift limbs to run, and speedily they started in pursuit. Just as when two sharp-toothed hounds, well-skilled in the chase, unrelentingly press hard on a doe or a hare through a wooded land, and it runs shrieking before them, in the same way Tydeus’ son and Odysseus, the sacker of cities, cut Dolon off from the army and unrelentingly chased hard after him. But when he was just about to come among the watchmen in his flight towards the ships, then Athene poured strength into the son of Tydeus, so that none of the well-armored Achaians would be able to boast that he was the first to strike and make him second. And

strong Diomedes leaped on him with the spear and said: “Stand still, or I will overtake you with my spear, and I do not think that you will avoid complete destruction at my hand for long.”

So he spoke and threw his spear, but he deliberately missed the man, and, passing over his right shoulder, the point of the polished spear stuck fast in the ground; and Dolon stood still, in terror and trembling, and his teeth chattered in his mouth, and he was green with fear. Then the two caught up to him, panting, and seized his hands, and weeping he spoke: “Take me alive, and I will pay a ransom, for within our house there is bronze and gold and wrought iron, out of which my father would pay you a ransom beyond counting, if he should learn that I am alive among the ships of the Achaians.”

Then crafty Odysseus answered him and said: “Take courage, do not let death be in your thoughts, but speak, and tell me everything truthfully: why do you come alone through the black night among our ships, so far from your people, when other men are sleeping? Have you come to plunder some of the fallen dead men, or did Hektor send you out to spy out everything at our hollow ships, or did your own spirit urge you on?”

Then Dolon answered him, his limbs trembling beneath him: “Hektor led my wits astray with many false promises; he vowed to give me the sure-footed horses of the proud son of Peleus, along with his chariot decorated with bronze, and he ordered me to go out through the brief black night and come close to the enemy and find out whether the ships are guarded as usual, or whether they are planning to flee, since we have already defeated them, and are careless about guarding them, being worn out by exhaustion.”

Smiling at that, crafty Odysseus answered him: “Indeed your heart was set on great rewards, those horses of the wise grandson of Aiakos; but they are hard for mortal men to master and hard to drive, for any but Achilles, whom an immortal mother bore. But come, tell me everything truthfully: when you came here where did you leave Hektor, shepherd of his people, and where are his war gear and his horses? And how are the watchmen arranged and the beds of the other Trojans? And what counsel are they taking among

themselves—are they eager to remain there near our ships, far from the city, or will they return to the city again, believing that they have defeated the Achaians?”

Then Dolon, son of Eumedes, answered him: “Look, all these things I will recount to you truthfully. Hektor and those who are counselors assemble beside the burial mound of godlike Ilios, away from the noise, but as for the watchmen you ask about, O hero, no special men guard the army. And as for all the watchfires of the Trojans, those who must do it keep watch and encourage each other to keep watch; but the allies who have come from many lands are sleeping and leave it to the Trojans to keep watch, for their children and wives do not live anywhere near.”

Then crafty Odysseus answered him and said: “How are they arranged; do they sleep among the horse-taming Trojans, or apart? Tell me clearly, so that I may know.”

Then Dolon, son of Eumedes, answered him: “Indeed I will recount all this to you truthfully as well. The Karians lie towards the sea and also the Paionians with the curved bows and the Leleges and Kaukonians and noble Pelasgians. And towards Thymbre the Lykians have their place, and the haughty Mysians and the Phrygians that fight from chariots and the Maionians lords of chariots. But why do you ask me so thoroughly about all these things? For if you wish to sneak into the throng of Trojans, look, the Thracians, newcomers, are there at the furthest point away from the rest, and among them is their king, Rhesos, son of Eioneus. His are the fairest and greatest horses that I ever saw, whiter than snow, and like the winds for speed. And his chariot is crafted well with gold and silver, and his armor that he brought with him is golden, marvelous, and a wonder to see—fit for immortal gods rather than for mortal men. But bring me now to the swift ships or leave me here, when you have bound me mercilessly, so that you may go and test whether I have spoken the truth to you or lies.”

Then strong Diomedes, looking grimly at him, said: “Have no thought of escape in your heart, Dolon, in exchange for all the good information you have brought, since you have fallen into our hands.

For if we release or let you go now, at some later time you will come to the fast ships of the Achaeans, either to spy or to fight openly, but if you lose your life at my hands, you will never again be an evil for the Argives.”

He spoke, and the other man was about to reach for his chin with his strong hand to beg for mercy, but Diomedes smote him on the middle of the neck, rushing on him with the sword, and cut through both the sinews, and his head, still speaking, fell in the dust. And they stripped from his head the cap of ferret’s skin, and took his wolf-skin and his curved bow and his long spear, and noble Odysseus held these high in his hand to Athene, the Giver of Spoil, and he prayed and spoke a word: “Rejoice, O goddess, in these, for we will call on you first of all the immortals on Olympos for help; now send us on against the horses and the sleeping places of the Thracian men.”

So he spoke aloud and lifted the spoils high and set them on a tamarisk bush and marked the place plainly, gathering together reeds and tamarisk shoots, so they would not miss the place as they returned again through the brief dark of night.

Successful Return

So the two went forward through the armor and the black blood, and quickly they came to the company of Thracian men. They were slumbering, worn out with toil, but their noble weapons lay by them on the ground, all orderly, in three rows, and by each man was his pair of horses. And Rhesos slept in the middle, and beside him his swift horses were bound with ropes to the top rim of the chariot. Odysseus noticed him from far off and pointed him out to Diomedes: “Look, Diomedes, this is the man, and these are the horses about which Dolon, whom we slew, told us. Come now, show your great strength; it is not right for you to stand idly by with your weapons; let loose the horses, or you slay the men and I will take care of the horses.”

So he spoke, and bright-eyed Athene breathed strength into the other man, and he began slaughtering men on this side and on that, and their moaning arose hideously as they were struck with his sword, and the earth ran red with their blood. Just as a lion comes upon flocks without a shepherd, on goats or sheep, and leaps upon them with evil desire, in the same way the son of Tydeus set upon the men of Thrace, till he had slain twelve of them. And whoever the son of Tydeus drew near and struck with the sword, crafty Odysseus would seize by the foot and drag him out of the way, with this plan in his heart, that the lovely-maned horses could easily come away and not be shaken in their hearts when they trampled over the dead, for they were not yet used to dead men. But when the son of Tydeus came across the king, he was the thirteenth man from whom he took away the sweet life, while he was breathing heavily, for an evil dream stood by the head of the son of Oineus that night, through the craft of Athene. Meanwhile hardy Odysseus freed the sure-footed horses and tied them together with ropes and drove them out of the herd, slapping them with his bow, since he had neglected to take the whip from the beautifully-decorated chariot. Then he whistled as a sign to noble Diomedes.

But Diomedes stood and pondered what daring deed he might do, whether he should take the chariot, where lay the beautifully-decorated armor, and drag it out by the pole or lift it up high, and in this way carry it out, or whether he should take the life away from yet more of the Thracians. And while he was pondering this in his heart, then Athene drew near, and stood, and spoke to noble Diomedes: “Think of returning to the hollow ships now, O son of great-hearted Tydeus, before you go there running from the enemy, if perhaps another god rouses the Trojans.”

So she spoke, and he recognized the voice of the goddess as she spoke, and swiftly he leaped up onto the horses, and Odysseus lashed them with his bow, and they sped to the fast ships of the Achaians.

Apollo of the silver bow did not keep his watch vainly, for he saw Athene caring for the son of Tydeus; in anger against her he stole among the crowded throng of Trojans, and aroused a counselor

of the Thracians, Hippokoön, the noble kinsman of Rhesos. And he was startled out of sleep, when he saw the place empty where the swift horses had stood, and saw the men gasping in their death throes; then he groaned aloud, and called out by name to his dear friend. And a clamor arose and an indescribable din of the Trojans hurrying together, and they were astonished at the terrible deeds, everything the heroes had done before going back to the hollow ships.

But when those others came to the place where they had slain Hektor’s spy, Odysseus, dear to Zeus, reined in the swift horses, and Tydeus’ son, leaping to the ground, set the bloody spoils in the hands of Odysseus and mounted again and lashed the horses, and they sped onward eagerly to the hollow ships, for they greatly wished to be back there.

Nestor first heard the sound and said: “O friends, leaders and counselors of the Argives, am I wrong or will I speak the truth? My heart urges me to speak, for the sound of swift-footed horses strikes my ears. If only Odysseus and strong Diomedes were urgently driving the sure-footed horses from among the Trojans; but I am terribly fearful lest the bravest of the Argives suffer anything from the Trojans’ noisy battle.”

He had not yet finished speaking when they themselves arrived and leaped to the ground, and happily the others welcomed them with hand-clasping and with sweet words. And lordly Nestor of Gerenia first began to question them: “Come, tell me now, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaians, how you two took those horses. Was it by stealing into the throng of Trojans? Or did some god meet you and give them to you? They are wonderfully like rays of the sun. I constantly mix with the Trojans in fight, nor do I linger by the ships, though I am an old warrior. But never yet have I seen or even thought of such horses. No, I think some god must have encountered you and given them to you. For Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer and bright-eyed Athene, the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, love you both.”

And crafty Odysseus answered him: “O Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, if a god wished, he could easily give even better horses than these, for the gods are far stronger than us. But

as for these newly arrived horses, which you ask me about, old man, they are Thracian, but brave Diomedes slew their master and twelve men of his company besides him. The fourteenth man was a spy we captured near our ships, one whom Hektor and the other arrogant Trojans sent out to spy on our camp.”

So he spoke and drove the sure-footed horses across the moat, laughing, and the other Achaians went with him happily. When they had come to the well-built shelter of the son of Tydeus, they bound the horses with well-cut thongs at the mangers where the swift horses of Diomedes stood eating honey-sweet barley.

And Odysseus placed the bloody spoils of Dolon in the stern of the ship, so that they might prepare a sacred offering to Athene. But they themselves went into the sea and washed off the thick sweat from their shins and necks and thighs. And when the waves of the sea had washed the thick sweat from their skin, and their hearts revived again, they went into polished baths, and were cleansed.

And when they had washed and anointed themselves with olive oil, they sat down to supper and drew off the honey-sweet wine from the full mixing bowl, and they poured it out to Athene.

Book XI: The Second Day of Battle



Zeus sends Discord to the Ships of the Achaians

Agamemnon's "Aristeia"

Now Dawn arose from her couch beside proud Tithonos, to bring light to the immortals and to mortal men. But Zeus sent fierce Discord to the fast ships of the Achaians, and in her hands she held the banner of war. And she stood upon the huge black ship of Odysseus, that was in the middle, to make her voice heard on either side, both to the shelters of Aias, son of Telamon, and to the shelters of Achilleus, for these two, trusting in their courage and the strength of their hands, had drawn up their trim ships at the two ends of the line. There stood the goddess and cried out in a great and terrible voice, and she set mighty strength in the hearts of each of the Achaians to make war and fight unceasingly. And suddenly war grew sweeter to them than to depart in their hollow ships to their dear native land.

Then the son of Atreus cried aloud and ordered the Argives to arm themselves, and he himself in their midst put on the shining bronze. First he fastened handsome greaves about his legs, fitted with ankle-clasps of silver; next he fastened his breastplate about his breast, the breastplate that in time past Kinyras gave him for a guest-

gift. For far off in Cyprus Kinyras heard the great rumor that the Achaians were about to sail to Troy in their ships; so Kinyras gave him the breastplate, to please the king. There were ten circles of dark cobalt on it, and twelve of gold, and twenty of tin, and dark blue snakes writhed up towards the neck, three on either side, like rainbows that the son of Kronos has set in the clouds, a marvel to the mortal races of men. And around his shoulders he hung his sword, in which shone studs of gold, while its scabbard was silver, fitted with golden chains. And he took the richly-decorated splendid shield which covers a man's whole body, and around it were ten circles of bronze, and on it were twenty white disks of tin, and one in the midst of dark cobalt. And engraved on it was the Gorgon, terrifying in appearance, glaring fiercely, and around her were Fear and Terror. And from the shield was hung a strap of silver, and on it was curled a snake of cobalt; it had three interlaced heads growing out of one neck. And on his head Agamemnon set a two-crested helmet with fourfold plating and a crest of horsehair, and it shook fiercely. And he seized two strong spears, shod with bronze and sharp, and the bronze shone far into the sky; and at that Hera and Athene thundered, honoring the king of Mykenai, rich in gold.

Then each man ordered his charioteer to hold his horses by the moat, firm and in order, and they themselves were hurrying about, heavily armored in their battle gear, and their continual clamor rose into the Dawn. And long before the charioteers arrived they were at the moat, but soon the drivers came up also. And among them the son of Kronos raised an evil uproar, and from above rained down dew, dark with blood, out of the upper air, for he was about to send many strong men down to Hades.

But the Trojans on the other side, on the high ground of the plain, gathered around great Hektor and noble Poulydamas and Aineias, who was honored as a god by the people of the Trojans, and the three sons of Antenor—Polybos and noble Agenor and young Akamas who was like the immortals. And Hektor in the front rank carried his round shield. Just as a bright star of ill omen appears glimmering among the clouds and then again disappears into the shad-

owy clouds, in the same way, Hektor would appear, now in the front ranks, and then again giving commands in the rear, and he shone all in bronze, like the lightning of aegis-bearing Father Zeus.

Just as when reapers opposite each other drive their swaths through a rich man's field of wheat or barley, and the handfuls fall thick, in the same way the Trojans and Achaeans leaped upon each other, destroying, and neither side thought of ruinous flight; and the battle was head to head, and they rushed on like wolves. And foul Discord was glad at the sight, for she alone of the gods was with them in the war; for the other gods were not beside them, but sat in peace within their halls, where the noble mansion of each one was built in the folds of Olympos. And they all were blaming the son of Kronos, Lord of the storm-cloud, because he willed to give glory to the Trojans. But the Father paid no attention to them, but sat aloof, apart from the others, rejoicing in his glory, looking toward the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaeans and the glitter of bronze and the slayers and the slain.

As long as it was early morning, and the sacred day still grew, so long did the shafts of both armies strike, and men fell; but about the hour when a woodman prepares his meal in the wooded hollows of a mountain, when his hands are tired from felling tall trees and weariness comes over his soul, and the desire for good food grips his heart, at that time the Danaans broke the battalions by their valor and called on their comrades through the lines. And in rushed Agamemnon first of all and slew a man, Bienor, shepherd of his people—first him, then his comrade Oileus, the charioteer, who leaped from the chariot and stood and faced Agamemnon, but the king smote his forehead with the sharp spear as he came eagerly on, and his visor, heavy with bronze, could not hold off the spear, but the point sped through visor and bone, and his brain inside was all spattered out, and Oileus was destroyed in spite of his eagerness.

Agamemnon, king of men, left them there, with their white bodies gleaming, when he had stripped them of their armor, and he went on to destroy Antiphos and Isos, two sons of Priam, one born in wedlock, the other a bastard, and both were in one chariot:

the second one held the reins, but renowned Antiphos was fighting beside him. Achilles had once caught these two on the spurs of Ida as they were herding sheep and bound them with vines, and he let them go for a ransom. But now Agamemnon, son of Atreus, of the wide domain, struck Isos on the breast, above the nipple, with his spear, but Antiphos he struck next to his ear, with the sword, and dashed him from the chariot. Then he hurried and stripped their bodies of their fine armor, knowing well who they were, for he had seen them before, beside the fast ships, when swift-footed Achilles led them from Ida. Just as a lion easily crushes the young fawns of a swift deer, when he has seized them in his strong teeth, having found their hiding place, and he takes their tender life away, and the deer, if she happens to be close by, cannot help them, for terror comes over her too, and she swiftly runs away through the thick brush and the forest, sweating before the onslaught of the mighty beast; in the same way not one of the Trojans was able to save them from their destruction, but fled in fear before the Argives.

Next he caught Peisandros and Hippolochos, steadfast fighters. These were sons of wise-hearted Antimachos, who even more than others had taken the gold of Alexandros, glorious gifts, and therefore never would consent to return Helen to fair-haired Menelaos. King Agamemnon captured his two sons, both being in one car, and together they were driving the swift horses; for the shining reins had fallen from their hands, and the horses were all in panic, and he attacked them, like a lion. But the two begged him from their chariot: “Take us alive, O son of Atreus, and accept a great ransom, for in the halls of Antimachos there are many possessions, bronze, and gold, and wrought iron; out of these our father could give you a ransom beyond description, if he heard that we two were still alive by the ships of the Achaians.”

In this way the two, weeping, begged the king with sweet words, but they heard a voice in which was no sweetness at all: “If you are indeed the sons of wise Antimachos, who once in the assembly of the Trojans urged the slaughter of Menelaos, when he came on an embassy with godlike Odysseus and would have never let him return

to the Achaians, then you shall now pay the price of your father's foul shame."

He spoke and hurled Peisandros from his chariot to the earth, smiting him with the spear upon his breast, and he lay prone on the ground. Hippolochos rushed away, but him too Agamemnon smote to the earth and cut off his arms and head with the sword, then tossed him like a ball of stone to roll through the throng. Then he left them and attacked where the battalions clashed the thickest, and all the well-armored Achaians were with him. Foot soldiers kept slaying foot soldiers as they were driven in flight, and horsemen slaying horsemen with the sword, and from beneath them the dust rose up from the plain, stirred by the thundering hooves of horses. And the Lord Agamemnon, continually slaying, followed after them, calling on the Argives. Just as when consuming fire falls on dense woodland, and the whirling wind carries it everywhere, and the thickets fall consumed utterly before it, destroyed by the onset of the fire, in the same way, beneath Agamemnon, son of Atreus, the heads of the Trojans fell as they fled. And many strong-necked horses rattled empty chariots along the battle lanes, lacking their noble charioteers; but they were lying on the earth, giving more pleasure to the vultures than to their wives.

But Zeus drew Hektor out from the spears and the dust, from the man-slaying and the blood and the din, and the son of Atreus followed, calling eagerly to the Danaans. And they sped past the tomb of ancient Ilos, son of Dardanos, across the middle of the plain, past the place of the wild fig tree, heading for the city, and always the son of Atreus followed, shouting, and his invincible hands were covered with blood. But when they had come to the Skaian gates and the oak tree, they halted and awaited each other. But some were still in full flight through the middle of the plain, like cattle that a lion has scattered, coming on them in the dead of night; he has scattered them all, but to one of them sheer death appears instantly, and he breaks her neck first, seizing her with strong teeth, and swallows greedily the blood and all the guts; in the same way, King Agamemnon, son of Atreus, followed hard on the Trojans, always slaying the rearmost

man, and they were scattered in flight, and on their faces or backs many of them fell from their chariots beneath the hands of Agamemnon, for he raged powerfully with his spear. But when he was just coming below the city and the steep wall, then the father of men and gods sat down on the crests of many-fountained Ida, descending from heaven, with the thunderbolt in his hands.

Then he sent Iris of the golden wings to carry his message: “Go, swift Iris, and give this message to Hektor: so long as he sees Agamemnon, shepherd of the host, raging in the forefront of the fighters and destroying the ranks of men, so long let him hold back, but order the rest of the men to fight with the enemy in fierce battle. But when Agamemnon leaps into his chariot, either struck with a spear or wounded with an arrow, then I will give Hektor strength to slay until he comes right to the well-timbered ships, and the sun goes down, and sacred darkness comes on.”

So he spoke, and wind-footed swift Iris did not disobey him, but she went down from the hills of Ida to sacred Ilios, and she found the son of wise-hearted Priam, noble Hektor, standing among the horses and firmly tied chariots, and swift-footed Iris drew near and spoke to him: “Hektor, son of Priam, equal to Zeus in counsel, Zeus the father has sent me to bring you this command: so long as you see Agamemnon, the shepherd of the people, raging in the forefront of the fighters and destroying the ranks of men, so long hold back from the fight, but order the rest of the men to fight with the enemy in fierce battle. But when Agamemnon leaps into his chariot, either struck with a spear or wounded with an arrow, then Zeus will give you strength to slay until you come right to the well-timbered ships, and the sun goes down, and sacred darkness comes on.”

So spoke swift-footed Iris and departed, but Hektor in all his war gear leaped from the chariot to the ground, and, shaking his sharp spears, went through all the army, stirring up his men to fight, and he roused the terrible din of battle. And they wheeled round and stood and faced the Achaians, while the Argives on the other side strengthened their battalions. And they prepared to engage in battle as they stood opposite each other, and Agamemnon was first to rush, being eager to fight in the forefront.

Tell me now, you Muses who inhabit mansions on Olympos, who was the first to encounter Agamemnon, either of the Trojans themselves or of their renowned allies? It was Iphidamas, son of Antenor, great and mighty, who was nurtured in Thrace, rich in soil, the mother of sheep, and Kisseus, his mother's father, reared him in the halls, while he was only a little child—Kisseus the father of lovely-faced Theano. Then when he reached the stature of glorious youth, he tried to keep him there and gave him his own daughter; but as a bridegroom newly wed, he left his bridal chamber after the news of the coming of the Achaians, with twelve beaked ships that followed after him. These trim ships he left in Perkote, but he himself came by land to Ilios; he it was that first encountered Agamemnon, son of Atreus. And when they had come near in battle against each other, Atreus' son missed, and his spear was turned aside, but Iphidamas struck him on the war belt, below his breastplate, and thrust hard, trusting to his heavy hand, but could not pierce the gleaming war belt, for the point struck on the silver and was bent like lead. Then wide-ruling Agamemnon caught the spear with his hand and drew it toward him furiously, like a lion, and snatched it out of the hand of Iphidamas and smote his neck with the sword and unstrung his limbs. So he fell there and pitifully slept a sleep of bronze, far from his wedded wife, helping the people of the city—far from his bride, with whom he had known no joy, and he had given much for her: first he gave a hundred cattle, and after that he promised a thousand more animals, goats and sheep together, of which he had vast herds. Then Agamemnon, son of Atreus, stripped him of his armor and went off carrying his noble war gear into the throng of the Achaians.

The Wounding of Greek Heroes

Now when Koön, Antenor's eldest son, illustrious among men, saw him, strong sorrow came on him, dimming his eyes, because of

his brother's fall; and he stood on one side with his spear and, unnoticed by noble Agamemnon, smote him on the arm, beneath the elbow, and the point of the shining spear went clear through. Then Agamemnon, king of men, shuddered, but even so he did not stop fighting, but rushed against Koön, grasping his wind-swift spear. Koön had seized Iphidamas, his brother and his father's son, by the right foot with great force and called to all the best of his men; but as he dragged the dead man through the crush of battle, Agamemnon wounded him with his bronze spear beneath his heavy shield and unstrung his limbs and came close and cut off his head over the body of Iphidamas. There the sons of Antenor met their final fate at the hands of Agamemnon, the king, and went down into the house of Hades.

But Agamemnon ranged among the ranks of the men, with spear and sword and great stones for throwing, while the blood welled warm from his wound. But when the wound began to dry, and the blood ceased to flow, then keen pangs began to weaken the son of Atreus. And just as when the piercing shaft comes upon a woman in labor, the piercing shaft that the Eilithyiai send, the goddesses of the birth-pangs, the daughters of Hera, who have bitter pains as their gift, in the same way keen pains began to sap the strength of the son of Atreus. Then he leaped into his chariot and urged his charioteer to drive to the hollow ships, for he was terribly grieved at heart. And he called in a piercing voice and shouted to the Danaans: "O friends, leaders and counselors of the Argives, ward off the harsh thunder of battle from the seafaring ships now, for Zeus the counselor will not allow me to fight all day with the Trojans."

So he spoke, and his charioteer lashed the fair-maned horses toward the hollow ships, and they flew onward eagerly, and their breasts were covered with foam, and their bellies were stained with dust, as they carried the wounded king away from the war.

But when Hektor saw that Agamemnon had departed, he cried to the Trojans and Lykians with a loud shout: "Trojans and Lykians and Dardanians that fight in close combat, be men, my friends, and remember your furious courage. The best man of them has departed,

and Zeus the son of Kronos has now given me great glory. So immediately drive your sure-footed horses against the mighty Danaans, so that you may be the masters and carry away the greater glory.”

So he spoke and aroused the strength and courage of every man. Just as when some hunter drives his white-toothed hounds against a wild boar or a lion, in the same way Hektor son of Priam, like Ares the bane of men, drove the great-hearted Trojans against the Achaians. He himself with high thoughts went among the foremost and plunged into the fight, like a roaring blast that rushes down and stirs the blue ocean water. Whom did Hektor, son of Priam, slay first, and who last, when Zeus granted to him great glory?

Asaios first, and Autonoös and Opites and Dolops, son of Klytios, and Opheltios and Agelaos and Aisymnos and Oros and Hipponoös, steadfast in the fight; these leaders of the Danaans he slew, and after them a multitude, just as when the west wind drives the clouds of the white south wind, blasting them with a deep storm, and the waves swell huge, rolling onward, and the spray is scattered high beneath the rush of the wildly veering wind; in the same way, many heads of the people were blasted by Hektor.

There destruction would have begun and deeds without remedy, and all the Achaians would have fled and been slaughtered among the ships, if Odysseus had not called to Diomedes, son of Tydeus: “Tydeus’ son, what ails us that we forget our furious courage? Come here, my friend, and take your stand next to me, for truly it will be shameful if Hektor of the shining helmet captures the ships.”

And strong Diomedes answered him: “Indeed I will stand firm and bear up, but it will not help us for long, for Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer clearly desires to give victory to the Trojans rather than to us.”

He spoke and hurled Thymbraios from his chariot to the ground, piercing him with the spear in the left breast, and Odysseus smote Molion, the godlike companion of that prince. Then they left these two, when they had put an end to their fighting, and then the two worked through the crowd with a roar, just as when two boars full of courage attack the hunting hounds; in the same way they rushed on and slew the Trojans, while the Achaians gladly caught their breath

again in their flight from noble Hektor. There they captured a chariot and two of the best men of the people, two sons of Merops of Perkote, who above all men was skilled in prophecy, and he refused to let his sons go off to ruinous war; but the two did not obey him, for the Fates of black death drove them on. The son of Tydeus, Diomedes, renowned spearman, deprived them of life and spirit and took away their glorious armor. And Odysseus stripped Hippiodamos and Hypeirochos.

Then the son of Kronos stretched the line of battle evenly for them, as he looked down from Ida, and they kept slaying each other. Then Tydeus' son smote the hero Agastrophos, son of Paion, on the hip joint with his spear; his horses were too far away to help him flee, because great blindness was on his spirit, for his companion held them off to one side, while on foot he charged throughout the front ranks of the warriors, till he lost his life. But Hektor soon saw them among the ranks and rushed at them shouting, and with him the battalions of the Trojans followed. And seeing him, Diomedes of the loud war-cry shuddered and immediately spoke to Odysseus, who was close by: "Look, this disaster, mighty Hektor, is rolling toward us; let us stand and await him and fend off his onset."

So he spoke and leaned back and threw his far-shadowing spear, aiming at his head; and he did not miss, but struck him on the top of the crest, and bronze turned away bronze, so that the spear did not reach his noble flesh, but was stopped by the socket of the three-fold helmet which Phoibos Apollo had given to Hektor. But Hektor leaped back a great way and mingled with the throng, and he rested, dropped to his knee, and leaned on the ground with his stout hand, and dark night veiled his eyes.

But while Tydeus' son was following after his spear-cast, far through the foremost fighters, where he saw it sink into the earth, Hektor got his breath again and, leaping back into his chariot, drove off into the throng and avoided black Fate. Then, rushing on with his spear, mighty Diomedes shouted to him: "Dog, you have escaped from death again, but ruin came very close to you. Phoibos Apollo, to whom you must surely pray when you go into the clash of spears,

has saved you. Still, I will slay you when I meet you again later, if any god is helping me too. Now I will go after the rest, whomever I may seize.”

So he spoke and stripped the renowned spearman, the son of Paion. But Alexandros, the lord of lovely-haired Helen, aimed with his arrows at the son of Tydeus, shepherd of the people, leaning as he aimed against a pillar on the man-made burial mound of Ilos, son of Dardanos, an elder of the people in time past. Diomedes was stripping the shining breastplate of strong Agastrophos from his breast and the shield from his shoulders and his strong helmet, when Paris drew his bow; the shaft did not fly in vain from his hand, for he struck the flat part of Diomedes’ right foot, and the arrow went clean through and stuck fast in the ground; laughing happily, Paris leaped up from his hiding place and boasted and said: “You are hit, and my arrow did not fly in vain; I wish I had hit you deep in your belly and taken your life away. Then the Trojans who shudder at the sight of you, like bleating goats at a lion, could have caught their breath.”

But strong Diomedes answered him, undismayed: “Bowman, foul-mouth, proud of your lovely locks, always gaping at girls, if you had been tested in full war gear, man to man, your bow and showers of arrows would not have helped you, but now you boast vainly that you have grazed the sole of my foot. I care no more than if a woman had struck me, or a silly boy, for the arrow of a coward and a worthless man is feeble. It is different when it comes from my hand; the sharp shaft flies and immediately lays its man low, and his wife tears her cheeks, and his children are fatherless, and as he reddens the earth with his blood, he rots away, more birds than women around him.”

So he spoke, and the renowned spearman Odysseus came close and stood in front of him, and Diomedes sat down behind him and pulled the sharp arrow from his foot, and a bitter pain passed through his flesh. Then he leaped into his chariot and urged his charioteer to drive back to the hollow ships, for he was heartsick. Then the renowned spearman Odysseus was left alone, and none of the Argives remained by him, for fear had overcome them all. Then deeply troubled, he spoke to his own great-hearted spirit: “Ah me, what will

happen to me now? It would be a great evil if I flee, in fear of the throng, but a worse evil if I am caught all alone, for the son of Kronos has scattered all the other Danaans in flight. But why does my heart deliberate this way? For I know that those who flee the fight are cowards, but whoever would be a hero in war must stand stubbornly, whether he be struck or whether he strike another.”

While he pondered this way in his heart and spirit, the ranks of the Trojans came on with their shields and surrounded him, causing their own evil. Just as when hounds and young men in their new manhood close around a boar, and he comes out of his deep lair, whetting his white tusks between crooked jaws, and they rush around him, and the sound of the gnashing of tusks arises, and immediately they expect his assault, terrifying as he is; in the same way, Odysseus, dear to Zeus, rushed the Trojans. First he wounded noble Deïopites, from above, in the shoulder, leaping on him with his sharp spear, and then he slew Thoön and Ennomos; and then Chersidamas, who had leaped down from his chariot, he smote with his spear on his navel beneath the embossed shield, and he fell in the dust and clutched the ground with the hollow of his hand. He left these and wounded Charops, son of Hippiasos, the brother of high-born Sokos, with his spear. Sokos, a godlike man, came to help Charops and stood close by him and spoke, saying: “O renowned Odysseus, insatiable of craft and toil, today you will either boast about having slain two such mighty men as the sons of Hippiasos and stripped their armor, or else you will lose your life, struck by my spear.”

So he spoke and struck him on the circle of his shield; the strong spear passed through the shining shield and through the beautifully-decorated breastplate and tore the flesh of his side clean off, but Pallas Athene did not allow it to touch the bowels of the hero, and Odysseus knew that the dart had not hit a deadly spot and, drawing backward, he spoke to Sokos: “Wretched one, truly sheer destruction has come upon you. You have forced me to stop fighting with the Trojans, but I declare to you here that slaughter and black Fate will come upon you today and, destroyed by my spear, you will give glory to me and your soul to Hades of the noble horses.”

He spoke, and the other man turned and started to flee, and as he turned Odysseus thrust his spear into his back, between the shoulders and drove it on through his breast. Then he fell with a crash, and noble Odysseus boasted over him: “Ah, Sokos, son of wise-hearted Hippasos, tamer of horses, the final end of death has come upon you and caught you, and you could not avoid it. Ah, wretch, your father and lady mother will not close your eyes in death, but birds that eat flesh raw will tear you, and your burial shroud will be the multitude of their wings. But if I die, the noble Achaians will still give to me a proper burial.”

So he spoke and drew the mighty spear of wise-hearted Sokos out of his flesh and from his embossed shield, and his blood flowed out when the spear was pulled away and shook his spirit. And when they saw the blood of Odysseus, the great-hearted Trojans all came rushing together against him with a great din. But he gave ground and shouted to his comrades: three times he shouted, as loud as a man’s mouth can shout, and three times Menelaos, dear to Zeus, heard his call, and quickly he spoke to Aias, who was close by him: “Aias, of the seed of Zeus, child of Telamon, lord of the people, the cry of stout-hearted Odysseus rings round me, as though the Trojans were attacking him alone in their midst and had cut him off in the fierce battle. Let us hurry into the throng, for it is better to rescue him. I fear lest he suffer some evil, being alone among the Trojans, so brave as he is, and lest great sorrow for his loss comes upon the Danaans.”

So he spoke and led the way, and the other followed him, a god-like man. Then they found Odysseus, dear to Zeus, and the Trojans attacking him like tawny jackals from the hills around a wounded, horned stag which a man has struck with an arrow from the bow-string, and the stag has fled from him by his swift feet, as long as his blood is warm and his limbs are strong, but when the swift arrow has overcome him, then the ravening jackals tear him apart in the hills, in a dark wood, until some spirit directs a murderous lion there, and the jackals flee before him, but he rends them; in the same way, the many mighty Trojans gathered around wise-hearted Odysseus of the crafty counsels, but that hero kept thrusting with his spear and held off

the pitiless day. Then Aias drew near, carrying his shield like a tower, and stood by him, and the Trojans fled from him wherever they could. Then warlike Menelaos led Odysseus out of the crush of battle, holding him by the hand, till the charioteer brought the horses.

Then Aias leaped on the Trojans and slew Doryklos, a bastard son of Priam, and then he wounded Pandokos, and he wounded Ly sandros and Pyrasos and Pylartes. Just as when a river in winter flood rushes down from the hills onto the plain, swollen by the rain of Zeus, and it draws in many dry oaks and pines and carries much soil into the sea, in the same way, renowned Aias charged them, pursuing them through the plain, slaying horses and men. Hektor knew nothing of this, for he was fighting on the left side of the battle, by the banks of the river Skamandros, where more than anywhere else men's heads were falling, and an endless cry sounded around great Nestor and warlike Idomeneus. And Hektor was fighting with them, and he did terrible things with his spear and horsemanship, and he devastated the battalions of the young men. Still the noble Achaians would not have given ground in the battlefield if Alexandros, the lord of lovely-haired Helen, had not stopped the brave deeds of Machaon, shepherd of the host, and struck him on the right shoulder with a three-barbed arrow. And so the Achaians, though still breathing courage, were fearful lest men should seize Machaon in the turning of the battle.

Then Idomeneus spoke to noble Nestor: "Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, get up into your chariot and let Machaon go with you and swiftly drive your sure-footed horses to the ships. For a healer is worth many other men, for cutting out arrows, and spreading soothing ointments."

So he spoke, and lordly Nestor of Gerenia did not ignore him but immediately went up into his chariot, and Machaon, son of Asklepios, the skilled healer, went with him, and he lashed the horses, and they eagerly ran to the hollow ships where they longed to be.

But Kebriones, Hektor's charioteer, saw the Trojans driven in flight and spoke to him and said: "Hektor, we are fighting with the Danaans here at the outer edge of the woeful war, but the other

Trojans are driven in confused flight, both men and horses. Aias, son of Telamon, is driving them; I know him well, for the shield around his shoulders is huge. Let us urge our horses and chariot there too, where the horseman and warriors on foot are slaughtering each other, and an endless cry arises.”

So he spoke and lashed the fair-maned horses with the sharp-cracking whip, and they felt the lash and swiftly drew the chariot among the Trojans and Achaians, trampling on the dead and the shields and the axle-tree beneath, and the rims of the chariot were spattered with blood from the hooves of the horses and from the tires of the wheels. And Hektor was eager to enter the crush of warriors and to leap in and break through, and he brought the thunder of battle among the Danaans, and he rested very little from striking with his spear. He ranged among the ranks of the other men, with spear and sword and with great stones, but he avoided battling with Aias, son of Telamon.

Now Father Zeus, from his high throne, stirred up dread in Aias, and he stood in amazement and slung behind him his sevenfold shield of bull's hide and gazed around in fear upon the crowd, like a wild beast, turning this way and that, and slowly retreating step by step. Just as when hounds and country folk drive a tawny lion from the middle of the ox pasture and do not allow him to carry off the fattest of the herd; all night they watch, and in great hunger for flesh he attacks but can take nothing, for the spears and burning brands fly thick against him from strong hands, and he dreads these in spite of all his fierceness, and at dawn he leaves, with a vexed heart; in the same way, Aias departed now, vexed at heart, from among the Trojans, and very unwillingly, for he feared greatly for the ships of the Achaians. Just as when a lazy donkey, one that has had many sticks broken on his sides, goes into a field in spite of the boys, and he goes into the deep crop and devours it, while the boys strike him with sticks, and their force is feeble, yet with might and main they finally drive him out when he has had his fill of fodder, in the same way the high-hearted Trojans and allies, called from many lands, struck at great Aias, son of Telamon, with spears on the middle of his shield

and continually followed after him. And Aias would sometimes remember his fierce courage and turn around and hold at bay the battalions of the horse-taming Trojans, and then once more he would turn around again to flee. Yet he hindered them all from making their way to the fast ships, and he himself stood and fought between the Trojans and the Achaians, and some of the spears from strong hands stuck in his great shield, eager to pierce further, and many stuck half-way in the ground before they ever reached his body, though they were eager to taste his flesh.

When Eurypylos, the glorious son of Euaimon, saw him overwhelmed by showers of arrows, he went and took his stand by him and threw his shining spear and struck Apisaon, son of Phausias, shepherd of the people, in the liver, below the midriff, and straight-way loosened his knees; and Eurypylos sprang on him and stripped the armor from his shoulders.

But when godlike Alexandros saw him stripping the armor from Apisaon, immediately he drew his bow against Eurypylos and struck him with an arrow on the right thigh, and the shaft of the arrow broke and weighed down his thigh with pain. Then Eurypylos withdrew back into the crowd of his comrades, avoiding fate, and with a piercing voice he shouted to the Danaans: “Friends, leaders and counselors of the Argives, turn and stand and ward off the pitiless day from Aias, who is overwhelmed with arrows, and I do not think he will escape from the evil roar of battle. All of you stand at bay around great Aias, son of Telemon.”

So spoke Eurypylos, wounded, and they stood close together beside him, sloping the shields on their shoulders and holding up their spears, and Aias came to meet them and turned and stood when he reached the crowd of his comrades.

So they fought on like raging fire.

Nestor and Patroklos

But the mares of Neleus, heavily sweating, carried Nestor out of the battle, and they also carried Machaon, shepherd of the people. Then noble Achilles, swift of foot, saw and was aware of him, for he was standing by the stern of his great ship, watching the terrible conflict and the sad rout of the battle. And immediately he spoke to his comrade, Patroklos, calling to him from beside the ship, and he heard, and from the shelter he came, like Ares himself; and this was the beginning of evil to him. Then the strong son of Menoitios spoke first to Achilles: “Why do you call me, Achilles? What need do you have of me?”

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him and spoke: “Noble son of Menoitios, dear to my heart, now I think that the Achaians will stand in prayer at my knees, for an unbearable need has come upon them. But go now, Patroklos, dear to Zeus, and ask Nestor who this is that he brings back wounded from the war. Indeed from behind he looks like Machaon, that child of Asklepios, but I did not see the man’s eyes, for the horses sped past me, straining forward eagerly.” So he spoke, and Patroklos obeyed his dear comrade and started up and ran past the ships and the shelters of the Achaians.

Now when they came to the shelter of the son of Neleus, they leaped down on the rich earth, and the attendant, Eurymedon, unharnessed the horses of the old man from the chariot, and they dried the sweat from their jackets, standing in the breeze, by the shore of the sea, and afterward came to the shelter and sat down on chairs. And lovely-haired Hekamede mixed for them a potion, Hekamede whom the old man won from Tenedos when Achilles sacked it, and she was the daughter of great-hearted Arsinoös, and the Achaians chose her out for him, because he always excelled them all in counsel. First she pulled up before them a graceful table, polished well, with feet of cobalt, and put on it a vessel of bronze, with onion, to add relish to the drink, and pale honey, and the grain of sacred barley, and beside it a most noble goblet, that the old man brought from home,

embossed with studs of gold, and there were four handles on it, and around each two golden doves were feeding, and there were two feet at the bottom of the cup. Another man could scarcely have lifted the cup from the table when it was full, but the aged Nestor raised it easily. In this cup the woman, like the goddesses, mixed a potion for them, with Pramneian wine, and into it she grated cheese of goat's milk with a grater of bronze and scattered white barley over that and urged them to drink when she had prepared the potion.

So when the two had drunk and driven away parching thirst, they took their pleasure in conversation, speaking each to the other. Then Patroklos stood at the doors, a godlike man, and when the old man saw him, he rose from his gleaming chair and took him by the hand and led him in and urged him to be seated. But Patroklos, opposite him, refused and spoke and said: "I have not time to sit, old man, beloved of Zeus, nor will you persuade me. Revered and dreaded is the man who sent me here to ask you who this man is that you bring home wounded. No, but I know myself, for I see Machaon, shepherd of the people. And now I will go back again, a messenger, to speak a word to Achilles. And you know well, old man, beloved of Zeus, how terrible a man he is; he would easily blame even one who is blameless."

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him: "Why is Achilles sorry for the sons of the Achaians, so many of whom are wounded by spears? He knows nothing about the grief that has risen in the camp; for the best men lie at the ships, wounded by arrows or struck by spears. Strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus, is wounded by an arrow, and the renowned spearman Odysseus is struck, and Agamemnon also, and Eurypylos has been shot with an arrow in the thigh, and this other man I have just now brought out of battle, wounded with an arrow from the bowstring. But Achilles, for all his greatness, does not care for the Danaans, nor does he pity them at all. Is he waiting till the fast ships close by the shore are burning in consuming fire, in spite of the Argives' best efforts, and till we are slaughtered one on top of the other? For my strength is no longer what it was before in my supple limbs.

“If only I still had such youth, and my might were as steadfast, as when a conflict came up between the Eleians and ourselves about a raid on the cattle, when I slew Itymoneus, the brave son of Hypeirochos, a dweller in Elis, when I was driving the spoil away; in fighting for his cattle he was cut down in the foremost rank by a spear from my hand, and he fell, and the country folk around him were terrified. We drove together out of the plain a huge spoil, fifty herds of cattle, and as many flocks of sheep, and as many of pigs, and as many vast flocks of goats, and a hundred and fifty chestnut horses, all mares, and many with their foals at their feet. We drove them all by night into Neleian Pylos to the citadel, and Neleus was glad at heart because so much wealth came to me, the first time I went to war. And at daybreak, the heralds cried aloud that all men who were owed a debt in noble Elis should meet, and the men that were leaders of the Pyliaus gathered together and divided it all, for the Epeians owed a debt to many, for we who dwelt in Pylos were few and oppressed. For the mighty Herakles had come and oppressed us in the former years, and all our best men were slain. For there had been twelve sons of noble Neleus, but I alone was left, and all the others perished. And growing proud because of these things, the mail-clad Epeians despised us and devised deeds of violence. Now the old man Neleus took for himself a herd of cattle of that spoil and a great flock of sheep, choosing three hundred, and the shepherds along with them. For a great debt was owed to him in noble Elis: four horses, prize winners, had gone to the games with their chariot and were to run for a tripod; but Augeias, king of men, took these and held them and sent away the driver sorrowing over the horses. The old man was angry over these words and deeds, so he chose out a great portion of the spoil, and he gave the rest to the people to divide, so that no man should depart lacking his equal share. So we arranged everything and offered victims to the gods throughout the city, and on the third day all the Eleians came together, many men and sure-footed horses in full armor, and with them the two Moliones in their war gear, still only youths and not yet skilled in furious courage.

“Now there is a certain city, Thryoessa, a steep citadel, far off on Alpheios, the farthest city of sandy Pylos, and they pitched their camp around this city, eager to destroy it completely. But when they had passed through the whole plain, Athene came to us by night, rushing down from Olympos, with the message that we should arm ourselves. And the people she gathered in Pylos were not unwilling but very eager for war. Now Neleus would not allow me to arm myself, but hid my horses, for he thought that I knew nothing yet about the ways of warfare. Nevertheless I shone among our horsemen, though I was on foot, for Athene directed the fight in that way. There is a river, Minyeios, that falls into the sea near Arene, where the horsemen of us Pylians awaited the glorious dawn, and the ranks of footmen flowed there. In full array and harnessed in our armor, we came at midday to the sacred stream of Alpheios. There we sacrificed noble victims to Zeus, preeminent in might, and a bull to Alpheios and a bull to Poseidon, but to bright-eyed Athene we sacrificed a heifer of the herd, and afterwards we took our supper in ranks throughout the camp and lay down to sleep, each man with his weapons, near the stream of the river.

“Now the great-hearted Epeians were gathered round the citadel, eager to sack it utterly. But before that could happen, they witnessed a great display of warfare. For when the bright sun came up above the earth, we joined battle with prayer to Zeus and Athene. But when the battle between the Pylians and Epeians began, I was the first that slew a man and got for myself his sure-footed steeds—the warrior Moullos he was, who had as wife the lovely-haired Agamede, the eldest daughter of Augeias, and she knew all the drugs that the wide earth yields. As he came on, I smote him with a bronze-shod spear, and he fell in the dust, and I leaped into the chariot and became one of the foremost fighters. But the great-hearted Epeians fled this way and that when they saw the man fall, the leader of the horsemen who excelled in battle. But I sprang upon them like a black tempest, and I captured fifty chariots, and beside each chariot two men bit the earth with their teeth, subdued beneath my spear. And then I might even have destroyed the twin Moliones, sons of Aktor,

if their father, the wide-ruling Earthshaker, had not saved them out of the battle and covered them with a thick mist. There Zeus gave great might to the Pylians, for we followed the enemy through the wide plain, slaying them and gathering their glorious armor, till we arrived with our horses to Bouprasion, rich in wheat, and the Olenian rock, and a hill called the hill of Alesios, where Athene turned us back. There I killed my last man and left him there, but the Achaians drove their swift horses back from Bouprasion to Pylos, and they all gave praise to Zeus among the gods and to Nestor among men. Such was I, if I was ever anything among men.

“But Achilles wants to reap the reward for his courage by bravery; indeed I think he will repent and grieve terribly when the people perish.

“Dear one, surely Menoitios told you this, on that day when he sent you from Phthia to Agamemnon. And we two were in the house, noble Odysseus and I, and in the halls we all heard the things he commanded you. For we had come to the well-built halls of Peleus as we were gathering the armies throughout fertile Achaia, and there we had found the hero Menoitios and you and Achilles with you. And Peleus the Old, the lord of horses, was burning the fat haunches of oxen to Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, in the open space of his courtyard, and he held in his hand a chalice of gold, pouring the bright wine over the burning offerings. And you were attending to the flesh of the ox. And then we stood in the doorway, and Achilles leaped up in amazement and took us by the hand and led us in and urged us to be seated and generously set before us all the hospitality due to strangers. But when we had taken delight in eating and drinking, I began talking and urged you to follow us, and you were very eager, and your two fathers laid on you many commands. Peleus the Old urged his son Achilles be always the boldest in fight and pre-eminent over others, but Menoitios, son of Aktor, commanded you in this way: ‘My child, Achilles’ lineage is greater than yours, and in might he is far better, but you are older. So you must speak words of wisdom to him, gently, and show him what things he should do, and he will obey you to his benefit.’ In this way the old man urged you, but you have forgotten.

“Now speak to wise-hearted Achilles, and perhaps he will listen to you. Who knows but that with god’s help, you might stir his spirit with your persuasion, and the persuasion of a friend is a good thing. But if in his heart he is trying to avoid some oracle of the god, and his honored mother has told him something apart from us, still, let him send you out, and let the rest of the army of the Myrmidons follow you, if perhaps you will give some light to the Danaans. Let him give you his glorious armor to wear into battle, in hopes the Trojans will think you are he, and hold back from the conflict, and the warlike sons of the Achaians might catch their breath in their exhaustion, for there is little breathing space in battle. And you, being unwearied, might easily drive weary men back to the city, away from the ships and shelters.”

So he spoke, and it stirred up his heart in his breast, and he leaped up and ran beside the ships toward Achilles, seed of Aiakos. But when Patroklos, as he ran, came to the ships of godlike Odysseus, where their assembly place and place of law was, and where their altars to the gods were established also, Eurypylos met him, Euaimon’s son, of the seed of Zeus, wounded in the thigh with an arrow and limping out of the battle. And sweat ran down streaming from his head and shoulders, and from his cruel wound the black blood was welling, but his mind was unshaken. And the strong son of Menoitios had pity on him when he saw him and, lamenting, he spoke winged words: “O wretched men, you leaders and counselors of the Danaans, so now you are doomed, far from your friends and your own country, to feed full with your white fat the swift hounds in Troy! But come, tell me this, Eurypylos, hero and beloved of Zeus, is there any way that the Achaians can still restrain mighty Hektor, or will they certainly perish now, subdued beneath his spear?”

And wounded Eurypylos answered him: “No more, Patroklos of the seed of Zeus, will there be any defense of the Achaians, but they will fall among the black ships. For truly all of them who before were the bravest are lying back among the ships, wounded by the hands of the Trojans whose strength is always increasing. But help me now and lead me to the black ship and cut the arrow out of my

thigh and wash away the black blood from it with warm water and smear soft healing drugs on it, those good herbs about which they say you have learned from Achilles, whom Cheiron taught, the most righteous of the Centaurs. For of the healers Podaleirios and Machaon, I think, one is wounded in the huts, and he himself needs a good healer, and the other still withstands the sharp battle of the Trojans on the plain.”

Then the strong son of Menoitios answered him: “How shall these things be? What shall we do, hero Eurypylos? I am on my way to carry a message to wise-hearted Achilles, the command of Nestor of Gerenia, guardian of the Achaians; nevertheless, I will not ignore you who are wounded.”

So he spoke, and supported the shepherd of the people around his middle and led him to the shelter; and when the attendant saw them, he threw the skins of oxen on the ground. He laid him out at full length, and with a knife he cut the sharp arrow from his thigh and washed the black blood away from it with warm water. And he put on it a bitter root, rubbing it between his hands, a root that took pain away and ended all his anguish, and the wound began to dry, and the blood stopped flowing.

Book XII: The Trojan Attack on the Wall



Poulydamas Advises Hektor to Retire from the Trench

So in the shelters the strong son of Menoitios was tending the wounded Eurypylos, but still the Argives and Trojans fought on in mingled battle. Nor would the moat of the Danaans and their wide wall above it protect them for long—the wall they had built for the defense of the ships and the moat they had dug deep around it—for they had not given great sacrifices to the gods, so that it might guard their swift ships and rich spoil. No, it was built in spite of the gods, and so it did not last long. That great wall stood firm so long as Hektor lived, and Achilles held on to his anger, and the city of King Priam remained standing. But when all the bravest of the Trojans died and many of the Argives—some were taken, and some were left—and the city of Priam was sacked in the tenth year, and the Argives had gone back in their ships to their own dear country, then Poseidon and Apollo counseled together to wash away the wall, bringing in the might of the rivers, of all that flow from the hills of Ida to the sea. There was Rhesos and Heptaporos and Karesos and Rhodios, Grenikos and Aisepos and noble Skamandros and Simoeis, which caused many shields and helmets to fall in the mud, and the generation of half-divine men; Phoibos Apollo turned the mouths

of all these waters together, and for nine days he drove their stream against the wall; and Zeus caused unceasing rain, in order that he might mingle more quickly the wall with the salt sea. And the Shaker of the Earth, with his trident in his hands, led it all and sent out into the waves all the foundations of beams and stones that the Achaians had laid with such labor, and he made it all smooth by the strong current of Hellespont and covered again the great beach with sand, when he had swept away the wall and turned the rivers back to flow in their channels, where before they had poured down their lovely flow of water.

Poseidon and Apollo would do all this later, but now war and the thunder of war sounded around the well-built wall, and the beams of the towers rang with the fierce blows while the Argives, subdued by the scourge of Zeus, were trapped and driven inside by their hollow ships, in dread of Hektor, the mighty maker of panic, but he, as before, fought like a whirlwind. Just as when, surrounded by hounds and hunting men, a boar or lion wheels about, raging in his strength, and they arrange themselves like a tower and stand up against him, casting many javelins from their hands, but his stout heart is never confused nor afraid, and his courage is his downfall, and often he wheels about and tests the ranks of men, and wherever he attacks, the ranks of men give way; in the same way Hektor went and rallied his comrades through the press and spurred them on to cross the moat. But his swift-footed horses did not dare, but they neighed loudly, standing by the steep edge, for the wide moat frightened them, being neither easy to leap from close by, nor to cross, for there were overhanging banks around it on all sides, and it was thick-set with sharp stakes that the sons of the Achaians had planted there, a bulwark against hostile men. So a horse could not easily cross, pulling a smooth-wheeled chariot, but the foot soldiers were eager to see if they might accomplish it.

Then Poulydamas went close to brave Hektor and spoke to him: “Hektor and you other leaders of the Trojans and allies, we are foolish to try to drive our swift horses through the moat; it is very difficult to cross, for there are sharp stakes planted in it, and beyond that

is the wall of the Achaians. No one can go down this way to fight in chariots, for the place is narrow and we will only find destruction. For if Zeus who thunders on high is utterly to destroy them in his evil will and is minded to help the Trojans, then truly I too wish urgently that this would come about, that the Achaians should perish here, nameless, far from Argos, but if they turn again, and we flee back from among the ships and rush into the deep moat, then I think that not even one from among us will make his way back to the city, driven before the force of the Achaians when they rally, to carry the news. But let us all do as I suggest. Let our assistants hold the horses by the moat, while we in our war gear as foot soldiers follow Hektor all together, and the Achaians will not withstand us, if the bands of death are fastened on them.”

So Poulydamas spoke, and his wise words pleased Hektor greatly, and immediately in his war gear he leaped from his chariot to the ground. The other Trojans did not remain on their chariots but they all leaped down when they saw noble Hektor. Each man commanded his own charioteer to keep the horses in order there by the moat. And they divided up and arranged themselves, and in five companies they followed the leaders. Now those who went with Hektor and noble Poulydamas were the most numerous and the bravest and most eager to breach the wall and to fight by the hollow ships. Kebriones followed along with them as a third, for Hektor had left another man with his chariot, a weaker warrior than Kebriones. Paris led the second company, with Alkathöös and Agenor. Helenos and godlike Deïphobos, two sons of Priam, led the third company and along with them as third leader was the warrior Asios, Hyrtakos’ son, whom his tall sorrel steeds brought out of Arisbe, from the river Selleëis. And Aineias, the brave son of Anchises, was leader of the fourth company, and with him were two sons of Antenor, Archelochos and Akamas, both well-skilled in warfare.

And Sarpedon led the glorious allies, and to be with him he chose Glaukos and warlike Asteropaios, for they seemed to him to be clearly the bravest of all besides himself, but he excelled above all the host. And when all these had arrayed themselves with well-crafted

shields of bulls' hide, they went straight and eager against the Danaans, nor did they consider that those could resist them any longer, but would fall back on their black ships.

Asios Attacks the Right

Then the rest of the Trojans and the far-famed allies obeyed the counsel of blameless Poulydamas, but Asios, son of Hyrtakos, leader of men, did not wish to leave his horses and his charioteer there, but with them he drew near the swift ships, foolish man, for he was never to return back from the ships to windy Ilios, rejoicing in his horses and chariot, avoiding the evil Fates. Before that, Destiny of evil name overshadowed him, by means of the spear of Idomeneus, the haughty son of Deukalion. For Asios went against the left flank of the ships, through which the Achaians returned from the plain with chariots and horses; there he drove through his horses and his chariots and did not find gates shut and the long bar, but men were holding them open if perhaps they might save any of their comrades fleeing out of the battle towards the ships. Straight through he guided his horses with unswerving aim, and his men followed him, crying shrilly, for they thought that the Achaians could no longer hold them off, and that they would die on their own black ships; fools, for in the gates they found two of the bravest men, the high-hearted sons of the warrior Lapithai, one the son of Peirithoös, strong Polypoites, and one Leonteus, equal of Ares the bane of men. These two stood in front of the lofty gates, like high-crested oak trees in the hills, that forever withstand the wind and rain, firmly fixed with great and deep roots; in the same way, these two, trusting to the mightiness of their hands, stood firmly against the coming of great Asios and did not flee. But the Trojans came straight on against the well-built wall, holding high their shields of dry bulls' hide with a mighty clamor, around the prince Asios and Iamenos and Orestes and Adamas, son of Asios, and Thoön and Oinomaos. But the two Lapithai, inside

the wall, urged the well-armored Achaians to fight for the ships. But when they saw the Trojans attacking the wall, while the Danaans cried out and turned to flee, then the two rushed out and fought in front of the gates like wild boars that in the mountains withstand the attacking crew of men and dogs and, charging on either flank, they destroy the brush around them, cutting it at the root, and the clatter of their tusks grows loud, till someone kills them and takes their life away; in the same way, the bright bronze clattered on the chests of the two as they were struck in close combat, for they fought powerfully, trusting to the men above them and to their own strength.

For the men above were throwing down stones from the well-built towers, in defense of themselves and of the shelters and of the swift-faring ships. And the stones fell to the earth thick like snow that a tempestuous wind, as it drives the dark clouds, drops thickly down on the bounteous earth; in the same way, the missiles fell thickly from the hands of Achaians and Trojans alike, and their helmets and their embossed shields rang harshly, struck with mighty stones. Then Asios, son of Hyrtakos, groaned and smote both his thighs and indignantly he spoke: “Father Zeus, truly you too greatly love a lie, for I did not think that the Achaian heroes could withstand our might and our invincible hands. But like nimble-bodied wasps or bees that have made their dwellings along a rugged path and do not leave their hollow nest, but remain and keep the hunters at bay for the sake of their little ones, in the same way, these men have no desire to give ground from the gates till they kill or are killed, though there are only two of them.”

So he spoke, but he did not persuade the mind of Zeus, for his will was to give glory to Hektor.

But the others were fighting around the other gates, and it would be hard for me to tell about all these things, as though I were god, for everywhere around the wall of stone the superhuman fire blazed up—the Argives, for all their sorrow, defending the ships out of necessity; and all the gods who were on the Danaans’ side in the battle were grieved at heart.

And together the Lapithai waged war and battle. There the son of Peirithoös, mighty Polypoites, smote Damasos with the spear,

through the helmet with cheek-pieces of bronze; and the bronze helmet did not stop the spear, but the point of bronze broke clean through the bone, and all the brain inside was spattered out, and in his fury his spear destroyed him. Then he slew Pylon and Ormenos. And Leonteus, of the seed of Ares, smote Hippomachos, son of Antiniachos, with the spear, striking him on his war belt. Again he drew his sharp sword from the sheath and smote Antiphates in close combat, rushing on him through the throng, so that he fell on his back on the ground; and then he brought down to the rich earth Menon and Iamenos and Orestes, one after the other.

While they were stripping the shining armor from these men, the young men who followed with Poulydamas and Hektor, those who were most numerous and the bravest and the most eager to break down the wall and set the ships on fire, these still stood uncertainly by the moat, for just as they were about to cross over, a bird had appeared to them, an eagle flying high, skirting the army on the left hand. In its talons it bore a blood-red monstrous snake, alive, and still struggling; it had not yet forgotten the passion of battle but writhed backward and struck the breast of the bird that held it, beside the neck, and the bird threw it away from him down to the earth, in terrible pain, and dropped it in the middle of the throng; then with a cry it sped away down the gusts of the wind. And the Trojans shuddered when they saw the gleaming snake lying in the midst of them: an omen of aegis-bearing Zeus.

Hektor Attacks the Center

Then Poulydamas stood by brave Hektor and spoke: “Hektor, you always rebuke me in the assemblies, even though I give wise counsel, since it seems unfitting for one of the people to speak contrary to you, in council or in war, but one must always increase your power; but now once again I will say all that seems to me to be best. Let us not advance and fight with the Danaans for the ships. For our

end will come about this way, I think, if indeed this bird has come for the Trojans when they were eager to cross the moat, this eagle of lofty flight, skirting the host on the left hand, bearing in his talons a blood-red monstrous snake, still living; then immediately he let go of him, before he reached his own nest, and did not bring him home in the end to give to his young. In the same way, even if we burst with a mighty force through the gates and wall of the Achaians, and the Achaians give ground, still we will return in chaos from the ships the same way we came; for we will leave many of the Trojans behind, whom the Achaians will slay with the sword, in defense of the ships. This is how a prophet, one who had clear knowledge in his heart about omens and whom the people obeyed, would interpret.”

Then Hektor of the shining helmet glared at him and said: “Poulydamas, what you say is no longer pleasing to me; you know how to conceive better counsel than this. But if you truly speak sincerely, then the gods themselves have utterly destroyed your wits; you who urge us to forget the counsels of loud-thundering Zeus which he himself promised me and confirmed with a nod of his head! But you urge us to be obedient to birds with long wings, about which I care nothing, whether they fly to the right, to the dawn and to the sun, or to the left, to mist and darkness. No, let us trust to the counsel of mighty Zeus, who is king over all mortals and immortals. Only one omen is best—to fight for our own country. And why do you fear war and battle? For if all the rest of us are slain by the ships of the Argives, you do not need to fear dying, for your heart is not warlike or steadfast in battle. But if you hold back from the fight or persuade anyone else with your words to turn away from the war, you will be struck immediately by my spear and lose your life.”

So he spoke and led on, and they followed with a mighty roar; and Zeus, who rejoices in the thunder, roused from the hills of Ida a blast of wind, which carried the dust straight against the ships, and he shook the heart of the Achaians, but gave glory to the Trojans and to Hektor. Trusting then in his omens and in their might, they strove to break the great wall of the Achaians. They dragged down the high balconies of the towers and overthrew the battlements and pried up

the projecting buttresses that the Achaians had set deep in the earth, to be the props of the towers. These they overthrew and hoped to break the wall of the Achaians. But still the Danaans did not give ground, but closed up the battlements with shields of bulls' hides and threw from them at the enemy as they passed below the walls.

Now the Aiantes went everywhere on the towers, always urging and rousing the courage of the Achaians. One they would persuade with honeyed words, another they would rebuke with hard words, whomever they saw giving ground from the fight: "O friends, whoever is eminent, or of middle status among the Argives, yes or even lower yet, for not all men are equal in war, now there is work for all, and you know this well. Let no one turn back to the ships on hearing someone threatening loudly; rather, go forward and cheer one another on, and perhaps Olympian Zeus, the Lord of lightning, will grant to us to drive back the assault and push the enemy back to the city."

So these two shouted in the forefront and roused the battle of the Achaians. But just as flakes of snow fall thick on a winter day when Zeus the Counselor has begun to snow, showing these arrows of his to men, and he has lulled the winds, and he snows continually, till he has covered the crests of the high hills and the farthest headlands and the grassy plains and rich tillage of men, and the snow is scattered over the harbors and shores of the grey sea, and only the wave as it rolls in keeps off the snow, but all other things are covered over, when the shower of Zeus comes heavily; in the same way, from both sides their stones flew thick, some towards the Trojans, and some from the Trojans against the Achaians, while both sides were struck, and all over the wall the din arose.

Sarpedon Attacks the Right

Yet the Trojans and famed Hektor would never have broken the gates and the long bar of the wall if Zeus the Counselor had not roused his son Sarpedon against the Argives, like a lion against the

crooked horned cattle. Immediately he held forth his beautiful round shield of hammered bronze, which the bronzesmith had hammered out and inside it had stitched many bulls' hides with rivets of gold all around the circle; this he held forth and shook two spears and sped on his way, like a mountain-nurtured lion, that has gone long without food, and his brave spirit urges him to attack the sheep, even against a well-built homestead. Even if he finds herdsmen nearby, guarding the sheep with hounds and spears, still he is unwilling to be driven away, without great effort, from the pens, but he either leaps on a sheep and seizes it or is himself struck in the first attack with a spear from a strong hand. In the same way his heart urged on the godlike Sarpedon to rush against the wall and break through the battlements. And instantly he spoke to Glaukos, son of Hippolochos: "Glaukos, why do we two have the greatest honor—seats of honor, and banquets, and full cups in Lykia, while all men look on us as gods? And why do we hold a great domain by the banks of Xanthos, a noble domain of orchard land and wheat-bearing soil? Therefore now it is our duty to take our stand in the first rank of the Lykians and encounter the fiery battle, so that some of the well-armored Lykians may say, 'Truly our kings who rule Lykia are no inglorious men, who eat fat sheep and drink the choice honey-sweet wine; no, they are also of excellent might, for they fight in the foremost ranks of the Lykians.' Ah, friend, if having escaped from this battle we were forever to be ageless and immortal, I would neither fight in the foremost ranks myself nor send you into the war that gives men glory; but certainly ten thousand fates of death beset us on all sides, and no mortal may escape or avoid these. Let us go forward, whether we shall give glory to other men, or others to us."

So he spoke, and Glaukos did not turn away or disobey him, and the two of them went straight forward, leading the great host of the Lykians. Then Menestheus, son of Peteos, shuddered when he saw them, for they went against his tower, bringing ruin with them; and he looked along the tower of the Achaians, hoping that he might see any of the leaders who would ward off destruction from his comrades, and he saw the Aiantes, hungry for war, standing there, and

Teukros close by, having just come from his hut. But he could not call loudly enough to be heard by them, so great was the battle roar, and the noise went up to heaven of struck shields and helmets with horsehair crests and of the gates, for now they had all been shut, and the Trojans stood beside them and strove by force to break them and enter in. Menestheus swiftly sent the messenger Thoötes to Aias: “Go, noble Thoötes, and run and call Aias, or rather the two, for that will be far the best of all, since soon there will be utter ruin here. For the leaders of the Lykians, who have long been fierce in strong battle, are pressing hard close by. But if war and toil are arising for them too, yet at least let the strong Telamonian Aias come alone, and let Teukros, the skilled bowman, come with him.”

So he spoke, and the messenger listened and did not disobey him, but started up and ran by the wall of the mail-clad Achaians and came and stood by the Aiantes and immediately spoke: “Aiantes, leaders of the strong-armored Achaians, the dear son of Peteos, beloved of Zeus, begs you to go to him so that, even for a little while, you may take your part in the battle; he desires both of you, for that will be far the best of all, since soon there will be utter ruin there. For the leaders of the Lykians, who have long been fierce in the strong battle, are pressing hard close by. But if war and toil are arising for you too, at least let the strong Telamonian Aias come alone, and let Teukros, the skilled bowman, come with him.”

So he spoke, and the strong Telamonian Aias did not disobey him, but urgently spoke winged words to the son of Oileus: “Aias, you two remain here, yourself and strong Lykomedes, and urge the Danaans to war with all their might; but I will go there, to take my part in battle, and soon I will come back again, when I have aided them.”

So spoke Telamonian Aias and left, and Teukros went with him, his brother by the same father, and with them Pandion carried the curved bow of Teukros.

When they came to the tower of great-hearted Menestheus, passing inside the wall—and they came to men very hard-pressed—the enemy, the strong leaders and counselors of the Lykians, were climbing up on the battlements like a dark whirlwind. And they

threw themselves into the war, and the battle-cry arose. Aias, Telamon's son, slew the first man, Epikles, great of heart, the comrade of Sarpedon. With a jagged stone he smote him, a great stone that was high within the wall, by the battlements. A man such as mortals now are could not easily hold it in both hands, however strong in his youth, but Aias lifted it and threw it from above, and it shattered the helmet with its fourfold crest and broke all the bones of his head, and he fell like a diver from the lofty tower, and his life left his bones. And Teukros smote Glaukos, the strong son of Hippolochos, as he came on, with an arrow from the lofty wall; where he saw his shoulder bare he struck him and made him cease from delight in battle. He leaped back from the wall secretly, lest any of the Achaians should see that he had been wounded and speak boastfully. But sorrow came over Sarpedon when Glaukos departed, as soon as he was aware of it, but he did not forget the joy of battle. He aimed at Alkmaon, son of Thestor, with the spear and smote him and then pulled out the spear. And Alkmaon, following the spear, fell prone, and his bronze-clad armor rang round him. Then Sarpedon seized with strong hands the battlement and dragged, and it all gave way together, while above the wall was stripped bare and made a path for many.

Then Aias and Teukros encountered him. Teukros smote him with an arrow, on the bright strap of his covering shield, over his breast, but Zeus warded off the Fates from his son, so that he would not be destroyed beside the ships' sterns. Then Aias leaped on him and smote his shield, but the spear did not pass clean through; yet he shook Sarpedon in his fierceness. He gave ground a little way from the battlement, but did not entirely retreat, since his heart hoped to win glory. Then he turned and cried to the godlike Lykians: "O Lykians, why are you slack in your fierce valor? It is hard for me, strong as I am, to break through alone and make a path to the ships; follow me closely, for the more men there are, the better the work will be."

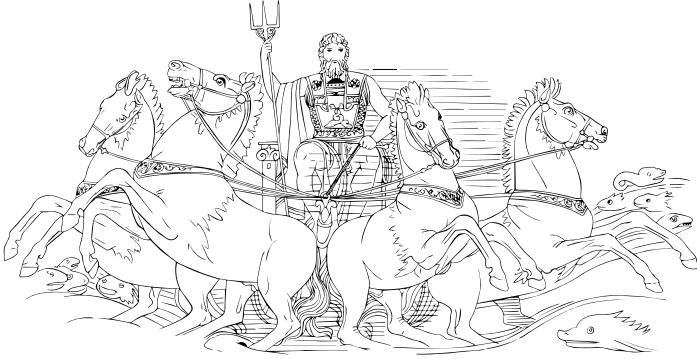
Hektor Breaks Through

So he spoke and, dreading the rebuke of their king, they pressed on harder around the counselor and king. And the Argives on the other side strengthened their battalions inside the wall, and heavy war work began for them. For neither could the strong Lykians burst through the wall of the Danaans and make a way to the ships, nor could the warlike Danaans drive back the Lykians from the wall when once they had drawn close to it. But as two men argue over the boundaries of their land, with measuring rods in their hands, in a common field, when in a narrow space they struggle to keep equal shares; in the same way, the battlements divided them, and over those they smote the round shields of ox-hide and the fluttering bucklers on the breasts of either side. And many were wounded in their flesh with the ruthless bronze, whenever the back of any of the warriors showed bare as he turned, many of them clean through their shields. Everywhere the towers and battlements ran with the blood of men tshed on either side, by Trojans and Achaians. But even so they could not rout the Argives, but they held their ground, just as an honest woman who works with her hands holds the scales and raises the weight and the wool together, balancing them, so that she may win her small wages for her children; in the same way, the battle was evenly drawn, till the moment when Zeus gave the greater glory to Hektor, son of Priam, who was the first to leap inside the wall of the Achaians. In a piercing voice he cried aloud to the Trojans: “Rise, horse-taming Trojans, break the wall of the Argives and throw blazing fire among the ships.”

So he spoke, spurring them on, and they all heard him, and in one mass rushed straight against the wall and with sharp spears in their hands climbed upon the balconies of the towers. And Hektor seized and carried a stone that lay in front of the gates, thick in the rear part, but sharp at its point, a stone that two of the best men of the people, as mortals are now, could not easily lift from the ground onto a wagon, but he easily lifted it alone, for the son

of crooked-counseling Kronos made it light for him. And just as when a shepherd easily carries the fleece of a ram, taking it in one hand, and it burdens him very little, in the same way Hektor lifted the stone and carried it straight to the doors that closely guarded the stubborn-set portals, double gates and tall, and two cross bars held them within, and one bolt fastened them. And he came and stood close by and firmly planted himself and smote them in the middle, setting his legs well apart so that his throw would lack no strength. And he broke both the hinges, and the stone fell inside because of its weight, and the gates rang loudly all around, and the bars did not hold, and the doors burst this way and that beneath the onslaught of the stone. Then glorious Hektor leaped in, his face like sudden night, but shining in glorious mail that was clad about his body, and with two spears in his hands. No man that met him could have held him back when once he leaped within the gates: no one but the gods. And his eyes shone with fire. Turning towards the throng, he cried to the Trojans to leap over the wall, and they obeyed his voice, and quickly some leaped over the wall, and some poured through the well-built gateways, and the Danaans fled in fear among the hollow ships, and up went an endless uproar.

Book XIII: Poseidon Interferes



Poseidon Rising from the Sea

Poseidon Rallies the Achaians

After Zeus had brought the Trojans and Hektor to the ships, he left them to their toil and endless labor there, but he turned his shining eyes elsewhere and looked upon the land of the Thracian horse breeders, and the Mysians, fierce hand to hand fighters, and the proud Hippomolgoi who drink mares' milk, and the Abioi, the most righteous of men. He did not turn his shining eyes toward Troy anymore at all, for he thought in his heart that none of the immortals would come near to help either Trojans or Danaans.

But the mighty Earthshaker did not hold a blind watch, for he sat and marveled at the war and strife, high on the topmost crest of wooded Samothrace, for from there all Ida and the city of Priam and the ships of the Achaians were plain to see. He went up there from the sea and sat down, and he had pity on the Achaians, who were being beaten by the Trojans, and his anger was strong against Zeus.

Then immediately he went down from the rugged hill, moving with swift steps, and the high hills and the woodlands trembled beneath the immortal footsteps of Poseidon as he passed. He took

three strides, and with the fourth he reached his goal, Aigai, where his famous palace in the deeps of the sea, his shining golden mansions, were built, imperishable forever. He came there and harnessed to his chariot his bronze-hooved horses, fast-running, with their golden manes streaming. He put his own golden armor on his body and seized the well-crafted lash of gold and mounted his chariot, and he drove out across the waves. And the sea beasts frolicked beneath him, on all sides out of the deeps, for they knew their lord well, and the sea parted for him with joy, and swiftly the horses sped, and the axle of bronze under the chariot was not dampened, and the surging horses carried him to the ships of the Achaians.

There is a spacious cave in the depths of the deep sea between Tenedos and rugged Imbros; there Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, reined in his horses and freed them from the chariot and threw down in front of them ambrosial food to graze on, and he bound golden cords around their hooves, tethers that could not be broken or loosed, so that the horses might continually wait for their lord's return. And he went to the camp of the Achaians.

Now the Trojans were following Hektor, son of Priam, in close array, like flame or storm wind, with fierce intensity. They came on with shouts and cries and hoped to seize the ships of the Achaians and to slay beside them all the bravest of the people. But Poseidon, who circles the world, the Shaker of the Earth, was urging on the Argives, and out he came from the deep salt sea, like Kalchas in appearance and unwearied voice. First he spoke to the Aiantes, who themselves were eager for battle: "You Aiantes, you will save the people of the Achaians if you remember your strength and care nothing for cold fear. For I do not dread the powerful hands of the Trojans who have climbed the great wall in multitudes elsewhere—no, the strong-greaved Achaians will hold them all at bay. But I greatly dread that some evil may come upon us here where that furious one is leading like a flame of fire—Hektor, who boasts that he is a son of mighty Zeus. But here some god may put it into the hearts of you two, to stand sturdily yourselves and urge others to do likewise; in that way

you might drive him from the fast ships in spite of his ferocity; yes, even if the Olympian himself is rousing him to war.”

With that, the Shaker of the World, the Girdler of the Earth, struck the two with his staff and filled them with strong courage, and he made their limbs and their feet light and their hands too. Then, just as a swift-winged hawk speeds forth to fly, poised high above a tall sheer rock, and swoops to chase some other bird across the plain—in the same way Poseidon, the Shaker of the World, sped from them. And of the two, Oileus’ son, the swift-footed Aias, was the first to recognize the god, and instantly he spoke to Aias, son of Telamon: “Aias, since it is one of the gods who hold Olympus, who in the likeness of a seer commands us now to fight beside the ships—he is not Kalchas, the prophet and soothsayer, for easily I knew the appearance of his feet and knees as he turned away, and the gods are easy to discern—therefore, my own heart within my breast is more eagerly set on war and battle, and my feet beneath and my hands above are hungering for the fight.”

Then Aias, son of Telamon, answered him saying: “My hands, too, cling fiercely to the spear shaft, and anger has risen within me, and both my feet are swift beneath me. I am eager to meet, even in single combat, the endless rage of Hektor, son of Priam.”

So they spoke to each other, rejoicing in the delight of battle, which the god put in their heart. Then the Circler of the Earth stirred up the Achaians who were in the rear and were renewing their strength beside the swift ships. Their limbs were weakened by their terrible struggle, and their souls were filled with sorrow at the sight of the Trojans who had climbed over the great wall in such multitudes. And they looked at them and shed tears beneath their brows, thinking that they would never escape destruction. But the Shaker of the Earth lightly came among them and urged on the strong battalions of warriors. He came and summoned Teukros first and Leïtos and the hero Peneleos and Thoas and Deïpyros and Meriones and Antilochos, lords of the war-cry; all these he spurred on with winged words: “Shame on you, Argives, shame, you children; I had trusted in your war-craft for the salvation of our ships. But if you are to

withdraw from the sorrowful war, then the day is now shining which will see us conquered by the Trojans. For shame! For indeed this is a great marvel that my eyes look on, a terrible thing that I never thought would happen—the Trojans advancing against our ships. In time past they were like fleeing deer which in the wild wood are the prey of jackals and leopards and wolves and wander helpless, without strength, empty of the joy of battle. In the same way, the Trojans in the past never waited to face the wrath and the hands of the Achaians, not for a moment. But now they are fighting far from their town, by the hollow ships, all through the weakness of our leader and the neglect of the people, who, being at odds with the king, have no heart to defend the swift ships; in fact, they are slain by them. But if indeed the hero Agamemnon, the wide-ruling son of Atreus, is the very cause of it all, because he dishonored the swift-footed son of Peleus, still we must not hold back in any way from war. No, let us make right our error quickly, for the hearts of the brave are easily made right. It is no longer proper to hold back from violent work, all you who are the best men of the people. I myself would not quarrel with one who, being a weakling, abstained from war, but with you I am heartily angry. Ah, friends, soon you will make the evil worse through this neglect; but let each man feel shame and indignation in his heart, for truly the conflict that has now risen is great. Look, the mighty Hektor of the loud war-cry is fighting right at the ships, and he has broken in pieces the gates and the long bar.”

In this way the Earth-Enfolder called to and spurred on the Achaians. And immediately they made a stand around the Aiantes, strong bands that Ares himself could not enter or make light of, nor Athene that marshals the host. They were the chosen best that stood against the Trojans and noble Hektor and spear on spear made a close-set fence and shield on shield crowded together, buckler pressed on buckler and helmet on helmet and man on man. The horsehair crests on the bright helmet-ridges touched each other as they waved, they stood so close by each other, and spears brandished in bold hands were interlaced; and their hearts were steadfast and hungered for battle.

Then the Trojans drove forward in a mass, and Hektor led them, pressing straight onwards, like a rolling rock from a cliff that the winter-swollen water forces from the crest of a hill, having broken the foundations of the stubborn rock with its great flood; bounding high it flies, and the wood echoes under it, and unrestrained it runs its course, till it reaches the level plain, and then it rolls no more for all its eagerness; in the same way Hektor for a while threatened easily to make his way to the sea through the shelters and the ships of the Achaians, slaying as he came; but when he encountered the close-set battalions, he was stopped when he drew near them. But on the other side, the sons of the Achaians thrust with their swords and double-pointed spears and drove him back from them, so that he gave ground and reeled backward. Then he cried with a piercing voice, calling on the Trojans: “Trojans and Lykians and close-fighting Dardanians, hold your ground, for the Achaians will not long keep me away, even though they have arranged themselves like a tower. Rather, I think, they will flee back before my spear, if indeed the chief of the gods has driven me on, the loud-thundering Lord of Hera.”

With that, he spurred on the heart and spirit of each man; and Deïphobos, the son of Priam, strode among them with high thoughts and held in front of him the circle of his shield, and lightly he stepped with his feet, advancing beneath the cover of his shield. Then Meriones aimed at him with a shining spear and struck and did not miss, but smote the circle of the ox-hide shield, yet he did not pierce it; long before that might happen the long spear-shaft snapped in the socket. Now Deïphobos was holding off from him the ox-hide shield, and his heart feared the spear of wise Meriones, but that hero shrunk back among the throng of his comrades, furiously angry both for the loss of victory and of his spear that he had broken. So he set out to go to the shelters and the ships of the Achaians, to bring back another long spear that he had left in his hut.

Meanwhile the others fought on, and an unending din arose. First Teukros, son of Telamon, slew a man, the spearman Imbrios, the son of Mentor, rich in horses. He lived in Pedaios before the coming of the sons of the Achaians, and he had for wife a daughter of Priam,

born out of wedlock, Medesikaste; but when the curved ships of the Danaans came, he returned again to Ilios and was preeminent among the Trojans and lived with Priam, who honored him like his own children. Him the son of Telamon pierced below the ear with his long lance and pulled back the spear. Then he fell like an ash tree that on the crest of a far-seen hill is struck with the axe of bronze and brings its delicate foliage to the ground—in the same way he fell, and his armor covered with bronze rang around him. Then Teukros rushed forward, eager to strip his armor, and Hektor threw his shining spear at him as he came. But Teukros, steadily watching him, narrowly avoided the spear of bronze; so Hektor struck Amphinachos, son of Kteatos, son of Aktor, in the breast with the spear as he was returning to the battle. With a crash he fell, and his armor rang upon him.

Then Hektor rushed forward to tear from the head of great-hearted Amphinachos the helmet closely fitted to his temples, but Aias aimed at Hektor as he came with a shining spear, yet did not strike his body, for he was all covered in great armor of bronze; but he struck the center of his shield and drove him back by huge force, and he gave place from behind the two dead men, and the Achaians pulled them out of the battle. So Stichios and noble Menestheus, leaders of the Athenians, carried Amphinachos back among the men of the Achaians, but the two Aiantes carried Imbrios, with hearts full of furious strength. Just as when two lions have snatched away a goat from sharp-toothed hounds and carry it through the deep thicket, holding the body high above the ground in their jaws, in the same way the two warrior Aiantes held Imbrios high and spoiled him of his armor. Then the son of Oileus cut his head from his delicate neck, in anger for the sake of Amphinachos, and sent it rolling like a ball through the throng, and it dropped in the dust before the feet of Hektor.

Idomeneus' "Aristeia"

Then Poseidon was angry at heart when his son's son fell in the terrible combat. So he set out to go by the shelters and the ships of the Achaians, to spur on the Danaans, and he was contriving sorrows for the Trojans. Then Idomeneus, the renowned spearman, met him as he was coming from his comrade that had just come out of the battle wounded on the knee with the sharp bronze. His comrades had carried him out, and Idomeneus gave orders to the healers and then went on to his shelter, for he was still eager to face the war. Then the mighty Shaker of the Earth addressed him, in the voice of Thoas, son of Andraimon, who ruled over the Aitolians in all Pleuron and mountainous Kalydon and was honored like a god by the people: "Idomeneus, counselor of the Cretans, where are your threats now, with which the sons of the Achaians threatened the Trojans?"

Then Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, answered him: "Thoas, there is no man to blame that I know of, for we are all skilled in war. Nor is there any man who is held back by timid fear or who gives way to cowardice and shuns the cruel war; no, this is, I think, what must have seemed good to the almighty son of Kronos—that the Achaians should perish nameless here, far away from Argos. But Thoas, since you have long been staunch and you spur on other men wherever you see them giving ground, do not slack now but call aloud to every warrior."

Then Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, answered him: "Idomeneus, may that man who today is willfully slack in battle never leave Troy-land, but may he be the sport of dogs. Take your weapons and depart; we must be men together, if that will be any help, though there are only two of us. Even cowards take courage in company, but we two know well how to battle among the bravest."

With this, the god went back again into the strife of men, but Idomeneus, as soon as he came to his well-built shelter, put his noble armor on his body and seized two spears and set out like the lightning that the son of Kronos seizes in his hand and brandishes from

radiant Olympos, showing a sign to mortal men, and the flames of it are seen far off. In the same way, the bronze around the breast of Idomeneus shone as he ran, and Meriones, his noble companion, met him while he was still near his shelter, for he was going to fetch his spear of bronze, and mighty Idomeneus spoke to him: “Meriones, son of Molos, swift-footed, dearest of my company, why have you come here and left the war and strife? Are you wounded at all and pained by a spear’s point, or do you come with a message for me about something? Indeed, I myself have no desire to sit in the shelters, but to fight.”

Then wise Meriones answered him, saying: “Idomeneus, counselor of the well-armored Cretans, I have come to fetch a spear, if perhaps you have one left in the shelters, for the one I carried before I have broken, throwing at the shield of proud Deïphobos.”

Then Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, answered him: “You will find spears, if you wish, one or twenty, standing in the shelter against the shining side walls, spears of the Trojans which I have taken from the slain. It is not my desire to stand and fight with enemies from far off, and therefore I have spears and heavy shields and helmets and breastplates that shine.”

Then wise Meriones answered him: “In my own shelter and black ship are many spoils of the Trojans, but they are not close by. I have not forgotten my valor but stand out among the foremost to face the glorious war, whenever the strife of battle arises. Any other of the strong-armored Achaians, I think, may forget my prowess, but you know it well.”

Then Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, answered him: “I know what a man of valor you are; why should you tell me about it? If beside the ships all the best of us were being chosen for an ambush, in which the valor of men is most clearly seen—for there the coward and the brave man most plainly show themselves, for the color of the coward changes often, and his spirit cannot stand firm within him, but now he kneels on one knee, now on the other, and rests on either foot, and his heart beats loudly in his breast, as he thinks of doom, and his teeth chatter loudly; but the color of the brave man

does not change, nor is he greatly afraid from the moment he enters the ambush of heroes, but his prayer is to mingle instantly in terrible battle—if we were being chosen for such an ambush, I say, not even then would any man think lightly of your courage and your strength. Even if you were stricken in battle from afar or smitten in close fight, the spear would not strike you in the back part of the neck, nor in the back, but would strike your breast or belly as you press on towards the gathering of the foremost fighters. But come, let us talk no more like this, like children, lingering here, lest anyone become angry; but go to the shelter and bring the strong spear.”

So he spoke, and Meriones, the equal of swift Ares, quickly brought the spear of bronze from the shelter and followed after Idomeneus, with high thoughts of battle. And just as Ares, the bane of men, goes out into battle, and with him follows his dear son Panic, stark and fearless, who terrifies even the hardy warrior; and these two leave Thrace, and arm themselves for fight with the Ephyroi, or the great-hearted Phlegyans, and do not listen to both peoples but give honor to only one—like these gods did Meriones and Idomeneus, leaders of men, set out into the fight, armored in gleaming bronze. And Meriones spoke to Idomeneus, saying: “Son of Deukalion, where are you most eager to enter into the throng: on the right side of the army or in the center or on the left? Indeed, nowhere else, I think, are the flowing-haired Achaians so likely to fail in the fight.”

Then Idomeneus, the leader of the Cretans, answered him: “In the center of the ships there are others to bear the brunt, the Aiantes, and Teukros, the best Bowman of the Achaians and a good man in close combat; these will give Hektor, Priam’s son, toil enough, however keen he might be for battle, and though he might be exceedingly stalwart, he will find it hard, in spite of all his hunger for battle, to overcome their strength and their invincible hands and to set fire to the ships, unless the son of Kronos himself sends down onto the swift ships a blazing torch. But great Telemonian Aias would not yield to any man who is mortal and eats Demeter’s grain and may be split with the sword of bronze and with the hurling of great stones. No, he would not give way even to Achilles, the breaker of the ranks

of men, in close fight, though for speed of foot no one may in any way equal Achilles. But guide us two, as you say, to the left side of the throng, that we may quickly learn whether we are to win glory from others, or other men from us.”

So he spoke, and Meriones, the equal of swift Ares, led the way till they came to the throng in that place where he urged him to go. When the Trojans saw Idomeneus, powerful like flame, and his companion with him and their glorious armor, they all shouted and made for him through the throng. Then their battle began by the sterns of the ships. And just as the gusts rush on when shrill winds blow on a day when dust lies thickest on the roads, and the winds raise together a great cloud of dust; in the same way, their battle clashed together, and all were desperate at heart to slaughter each other with the sharp bronze in the throng. And the battle, the bane of men, bristled with long spears, the piercing spears they grasped, and the glitter of bronze from gleaming helmets dazzled the eyes, and the sheen of newly-burnished breastplates, and shining shields, as the men massed all together. Very stout of heart would be the man who felt joy and not fear at the sight of this struggle of battle.

Thus the two mighty sons of Kronos, with conflicting wills, were creating sorrow and anguish for the heroes. Zeus desired victory for the Trojans and Hektor, giving glory to swift-footed Achilles; yet he did not wish the Achaian people to perish completely before Ilios, but only to give glory to Thetis and her strong-hearted son. But Poseidon went among the Argives and stirred them to war, stealing secretly out from the grey salt sea, for he was terribly angry that they were being overcome by the Trojans and was furious against Zeus. Both were of the same lineage and the same place of birth, but Zeus was the elder and the wiser. Therefore Poseidon avoided giving open aid, but secretly he kept spurring them on, throughout the people, in the likeness of a man. These two had strained the ends of the cords of fierce battle and equal war and had stretched them over both Trojans and Achaians, a knot that none could break or undo, and the result was the loosening of the knees of many.

Then Idomeneus, though his hair was flecked with grey, called on the Danaans and, leaping among the Trojans, roused their terror. For he slew Othryoneus, who lived in Kabesos, but who recently had followed the news of war, and had asked for a wife the fairest of the daughters of Priam, Cassandra, without the gifts of wooing, but with the promise of a mighty deed—that he would drive forcibly out of Troy-land the sons of the Achaians. The old man Priam promised that he would give her to him, so he fought trusting in the king's promises. Idomeneus aimed at him with a bright spear and cast and smote him as he came proudly striding on, and the breastplate of bronze that he wore was no help, but the spear stuck in the middle of his belly. And he fell with a crash, and Idomeneus boasted over him and lifted up his voice, saying: "Othryoneus, indeed I praise you above all mortal men, if indeed you accomplish all that you have promised to Priam, son of Dardanos, who promised you in turn his own daughter. We likewise would promise as much to you and fulfill it and would give you the fairest daughter of the son of Atreus and bring her from Argos and marry her to you, if only you will help us to capture the nobly-built fortress of Ilios. Indeed, follow us that so we may make a covenant of marriage by the seafaring ships, for we do not require the gifts of wooing."

With that, the hero Idomeneus dragged him by the foot through the fierce battle. But Asios came to his aid on foot in front of his horses that the charioteer guided so closely that their breath touched the shoulders of Asios. And he desired with all his heart to throw his spear at Idomeneus, but he was quicker and struck him with the spear in his throat, below the chin, and drove the point straight through. And he fell as an oak falls, or a poplar, or tall pine tree, that craftsmen have felled on the hills with newly sharpened axes, to be a ship's timber; in the same way, he lay stretched out before the horses and the chariot, groaning and clutching at the bloody dust. And the charioteer was stunned and did not keep his wits, as he used to, and dared not turn his horses to avoid the hands of his enemies; and Antilochos, the steadfast in war, smote him and pierced the middle of his body with a spear. The breastplate he was used to wearing did

not help at all, but Antilochos planted the spear hard in the middle of his belly. With that, he fell gasping from the well-built chariot, and Antilochos, the son of great-hearted Nestor, drove the horses out from the Trojans, among the strong-armored Achaians. Then Deïphobos, in grief for Asios, drew very close to Idomeneus and cast his shining spear at him. But Idomeneus, steadily watching him, avoided the spear of bronze, hidden beneath the circle of his shield, the shield covered over with ox-hide and gleaming bronze, which he always carried, fitted with two arm-rods: under this he crouched, and the spear of bronze flew over him. And his shield rang sharply, as the spear grazed it. Yet it did not fly in vain from the heavy hand of Deïphobos, but smote Hypsenor, son of Hippasos, the shepherd of the people, in the liver, beneath the midriff, and instantly unstrung his knees. And Deïphobos boasted over him hugely, crying aloud: “Ah, truly Asios does not lie unavenged; no, I think that even on his road to Hades, strong Warden of the gate, he will rejoice at heart, since, see, I have sent him escort for the way!”

So he spoke, but grief came over the Argives because of his boast and stirred above all the soul of wise-hearted Antilochos; still, in spite of his sorrow, he was not forgetful of his dear companion, but ran and stood over him and covered him with his shield. Then two trusty companions, Mekisteus, son of Echios, and noble Alastor, stooped down and lifted him and with heavy groaning carried him to the hollow ships.

Idomeneus did not relax his mighty force, but kept striving either to cover one of the Trojans with black night or to fall himself in fending off death from the Achaians. There the dear son of Aisyetes, beloved of Zeus, the hero Alkathōös, was slain, who was son-in-law of Anchises and had married the eldest of his daughters, Hippodameia, whom her father and her mother dearly loved in the halls, for she excelled all the young women of her age in beauty and skill and in wisdom, and therefore the best man in wide Troy took her as his wife. Poseidon subdued this man Alkathōös to Idomeneus, throwing a spell over his shining eyes and snaring his glorious limbs so that he could neither flee backwards, nor avoid the stroke, but

stood steady as a pillar, or a tree with a lofty crown of leaves, when the hero Idomeneus smote him in the middle of the breast with the spear and tore the armor of bronze around him, which before had fended off death from his body, but now rang harsh as it was broken by the spear. And he fell with a crash, and the spear stuck in his heart, which, still beating, shook the butt-end of the spear, till at last mighty Ares stopped its fury there. But Idomeneus boasted terribly and cried aloud: “Deïphobos, are we to think it justice that we have slain three men for one, since you boast this way? No, but stand up against me yourself, that you may know what kind of son of Zeus I am who have come here! For Zeus first fathered Minos, the warden of Crete, and Minos had a son, the noble Deukalion, and Deukalion fathered me, a prince over many men in wide Crete, and now the ships have brought me here, a curse to you and your father and to all the Trojans.”

So he spoke, but the thoughts of Deïphobos were divided, whether he should retreat and call to his aid one of the great-hearted Trojans, or should make the attempt alone. And to his mind this seemed better, to go find Aineias, whom he found standing at the back of the throng, for Aineias was always angry with noble Priam, because Priam gave him no honor, in spite of his valour among men. So Deïphobos stood by him and spoke winged words to him: “Aineias, counselor of the Trojans, now indeed there is great need for you to help your sister’s husband, if any care for your kin moves you. Follow me, let us help Alkathöös, your sister’s husband, who used to cherish you in his hall, when you were just a little one; look now, spear-famed Idomeneus has stripped him of his armor.”

So he spoke and roused the spirit in the breast of Aineias, who went to seek Idomeneus, with high thoughts of war. But fear did not take hold upon Idomeneus, as though he were some tender boy, but he stood at bay, like a boar on the hills that trusts in his strength and withstands the great attacking throng of men in a lonely place, and he bristles up his back, and his eyes shine with fire, while he clashes his tusks and is eager to keep at bay both men and hounds. In the same way, spear-famed Idomeneus stood at bay against Aineias,

who came to the rescue, and he gave no ground at all, but called on his comrades, glancing to Askalaphos and Aphareus and Deïpyros and Meriones and Antilochos, all masters of the war-cry; he spurred these up to battle and spoke winged words: “Come here, friends, and rescue me, for I am all alone, and I terribly dread the onslaught of swift-footed Aineias, who is attacking me; for he is powerfully strong to destroy men in battle, and he has the flower of youth, the greatest aid there is. If he and I were the same age and had this same courage we now have, he or I would quickly achieve great victory.”

So he spoke, and they all stood close to each other, being of one spirit in their hearts, with shields laid on their shoulders. But Aineias, on the other side, cried to his comrades, glancing to Deïphobos and Paris and noble Agenor that with him were leaders of the Trojans; and the rest of the men followed them, as sheep follow their leader to the water from the pasture, and the shepherd is glad at heart; even so the heart of Aineias was glad in his breast when he saw the ranks of the people coming to help him.

Then they rushed in close fight around Alkathoös with their long spears, and around their breasts the bronze rang terribly, as they aimed at each other in the throng, while two men of war beyond the rest, Aineias and Idomeneus, the equals of Ares, were each striving to hew the flesh of the other with the pitiless bronze. Now Aineias first made a cast at Idomeneus, who, steadily watching him, avoided the spear of bronze, and the point of Aineias went quivering in the earth, since it had flown vainly from his stalwart hand. But Idomeneus smote Oinomaos in the middle of the belly, and broke the front of his breastplate, and the bronze let forth his bowels through the breastplate, and he fell in the dust and clutched the earth in his palms. And Idomeneus drew out the far-shadowing spear from the dead man, but was not able to strip the rest of the lovely armor from his shoulders, for the spears pressed hard on him. His feet no longer served him firmly in a charge, nor could he rush after his own spear, nor avoid the foe. Therefore in close combat he still held off the pitiless day of destiny, but in retreat his feet no longer carried him swiftly from the battle. And as he was slowly departing, Deïphobos

aimed at him with his shining spear, for, indeed he always nursed a steadfast hatred against Idomeneus. But this time too he missed him and smote Askalaphos, the son of Enyalios, with his spear, and the strong spear passed through his shoulder, and he fell in the dust and clutched the earth in his outstretched hand. But loud-voiced awful Ares was not yet aware at all that his son had fallen in the strong battle, but he was reclining on the peak of Olympos, beneath the golden clouds, held there by the plan of Zeus, where the other immortal gods were also, restrained from the war.

Now the people rushed in close fight around Askalaphos, and Deiphobos tore from Askalaphos his shining helmet; but Meriones, the equal of swift Ares, leaped forward and smote the arm of Deiphobos with his spear, and from his hand the visored helmet fell clanging to the ground. And Meriones sprang forth instantly, like a vulture, and drew the strong spear from the shoulder of Deiphobos and fell back among the throng of his comrades. But the brother of Deiphobos, Polites, put his arm around his waist and helped him out from the terrible thunder of war till he came to the swift horses that waited for him behind the battle and the fight with their charioteer and beautifully-decorated chariot. The horses drew him, heavily groaning, to the city, worn out by the pain, and the blood ran down from his newly wounded arm.

But the rest were still fighting, and the war-cry arose endlessly. There Aineias rushed on Aphareus, son of Kaletor, and with his sharp spear struck his throat, which happened to be turned to him, and his head dropped down, and his shield and helmet fell with him, and death that slays the spirit overwhelmed him. And Antilochos watched Thoön as he turned the other way and leaped on him and wounded him, severing all the vein that runs up the back till it reaches the neck; this he severed clean, and Thoön fell on his back in the dust, stretching out both his hands to his dear companions. Then Antilochos rushed on and stripped the armor from his shoulders, glancing around while the Trojans gathered from here and there, and smote his wide shining shield; but they were not able to pierce with the pitiless bronze the delicate flesh of Antilochos, hidden behind

the shield. For indeed Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, guarded on every side the son of Nestor, even in the midst of the javelins. Yet Antilochos could not get free of the foe, but turned around among them, and his spear was never at rest, but always brandished and shaken, and the aim of his heart was to smite one of his enemies from afar, or to attack him at close range. But as he was aiming through the crowd, he did not escape the notice of Adamas, son of Asios, who smote the midst of his shield with the sharp bronze, attacking from close by; but Poseidon of the dark locks made his spear useless, refusing to let him take the life of Antilochos. And part of the spear remained there, like a burned stake, in the shield of Antilochos, and half lay on the earth, and Adamas retreated back to the ranks of his comrades, avoiding Fate. But Meriones, following after him as he departed, smote him with a spear between his genitals and the navel, where a wound is most painful to wretched mortals. There he thrust the spear into him and he fell and writhed on the spear, just as a bull that herdsmen on the hills drag along forcefully when they have bound him with vines; in the same way when he was struck he writhed for a moment, not for long, till the hero Meriones came near and drew the spear out of his body. And darkness covered his eyes.

Then Helenos in close fight smote Deïpyros on the temple with a great Thracian sword and tore away the helmet, and the helmet, being dislodged, fell on the ground, and one of the Achaians in the fight picked it up as it rolled between his feet. But dark night covered the eyes of Deïpyros. Then grief took hold of the son of Atreus, Menelaos of the loud war-cry, and he rushed with a curse against the warrior Helenos, the prince, shaking his sharp spear, while the other drew at the center of his bow. And both at once were making ready to let fly, one with his sharp spear, the other with the arrow from the string. Then the son of Priam smote Menelaos on the breast with his arrow, on the front of the breastplate, and the bitter arrow flew off. Just as from a broad shovel in a great threshing floor the black-skinned beans and the pulse fly, before the whistling wind and the stress of the winnower's shovel; in the same way from the breastplate of renowned Menelaos the bitter arrow flew glancing far aside. But

the son of Atreus, Menelaos of the loud war-cry, smote the hand of Helenos with which he held the polished bow, and into the bow, clean through the hand, was driven the spear of bronze. Back he withdrew to the ranks of his comrades, avoiding Fate, with his hand hanging down at his side, for the ashen spear dragged after him. And the great-hearted Agenor drew the spear from his hand and bound up the hand with a band of twisted sheep's wool, a sling that an attendant carried for him, the shepherd of the people.

Then Peisandros went straight for renowned Menelaos, but an evil Fate was leading him to Death, to be overcome in the dread strife of battle by you, Menelaos. Now when the two had come close in their attack upon each other, the son of Atreus missed, and his spear was turned aside, but Peisandros smote the shield of renowned Menelaos, yet was not able to drive the bronze clean through, for the wide shield caught it, and the spear broke in the socket; yet Peisandros rejoiced in his heart and hoped for the victory. But the son of Atreus drew his silver-studded sword and leaped upon Peisandros. And Peisandros, under his shield, clutched his noble axe of fine bronze with long and polished handle of olive-wood, and the two set upon each other. Then Peisandros smote the crest of the helmet shaded with horse hair, close below the very plume, but Menelaos struck the other man as he came forward on the brow above the base of the nose, and the bones cracked and the eyes, all bloody, fell at his feet in the dust. Then he bowed and fell, and Menelaos set his foot on his breast and stripped him of his arms and exulted, saying: "In this way you will leave the ships of the Danaans of the swift steeds, you arrogant Trojans, greedy for the terrible thunder of war. Yes, and you will not be lacking in all other kinds of reproof and shame with which you humiliated me, you hounds of evil, who have no fear in your hearts of the strong wrath of loud-thundering Zeus, the god of guest and host, who one day will destroy your steep citadel, you who wantonly carried away my wedded wife and many of my possessions, when you were entertained by her. Now again you want to throw ruinous fire on the seafaring ships and to slaughter the Achaian heroes. But you will yet refrain from battle, as eager as you are. O Father

Zeus, truly they say that you excel in wisdom all others, both gods and men, and all things are from you. What a wonder that you are favoring these men of violence, the Trojans, whose power is always for evil, and they never have their fill of the thunder of war. For all things there is an end to hunger, yes, even for love and sleep, and for sweet song, and for delightful dance, of which a man would rather have his fill than of war, but the Trojans never have enough of war.”

So spoke noble Menelaos, and he stripped the bloody arms from the body and gave them to his companions, and instantly he went out again and mingled in the forefront of the battle. Then Harpalion, the son of King Pylaimenes, leaped out against him, Harpalion who followed his dear father to Troy to the war, but never came again to his own country. He smote the middle of the shield of Atreus’ son with his spear, in close combat, yet was not able not to drive the bronze clean through, but fell back into the host of his comrades, avoiding Fate, glancing around every direction, lest someone should wound his flesh with the bronze. But Meriones shot at him, as he retreated, with a bronze-shod arrow, and smote him in the right buttock, and the arrow went right through the bladder and came out under the bone. And dropping down there in the arms of his dear companions he breathed out his soul, lying stretched like a snake on the earth, and the black blood flowed out and moistened the ground. And the Paphlagonians, great of heart, tended him carefully and set him in a chariot and drove him to sacred Ilios sorrowing, and with them went his father, shedding tears, and there was no atonement for his dead son.

Now Paris was very angry at heart because of his slaying, for he had been his host among the Paphlagonians; therefore, in anger for his sake, he let fly a bronze-shod arrow. Now there was a certain Euchenor, the son of Polyidos the seer, a rich man and a good one, whose home was in Corinth. And he knew well his own ruinous fate, when he went on board the ship, for often the old man, the good Polyidos, would tell him that he would either perish of a terrible disease in his halls or go with the ships of the Achaians and be destroyed by the Trojans. So he avoided at once the heavy war-fine of the Achaians, and the hateful disease too, so that he might not know

any sorrow. Paris smote this man beneath the jaw and under the ear, and swiftly his spirit departed from his limbs, and dread darkness overshadowed him.

So they fought on like raging fire, but Hektor, beloved of Zeus, had not heard nor knew at all that on the left of the ships his host was being subdued by the Argives, and soon the Achaians would have won glory, so mighty was the Holder and Shaker of the Earth who urged on the Argives, yes, and mightily defended them himself. But Hektor remained where at first he had leaped within the walls and the gate and had broken the close ranks of shield-bearing Danaans where the ships of Adas and Protesilaos were drawn up on the beach of the ancient sea, while above them the wall was built lowest, and by it most of all the heroes and their horses were raging in battle.

There the Boiotians and Ionians with trailing tunics and Lokrians and Phthians and illustrious Epeians were barely able to stop his onslaught on the ships or to drive back from them noble Hektor, like a flame of fire. And there also were the picked men of the Athenians; among them Menestheus, son of Peteos, was the leader; and there followed with him Pheidias and Stichios and brave Bias, while the Epeians were led by Meges, son of Phyleus, and Amphion and Drakios, and in front of the Phthians were Medon and Podarkes, resolute in war. Now the one, Medon, was the illegitimate son of noble Oileus and brother of Aias, and he lived in Phylake, far from his own country, because he had slain a man, the brother of his step-mother Eriopis, wife of Oileus. But the other, Podarkes, was the son of Iphiklos, son of Phylakos, and they in their armor, in the forefront of the great-hearted Phthians, were defending the ships and fighting among the Boiotians.

Now Aias, the swift son of Oileus, never left the side of Aias, son of Telamon, no, not for an instant, but just as in fallow land two wine-dark oxen with equally stout hearts strain at the well-shaped plough, and round the roots of their horns abundant sweat springs up, and nothing keeps them apart except the polished yoke as they labour through the furrow, till the end of the furrow brings them up; in the same way the Aiantes stood close by each other. Now indeed

many noble men of his companions followed the son of Telamon and carried his shield when labor and sweat came over his limbs. But the Lokrians did not follow the high-hearted son of Oileus, for their hearts were not steadfast in close battle, since they had no helmets of bronze, shadowy with horsehair plumes, nor round shields, nor ashen spears, but trusting in bows and well-twisted slings of sheep's wool, they followed him to Ilios. With these, in the war, they shot thick and fast and broke the ranks of the Trojans. So the one group in front, with their beautifully-decorated armor fought with the Trojans and with Hektor, arrayed in bronze, while the others from behind kept shooting from their ambush, and the Trojans lost all memory of the joy of battle, for the arrows confounded them.

Very unwillingly the Trojans would have withdrawn from the ships back to windy Ilios then, if Poulydamas had not come near brave Hektor and said: "Hektor, it is hard for you to be persuaded by those who would counsel you; for god has given you excellence in the works of war, and therefore in council you also are eager to excel other men in knowledge. But you will not be able to take everything upon yourself. For to one man god has given for his portion the works of war, to another the dance, to another the lute and song, but in the heart of yet another far-seeing Zeus has placed an excellent understanding by which many men gain; he saves many, and he himself knows it best. Listen, I will speak as it seems best to me. See how all around you the circle of war is blazing, but the great-hearted Trojans, now that they have broken through the wall, are scattered among the ships, some standing apart in their armor and some fighting, a few men against a great army. Pull back and call together all the best of the warriors. Then we will listen to all counsel carefully, concerning whether we should fall on the many-benched ships, if indeed god desires to give us victory, or after counsel is held, we should return unharmed from the ships. For truly I fear lest the Achaians repay their debt of yesterday, since there remains by the ships a man always hungry for war, who will never leave the battle."

So Poulydamas spoke, and his safe counsel pleased Hektor greatly, and he immediately sprang to the ground from the chariot

with his weapons and spoke to him winged words and said: “Poulydamas, you keep all the best of the host here, but I will go there to face the war, and I will quickly return again, when I have strictly laid on them my commands.”

So he spoke and set out, in appearance like a snowy mountain, and shouting aloud he rushed through the Trojans and allies. And they all hurried to Poulydamas, the kindly son of Panthoös, when they heard the voice of Hektor. But he went looking for Deïphobos and the strong prince Helenos and Adamas, son of Asios, and Asios, son of Hyrtakos, among the warriors in the foremost line, to try to find them anywhere. But them he found not at all unharmed, nor free of evil, but some among the sterns of the ships of the Achaians lay lifeless, slain by the hands of the Argives, and some were within the wall wounded by spear thrust or cast. But one he easily found, on the left of the grievous battle—noble Alexandros, the lord of lovely-haired Helen, encouraging his companions and urging them to war. And he drew near to him and addressed him with words of shame: “Evil Paris, fairest of face, you who lust for women, you seducer; where are Deïphobos, and the strong prince Helenos and Adamas, son of Asios, and Asios, son of Hyrtakos, and where is Othryoneus? Now all high Ilios has perished utterly. Now you see too that sheer destruction is certain.”

Then godlike Alexandros answered him, saying: “Hektor, since you are inclined to blame one who is blameless, some other day I might rather withdraw from the war, since my mother did not bear me to be a coward. For from the time that you gathered the battle of your companions around the ships, from that time we have remained here, and we war with the Danaans ceaselessly, and our companions about whom you ask are slain. Only Deïphobos and the strong prince Helenos have withdrawn, both of them being wounded in the hand with long spears, for the son of Kronos kept death away from them. But now lead on, wherever your heart and spirit urge you, and we will follow you eagerly, nor will we lack for courage, I think, as long as we have strength; but beyond his strength no man can fight, no matter how eager he is.”

So spoke the hero and persuaded his brother's heart, and they went forth where the war and the roar were thickest, around Kebri-ones and noble Poulydamas and Phalkes and Orthaios and godlike Polyphetes and Palmys and Askanios and Morys, son of Hippotion, who had come in their turn out of deep-soiled Askania, on the morning before, and now Zeus urged them to fight. And these all set out, like the blast of violent winds, that rushes to earth beneath the thunder of Father Zeus, and with astounding roar mingles with the salt sea, and in it are many swelling waves of the loud-roaring sea, arched over, and white with foam, some in front and others in the rear; in the same way, the Trojans, arranged front and rear and shining with bronze, followed their leaders.

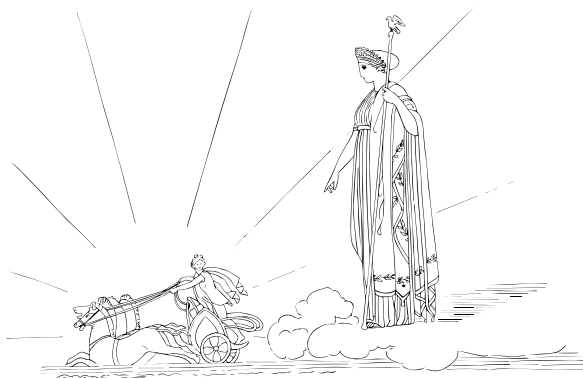
And Hektor, son of Priam, the equal of Ares, the curse of men, was leading them. In front he held the circle of his shield, thick with hides and plates of beaten bronze, and on his temples swayed his shining helmet. And everywhere he went in advance and tested the ranks, if perhaps they would yield to him as he charged under cover of his shield. But he could not confound the heart within the breast of the Achaians. And Aias, stalking with long strides, challenged him first: "Draw nigh; why do you vainly try to dismay the Argives? We are not new to war by any means, but only by the cruel scourge of Zeus are we Achaians beaten down. Surely now your heart hopes to utterly spoil the ships, but we too have hands with which to hold our own. Indeed your peopled city will be taken and sacked long before that happens. But as for you, I tell you that the time is near when you will pray to Father Zeus as you flee, and to the other immortal gods, that your lovely-maned horses may be swifter than falcons—your horses that will carry you to the city as they storm in dust across the plain."

And as he spoke, a bird flew forth on the right hand, an eagle of lofty flight, and the people of the Achaians shouted at the sight, encouraged by the omen, but glorious Hektor answered: "Aias, you blundering boaster, what are you saying! If only I were forever as surely the son of aegis-bearing Zeus, and that my mother were lady Hera, and that I were held in such honor as Apollo and Athene, as surely as this day is to bring utter evil on all the Argives! And among

them you will be slain, if you have the courage to await my long spear, which will rend your lily skin, and you will glut the dogs and birds of the Trojans with your fat and flesh, falling among the ships of the Achaians.”

So he spoke and led the way, and they came on with a terrible roar, and the whole army shouted behind them. And the Argives on the other side answered with a shout and did not forget their courage, but withstood the onslaught of the bravest of the Trojans. And the cry of the two armies went up through the high air, to the splendour of Zeus.

Book XIV: Hera Interferes



Hera Commands the Sun to Set

Council of Wounded Heroes

Yet the cry of battle did not escape Nestor, although he was drinking his wine, but he spoke winged words to the son of Asklepios: “Consider, noble Machaon, what had best be done; listen, the cry of the strong warriors by the ships grows louder. Now stay where you are sitting and drink the bright wine till Hekamede of the lovely hair heats warm water for the bath and washes away the clotted blood; but I will go out quickly and go to a watching place.”

With that, he took the well-wrought shield of his son, horse-taming Thrasymedes, which was lying in the hut, all shining with bronze, for the son had the shield of his father. And he seized a strong spear with a point of sharp bronze and stood outside the hut and immediately saw a shameful thing—the Achaians, routed and fleeing, and the high-hearted Trojans driving them, and the wall of the Achaians was overthrown. Just as when the great sea is troubled with a silent wave and awaits the sudden rush of the shrill winds, but is still unmoved nor rolled forward or to either side until some steady gale comes

down from Zeus; in the same way the old man pondered, his mind divided between two ways, whether he should go into the throng of the Danaans of the swift horses, or go after Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the people. And as he pondered, it seemed to him the better counsel to go to the son of Atreus. Meanwhile they were warring and slaying each other, and the stout bronze rang around their bodies as they were hit with swords and double-pointed spears.

Now the kings, beloved of Zeus, encountered Nestor, as they went up from the ships, those who were wounded with the bronze—Tydeus' son and Odysseus and Agamemnon, son of Atreus. For their ships were drawn up far apart from the battle, on the shore of the grey sea, for these were the first they had drawn up to the plain, and they had built the wall in front of the rear most ships. For as wide as the beach was, it could in no way hold all the ships, and the army was constrained. So they drew up the ships, row behind row, and filled up the wide mouth of the whole shore that the headlands held between them. The kings were going together, leaning on their spears, to watch the battle, and the heart of each man was sorrowful within his breast. And the old man, Nestor, met them, and caused the spirit to fail within the breasts of the Achaians.

And mighty Agamemnon spoke and addressed him: “O Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, why do you come here, leaving the war, the curse of men? I fear the fulfillment of the word that dread Hektor spoke and the threat with which he threatened us, speaking in the assembly of the Trojans—that he would never return to Ilios from the ships till he had burned the ships with fire and slain the men. This is what he said, and now all these things are being fulfilled. Alas, surely even the other strong-armored Achaians harbor anger against me in their hearts, like Achilles, and have no desire to fight by the rearmost ships.”

Then lordly Nestor of Gerenia answered him, saying: “Truly these things are close to being fulfilled, nor could Zeus himself contrive them any other way, he who thunders on high. For, look, the wall is overthrown, which we trusted to be an unbroken bulwark for our ships and our own bodies. And these men by the swift ships have

endless battle without relief, and you could not tell, however closely you looked, from which direction the Achaians are driven in rout, there is so much confusion in the slaughter, and the cry of battle goes up to heaven. But let us take counsel about what should be done, if we can do anything; but I do not counsel that we should go down into the war, for a wounded man cannot help in battle.”

Then Agamemnon, king of men, answered him: “Nestor, since they are warring by the rearmost ships, and the well-built wall has not helped nor the trench where the Achaians endured so much labour, hoping in their hearts that it should be the unbroken bulwark of the ships and of their own bodies, all this, it seems, must be the will of most-high Zeus, that the Achaians should perish here, nameless, far from Argos. For I knew it when he was quick to aid the Danaans, and now I know that he is giving to the Trojans glory like that of the immortal gods and has bound our hands and our strength. But let us all do as I say: let us drag down the ships that are drawn up in the first line near to the sea and send them all out onto the blessed salt-water and moor them far out with stones, till the divine night comes, if perhaps at night the Trojans will refrain from war; then we might drag down all the rest of the ships. For there is no shame in fleeing from ruin, even in the night. He does better who flees from trouble than he who is overtaken.”

Then, looking at him sternly, Odysseus of many counsels spoke: “Atreus’ son, what word has passed the door of your lips? Ruinous one, you should lead some other worthless army and not be king among us, for whom Zeus has determined that, from youth to old age, we should weave the threads of terrible wars, till every man of us perishes. Are you so eager to abandon the wide-wayed city of the Trojans, the city for which we have endured with sorrow so many evils? Be silent, lest some other Achaians hear those words which no man should allow to even pass through his lips, no one who understands in his heart how to speak proper counsel, none who is a sceptred king, and has as many people obeying him as the Argives over whom you reign. I utterly scorn your thoughts because of the word you have spoken, when in the very midst of war and battle you urge

us to drag the well-timbered ships down to the sea, so that even more than ever the Trojans will gain what they desire and master us, and sheer destruction will fall upon us. For the Achaians will not win the war if the ships are drawn down to the salt sea, but will look around to flee and withdraw from battle. Your counsel will accomplish evil, commander of the people!”

Then the king of men, Agamemnon, answered him: “Odysseus, you have pierced my heart sharply with your stern rebuke; no, I do not urge the sons of the Achaians to drag the well-timbered ships to the salt sea against their will. Perhaps there is some man, young or old, who will utter wiser counsel than mine; it would be welcome to me.”

Then Diomedes of the loud war-cry spoke also among them: “That man is near; we need not seek him for long, if you are willing to be persuaded by me and not be resentful because in years I am the youngest among you. I too can boast that I am descended from a noble father, Tydeus, whom the piled-up earth covers in Thebes. For Portheus had three well-born children: Agrios and Melas, who lived in Pleuron and steep Kalydon, and the third was lordly Oineus, the father of my father, and in valor he surpassed the others. And he lived there, but my father lived in Argos, where he had wandered, for Zeus and the other gods willed it to be so. And he married one of the daughters of Adrastos and lived in a house rich in goods and had plenty of wheat-bearing fields and many orchards, and he had many sheep, and in skill with the spear he surpassed all the Achaians. You must have heard these things if I speak the truth. So you cannot say that I am weak and a coward by descent and because of that disrespect my counsel which I am about to speak. Let us go down to the battle, wounded as we are, since it is necessary; then we might stay outside the battle, beyond the range of spears, lest any of us receive even more wounds; but we will encourage the others, even those who before gave in to their fear and stayed out of the fighting.”

So he spoke, and they all heard him willingly and obeyed him. And they set out, led by Agamemnon, the king of men.

Now the renowned Earth-Shaker did not hold watch in vain, but he went with them in the guise of an old man, and he seized the

right hand of Agamemnon, Atreus' son, and, uttering winged words, he spoke to him, saying: "Son of Atreus, I think that now the ruinous heart of Achilles rejoices in his breast, as he sees the slaughter and flight of the Achaians, since he has not the smallest bit of wisdom. May god strike him and may he perish. But with you the blessed gods are not angry; I think the leaders and rulers of the Trojans will cover the wide plain with dust yet, and you yourself will see them fleeing to the city from the ships and the shelters."

So he spoke and gave a mighty shout as he sped over the plain, as loud as nine or ten thousand men cry in battle, when they join the strife of war, so powerful was the cry that the strong Shaker of the Earth sent forth from his breast, and he put great strength into the heart of each of the Achaians, to struggle and war unceasingly.

"The Deception of Zeus"

Now Hera of the golden throne stood on the peak of Olympos and saw with her eyes and soon recognized that it was her brother and her husband's going to and fro through the glorious fight, and she rejoiced in her heart. And she saw Zeus sitting on the highest peak of many-fountained Ida, and he was hateful to her heart. Then the ox-eyed lady Hera considered how she might bewitch the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus. And this seemed to her in her heart to be the best counsel; to go to Ida, when she had dressed herself beautifully, if perhaps he would desire to sleep beside her and embrace her body in love, and she could pour a sweet and gentle sleep on his eyelids and his crafty wits. And she set forth to her chamber which her dear son Hephaistos had made, and in it he had made strong doors on the pillars, with a secret bolt, that no other god could open. There she entered in and closed the shining doors. With ambrosia she cleansed every stain from her lovely body and anointed herself with olive oil—ambrosial, soft, and with a sweet aroma, if it were merely shaken, in the bronze-floored mansion of Zeus, the aroma would fill earth and

heaven. With this she anointed her lovely body, and she combed her hair and with her hands plaited the shining locks, lovely and ambrosial, that flowed from her immortal head. Then she dressed herself in her fragrant robe that Athene had delicately made for her, putting on it many beautiful things, and she fastened it over her breast with clasps of gold. And she girdled it with a girdle adorned with a hundred tassels, and she set earrings in her pierced ears, earrings of three drops, and gleaming; and radiance shone from them. And the peerless goddess covered herself with a lovely new veil, bright as the sun, and on her shining feet she laced beautiful sandals. And when she had fully adorned herself, she went out from her chamber and called Aphrodite apart from the other gods and spoke to her, saying: “Will you obey me, dear child, in what I tell you? Or will you refuse with a grudge in your heart, because I help the Danaans, while you help the Trojans?”

Then Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus, answered her: “Hera, goddess queen, daughter of mighty Kronos, say what is on your mind, for my heart urges me to fulfill it if I am able to.”

Then with deceitful purpose the lady Hera answered her: “Give to me Love and Desire with which you overcome all the immortals and mortal men. For I am going to visit the limits of the bountiful Earth, and Okeanos, father of the gods, and mother Tethys, who reared me well and nourished me in their halls, having taken me from Rhea, when far-seeing Zeus imprisoned Kronos beneath the earth and the youthful sea. I will visit them and will soften their endless strife, for already for a long time they have held apart from each other, from love and the marriage bed, since anger has settled in their hearts. If I might persuade their hearts with words and bring them back to love and the marriage bed, I will forever be called dear and honored by them.”

Then laughter-loving Aphrodite answered her: “I must not deny you, nor would it be proper to refuse what you ask, for you sleep in the arms of Zeus, the king of the gods.”

With this, she loosed from her breast the embroidered belt, beautifully-crafted, in which all her enchantments are contained. In it

are love and desire and loving embraces, which steal the wits even of the wise. This belt she laid in Hera's hands and spoke and said: "Take this beautifully-crafted belt, on which all things are handworked, and put it in your bosom; I think you will not return with that thing which you desire in your heart unaccomplished."

So she spoke, and the ox-eyed lady Hera smiled, and smiling she hid the belt within her breast.

Then the daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite, went to her house, and Hera, rushing down, left the peak of Olympos and touched on Pieria and pleasant Emathia and sped over the snowy hills of the Thracian horsemen, over the highest peaks, and did not graze the ground with her feet; from Athos she went across the foaming sea and came to Lemnos, the city of godlike Thoas. There she met Sleep, the brother of Death, and clasped his hand and spoke and called him by name: "O Sleep, Lord of all gods and of all men, if ever you heard my word, obey me again now, and I will always be grateful to you. Lull the shining eyes of Zeus beneath his brows for me, I beg you, as soon as I have laid myself down with him in love. I will give gifts to you, a noble golden throne, imperishable forever, which Hephaistos the lame, my own son, will craft skilfully, and he will set a footstool for your feet beneath it to set your shining feet upon when you are feasting."

Then sweet Sleep answered her and said: "Hera, goddess and queen, daughter of mighty Kronos, I might easily lull to slumber another of the eternal gods—yes, even if it were the streams of Okeanos himself, who is the father of them all. But I dare not draw near to Zeus, the son of Kronos, nor lull him to slumber, unless he himself commands it. For before this a request of yours taught me a lesson, on the day when Herakles, that famed high-hearted son of Zeus, sailed from Ilios, after he had sacked the city of the Trojans. Then indeed I lulled the soul of aegis-bearing Zeus, with my sweet influence poured over him, and you contrived evil against him in your heart and roused over the sea the blasts of violent winds, and you carried Herakles to well-peopled Kos, far from all his friends. But Zeus, when he awoke, was furious and threw the gods around in his mansion and sought me most of all, and he would have thrown

me from the upper air to perish in the deep, if Night, who subdues both men and gods, had not saved me. I came to her as a suppliant in my flight, and he stopped pursuing me, though he was still angry, for he feared doing anything displeasing to swift Night. And now again you urge me to accomplish this other task which may not be accomplished.”

Then the ox-eyed lady Hera answered him again: “Sleep, why do you hold these things in your heart? Do you think that Zeus of the far-borne voice will help the Trojans in the same way as he was angry for the sake of Herakles, his own child? Do this now. And I will give you one of the younger of the Graces, to marry and to be called your wife—Pasi¹thea, whom you have longed for all your life.”

So she spoke, and Sleep was glad and answered and said: “Swear to me by the inviolable water of Styx, and with one of your hands grasp the rich earth and with the other the shining sea, so that all may be witnesses to us, even all the gods below that are with Kronos, that truly you will give me one of the younger of the Graces, to marry and to be called my wife—Pasi¹thea, whom I have longed for all my life.”

So he spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera did what he asked; she swore as he had asked her and called all the gods by name, even those below Tartaros that are called Titans. But when she had sworn and ended that oath, the two left the citadel of Lemnos and of Imbros, clothed in mist, and swiftly they made their journey. They came to many-fountained Ida, the mother of wild beasts, to Lekton, where they left the sea, and the two of them passed above the dry land, and the highest tops of the forest waved beneath their feet. There Sleep stopped before the eyes of Zeus saw him and lighted on a tall pine tree, the loftiest pine in all Ida that then rose through the lower to the upper air. He sat in it, hidden by the branches of the pine, in the likeness of the shrieking bird¹ that on the mountains the gods call *chalkis*, though men call it *kymin²dis*. But Hera swiftly drew

1 Compare *Paradise Lost*, IV.194-196, where Satan sits like a cormorant on a tree in Paradise to spy.

2 The night jar, or nighthawk.

near to the top of Gargaros, the highest peak of Ida, and Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer saw her. And as he saw her, desire came over his deep heart, just as when they had first mingled with each other in delight and went together to the couch, their dear parents not knowing about it. And he stood before her and spoke and said: “Hera, why did you wish to come here from Olympos, without your horses and chariot, on which you ride?”

Then with deceitful purpose Lady Hera answered him: “I am going to visit the limits of the rich Earth, and Okeanos, father of the gods, and mother Tethys, who reared me well and cherished me in their halls. I will visit them and stop their endless strife, for already for a long time they have remained apart from each other, from love and the marriage bed, since anger has settled in their hearts. But my horses, which will carry me over land and sea, are standing at the foot of many-fountained Ida. And now it is because of you that I have come here, down from Olympos, if perhaps you might be angry with me later, if I had gone silently to the mansion of deep-flowing Okeanos.”

Then Zeus, the Gatherer of the Clouds, answered her and said: “Hera, you can go there at a later time. But let us take pleasure in the bed of love. For never before did the love of goddess or woman so mightily overwhelm and conquer the heart within my breast as it does now—not when I loved the wife of Ixion, who bore Pirithoös, the equal of gods in counsel, nor when I loved Danaë of the lovely ankles, daughter of Akrisios, who bore Perseus, most renowned of all men, nor when I loved the famed daughter of Phoinix, who bore me Minos and godlike Rhadamanthys, no, nor even when I loved Semele, nor Alkmene in Thebes, and she bore Herakles, a child hardy of heart, but Semele bore Dionysos, a delight to mortals; no, nor when I loved the fair-haired queen, Demeter, nor renowned Leto, nor even you yourself, as I love you now, and sweet desire possesses me.”

And the lady Hera answered him with deceitful purpose: “Most dread son of Kronos, what a word you have spoken! If you long to be couched in love on the peaks of Ida, where everything is open to view, how would it be if some one of the eternal gods should see us slumbering and go and tell it to all the other gods? I could not rise

from the couch and go again to your house; no, it would be a cause for righteous anger. But if you wish, and it is dear to your heart, you have a chamber that your own son Hephaistos built, and he fastened strong doors to the pillars; let us go there and lie down, if that is what you desire.”

Then Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer answered her and said: “Hera, do not fear lest any god or any man should see us, so great a golden cloud will I cast completely over you. I think that not even the sun, whose light is sharpest to see, would see through it.”

So he spoke, and the son of Kronos embraced his wife in his arms. And beneath them the divine earth put forth fresh new grass and dewy lotus and crocus and hyacinth, thick and soft, which raised them aloft from the ground. They lay on this and were covered over with a beautiful golden cloud, from which drops of glittering dew descended.

So the Father slept quietly on the peak of Gargaros, overcome by Sleep and love, with his beloved in his arms. But sweet Sleep ran to the ships of the Achaians, to tell his news to the god who holds and shakes the earth. He stood near him and spoke winged words: “Poseidon, help the Danaans wholeheartedly now and give them glory for a time, while Zeus still sleeps, for I have thrown a soft slumber over him, and Hera has beguiled him to sleep with her in love.”

Achaian Success

So he spoke and then went away to the renowned tribes of men, having stirred up Poseidon even more to aid the Danaans. He immediately leaped out in front of the foremost and called out to them: “Argives, are we again to give the victory to Hektor, son of Priam, so that he might take our ships and win glory? No, though he says that he will, because Achilles remains by the hollow ships, angry at heart. But there will be no great longing for that man if we spur ourselves on to help each other. Let us all do as I say: let us equip ourselves

with the best and greatest shields in the army and put shining helmets on our heads and seize the longest spears in our hands and in this way go out. I will lead the way, and I think that Hektor, son of Priam, will not long wait for us, in spite of all his zeal. And whoever is steadfast in battle and has a small shield on his shoulder, let him give it to a worse man and equip himself with a larger shield.”

So he spoke, and they listened to him eagerly and obeyed him. And the kings themselves, wounded as they were, ordered them—Tydeus’ son and Odysseus and Agamemnon, son of Atreus. They went through the whole army and exchanged weapons of war. The good warrior armed himself with the good armor and gave the worse armor to the worse man. But when they had put the shining bronze on their bodies, they started to march, and Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, led them with a terrifying sharp-edged sword in his strong hand, like lightning with which no man may fight, because fear holds men back from it. But renowned Hektor ordered the Trojans on the other side. Then they strained at the fiercest conflict of war, dark-haired Poseidon and glorious Hektor, one helping the Trojans, the other the Argives. And the sea washed up to the shelters and ships of the Argives, and they gathered together with a mighty roar. The waves of the sea do not bellow so loudly against the land, stirred up from the deep by the harsh breath of the north wind, nor is the roar of burning fire so loud in the glades of the mountains when it springs up to burn the forest, nor does the wind call so loudly in the high leafy tresses of the trees, when it rages and roars its loudest, as was the cry of the Trojans and Achaians shouting terribly as they rushed upon each other.

First glorious Hektor threw his spear at Aias, who was facing him fully, and he did not miss, striking him where two belts were stretched across his breast, the belt of his shield, and that of his silver-studded sword; these guarded his tender flesh. And Hektor was enraged because his swift spear had flown vainly from his hand, and he retreated into the throng of his fellows, avoiding Fate.

Then as he was retreating, the great Telamonian Aias smote him with a huge stone, for many stones, the props of the swift ships,

were rolled among the feet of the fighters; he lifted one of these, and struck Hektor on the breast over the shield-rim, near the neck, and made him spin like a top with the blow, so that he reeled round and round. Just as when an oak falls, uprooted beneath the stroke of Father Zeus, and a terrible aroma of brimstone arises from it, and whoever stands near and sees it has no more courage, for the bolt of Zeus is terrifying; in the same way, mighty Hektor immediately fell in the dust. And the spear fell from his hand, but his shield and helmet were firmly attached to him, and around him his armor adorned with bronze rang.

Then with a loud cry the sons of the Achaians ran up, hoping to drag him away, and they threw showers of spears. But not one was able to wound or strike the shepherd of the people; before that could happen, the bravest gathered around him—Poulydamas and Aineias and noble Agenor and Sarpedon, leader of the Lykians, and noble Glaukos; and none of the rest were heedless of him, but they held their round shields in front of him, and his comrades lifted him in their arms and carried him out of the battle, till he reached his swift horses that were standing waiting for him, with the charioteer and the gloriously-decorated chariot, at the rear of the combat and the war. They carried Hektor, who was heavily groaning, toward the city. When they came to the ford of the fair-flowing river, eddying Xanthos which immortal Zeus had fathered, there they lifted him from the chariot to the ground and poured water over him, and he got his breath back and looked up with his eyes and, kneeling on his knees, he vomited black blood. Then again he sank back on the ground, and black night covered his eyes, the stroke still overwhelming his spirit.

When the Argives saw Hektor departing, they rushed all the more upon the Trojans and remembered their delight in battle. Far in front, swift Aias, son of Oileus, leaped on Satnios, son of Enops, and wounded him with his sharp spear—Satnios whom the fair water nymph bore to Enops as he herded his flocks by the banks of Satnioeis. The spear-famed son of Oileus drew close to him and wounded him on his side, and he fell, and around him the Trojans and Danaans joined in strong battle. Then Poulydamas, the wielder of the

spear, son of Panthoös, came to his aid and smote Prothoënor on the right shoulder—Prothoënor, son of Areilykos—and the mighty spear went through his shoulder, and he fell in the dust and clutched the earth with his palm. And Poulydamas boasted over him terribly, crying aloud: “Truly I think that again the spear has not leaped in vain from the strong hand of the high-hearted son of Panthoös. No, one of the Argives has caught it in his flesh, and I think that he will go down into the house of Hades using it for a crutch.”

So he spoke, and sorrow came on the Argives because of his boasting. And most of all he stirred up the anger of the wise son of Telamon, Aias, for the man fell close beside him. Swiftly he threw with his shining spear at the other man, as he retreated; Poulydamas himself avoided black Fate, leaping to one side, but Archelochos, son of Antenor, received the spear, for the gods had willed his death. The spear struck him at the meeting of the head and neck, on the last joint of the spine, and cut both the tendons in two. And as he fell, his head and mouth and nose reached the earth long before his legs and knees did, and Aias shouted to noble Poulydamas: “Consider, Poulydamas, and tell me truly, whether you think that this man is not worth slaying as a substitute for Prothoënor; he seems to me no coward, nor born of cowards, but a brother or son of horse-taming Antenor, for he very closely resembles that line.”

So he spoke, knowing the truth very well, and grief seized the hearts of the Trojans. Then Akamas wounded Promachos the Boiotian with his spear, from where he stood over his brother whom Promachos was dragging away by the feet. Akamas boasted terribly over him, shouting aloud: “You Argive bowmen, hungry to make threats, indeed there will not be struggle and toil for us alone, but you will die just as we will. Consider how your Promachos sleeps, conquered by my spear, so that my brother’s blood-price may not go unpaid for long. A man may well pray for just this—that some kinsman will be left in his halls who will avenge his fall.”

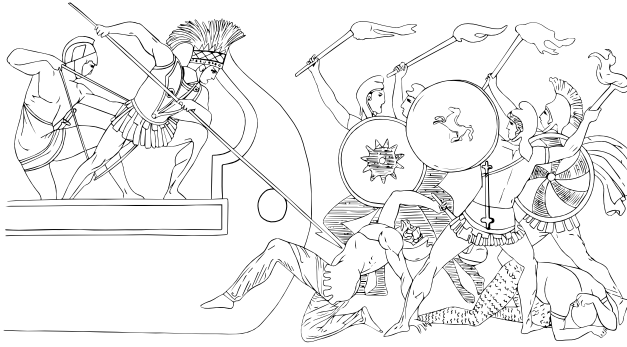
So he spoke, and sorrow came on the Argives at his boast. And most of all he stirred the heart of the wise Peneleos, who went for Akamas, and Akamas did not remain there for the attack of the

prince Peneleos. But Peneleos wounded Ilioneus, the son of Phorbas, rich in herds, whom Hermes loved most dearly of all the Trojans and gave him wealth. Now his mother bore Ilioneus, an only child, to Phorbas. Peneleos wounded this man beneath the brows, at the base of the eye, and drove out the eyeball, and the spear went clean through the eye and through the nape of the neck, and he fell backward, stretching out both his hands. And Peneleos, drawing his sharp sword, smote him on the middle of the neck and cut off his head with the helmet still on it, and still the strong spear stuck in the eye, and, lifting it up like a poppy head, he showed it to the Trojans and spoke his boastful words: “You Trojans, I urge you to bid the dear father and the mother of proud Ilioneus to wail in their halls; and the wife of Promachos, son of Alegenor, will not rejoice in her dear husband’s homecoming either, in that hour when we youths of the Achaians return with our ships from Troy-land.”

So he spoke, and fear fell on the limbs of all of them, and each man looked around to see where he might flee sheer destruction.

Tell me now, you Muses who dwell in the mansions of Olympus, who was the first of the Achaians to lift the bloody spoils, when the renowned Shaker of the Earth had turned the battle? Indeed it was Aias, son of Telamon, who first wounded Hyrtios, the son of Gyrrios, the leader of the Mysians, strong of heart, and Antilochos stripped the spoils from Phalkes and Mermeros, and Meriones slew Morys and Hippotion, and Teukros slew Prothoön and Periphetes; next Atreus’ son wounded Hyperenor, the shepherd of the people, in the side, and the bronze point tore through and let out the entrails, and the soul through the jagged wound fled heavily, and darkness covered his eyes. But Aias, the swift-footed son of Oïleus, slew the most men, for there was no one as swift of foot as he, to pursue when men fled, when Zeus sent terror among them.

Book XV: Apollo Interferes



Aias Defending the Greek Ships Against the Trojans

Zeus Wakes

When they had sped in flight across the wall and trench, and many were destroyed at the hands of the Danaans, the rest stopped and remained beside the chariots in confusion, pale with terror.

But now Zeus awoke, on the peaks of Ida, beside Hera of the golden throne. Then he leaped up and stood and saw the Trojans and Achaians, those in flight, and these, the Argives, driving them on from behind, and among them the prince Poseidon. And he saw Hektor lying on the plain, and around him sat his companions, and he was gasping with labored breath, and his mind was dazed, and he was vomiting blood, for it was not the weakest of the Achaians that had struck him. Seeing him, the father of men and gods had pity on him, and angrily he spoke to Hera, with a fierce look: “Hera, difficult to deal with, indeed it is your deceitful trick that has made noble Hektor cease from the fight and has terrified the people. I do not know yet whether you will be the first to reap the fruits of your cruel treason when I beat you with a lash. Do you not remember when you were hung from on high, and from your feet I suspended two anvils

and fastened around your hands a golden fetter that could not be broken? And you hung in the clear air and the clouds, and the gods were angry in high Olympos, but they could not come and free you. Whoever I caught, I would seize and throw from the threshold to fall, fainting to the earth, but even then the ceaseless sorrow did not leave my soul free, sorrow for godlike Herakles. You drove him over the eternal sea, when you had bribed the tempest, with the help of the North Wind, because of your evil will, and then carried him away to well-peopled Kos. I rescued him from there and led him back again to Argos, the pasture-land of horses, after his many labors. I remind you of these things again, so that you will stop your trickery and will know whether the flirtation and love benefitted you at all, when you lay with me after you came from the gods and seduced me.”

So he spoke, and the ox-eyed lady Hera trembled and spoke winged words to him, saying: “Let earth be my witness and wide heaven above and that falling water of Styx, the greatest oath and the most terrible to the blessed gods, and your own sacred head and our own bridal bed, by which I could never perjure myself, that it is not by my will that Earth-Shaking Poseidon troubles the Trojans and Hektor, and helps those on the other side. No, it is his own soul that urges and commands him, and he had pity on the Achaians, when he saw them hard-pressed beside the ships. I would even counsel him to go wherever you, Lord of the storm-cloud, would command him.”

So she spoke, and the Father of gods and men smiled and, answering her, he spoke winged words: “Ox-eyed lady Hera, if from now on you would remain of one mind with me among the immortal gods, then Poseidon, however much he might wish otherwise, would quickly turn his mind to follow your heart and mine. If indeed you speak the truth sincerely, then go now among the clans of the gods, and call Iris to come here, and Apollo, the renowned archer, so that Iris may go among the army of the bronze-clad Achaians and tell Poseidon the prince to cease from the war and get back to his own house. But let Phoibos Apollo spur Hektor on to the war and breathe strength into him again and make him forget his pain that now wears down his heart and drive the Achaians back again when he has stirred

craven fear in them. Let them flee and fall among the many-benched ships of Achilles son of Peleus, and he will rouse his own companion, Patroklos, and renowned Hektor will slay him with the spear, in front of Ilios, after he has slain many other young men, among them my own son, noble Sarpedon. Then in wrath for that, noble Achilles will slay Hektor. And from that hour I will cause a new pursuit away from the ships which will continue until the Achaians take steep Ilios through the counsels of Athene. But before that time I will not cease from my anger, nor will I allow any other of the immortals to help the Danaans there, before I fulfill that desire of the son of Peleus, as I promised him and confirmed with a nod of my head, on that day when the goddess Thetis clasped my knees, begging me to honor Achilles, the sacker of cities.”

So he spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera did not disobey him, and she sped down from the hills of Ida to high Olympos. And just as when the mind of a man flashes rapidly, a man who has traveled over far lands and thinks in his wise heart, “I wish I were here, or there,” and he thinks of many things, in the same way the lady Hera swiftly fled in her eagerness and came to steep Olympos and went in among the gathering of the immortal gods in the house Zeus. And when they saw her they all rose up together and held out their cups to her in welcome. The others she ignored, but took the cup of Themis of the fair cheeks, for she was the first that came running to meet her and, speaking winged words, addressed her: “Hera, why have you come? You seem like one who is confounded; truly the son of Kronos, your own husband, has made you afraid.”

Then the white-armed goddess Hera answered her, saying: “Do not ask me about this, goddess Themis; you yourself know how arrogant and unyielding is his heart. But begin the noble banquet of the gods in the halls, and you will hear among all the immortals what evil deeds Zeus declares. I do not think it will delight equally the minds of all, neither of gods nor of mortals, if there are any who still sit with pleasure at the feast.”

So spoke the lady Hera and sat down, while the gods were heavy-hearted in the hall of Zeus. And she laughed with her lips, but

her forehead above her dark brows was not cheerful, and indignantly she spoke out among them all: “We are witless fools in our anger against Zeus; we are still eager to draw close to him to try to hinder his will by our words or deeds, but he sits alone and does not care at all or give any thought to it, for he considers himself clearly to be preeminent among the gods in force and strength. Why do you content yourselves with whatever sorrow he sends on each of you? Already, I think, sorrow has been wrought for Ares, for his son has fallen in the fight, the dearest of men, Askalaphos, whom dread Ares considers to be his own.”

So she spoke, and Ares struck his strong thighs with the flats of his hands and sorrowing he spoke: “You who live in the mansions of Olympus, do not blame me if I go to the ships of the Achaians and avenge the slaying of my son, even if it is my doom to be smitten with the bolt of Zeus and lie among the dead, in the dust and blood.”

So he spoke and commanded his horses, Fear and Dread, to be yoked, and he himself put on his shining war gear. This would have caused an even greater and more implacable wrath and anger between Zeus and the immortals, had not Athene, in terror for the sake of all the gods, leaped out through the doorway, leaving the throne she sat on, and taken the helmet from Ares’ head and the shield from his shoulders and seized the spear of bronze from his stalwart hand and set it apart, and then with words she rebuked the impetuous Ares: “You are mad and confused in your wits—this is your curse! You have ears and hear not, and your understanding and your reverence have perished. Do you not hear the words of the white-armed goddess Hera, who just now came from Olympian Zeus? Do you wish both to bring on yourself the full measure of evil and be forced back to Olympus in sorrow, and also to sow the seeds of a great wrong to all the other gods? For he would immediately leave the high-hearted Trojans and the Achaians and come to us to wreak havoc on Olympus; and he will seize each of us in turn, the innocent along with the guilty. Therefore now I urge you again to soften your anger for your son, for already many men stronger and hardier than

he have fallen and will still fall, and it is a difficult thing to save the lineage and offspring of all men.”

So she spoke and made violent Ares sit down on his throne. But Hera called Apollo outside the hall, and also Iris, the messenger of the immortal gods, and spoke winged words and addressed them, saying: “Zeus bids you go to Ida as swiftly as you can, and when you have gone there and looked on the face of Zeus, do whatever he orders and commands.”

So the lady Hera spoke, and she returned again and sat down on her throne, and they flew swiftly onward and came to many-fountained Ida, mother of wild beasts, and found far-seeing Zeus seated on the highest peak of Gargaros, and he was encircled around by a fragrant cloud like a crown. And these two came before the face of Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer and stood there, and he was not all displeased at heart when he saw them, for they had swiftly obeyed the words of his dear wife. And he spoke winged words to Iris first: “Swift Iris, go to the prince Poseidon, and tell him all these things and do not be a false messenger: command him to cease from war and battle and to go back among the clans of the gods or into the bright sea. But if he will not obey my words, but has no regard for me, then let him consider in his heart and mind whether he dares with all his strength to withstand me when I come against him, since I consider myself to be far more powerful than he, and the firstborn. But his heart does not fear to call himself the equal of me whom all the other gods dread.”

So he spoke, and the wind-footed swift Iris did not disobey him but went down the hills of Ida to sacred Ilios. Just as when snow or chill hail flashes from the clouds beneath the force of the North Wind, born in the clear air; in the same way swiftly she flew in her eagerness and drew near the renowned Earth-Shaker and spoke to him, saying: “O dark-haired Embracer of the Earth, I have come here to bring a message to you from aegis-bearing Zeus. He commands you to cease from the battle and war and to go among the clans of the gods, or into the bright sea. But if you will not obey his words, but have no regard for him, he threatens that he himself will come here

against you in battle, and he commands you to avoid his hands, since he considers himself to be far more powerful than you, and the first-born. But your heart does not fear to call yourself the equal of him whom all the other gods dread.”

Then in great displeasure the renowned Shaker of the Earth answered her: “For shame! Indeed now, as strong as he is, he has spoken arrogantly, if indeed he wishes to subdue by force, against my will, me who am his equal in honor. For we are three brothers, and sons of Kronos, whom Rhea bare—Zeus, and myself, and Hades is the third, the ruler of the people in the underworld. Everything was divided in thirds by lot, and each drew a domain of his own, and to me fell the grey sea to be my habitation for ever, when we shook the lots: and Hades drew the murky darkness, and Zeus the wide heaven, in clear air and clouds, but the earth and high Olympos are common to all. Therefore in no way will I follow the will of Zeus; let him quietly remain, for all his strength, in his third portion. And let him not strive to terrify me with the might of his hands, as if I were a coward. It would be better for him to threaten with terrible words his daughters and his sons, whom he fathered, for they will have to listen to whatever he commands.”

Then the swift wind-footed Iris answered him: “Is it really your wish, O dark-haired Embracer of the Earth, that I carry this message, harsh and candid, to Zeus, or will you turn at all? For the hearts of the good may be turned. You know how the Furies always follow and help the elder-born.”

Then he answered her again, Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth: “Goddess Iris, you have said these words most properly. Yes, it is an excellent thing when the bearer of a message has a prudent wit. Yet this is a terrible grief that comes on the heart and spirit, whenever anyone desires to rebuke with angry words his peer to whom fate has assigned an equal share with himself. But indeed I will yield now, in spite of all my anger; but I will tell you another thing, and make this threat in my heart, that if against my will and the will of Athene, the driver of the prey, and of Hera and Hermes, and Prince Hephaistos, Zeus spares steep Ilios and chooses not to utterly destroy it and give

great might to the Argives, then let him know this, that our wrath will be unappeasable.”

So spoke the Shaker of the Earth, and left the people of the Achaians and went out and sank into the sea; and the heroes of the Achaians missed him terribly.

Apollo Rallies the Trojans

Then Zeus, the Gatherer of the Clouds, spoke to Apollo, saying: “Go now, dear Phoibos, to Hektor of the bronze helmet; for look, already the Embracer of the World, the Earth-Shaker, has gone into the bright sea, avoiding our furious anger. Had he not done so, even the gods of the underworld who are with Kronos would have heard our conflict. But this is far better, both for me and for him, that despite his anger he should yield to my hands, for this strife would not have ended without sweat. But take in your hands the tasseled aegis and shake it fiercely and frighten the Achaian heroes. But you, Archer-God, let glorious Hektor be your concern; rouse in him great anger until the Achaians come in their flight to the ships and the Hellespont. And from that moment on, I will devise words and deeds by which the Achaians may catch their breath again from their toil.”

So he spoke, and Apollo was not deaf to the word of the Father, but he went down the hills of Ida like a swift falcon, the bane of doves and the swiftest of flying things. And he found the son of wise-hearted Priam, noble Hektor, sitting up, no longer lying down, for he had just revived and recognized the companions around him, and his gasping and his sweat had ceased from the moment when the will of aegis-bearing Zeus began to revive him. Then Apollo the Archer stood near him and spoke to him: “Hektor, son of Priam, why do you sit, fainting, apart from the others? Is it perhaps that some trouble has come upon you?”

Then, with faint breath, Hektor of the shining helmet answered him: “Who are you, best of the gods, who asks me face to face? Do

you not know that by the back row of the ships of the Achaians, Aias of the loud war-cry smote me on the breast with a stone, as I was slaying his companions and made me cease from my violent deeds? Indeed I thought that this very day I would go to the dead and to the house of Hades, when I had gasped my life away.”

Then Prince Apollo the Archer answered him again: “Take courage now; the son of Kronos has sent to you a very great ally from Ida, to stand by you and defend you, Phoibos Apollo of the golden sword; I have long defended you, you and the steep citadel. Now command your many charioteers to drive their swift horses against the hollow ships, and I will go before you and make the way smooth for the chariots and will put the Achaian heroes to flight.”

So he spoke and breathed great might into the shepherd of the people. Just as when a stalled horse, full fed at the manger, breaks his tether and speeds at a gallop over the plain exultingly, accustomed to bathing in the fair-flowing stream, and holds his head on high, and the mane flows about his shoulders, and he trusts in his glory, and nimbly his knees carry him to the pastures of the mares; in the same way, Hektor lightly moved his feet and knees, urging on his horsemen, when he heard the voice of the god. But just as when hounds and country people pursue a horned stag or a wild goat that is saved from them by steep rock and shady woods, and they cannot find him, but at their noise a maned lion has shown himself on the way and quickly turned them all despite their eagerness; in the same way the Danaans for a while followed on in their companies, striking with swords and double-pointed spears, but when they saw Hektor going up and down the ranks of men, then they were afraid, and their hearts fell.

Then spoke Thoas, son of Andraimon, far the best of the Aitolians, skilled in throwing the spear and good in close fight, and in council did few of the Achaians surpass him when the young men were striving in debate; with good intention he spoke out among them: “With my eyes I see a great marvel—Hektor has risen up again and has avoided the Fates. Each of us hoped in his heart that he had died beneath the hand of Aias, son of Telamon. But one of the gods

has again delivered and saved Hektor, who has loosened the knees of many of the Danaans, as I think will happen again now, for he does not rise in the front ranks, so eager for battle, without the will of loud-thundering Zeus. But now let us all do as I say: let us command the throng to turn back to the ships, but let all of us who consider ourselves to be among the best in the army make a stand, if perhaps we may meet him first and hold him off with outstretched spears, and he, I think, in spite of all his eagerness, will fear at heart to enter into the throng of the Danaans.”

So he spoke, and they heard him eagerly and did as he suggested. Those who were with Aias and the prince Idomeneus and Teukros and Meriones and Meges, the peer of Ares, called to all the best of the warriors and kept up the fight with Hektor and the Trojans, but behind them the multitude returned to the ships of the Achaians.

Now the Trojans drove forward in close ranks, and with long strides Hektor led them, while in front of him went Phoibos Apollo, his shoulders wrapped in cloud, and he held the dread aegis, circled with a shaggy fringe and gleaming, which Hephaistos the smith had given to Zeus to carry to terrify men; with this in his hands he led the people.

Now the Argives stood fast in close ranks, and the piercing cry rose on both sides, and the arrows leaped from the bow-strings, and many spears from stalwart hands, of which some stuck strongly in the flesh of young men, swift in fight, but many, longing to glut themselves with flesh, stuck in the ground halfway, before they reached the white skin. As long as Phoibos Apollo held the aegis steadily in his hands, the darts smote either side with full force and the men fell. But when he looked straight into the faces of the swift-mounted Danaans and shook the aegis, and he himself shouted fiercely, then he terrified their hearts in their breasts, and they forgot their violent courage. Just as when two wild beasts drive in confusion a herd of cattle or a great flock of sheep in the dark hour of black night, coming swiftly on them when the herdsman is not nearby—in the same way all the Achaians were terror-stricken and lost their strength, for

Apollo sent a panic among them, but continued to give glory to the Trojans and Hektor.

Then man fell upon man when the close fight was scattered. Hektor slew Stichios and Arkesilaos, one a leader of the well-armored Boiotians, the other the true companion of great-hearted Menestheus. And Aineias slew Medon and Iasos—one of them, Medon, brother of Aias, was the bastard son of divine Oileus, but he lived in Phylake, far from his own country, for he had slain the brother of his stepmother Eriopis, the wife of Oileus. But Iasos was a leader of the Athenians and was called the son of Sphelos, the son of Boukolos. And Poulydamas slew Mekisteus, and Polites killed Echios in the forefront of the battle, and noble Agenor overcame Klonios. And Paris smote Deïochos behind the lower part of the shoulder as he was rushing through the fighters in the foremost rank, and he drove the bronze clean through.

Battle at the Ships

While they were stripping the spoil from these, the Achaians were dashing into the moat and against the wall, fleeing here and there in their terror, and were driven by force inside the wall. But Hektor called with a loud shout to the Trojans: “Now go against the ships and leave the bloody spoils. Whoever I see away from the ships on the other side, I will see that he dies, and his kinsmen and kinswomen will not lay him on the funeral fire, but dogs will tear his body in front of our citadel.”

So speaking, he whipped his horses on the shoulder with the lash and called aloud to the Trojans along the ranks. And they all cried out and with a thunderous din kept their horses that pulled their chariots even with his. In front of them Phoibos Apollo easily broke down the banks of the deep ditch with his feet and threw them into the middle of the moat, making a causeway as long and wide as a spearcast when a man throws to test his strength. Across this the

Trojans poured forward in their battalions, while in the forefront Apollo held the shining aegis. And very easily did he throw down the wall of the Achaians, just as when a boy scatters the sand beside the sea, first making sand buildings for sport in his childishness, and then again, in his sport, destroying them with his feet and hands, in the same way, you, Archer Apollo, destroyed the long toil and labour of the Argives, and among them rose a panicked terror.

So the Argives stopped and stood by the ships, calling each to other; and, lifting their hands to all the gods, each man prayed vehemently and most of all Gerenian Nestor, the guardian of the Achaians, prayed, stretching his hand towards the starry heaven: “O Father Zeus, if ever any one of us in wheat-bearing Argos burned fat thighs of bulls or sheep to you and prayed that he might return, and you promised and assented to these things, remember now, and turn away the pitiless day, Olympian, and do not allow the Trojans to overcome the Achaians in this way.”

So he spoke in his prayer, and Zeus, the Lord of counsel, thundered loudly, hearing the prayers of the ancient son of Neleus.

But when the Trojans heard the thunder of aegis-bearing Zeus, they rushed all the more eagerly upon the Argives and remembered the joy of battle. Just as when a great wave of the wide sea sweeps over the bulwarks of a ship, the might of the wind which swells the waves forcing it onward, in the same way the Trojans with a great cry leaped over the wall and drove their horses on, and at the back row of the ships were fighting hand to hand with double-pointed spears, the Trojans fighting from the chariots, but the Achaians from the black ships with long pikes that they had lying in the ships for battle at sea, jointed pikes shod at the head with bronze.

Now as long as the Achaians and Trojans were fighting around the wall, away from the swift ships, Patroklos sat in the hut of kindly Eurypylos and was cheering him with talk and was laying herbs on his cruel wound to ease his dark pain. But when he saw the Trojans rushing over the wall, and the roar and flight of the Danaans began, then he groaned and smote his two thighs with the flats of his hands and sorrowing he spoke: “Eurypylos, I can no longer stay with you

here, though your need is great, for a terrible new strife has arisen. Let your attendant comfort you, while I run to Achilles, so that I may urge him to join the battle. Who knows; perhaps with god's help I may arouse his spirit with my persuasion and the persuasion of a friend is a good thing."

Even as he spoke, his feet were carrying him away, but the Achaians withstood the onslaught of the Trojans steadfastly, yet were not able to drive them away from the ships, though their numbers were fewer; nor could the Trojans break the ranks of the Danaans and pour among the shelters and the ships. But just as the carpenter's line straightens the timber of a ship in the hands of a cunning shipwright that is well-skilled in his craft by the inspiration of Athene, in the same way the battle was strained equally, and various groups were fighting around various ships. Now Hektor went for renowned Aias, and the two were warring around the same ship; Hektor could not drive back Aias and set fire to the ship, nor could Aias thrust Hektor away, since the god urged him on. There glorious Aias smote Kaletor, son of Klytios, in the breast with a spear, as he was bringing fire against the ship, and he fell with a crash, and the torch dropped from his hand. But Hektor, when he saw with his eyes his cousin fallen in the dust in front of the black ship, called with a loud cry to the Trojans and Lykians: "Trojans and Lykians and Dardanians that fight hand to hand, do not slacken at all from the battle in this struggle, but save the son of Klytios lest the Achaians strip him of his armor, now that he has fallen near the ships."

So he spoke and hurled a shining spear at Aias; he missed Aias but hit Lykophron, the son of Mastor, the Kytherian attendant of Aias, who dwelt with him, having slain a man in divine Kythera. Hektor smote him on the head above the ear with the sharp bronze as he stood near Aias, and he fell backward to the earth in the dust from the stern of the ship, and his limbs were loosened. And Aias shuddered and spoke to his brother: "Dear Teukros, our true companion has been slain, the son of Mastor out of Kythera whom we honored at home in the halls like our own parents. Great-hearted Hektor has

slain him. Where now are your swift shafts of doom and the bow that Phoibos Apollo gave you?”

So he spoke, and Teukros heeded him and ran and came and stood close by him, with the bent bow in his hand and the quiver with the arrows, and swiftly he showered his shafts upon the Trojans. And he smote Kleitos, the splendid son of Peisenor, the companion of Poulydamas, the haughty son of Panthoös, who was holding the reins in his hand as he was busy with the horses, for he was driving them there, where by far the most of the companies were broken in confusion; he was doing a favor for Hektor and the Trojans. But his curse came swiftly on him, which none of them could ward off from him, in spite of their desire. For the evil arrow hit the back of his neck, and he fell from the chariot, and his horses startled backward, rattling the empty chariot. But immediately prince Poulydamas saw it and was the first to come over to the horses. He gave them to As-tynoös, the son of Protiaon, and commanded him strictly to hold the horses close at hand and keep watch; then he himself went back and mingled with the foremost fighters.

Then Teukros aimed another shaft at bronze-helmeted Hektor and would have ended the battle by the ships of the Achaians if he had struck him in all his might and taken his life away. But he did not escape the wise mind of Zeus, who guarded Hektor but took away the praise from Teukros, son of Telamon, for he broke the well-twisted string on the noble bow as Teukros was aiming at Hektor, and his arrow weighted with bronze wandered elsewhere, and the bow fell from his hands. But Teukros shuddered and spoke to his brother saying: “Alas, truly the god completely ruins our intentions in battle, for he has driven the bow from my hand and broken the newly twisted cord which I bound on only this morning, so that it might hold up under the many shafts that would leap from the bow.”

Then the great Aias, son of Telamon, answered him saying: “Yes, friend, but let the bow and the many arrows lie where they are, since the god has destroyed them, being jealous of the Danaans, but take in your hands a long spear and a shield on your shoulder and war with the Trojans and arouse the rest of the people. Do not let

them capture the well-timbered ships without labor, despite all their success; let us remember the joy of battle.”

So he spoke, and Teukros put the bow back in the shelter, but he set a four-fold shield around his shoulders, and on his mighty head he placed a well-crafted helmet with a horsehair plume, and the crest nodded fiercely over it. And he seized a strong spear, shod with sharp bronze, and started on his way and, running swiftly, stood beside Aias.

But when Hektor saw that the weapons of Teukros had been broken, he cried with a mighty shout to the Trojans and Lykians: “Trojans and Lykians and Dardanians who love close fight, be men, my friends, and remember your violent courage here by the hollow ships, for I have seen with my own eyes, how the weapons of the bravest warrior were broken by Zeus. Zeus’ help to me is very easily recognized, both to whomever he gives the reward of greater honor, and to whomever he would diminish and not desire to help, as now he diminishes the strength of the Argives but helps us. But fight in firm companies at the ships, and whomever of you is smitten by a spear or sword-blow and meets death and fate, let him die. It is not a dishonorable thing for him to fall fighting for his country, but his wife and his children after him are safe, and his house unharmed, and his portion of land if only the Achaians depart with their ships to their dear native land.”

So he spoke and aroused the might and the spirit of every man.

But Aias, on the other side, called to his comrades: “Shame on you, Argives; one thing is now certain—either that we must be utterly destroyed, or else be saved and drive the danger from the ships. Do you think that if Hektor of the shining helmet takes the ships, you will each go by dry land to his own country? Do you not hear Hektor exhorting all the men, being so eager to burn the ships? Truly he is not urging men to the dance but to battle. And there is no better counsel or plan for us than to put forth our hands and all our might in close combat. It would be better to risk life or death, once for all, than to go on hard-pressed vainly for a long time in the terrible stress of battle by the ships, at the hands of worse men than we are.”

So he spoke and aroused the might and the spirit of every man. Then Hektor slew Schedios, the son of Perimedes, a leader of the Phokians, while Aias slew Laodamas, the leader of the foot soldiers, the noble son of Antenor; and Poulydamas slew Otos, from Kyllene, companion of Phyleides, a king of the high-hearted Epeians. And Meges, when he saw it, rushed on him, but Poulydamas ducked down, and Meges missed him, or Apollo did not allow the son of Panthoös to be struck among the foremost fighters, but he wounded Kroismos in the midst of the breast with his spear. And he fell with a crash, and Meges began to strip the armor from his shoulders. Then Dolops, son of Lampos, son of Laomedon, rose against him, a skilled warrior, Lampos' bravest son, well skilled in violent courage, who then smote the middle of the shield of Phyleus' son, attacking him at close quarters. But his well-crafted breastplate that he wore guarded him, the breastplate fashioned of plates of metal. This breastplate Phyleus once carried out of Ephyra and the river Selleëis. For a guest friend of his, Euphetes, king of men, had given it to him that he might wear it in war, a defense against enemies; and now from his son's flesh too it fended off the evil. Now Meges smote with his sharpened spear at the topmost crest of his helmet of bronze with horsehair plume and broke off his plume of horsehair, and it all fell earthward in the dust, shining with its new scarlet dye. Now while he remained and fought and still hoped for victory, warlike Menelaos came against him and stood with his spear, unnoticed at one side, and smote him on the shoulder from behind, and the eager spear ripped through his breast in its forward flight, and then he fell forward. Then the two went to him to strip his armor of bronze from his shoulders. But Hektor called to all his kinsmen, and first he rebuked the son of Hiketaon, strong Melanippos. Till then, Melanippos was accustomed to feeding his cattle of shambling gait in Perkote, far off from hostile men, but when the curved ships of the Danaans came, he returned to Ilios and excelled among the Trojans and lived close to Priam, who honored him equally with his own children. Hektor rebuked him and spoke out and called him by name: "Melanippos, are we to be slack like this? Is your heart not moved at all at the sight of your slain kinsman? Do you

not see how they are busy over the armor of Dolops? Follow now, for we can no longer fight with the Argives from far off. We must slay them, or else they will utterly sack steep Ilios and slay her people.”

So he spoke and led on, while the other followed him, a god-like man. But the great Aias, son of Telamon, exhorted the Argives, saying: “O friends, be men, and keep shame in your hearts; yes, be ashamed to feel the contempt of another in battle. For more men who fear shame will escape than fall, but neither glory nor any help come to men who run.”

So he spoke, and they also became eager to drive off the others, and they stored his words in their hearts and circled the ships with a ring of bronze, while Zeus urged on the Trojans. Then Menelaos of the loud war-cry exhorted Antilochos: “Antilochos, not one of the Achaians is younger than you, nor swifter of foot, nor strong as you are in battle; now see if you can leap out and smite some man of the Trojans.”

So he spoke and hastened back again after encouraging the other man, and Antilochos leaped out from the foremost ranks and threw his shining spear, glancing all around him, and the Trojans gave ground before him when he threw. And he threw no vain spear, but smote Melanippos, the proud son of Hiketaon, as he was returning to the combat; he struck him on the breast by the nipple. And he fell with a crash, and darkness covered his eyes. And Antilochos attacked like a hound that rushes upon a wounded fawn that the hunter has aimed at and struck as it leaped from its hiding place and has loosened all its limbs. In the same way, Antilochos steadfast in battle leaped upon you, Melanippos, to rob you of your armor. But noble Hektor observed him and came running against him through the battle. But Antilochos did not wait for his attack, though he was a swift warrior, but he fled like a wild beast that has done some evil thing, having slain a dog or a herdsman by the cattle, and flees before the crowd of men can gather; in the same way, the son of Nestor fled. Now the Trojans and Hektor, with an astonishing clamour, showered their grief-causing spears upon him, but he turned and stood when he had reached the crowd of his companions.

Now the Trojans, like ravening lions, rushed upon the ships, fulfilling the will of Zeus, who was always stirring up their great anger but softening the temper of the Argives and taking away their glory, while he spurred on the Trojans. For the heart of Zeus was set on giving glory to Hektor, the son of Priam, that he might throw fierce-blazing fire, unwearied, upon the beaked ships and so completely fulfill the petition of Thetis; therefore, wise-counseling Zeus waited, till his eyes should see the glare of a burning ship. For from that hour he was to ordain the backward chase of the Trojans from the ships and to give glory to the Danaans. With this design he was stirring up Hektor, Priam's son, who was himself exceedingly eager, against the hollow ships. And he was raging, like Ares, the brandisher of the spear, or as when ruinous fire rages on the hills, in the folds of a deep woodland; and foam grew about his mouth, and his eyes shone beneath his dreadful brows, and around his temples as he fought his helmet shook terribly. For Zeus out of heaven was his ally and gave him honor and glory, since he was just one man against so many. For he was not to live long; Pallas Athene was already pressing against him the day of his destiny at the hand of the son of Peleus.

But he was eager to break the ranks of men, testing them wherever he saw the thickest crowd and the noblest armor. Yet he could not break them, in spite of all his zeal. They stood firm and embattled like a great, steep rock close to the grey sea, a rock that withstands the swift passage of the shrill winds and the swelling waves that roar against it; in the same way the Danaans steadfastly stood against the Trojans and refused to flee. But Hektor, shining with fire on all sides, leaped on the throng and fell upon them as when beneath the storm-clouds a swift wave reared by the winds crashes on a swift ship, and she is hidden with foam, and the dread blast of the wind roars against the sail, and the sailors fear and tremble in their hearts, for they are carried out from death by only a little; in the same way, the spirit was torn in the breasts of the Achaians. But he came on like a ravening lion attacking the cattle that are feeding innumerable in the low-lying land of a great marsh, and among them is a herdsman who does not yet know how to fight well with a wild beast to prevent the

slaughter of the crooked-horned cattle, and he always keeps abreast of the rear or the front rank of the cattle, but the lion leaps into the middle and devours a cow, and they all tremble for fear; in the same way, the Achaians were all made terribly afraid by Hektor and Father Zeus. But Hektor only slew Periphetes of Mykenai, the dear son of Kopreus, who was accustomed to go on the errands of Eurystheus to the mighty Herakles. From him, a far lowlier father, was born a better son, in all kinds of excellences, in swiftness of foot and in war; and in wisdom of mind he was among the first of the Mykenaeans. So he gave Hektor greater glory; for as he turned back, he tripped against the rim of his shield which he was accustomed to carrying, a shield that reached to the feet, a fence against javelins; he stumbled on it and fell back, and his helmet rang loudly around his temples as he fell. And Hektor quickly noticed it and ran up swiftly and stood by him and thrust a spear into his breast and slew him close by his dear companions who could not help him, in spite of all their sorrow for their friend, for they themselves greatly feared noble Hektor.

Now they had come between the ships, and the prows protected them, the prows of the ships drawn up in the first line, but the Trojans rushed in after them. And the Argives were compelled to drop back from the foremost ships; yet they remained there in close rank beside the shelters and did not scatter throughout the camp. For shame and fear restrained them, and ceaselessly they kept shouting each to the other. Now most of all Gerenian Nestor, the guardian of the Achaians, implored each man by the memory of their fathers and spoke beseechingly: "O friends, be men, and be ashamed of other men's contempt in your hearts. Let each of you also remember your children and wife and possessions and the possessions of your fathers, whether you have any parents yet alive or they are already dead. For their sake I beg you, for the sake of those who are not with us, to stand stoutly, and do not turn to run."

So he spoke and stirred up each man's courage and might, and from their eyes Athene lifted the cloud of mist, and light came forcefully upon them from either side, both from the direction of the ships and from that of the even-balanced war. And they saw Hektor

of the loud war-cry, and his companions, those who stood in the rear and were not fighting, and all those who fought in the battle by the swift ships.

But it did not please the spirit of high-hearted Aias to stand in the place where the other sons of the Achaians had withdrawn, but he kept striding with long strides up and down the decks of the ships, and he wielded in his hands a great pike for sea-battles, jointed with rings, twenty-two cubits¹ in length. Just as a man well-skilled in horsemanship who yokes together four horses out of many and, hurrying them from the plain towards a great city, drives along the public way, many men and women marveling at him, and he confidently leaps and changes his stand from horse to horse, while they fly along; in the same way, Aias went with long strides over many decks of the swift ships, and his voice went up to heaven. And with great cries he kept summoning the Danaans to defend the ships and the shelters. Nor did Hektor remain in the throng of well-armed Trojans, but just as a tawny eagle rushes on a flock of winged fowl that are feeding by a riverside, a flock of geese or cranes or long-necked swans, in the same way Hektor went straight for a black-beaked ship, rushing right on it, and Zeus mightily drove him on from behind with his strong hand and stirred up the army along with him.

So again fierce battle was waged by the ships. You would think that they met each other in battle unwearied and unworn in war, they fought so furiously. And in their striving they were thinking this way: the Achaians thought that they would never escape the danger but would die there, but the heart of each Trojan hoped in his breast that they could set fire to the ships and slaughter the heroes of the Achaians. With these imaginations they stood against each other, and Hektor seized the stem of a sea-faring ship, a sleek ship, swift on the sea, which had carried Protesilaos to Troy, but did not bring him back again to his own country. Now around his ship the Achaians and Trojans battled each other hand to hand; they did not endure flights of arrows or spears far apart from each other, but standing

1 Roughly 33 feet.

close by each other, with the same ferocity, they fought with sharp axes and hatchets and with great swords and double-pointed spears. And many beautiful swords, dark-scabbarded and hilted, fell to the ground, some from their hands, some from off the shoulders of battling men, and the black earth ran with blood.

But Hektor, once he had seized the ship's stem, did not let go, keeping the banner post in his hand, and he called to the Trojans: "Bring fire and with one voice all of you raise the battle-cry; now Zeus has given us the dearest day of all—to seize the ships that came here against the will of the gods and brought many evils upon us, because of the cowardice of the elders, who held me back when I was eager to fight at the sterns of the ships, and kept back the army. But if far-seeing Zeus dazzled our wits then, now he himself urges and commands us onwards."

So he spoke, and they attacked the Argives even more fiercely. And Aias no longer withstood their attack for he was driven back by the spears, so he withdrew a little onto the oarsmen's bench, seven feet long, thinking that he would now die, and he left the decks of the sleek ship. There then he stood on the watch, and with his spear he continually drove the Trojans from the ships, whoever brought unwearied fire, and he kept shouting terribly, calling to the Danaans: "O friends, Danaan heroes, men of Ares' company, be men, my friends, and remember your violent courage. Do we think that there are allies at our backs, or some wall stronger than this to ward off death from men? There is no city arrayed with towers nearby where we could defend ourselves, having an army that could turn the balance of battle. No, we are set down in the plain of the armored men of Troy, with our backs against the sea, and far off from our own land. Therefore safety is in battle, and not in slackening from the fight."

So he spoke, and rushed on, ravening for battle, with his keen spear. And whoever of the Trojans was coming against the ship with blazing fire, to please Hektor who was urging them, Aias would wound him, waiting with his long spear, and he wounded twelve men in front of the ships at close quarters.

Book XVI: Death of Patroklos



Sleep and Death Conveying the Body of Sarpedon to Lykia

Achilleus Sends Patroklos to Battle

So they were battling around the well-timbered ship, but Patroklos came up to Achilleus, shepherd of the people, and he shed warm tears like a fountain of dark water that pours its murky stream down a steep cliff. When noble, swift-footed Achilleus saw him he was grieved for his sake and addressed him and spoke winged words, saying: “Why do you weep, Patroklos, like a silly little girl, who runs to her mother’s side and begs her mother to pick her up, clutching at her robe, and gets in her way as she walks and tearfully looks up at her, till the mother picks her up? Like her, Patroklos, you let soft tears fall. Do you have something to tell the Myrmidons, or to me myself, or is it some news out of Phthia that you alone have heard? They say that Menoitios, son of Aktor, is still alive; and Peleus, son of Aiakos, still lives among the Myrmidons; we would sorrow terribly for either of these two if they were dead. Or are you lamenting for the sake of the Argives, over how they perish by the hollow ships through their own fault? Speak out, and do not hide it in your heart, so that we may both know all of it.”

But with a heavy groan you spoke to him, lordly Patroklos: “Achilleus, son of Peleus, far the bravest of the Achaians, do not be angry, seeing that such a terrible disaster has fallen on the Achaians. For indeed all of them who before were the best are now lying among the ships, struck and wounded. The son of Tydeus, strong Diomedes, is wounded, and Odysseus, spearman renowned, and Agamemnon; and Eurypylos is wounded on the thigh with an arrow. And the healers skilled in medicines are busy around them, healing their wounds; but you are hard to reconcile, Achilleus. May such anger as you hold never take hold of me; your pride is causing such harm to others. What other man born in the future will benefit from you unless you ward off terrible destruction from the Argives? As pitiless as you are, the Lord Peleus could not have been your father, nor Thetis your mother, but the grey sea bore you and the sheer cliffs, your spirit is so hard. But if in your heart you are avoiding some prophecy, and your lady mother has told you something from Zeus, then at least send me out quickly and make the rest of the men of the Myrmidons follow me, if perhaps any light may come from me to the Danaans. And give me your armor to buckle around my shoulders, if perhaps the Trojans may think that I am you and so refrain from battle, and the warlike sons of the Achaians may catch their breath, wearied as they are, for the breathing space in war is very little. And we who are fresh might easily drive men wearied with the battle back to the citadel, away from the ships and the shelters.”

So he spoke and begged him, not knowing that truly it was his own evil fate and death that he was asking for. Then swift-footed Achilleus spoke to him in great heaviness: “Patroklos of the seed of Zeus, what word have you spoken? I am not thinking of any prophecy that I know of, nor has my lady mother told me anything from Zeus, but this dread sorrow comes upon my heart and spirit, from the hour that a man wishes to rob me who am his equal and to take away my prize, for he excels me in power. This is a terrible sorrow to me, after all the toils that my heart has endured. The girl that the sons of the Achaians chose out for me as my prize, and that I won with my spear when I sacked a well-walled city, mighty Agamem-

non, the son of Atreus, has taken back out of my hands, as though I were only some disreputable wanderer. But we will let bygones be bygones. No man may be angry at heart forever, and yet truly I said that I would not stop being angry until that time when the war-cry and the battle should come to my own ships. But you put on your shoulders my famous armor and lead the war-loving Myrmidons to the fight, if indeed the dark cloud of the Trojans has strongly surrounded the ships, and if the Argives are driven back to the shore of the sea, holding but a narrow space of land, and the whole town of Troy has come boldly against them. They do not see the visor of my shining helmet gleaming close at hand; they would flee swiftly and fill the streams with dead, if mighty Agamemnon had only been kindly to me, but now they are battling around the camp. For the spear does not rage in the hands of Diomedes, the son of Tydeus, to fend off destruction from the Danaans. And I have not heard the voice of the son of Atreus, shouting out of his hated mouth, but the voice of Hektor, the slayer of men, bursts around me as he calls on the Trojans, and they fill all the plain with their cries, overcoming the Achaians in battle. But even so, Patroklos, to ward off destruction from the ships, fall on them mightily, lest they burn the ships with blazing fire and take away our longed-for return.

“But you must obey the commandment that I will put into your mind, that you may win great honor and fame for me from all the Danaans, and they may give me back again that most lovely girl and also add splendid gifts. When you have driven them from the ships, return, and even if the loud-thundering Lord of Hera grants you to win glory, still do not try to fight with the war-loving Trojans without me; for by doing that you would diminish my honor. Do not lead on toward Ilios, exulting in war and battle and slaying the Trojans, lest one of the immortal gods from Olympos come against you; Apollo the Archer loves them dearly. No, come back when you have brought safety to the ships and let the rest do the fighting along the plain. O Father Zeus, and Athene, and Apollo, if only not one of all the Trojans might escape death, nor any of the Argives, but that we two might avoid destruction and alone we might pull down the sacred crown of Troy.”

So they spoke to each other, but Aias could no longer withstand the attack, for he was overpowered by spears; the counsel of Zeus was subduing him and the spears of the proud Trojans; and his bright helmet, being struck, kept ringing terribly about his temples, for it was constantly struck upon the beautifully-crafted cheek-pieces. Furthermore, his left shoulder was weary, as he steadfastly held up his glittering shield, though they could not make him give ground as they pressed hard with their spears all around him. And always he was worn out and could not catch his breath, and sweat was running from all his limbs, and he had no time to draw breath, because on all sides was evil heaped on evil.

Tell me now, you Muses that have mansions on Olympos, how fire finally fell on the ships of the Achaians. Hektor drew near, and he smote the ash spear of Aias with his great sword, close to the socket, behind the point, and cut it clean away, and the son of Telamon brandished in his hand no more than a pointless spear, and the bronze head fell ringing to the ground far away from him.

And Aias knew in his noble heart how Zeus who thunders on high had utterly cut off from him any help in battle and desired victory for the Trojans, and he shuddered at the actions of the gods. Then Aias backed away from the spears. And the Trojans threw unquenchable fire on the swift ship, and instantly the inextinguishable flame streamed over her; so the fire swept over the stern, at which Achilles smote his thighs, and spoke to Patroklos: "Arise, Patroklos of the seed of Zeus, commander of the horsemen, for indeed I see the rush of the consuming fire by the ships. Hurry, lest they take the ships, and there be no more retreat; put on the armor quickly, and I will summon the army."

So he spoke while Patroklos was putting on the armor of shining bronze. First he put the noble greaves, fitted with silver clasps, around his legs and next put around his breast the beautifully-decorated starry breastplate of the swift-footed grandson of Aiakos. And around his shoulders he hung a sword of bronze, with studs of silver, and next took the great and mighty shield and on his proud head set a well-crafted helmet with a horsehair crest, and the crest waved fierce-

ly from above. Then seized he two strong spears that fitted his grasp, but he did not take the spear of the noble grandson of Aiakos, heavy and huge and stalwart, that none other of the Achaians could handle, but Achilles alone was able to wield it—the ashen Pelian spear that Cheiron gave to his dear father, from a peak of Pelion, to be the death of warriors. And Patroklos commanded Automedon to yoke the horses quickly, for he most honored Automedon after Achilles, the breaker of the ranks of men, and whom he trusted to heed his voice in battle. And Automedon led the swift horses beneath the yoke for him, Xanthos and Balios, who fly as swiftly as the winds, the horses that the harpy Podarge bore to the West Wind as she grazed on the meadow by the stream of Okeanos. And in the side-traces he put the noble Pedasos, that Achilles carried off when he took the city of Eëtion; and being only a mortal steed, he followed with the immortal horses.

Meanwhile, Achilles went and armed all the Myrmidons in the shelters with armor, and they gathered like ravening wolves, with inexpressible strength in their hearts, that have slain a great horned stag in the hills and torn him to pieces; and their jaws are red with blood, and in a herd they go to lap with their thin tongues the surface of the dark water in a dusky well, belching out the blood of the slaughter, their heart steadfast within their breasts, and their bellies swollen; in the same way, the leaders and chiefs of the Myrmidons gathered around the noble attendant of swift-footed Achilles. And among them all stood warlike Achilles himself, urging on the horses and the shield-carrying warriors.

There were fifty swift ships which Achilles, beloved of Zeus, led to Troy, and in each ship on the benches sat fifty men, his comrades, and he appointed five leaders whom he trusted to command, and he himself with great authority was lord of them all. One rank was led by Menesthios of the shining breastplate, the son of Spercheios, the River that falls from Zeus. The daughter of Peleus, beautiful Polydore, bore him to tireless Spercheios—a woman lying with a god. But in name he was the son of Boros, Perieres' son, who publicly married her, giving countless gifts of courtship. And the next company

was led by warlike Eudoros, the son of an unmarried girl—Polymele, lovely in the dance, the daughter of Phylas, bore him. Hermes, the strong slayer of Argus, loved her, when he had seen her with his eyes among the singing maidens, in the choir of Artemis, the swift-rushing goddess of the golden arrows. Then immediately he went up into her upper chamber and lay with her secretly, Hermes, the bearer of all good things, and fathered by her a glorious son, Eudoros, swift of foot and a man of war. But when Eileithyia, goddess of the pains of travail, had brought him out into the light, and he saw the rays of the sun, then the strong Echeekles, son of Aktor, led Polymele to his halls, after he had given countless gifts of courtship, but old Phylas reared Eudoros well and nourished him tenderly, loving him dearly as if he had been his own son. And the third company was led by warlike Peisandros, the son of Maimalos, most excellent among the Myrmidons in fighting with the spear, second only to the comrade of the son of Peleus. And the ancient knight Phoinix led the fourth company, and Alkimedon, the noble son of Laerkes led the fifth.

Now when Achilleus had stationed them all and arranged them well under their leaders, he laid on them a strong command: “Myrmidons, do not let me find any of you forgetful of the threats with which you threatened the Trojans beside the swift ships, during the whole time of my anger, and you each accused me, saying, ‘Hard-hearted son of Peleus, surely your mother reared you on gall, pitiless one who keeps your companions at the ships against their will. Let us return home again with our seafaring ships, since such an evil wrath has sunk into your heart.’ In this way you often clamored against me in your gatherings; but now the mighty work of war has come, which you have always loved. Therefore let each man keep a stout heart in the battle with the Trojans.”

So he spoke and stirred up the heart and courage in each of them, and the ranks became even closer packed when they heard the prince. Just as when a man builds the wall of a high house with close-set stones to avoid the might of the winds, in the same way the helmets and shields were arranged, and shield pressed on shield, helmet on helmet, and man on man, and the horsehair crests on the bright

helmet-ridges touched each other when they nodded, they stood so close to each other. But in front of them all two men stood in their armor, Patroklos and Automedon, both of one heart, to do battle at the front of the Myrmidons.

But Achilles went into his shelter and opened the lid of a beautiful and well-crafted chest that silver-footed Thetis placed on board his ship to carry with him, and she filled it well with coats and cloaks to keep the wind away and with thick carpets. Into this he had put a beautifully-crafted cup, and no other man drank wine from it, nor did he offer drink-offerings to any other god with it, except to Zeus the Father. He took this cup from the chest and first purified it with brimstone and then washed it in pure streams of water and washed his hands and poured bright wine into it. Then he prayed, standing in the middle of his court, and poured out the wine, looking up to heaven, and Zeus who rejoices in the thunder heard him: “King Zeus, Dodonaean, Pelasgian, you who dwell far off, ruling over wintry Dodona, and around you live the Selloi, your prophets, with unwashed feet and sleeping on the ground—just as once you heard my voice in prayer and honored me and severely afflicted the people of the Achaians, so now also fulfill for me my desire. For I myself will remain among the ranks of the ships, but I send my companion with many Myrmidons to war: give him speedy victory, O far-seeing Zeus, and strengthen his heart within him, that Hektor too may know whether my companion has skill to do battle alone, or whether his powerful hands rage only when I enter the turmoil of war. But when he has driven away from the ships the war and thunder of battle, then let him return unharmed to me at the swift ships with all his weapons and with his companions who fight hand to hand.”

So he spoke in his prayer, and wise-counseling Zeus heard him, and the Father granted part to him, and part he denied. He granted him that Patroklos should drive the war and the fight from the ships, but denied him to return safely out of the fight. Then Achilles, having poured out the drink-offering and made his prayer to Father Zeus, went back into his shelter and placed the cup in the chest again and came out and stood in front of his shelter, for his heart still desired to see the furious struggle of the Trojans and Achaians.

Patroklos' "Aristeia"

But those men who were armed around high-hearted Patroklos marched forward till they were rushing in their courage on the Trojans. And immediately they poured forth like wasps that have their dwelling by the wayside, and that boys always like to vex, always tormenting them in their nests beside the way in childish sport, and they create an evil for many people. If some man on a journey passes by them unknowingly, every one of them flies with a furious spirit, and each defends his young, with the same heart and spirit the Myrmidons poured out now from the ships, and an unquenchable cry arose, and Patroklos called on his companions, shouting aloud: "Myrmidons, companions of Achilleus, son of Peleus, be men, my friends, and be mindful of your violent courage, so that we may win honor for the son of Peleus, who is far the bravest of the Argives by the ships, and whose close-fighting men are the best. And let wide-ruling Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, learn his own blindness of heart, that he gave no honor to the best of the Achaians."

So he spoke and stirred up each man's heart and courage, and in a mass they fell on the Trojans, and the ships around echoed powerfully to the cry of the Achaians. And when the Trojans saw the strong son of Menoitios and his companion, shining in their armor, their hearts shook in all of them, and their companies wavered, for they thought that the swift-footed son of Peleus had thrown away his wrath by the ships and chosen to be reconciled: then each man looked around, to see where he might flee from utter destruction.

But Patroklos first threw a shining spear straight into the pack, where most men were thronging, right by the stern of the ship of great-hearted Protesilaos, and he smote Pyraichmes, who led his Paionian horsemen out of Amydon, from the wide water of Axios; he smote him on the right shoulder, and he fell on his back in the dust with a groan, and his companions around him, the Paeonians, were afraid, for Patroklos sent fear among them all, when he slew their leader who was always the best in battle. Then he drove them

away from the ships and quenched the raging fire. And the half-burnt ship was left there, and the Trojans fled with a tremendous din, and the Danaans poured in among the hollow ships, and the shouting was endless. Just as when Zeus, the Gatherer of the Lightning, has stirred a dense cloud away from the high peak of a great hill, and all the peaks shine out and sharp promontories and glades, and from heaven the infinite air breaks open; in the same way the Danaans, having driven the blazing fire from the ships, caught their breath for a little while, but there was no pause in the battle. For the Trojans were not yet driven in utter rout from the black ships by the Achaians, dear to Ares, but they still stood up against them and unwillingly gave ground from the ships.

Then man slew man in the scattered fight among the leaders. First the strong son of Menoitios struck the thigh of Areilykos with a sharp spear at the moment when he turned, and drove the bronze clean through, and the spear broke the bone, and he fell on his face on the ground. Meanwhile, warlike Menelaos wounded Thoas on his breast where it was left uncovered by the edge of the shield and loosened his limbs. And Phyleides watched Amphiklos as he attacked, and was quicker, thrusting forward at the thigh, where a man's muscle is thickest, and the sinews were rent with the point of the spear, and darkness covered his eyes. And one of the sons of Nestor, Antilochos, smote Atymnios with the sharp spear and drove the spear of bronze through his flank, and he fell forward. But close by, Maris rushed at Antilochos with the spear, in rage for his brother's sake, and stood in front of the dead man; but godlike Thrasymedes was quicker and thrust forward instantly at his shoulder before he could strike a blow and did not miss, for the point of the spear tore the root of the arm from the muscles, right to the bone. Then he fell with a crash, and darkness covered his eyes. So these two, subdued by the two brothers, went down to Erebo—the noble companions of Sarpedon, the warrior sons of Amisodaros who reared the invincible Chimaira, the curse of many men. But Aias, son of Oileus, rushed at Kleoboulos and seized him alive, entangled in the throng; there he loosened his might, smiting him on the neck with the hilted sword.

And the whole blade was warm with his blood, and dark death and mighty Fate closed his eyes.

Then Peneleos and Lykon rushed at each other, for they missed each other with their spears; both had thrown in vain, so instantly they ran together with their swords. Lykon struck the socket of the horsehair crest, and his sword broke at the hilt, but Peneleos struck his neck behind the ear, and the entire blade sank in, and nothing but the skin held, and his head hung slack, and his limbs were loosened.

Now Meriones overtook Akamas with swift strides and struck him on the right shoulder, as he climbed up into his chariot, and he slid out of his chariot, and mist was poured over his eyes. And Idomeneus stabbed Erymas on the mouth with the pitiless bronze, and the spear of bronze went clear through beneath the brain and shattered his white bones, and his teeth were broken out, and both his eyes were filled with blood, and he blew blood up through his mouth and nostrils as he gaped, and the black cloud of death covered him over.

Thus those leaders of the Danaans each killed his man. Just as robber wolves fall on the lambs or kids, choosing them out of the herds when they are scattered on hills by the thoughtlessness of the shepherd, and the wolves see it and quickly attack the young who have no courage, in the same way the Danaans fell on the Trojans, and they thought only of shameful flight and forgot their violent courage.

Great Aias kept trying to throw his spear at Hektor of the bronze helmet, but with his skill in battle, he covered his broad shoulders with his shield of ox-hide and watched the flying arrows and the noise of spears. He well knew that control of the battle had changed, but even so he stood fast and struggled to rescue his faithful companions.

Just as when a cloud from Olympus sails high into the sky, through the sacred air, when Zeus sends out a storm, in the same way the battle-cry and the rout came from the ships, and they did not cross the moat in good order this time. But Hektor's swift-footed horses carried him with his armor, and he left the warriors of Troy, whom the deeply-dug moat restrained against their will. And many swift horses that pulled the chariots broke the front of the pole in the moat and left the chariots of their masters.

But Patroklos followed them, calling fiercely to the Danaans, full of evil will against the Trojans, while they filled all the paths with their cries and flight; for they were scattered, and the billows of dust rose high below the clouds, and the sure-footed horses struggled back toward the city, away from the ships and the shelters.

But where Patroklos saw the men thickest in the rout, he guided his horses there with a cry, and under his axle men fell prone from their chariots, and the chariots were overturned with a shattering crash. But the swift, immortal horses that the gods gave as glorious gifts to Peleus leaped straight over the ditch in their onward rush. And Patroklos' heart urged him against Hektor, for he was eager to strike him, but his swift horses carried Hektor out and away. Just as beneath a storm the whole black earth is burdened, on an autumn day when Zeus pours forth rain violently in fury against men who make crooked judgments in the assembly by force and drive justice out and do not consider the vengeance of the gods, and all the rivers run full and torrents tear the ravines, and they rush headlong from the hills down to the dark sea roaring powerfully, and the works of men are destroyed; in the same way the roar of the Trojan horses was thunderous as they ran.

When Patroklos had cut down the nearest companies, he drove them backward again to the ships, and did not allow them to approach the city, no matter how much they longed to, but between the ships and the river and the lofty wall, he rushed on them and slaughtered them and avenged many of his slain companions. He smote Pronoös with a shining spear, where the shield left bare the breast, and loosened his limbs, and he fell with a crash. Then he attacked Thestor, the son of Enops, as he sat crouching in the polished chariot, for he was struck with confusion, and the reins fell from his hands. Patroklos drew near him and smote him on the right jaw with the spear and pierced clean through his teeth. And Patroklos grabbed the spear and dragged him over the rim of the chariot, just as when a man sits on a jutting rock and with a line and glittering hook drags a fish out of the sea, in the same way he dragged Thestor, gaping, from the chariot with the bright spear and threw him down on his face,

and life left him as he fell. Next, as Euryalos came on, he struck him on the middle of his head with a stone, and his head was completely shattered inside the strong helmet, and he fell prone on the earth, and death which slays the spirit overwhelmed him. Next, in turn, he brought down to the rich earth Erymas and Amphoteros and Epaltes and Tlepolemos, son of Damastor, and Echios and Pyris and Ipheus and Euippos and Polymelos, son of Argeas.

But when Sarpedon saw his companions with loosened armor, destroyed beneath the hands of Patroklos, son of Menoitios, he cried aloud, rebuking the godlike Lykians: “Shame, Lykians; where are you running to? Be strong, for I will encounter this man so that I may know who he is who conquers here and works so many evils on the Trojans and has loosened the knees of so many noble men.”

So he spoke and leaped with his weapons from the chariot to the ground. But when Patroklos, on the other side, saw him, he also leaped from his chariot. And just as vultures with hooked talons and curved beaks battle with loud cries on some high cliff, in the same way they rushed against each other with great cries. And watching, the son of Kronos of the crooked counsels took pity on them, and he spoke to Hera, his sister and wife: “Woe is me, for it is fated that Sarpedon, the best-beloved of men to me will be brought down by Patroklos, son of Menoitios. My heart within me is divided in two ways, as I ponder whether I should snatch him up alive out of the sorrowful war and set him down in the rich land of Lykia, or whether I should bring him down beneath the hands of the son of Menoitios.”

Then the ox-eyed lady Hera answered him: “Most dread son of Kronos, what word is this you have spoken? Do you wish to deliver from evil death a mortal man long doomed by fate? Do what you wish, but none of us gods will in any way praise you. And I will tell you another thing, and you should keep it in heart: if you send Sarpedon alive back to his own house, consider whether some other god will also wish to send his own dear son away out of the fierce battle. For around the great citadel of Priam many sons of the immortals are battling, and you will cause terrible anger among the immortals. If he is precious to you, and your heart mourns for him, then let

him be killed in the strong battle by the hands of Patroklos, son of Menoitios, but when his soul and life leave that warrior, then send Death and sweet Sleep to carry him to the land of wide Lykia, and there his family and friends will bury him with a mound and a pillar, for this is owed to the dead.”

So she spoke, and the Father of gods and men did not disregard her. But he shed bloody raindrops on the earth, honoring his dear son whom Patroklos was about to kill in the deep-soiled land of Troy, far from his own country.

Death of Sarpedon

Now when they had come close to each other in their attack, Patroklos smote renowned Thrasymelos, the noble companion of Prince Sarpedon, in the lower part of the belly and loosened his limbs. As Sarpedon in turn rushed on, he missed Patroklos with his shining spear, but he struck the horse Pedasos on the right side with the spear, and Pedasos shrieked as he breathed his life out and fell crying in the dust, and his spirit fled from him. But the other two reared this way and that, and the yoke creaked, and the reins were tangled on them, because their trace-horse lay in the dust. But Automedon, the renowned spearman, found a remedy and, drawing his long-edged sword from his stout thigh, he leaped out and cut loose the dead horse with no delay, and the pair righted themselves and strained in the harness, and they pulled together again in the life-consuming battle.

Then Sarpedon missed again with his shining dart, and its point flew over the left shoulder of Patroklos and did not hit, but he in turn lifted the bronze, and his spear did not fly vainly from his hand, but struck Sarpedon just where the middle of the body holds the beating heart. And he fell just as an oak falls or a silver poplar or a slim pine tree that the shipwrights fell with sharpened axes on the hills, to be timber for shipbuilding; in the same way he lay at length

in front of the horses and chariot, moaning aloud and clutching at the bloody dust. Just as when a lion has attacked a herd and killed a bull, tawny and stout-hearted, among the shambling cattle, and the bull dies groaning under the claws of the lion, in the same way the leader of the Lykian spearmen raged beneath Patroklos, even as he died, and he called to his dear companion: “Dear Glaukos, warrior among warlike men, now you must truly be a spearman and a hardy fighter; now let evil war be dear to you, if you are truly a man of might. Go all around and urge on the heroes who are leaders of the Lykians to fight for Sarpedon, and then you yourself on my behalf with the sword. For it will be a shame and disgrace for you forever, all your days, if the Achaians strip me of my armor, fallen among the ships. No, hold out manfully and spur on all the people.”

As he said these things, death at last covered over his eyes and his nostrils; but Patroklos, setting his foot on Sarpedon’s chest, pulled the spear out of his flesh, and the diaphragm came out with the spear, so that he pulled out both the spear point and the soul of Sarpedon; and the Myrmidons held his panting steeds there, eager to run off, since the chariot was robbed of its masters.

Then terrible sorrow came over Glaukos when he heard the voice of Sarpedon, and his heart was shaken that he was not able to help him. And with his hand he clutched his own arm, for the wound hurt him, the wound by the arrow with which Teukros, warding off destruction from his friends, had struck him as he had pressed on toward the lofty wall. Then Glaukos spoke in prayer to the Archer Apollo: “Hear me, prince who is somewhere in the rich land of Lykia, or in Troy, for you can hear from anywhere the man who is in need, as even now need has come upon me. For I have this terrible wound, and my arm is wracked with sharp pains, and my blood will not stop flowing, and my shoulder is burdened by the wound, and I cannot hold my spear firmly or go and fight against the enemy. And the best of men has perished, Sarpedon, the son of Zeus, and he does not even help his own son. O Prince, heal me from this terrible wound and soothe my pain and give me strength, so that I may call upon my Lykian kinsmen and stir them up to the war, and may myself fight for the fallen dead man.”

So he spoke in his prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him. Immediately he caused his pains to cease and in the terrible wound stopped the black blood and put courage into his heart. And Glaukos felt it within him and was glad, because the great god so quickly heard his prayer. He went all around and urged on those who were leaders of the Lykians to fight around Sarpedon; then he went with long strides among the Trojans to Poulydamas, son of Panthoös, and noble Agenor, and he went to Aineias and to Hektor of the bronze helmet and, standing by them, he spoke winged words: “Hektor, surely you have completely forgotten the allies who breathe their lives away for your sake far from their friends and their own country, but you do not care about helping them! Sarpedon, the leader of the Lykian shieldmen who defended Lykia by his judgments and his might, lies low; armored Ares has struck him down under the spear of Patroklos. But, friends, stand by him and be angry in your hearts lest the Myrmidons strip him of his armor and dishonor the dead in their own wrath because of the Danaans who perished, whom we slew with spears by the swift ships.”

So he spoke, and uncontrollable and unbearable sorrow seized the Trojans completely, for Sarpedon was always the bulwark of their city, though he was a stranger, for many people had come with him, and he himself was the best warrior of them all. Then they went straight for the Danaans furiously, and Hektor led them, being angry for Sarpedon’s sake. But the fierce heart of Patroklos, son of Menoitios, urged on the Achaians. And he spoke first to the two Aiantes who themselves were extremely eager: “Aiantes, now let defense be your desire and be as you were before among men and even braver yet. The man who first leaped onto the wall of the Achaians lies low, Sarpedon himself. Now let us strive to seize and dishonor his body and to strip the armor from his shoulders, and let us destroy with the pitiless bronze many of his comrades who are fighting for his sake.”

So he spoke, and they all were eager in defense. So on both sides they strengthened the companies, Trojans and Lykians, Myrmidons and Achaians, and they joined in battle to fight around the fallen dead man; they shouted terribly, and the armor of men crashed loud-

ly. And Zeus drew ominous night over the violent battle so that there would be a terrible work of war around his dear son.

First the Trojans drove back the bright-eyed Achaians, and a man who was in no way the worst among the Myrmidons was struck, the son of great-hearted Agakles, noble Epeigeus, who ruled well-founded Boudeion in times past, but when he had slain a good man of his own kin, he came to Peleus and silver-footed Thetis as a suppliant. And they sent him to follow Achilleus, the breaker of the ranks of men, to Ilios of the great horses to war with the Trojans. As he was laying hold of the dead man, renowned Hektor smote him on the head with a stone, and his head was smashed in two in the strong helmet, and he fell flat on the dead man, and death that destroys the spirit poured around him. Then grief came over Patroklos for his slain companion, and he rushed through the foremost fighters like a falcon swift in flight that frightens daws and starlings, in the same way, O Patroklos, warrior-horseman, you rushed against the Lykians and the Trojans, being angry at heart for your companion's sake. And he smote Sthenelaos, the dear son of Ithaimenes, on the neck with a stone and broke away the sinews. Then the foremost fighters and great Hektor drew back. As far as the flight of a long javelin that a man throws, testing his skill, either in a contest for a prize, or in war being pressed by deadly enemies, so far the Trojans drew back, and the Achaians drove them.

But Glaukos, the leader of the Lykian shieldmen, turned around, and he slew Bathykles, great of heart, the dear son of Chalkon, who dwelt in his home in Hellas and was preeminent among the Myrmidons for wealth and possessions. Glaukos wounded him in the middle of his chest with a spear, turning suddenly about just as Bathykles was about to seize him as he followed hard after him. With a crash Bathykles fell, and great sorrow came over the Achaians that a good man was down, but the Trojans rejoiced greatly. They all thronged around him and stood firm, but the Achaians did not forget their valor, but brought their might straight down on them. There Meriones killed an armored warrior of the Trojans, Laogonos, the bold son of Onetor, who was priest of Idaean Zeus and was honored as a god by the people—he struck him under his jaw and ear, and his

spirit swiftly left his limbs, and hateful darkness gripped him. Aineias threw his bronze spear against Meriones, for he hoped to strike him as he came on beneath his shield. But he was watching straight ahead and avoided the bronze spear, stooping forward, and the long spear stuck firmly in the ground behind him, but the butt of the spear quivered; then mighty Ares took its strength away. So the spear of Aineias sank, quivering into the earth, since it had sped in vain from his strong hand. But Aineias was angry at heart and spoke aloud: “Meriones, my spear would have stopped your dancing forever, good at it as you are, if only I had struck you.”

But Meriones, the renowned spearman replied: “Aineias, as strong as you are, it would be hard for you to quench the might of every man who comes against you in battle. You also are mortal. And if I ever throw at you and strike you in your middle with the sharp bronze, in spite of all your courage and confidence in your hands, you will quickly give glory to me and your soul to Hades of the glorious horses.”

So he spoke, but the strong son of Menoitios rebuked him: “Meriones, why do you, a man of valor, speak this way? My friend, the Trojans will not draw back from their dead because of railing words—the earth will grip some before that happens. For the outcome of war is in the hands of men, but words are for council; we should not pile up words, but do battle.”

So speaking, he began, and the other followed him, a godlike man. Just as the din of woodcutters rises in the glades of a mountain, and the sound of it is heard far away, in the same way their din arose from the wide-wayed earth, the noise of bronze and of well-tanned ox-hides struck with swords and double-pointed spears. And now not even a clear-sighted man could have recognized noble Sarpedon any more, for he was covered completely with spears and blood and dust from head to foot. And men constantly thronged around the dead, just as flies buzz around a full milk pail in the farmyard, in the season of spring, when the milk drenches the bowls, in the same way they thronged around the dead. And Zeus never turned his shining eyes from the violent fight, but kept looking down at it and he debated greatly in his heart about the slaying of Patroklos, whether

glorious Hektor should kill him also with the sword in the furious battle then and there over divine Sarpedon and strip his armor from his shoulders, or whether he should deal out to even more men the sheer labor of war.

And as he pondered, it seemed better to him that the powerful companion of Achilles, Peleus' son, should immediately drive the Trojans and Hektor of the bronze helmet toward the city and rob many of their life. So he put a weakened heart into Hektor, and, leaping into his chariot, Hektor turned in flight and cried out to the rest of the Trojans to flee, for he recognized that the sacred scales of Zeus were tipping. At this, the strong Lykians no longer stood fast but fled in fear when they saw their king struck in his heart, lying among the company of the dead, for many had fallen around him when the son of Kronos made the fight fierce. Then the Achaians stripped the shining bronze armor from the shoulders of Sarpedon, and the strong son of Menoitios gave these to his companions to carry to the hollow ships.

Then Zeus who gathers the clouds spoke to Apollo: "Beloved Phoibos, go and take Sarpedon out of range of the spears and cleanse the black blood from him and then carry him far away and bathe him in the streams of the river and anoint him with ambrosia and clothe him in immortal garments and send him to be carried by the twin brothers, Sleep and Death, swift messengers, who will quickly set him down in the rich land of wide Lykia. There his relatives and friends will bury him, with funeral mound and a pillar, for this is what is owed to the dead."

So he spoke, and Apollo was not disobedient to his father. He went down the hills of Ida to the terrible battle-din and immediately carried noble Sarpedon out of the spears and far away, and he bathed him in the streams of the river and anointed him with ambrosia and clothed him in immortal garments and sent him to be carried away by the swift messengers, the twin brethren Sleep and Death, who quickly set him down in the rich land of wide Lykia.

But Patroklos cried to his horses and Automedon, and he went after the Trojans and Lykians and so was blindly forgetful in his wit-

lessness; for if he had obeyed the command of the son of Peleus he would have escaped the evil fate of black death. But the mind of Zeus is mightier than the mind of men, for he drives the courageous man to flight and easily takes away the victory, but then again rouses men to fight; so now he roused the spirit of Patroklos in his breast. Whom did you slay first and whom last, Patroklos, when the gods called you to death? Adrestos first, and Autonoös and Echeklos and Perimos, son of Megas, and Epistor and Melanippos, and after them Elastos and Moulaios and Pylartes: all these he killed, but every one of the rest of them were desperate to flee. Then the sons of the Achaians would have captured high-gated Troy by the hands of Patroklos, for around and in front of him he raged with the spear, but Phoibos Apollo stood on the well-built wall with ominous thoughts toward Patroklos and about helping the Trojans. Three times Patroklos climbed up the corner of the lofty wall, and three times Apollo forced him back and struck the shining shield with his immortal hands. But when for the fourth time he came on like a god, then Archer Apollo shouted terribly and spoke winged words: “Fall back, Patroklos of the seed of Zeus! It is not fated that the city of the valiant Trojans should fall beneath your spear, nor even beneath Achilles, a far better man than you.”

So he spoke, and Patroklos retreated far back, avoiding the anger of the Archer Apollo. But Hektor reined in his sure-footed horses within the Skaian gates, pondering whether he should drive them out again into the din and fight or should call the men to gather at the wall. While he was pondering, Phoibos Apollo stood by him in the guise of a strong young man, Asios, who was the brother of horse-taming Hektor’s mother, Hekabe, and the son of Dymas, who dwelt in Phrygia, on the streams of Sangarios. In his likeness, Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke to Hektor: “Hektor, why have you stopped fighting? It is not right. If only I were as much stronger than you as I am weaker—then holding back from war would quickly cause you pain. Turn your strong-hooved horses against Patroklos, if perhaps you may kill him, and Apollo give you glory.”

Death of Patroklos

So spoke the god and went back again into the tumult of men. And renowned Hektor urged wise-hearted Kebriones to lash his horses into the war. Then Apollo went and passed into the crowd and sent a terrible panic among the Argives, but to the Trojans and Hektor he gave glory. Hektor left the other Argives alone and killed none of them, but he turned his strong-hooved horses against Patroklos, and Patroklos on the other side leaped from his chariot to the ground, with a spear in his left hand and in his other hand grasped a shining jagged stone which his hand covered. Firmly he planted himself and hurled it, running at his enemy, and his throw was not in vain, but he struck Kebriones, the charioteer of Hektor, the bastard son of glorious Priam, on the brow with the sharp stone as he held the reins of the horses. The stone smashed both his brows together, and his bone did not hold, but his eyes fell to the ground in the dust in front of his feet. Then he, like a diver, fell from the well-crafted chariot, and his spirit left his bones. Then, taunting him, you addressed him, lordly Patroklos: “Oh how nimble a man, how gracefully he dives! If he were on the teeming sea, this man would please many by seeking for oysters, leaping from the ship, even if it were stormy weather, so gracefully he dives from the chariot into the plain. Truly even among the Trojans there are divers.”

So speaking, he leaped for the hero Kebriones with the rush of a lion which is struck in the breast while laying waste to the cattle-pens and his own courage is his curse, in the same way, Patroklos, you leaped eagerly toward Kebriones. But on the other side, Hektor leaped from his chariot to the ground. And these two struggled over Kebriones like lions that fight on the mountain peaks, both courageous and both hungry for a slain deer. In the same way, these two masters of the war-cry, Patroklos, son of Menoitios, and glorious Hektor, were eager to hew each other's flesh with the pitiless bronze.

Hektor then seized Kebriones by the head and did not let go, while Patroklos on the other side grasped him by the foot, and then the others, Trojans and Danaans, joined in the strong battle. Just

as the east and south winds contend with each other in shaking a deep wood in the dells of a mountain, shaking beech and ash and smooth-barked cornel trees which clash their long boughs against each other with a tremendous roar and a noise of broken branches, in the same way the Trojans and Achaians were leaping on each other and killing, and neither side had any thought of shameful flight. And many sharp spears were planted around Kebriones and winged arrows leaping from the bowstring, and many mighty stones smote the shields of those who fought around him. But he lay in the whirling dust, mighty, but with no more thought of horsemanship.

Now while the sun was going through mid-heaven, the spears smote both sides and the men fell, but when the sun turned to the time when men unyoke the oxen,¹ then the Achaians proved the greater men even beyond their destiny. They pulled the hero Kebriones out from under the spears, out of the tumult of the Trojans, and stripped the armor from his shoulders; and with evil intention against the Trojans, Patroklos rushed on them. Three times he rushed at them, the equal of swift Ares, shouting terribly, and three times he killed nine men. But when for the fourth time he rushed on like a god, the end of your life came to you, Patroklos, for Phoibos met you in the ferocious battle, in a terrible way. Patroklos was not aware of him coming through the throng, for Apollo came at him hidden in thick mist, and he stood behind him and smote his back and broad shoulders with a stroke of his hand, and his eyes were dazed. And Phoibos Apollo struck off from his head the helmet, which rolled rattling away with a crash beneath the hooves of the horses, the helmet with hollow eye-sockets, and the crests were fouled with blood and dust. This helmet with horsehair crest had never been allowed to be defiled with dust, for it protected the head and beautiful face of a divine man, Achilles. But just as now Zeus gave it to Hector to wear on his head, so his own destruction was near. And the long-shadowed spear was shattered in the hands of Patroklos, the great, heavy, strong, and sharp spear, while the tasseled shield with its

1 This has to mean mid-afternoon. Dawn of this day comes in the beginning of Book 11, mid-morning comes a few dozen lines later, and sunset of this same day comes early in Book 18.

strap fell from his shoulders to the ground. And the prince Apollo, son of Zeus, broke the breastplate, and blindness seized his heart and his shining limbs were unstrung, and he stood in bewilderment; and then at close range from behind a Dardanian stabbed him in the back, between the shoulders, with a sharp spear—Euphorbos, son of Panthoös, who excelled the men of his own age in throwing the spear and in horsemanship and in speed of foot. He had thrown down twenty men from their chariots since he had first come with his chariot to learn the lessons of war. It was he who first thrust a spear into you, lordly Patroklos, but he did not kill you, but ran back again and mingled with the throng, first pulling out from the flesh his ash spear—he did not wait for Patroklos’s attack, even though he was unarmed in the battle. But Patroklos, being overcome by the stroke of the god and by the spear, gave ground and retreated to the throng of his companions, trying to avoid Fate. But Hektor, when he saw great-hearted Patroklos give ground, wounded with the keen bronze, came close to him through the ranks and wounded him with a spear in the lower part of the belly and drove the bronze clean through. And he fell with a crash, and the Achaians sorrowed terribly. Just as when a lion has overcome an untiring boar in battle, the two of them fighting with huge courage on the ridge of a hill around a spring, and both wish to drink, and the lion has overcome by force the boar that now breathes with great difficulty; in the same way, after he had slain many men, Hektor, son of Priam, took the life away from the strong son of Menoitios, smiting him at close quarters with the spear; and, boasting over him, he spoke winged words: “Patroklos, surely you said that you would sack my town and take away from the Trojan women the time of freedom and take them in your ships to your own beloved country. Fool! In front of them the swift horses of Hektor strained in their speed toward the fight, and I myself surpass all the war-loving Trojans in wielding the spear, I who fend off from them the day of destiny; but vultures will devour you here. You wretch, Achilles in all his might was no help to you; he surely commanded you strictly as you came, while he stayed there, saying, ‘Do not come back to me, Patroklos, master of horses, at the hollow ships till you

have torn the bloody breastplate of man-slaying Hektor from his breast'; certainly this is what he must have said to you, and he persuaded your mind in your foolishness."

Then you faintly answered him, lordly, knightly Patroklos: "Boast greatly, Hektor, for Zeus, son of Kronos, and Apollo, who easily have conquered me, have given to you the victory. For they themselves stripped my armor from my shoulders. But if twenty men like you had encountered me, they would all have died, subdued by my spear. But ruinous Fate and the son of Leto have slain me, and of men it was Euphorbos. You are only the third in my slaying. And I will tell you another thing, which you should remember in your heart: you yourself do not have long to live, but Death and strong Fate already stand close beside you; you will be destroyed by the hands of noble Achilles, of the seed of Aiakos."

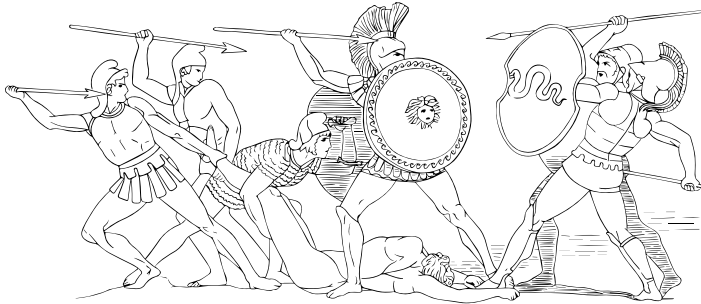
He spoke these things as death's end overshadowed him. And his soul, flitting from his limbs, went down to the house of Hades, bemoaning her² own doom, leaving manhood and youth.

Then renowned Hektor spoke to him as he lay dead: "Patroklos, why do you prophesy to me sheer destruction? Who knows; perhaps Achilles, the son of lovely-haired Thetis, will first be struck by my spear, and lose his life."

So he spoke and pulled the spear of bronze from the wound, setting his foot on the dead man, and pushed him off on his back away from the spear. And with his spear he immediately went to look for Automedon, the godlike companion of the swift-footed grandson of Aiakos, for he was eager to kill him, and his swift-footed immortal horses carried him away, the horses that the gods gave to Peleus as a splendid gift.

2 The Greek gender of the word "soul" is feminine, even when it is the soul of a great masculine hero like Patroklos (or Hektor—see the end of Book 22). I considered translating this to "its" rather than "hers" but thought the point interesting enough to leave and explain. Furthermore, earlier in this same sentence, his soul "flits" from his body; the Greeks imagined the soul leaving a person's body as a butterfly fluttering, and in fact called butterflies "little souls."

Book XVII: The Battle for Patroklos' Body



The Fight for the Body of Patroklos

Menelaos and Aias Defend Patroklos' Body

But Atreus' son, Menelaos, dear to Ares, was not unaware of the slaying of Patroklos by the Trojans in the battle. He went up through the front of the fight armored in flashing bronze and stood over the body as a new-born calf stands, lowing over its mother, unaccustomed to motherhood before then. In the same way, fair-haired Menelaos stood over Patroklos, and he held his spear and the circle of his shield before him, eager to slay whoever should encounter him. Then Panthoös' son of the stout ash spear was not heedless of noble Patroklos as he lay dead, and he stood near him and spoke to Menelaos, dear to Ares: "Atreus' son, Menelaos, Zeus-nurtured, captain of the host, give back and leave the body and yield the bloody spoils; for before me none of the Trojans and their famed allies smote Patroklos with the spear in the crush of battle; therefore yield to me this great glory to win among the Trojans, lest I throw and strike you and rob you of sweet life."

Then furiously angry, fair-haired Menelaos spoke: "O Father Zeus, it is not proper to boast beyond measure. Truly, neither is the spirit of leopard or of lion or of cruel wild boar, in the strength of

whose breast fury rages fiercest of all, so high as those arrogant spirits of Panthoös' son of the good ash spear. Even the mighty Hyperenor, tamer of horses, got no benefit from his youth when he reviled me and withstood my attack and thought that I was the worst warrior among the Danaans; I do not think he went home on his own feet to gladden his dear wife and his good parents. In the same way, I think, I will quench your spirit also, if you stand up against me; instead I urge you to get back into the throng and not to encounter me, before some evil thing befalls you; a fool is made wise only after a thing happens."

So he spoke, but did not persuade the other, but he spoke to him in answer: "Now therefore, Zeus-nurtured Menelaos, you will indeed pay for my brother whom you killed and boasted over, and with that left his wife a widow in her new bridal-chamber far away and brought to his parents unspeakable sorrow. Indeed I will lessen the sorrow of them all if I bring back your head and armor and lay them in the hands of Panthoös and noble Phrontis. But now no longer will our struggle be untested or unfought, whether for victory or for flight."

So saying, he struck the circle of the shield of Menelaos, but the bronze spear did not break it, but the point was bent back in the stubborn shield. And Menelaos, Atreus' son, in his turn attacked him with his bronze spear, having prayed to Father Zeus, and as the other man drew back, it pierced the lower part of his throat, and he threw his weight into the stroke, leaning hard; and sheer through the tender neck went the point of the spear. And he fell with a crash, and his armor rang upon him. His hair that was like the hair of the Graces, and his tresses, closely knit with bands of silver and gold, were all drenched in blood. Just as when a man raises some vigorous sapling of an olive tree in a clear space where water springs plentifully, a lovely shoot growing well, and blasts of all the winds shake it, yet it bursts into white blossom, then suddenly the wind of a great hurricane comes and tears it out of its place and stretches it out upon the earth; in the same way, Panthoös' son, Euphorbos of the good ash spear, lie when Menelaos, Atreus' son, had slain him and stripped him of his armor.

As when some mountain-bred lion, trusting in his might, has seized the best heifer out of a feeding herd and first takes her neck in

his strong teeth and breaks it and then fiercely devours the blood and all the inward parts, while around him hounds and herdsmen clamor loudly from a distance but will not come up against him, for pale fear takes hold on them; in the same way the heart in the breast of all the Trojans did not dare to come up against glorious Menelaos. Then the son of Atreus easily would have carried off the noble spoils of Panthoös' son, if Phoibos Apollo hid not resented it and aroused against him Hektor, the equal of swift Ares, by putting on the appearance of a man, of Mentès chief of the Kikones. And he spoke winged words aloud to him: "Hektor, now you are striving for unattainable things, the very horses of the wise grandson of Aiakos; for they are hard to be tamed or driven by a mortal man, except only Achilles, whom an immortal mother bore. Meanwhile warlike Menelaos, Atreus' son, has stood over Patroklos and slain the best of the Trojans there, Panthoös' son Euphorbos, and has stopped his impetuous might."

Saying this, the god went back into the conflict of men, but terrible grief darkened Hektor's inmost soul, and then he gazed hard along the lines and immediately became aware of the one man stripping off the noble arms, and the other man lying on the earth; and blood was flowing about the gaping wound. Then he went through the front of the fight, harnessed in flashing bronze, crying a shrill cry, like Hephaistos' unquenchable flame. Atreus' son was not deaf to his shrill cry and, terribly troubled, he spoke to his great heart: "Woe is me if I leave behind me these noble arms, and Patroklos who lies here because of vengeance on my behalf; I fear lest some Danaan seeing it be angry against me. But if for honor's sake I do battle alone with Hektor and the Trojans, I fear lest they come about me many against one, for Hektor is leading all the bright-helmeted Trojans here. So why does my heart debate in this way? When, against the power of heaven, a man is eager to fight with another whom God exalts, then mighty sorrow comes swiftly upon him. So none of the Danaans will be angry with me even if he sees me giving way to Hektor, since he fights with gods on his side. But if I might find Aias of the loud war-cry somewhere, then we would both together go and think of battle even if it were against the power of heaven, if perhaps

we might recover the body for Achilles, Peleus' son; that would be the best among these evils."

While he communed this way with his mind and heart, the Trojan ranks came onward with Hektor at their head. Then Menelaos gave back and left the dead man, turning himself constantly about like a deep-maned lion which men and dogs chase from a fold with spears and cries, while his strong heart within him grows chill, and he reluctantly leaves the farmstead; in the same way, fair-haired Menelaos went away from Patroklos and turned and stood when he came to the host of his comrades, searching for mighty Aias, Telamon's son. Quickly he saw him at the left of the whole battle, cheering on his comrades and rousing them to fight, for Phoibos Apollo had sent great terror on them, and he hurried and ran and immediately stood beside him and said: "This way, beloved Aias; let us rouse ourselves for the dead Patroklos, if perhaps we can at least carry his naked corpse to Achilles, though his armor is now held by Hektor of the shining helmet."

So he spoke and roused the heart of wise Aias. And he went up through the forefront of the battle, and with him went fair-haired Menelaos. Now Hektor, when he had stripped from Patroklos his noble armor, was dragging him away in order to cut the head from the shoulders with the keen bronze and carry his body to give to the dogs of Troy. But Aias came close, and the shield that he bore was like a tower; then Hektor gave back into the company of his comrades and sprang into his chariot, and he gave the noble armor to the Trojans to carry to the city, to be a great glory to him. But Aias spread his broad shield over the son of Menoitios and stood like a lion in front of his young when huntsmen in a forest encounter him as he leads his young, then he grows in strength and narrows his eyes; in the same way Aias stood over the hero Patroklos. And by his side stood Atreus' son, Menelaos, dear to Ares, nursing great sorrow in his breast.

Then Glaukos, Hippolochos' son, chief of the men of Lykia, looked toward Hektor with a frown and chided him with rough words: "Hektor, bravest in appearance, in battle you are sadly lacking. Indeed glory rests on you in vain since you turned fugitive. Think

now how you will save your city and home, only you with the people who were born in Ilios; for none of the Lykians at least will go up to fight against the Danaans for the city's sake, since there is no benefit, it seems, to continuously fight unceasingly against men of war. How is it likely that you will bring back safely into your army any lesser man, O hard of heart, when Sarpedon, who was both guest and friend, you abandoned to the Argives to be their prey and spoil, though in his life he often helped both your city and yourself? Yet now you have not dared to save him from the dogs. Therefore now if any of the men of Lykia will listen to me we will go home, and sheer doom will be revealed to Troy. For if a spirit of great courage were now in the Trojans, a fearless spirit such as enters into men who labor and strive for their native land against men who are their enemies, we would quickly drag Patroklos within Ilios' wall. And if this dead man were brought into the great city of King Priam, and we pulled him out of the battle, then the Argives would quickly give back the noble armor of Sarpedon, and we would bring his body into Ilios; so great is he whose companion has been slain—yes, the man who is far the best of the Argives beside the ships—he and his close-fighting companions. But you could not stand up against great-hearted Aias and look in his face amidst the cry of the men of war, nor do great battle with him, since he is a better man than you.”

Then, with a frown, Hektor of the shining helmet spoke to him: “Glaukos, why has someone like you spoken this way beyond all measure? Enough; indeed I thought that in wisdom you were above all others in deep-soiled Lykia, but now I completely scorn your wisdom, since you speak this way and say that I did not dare to meet mighty Aias. I have no fear of battle or the din of chariots, but the intention of aegis-bearing Zeus is always strongest, and he intimidates even a brave man and easily takes victory from him and yet soon rouses him to fight. Come here, friend, stand beside me and see my craftsmanship, whether all day I act like a coward, according to your words, or will stop some of the Danaans, no matter how fierce their courage, from battling for Patroklos' corpse.”

So saying, he called on the Trojans with a mighty shout: “Trojans and Lykians and Dardanians who fight hand to hand, be men, my friends, and think of furious valor, until I put on the noble armor of great Achilles that I stripped from brave Patroklos when I killed him.”

Having said this, Hektor of the shining helmet went out of the clash of battle and ran, and following his companions quickly with swift feet overtook them, for they were not yet far off, carrying to the city the glorious armor of Peleus’ son. And standing apart from the sorrowful battle he exchanged his armor; his own he gave to the warlike Trojans to carry to sacred Ilios, and he put on the divine armor of Achilles, Peleus’ son, which the gods who inhabit heaven had given to his dear father, and when he was old, Peleus entrusted them to his child; but that son never grew old in his father’s armor.

But when Zeus who gathers the clouds saw from far off Hektor arming himself in the armor of Peleus’ godlike son, he shook his head and spoke this way to his soul: “Oh unlucky man, there is no thought in your heart about death that draws near to you; you are putting onto yourself the divine armor of a man without equal, before whom the rest are terrified. His comrade, gentle and brave, you have slain, and improperly have stripped the armor from his head and shoulders. Yet for a while at least I will give into your hands great might in recompense, because in no way will you come home out of the battle for Andromache to receive from you the glorious arms of the son of Peleus.”

So spoke the son of Kronos and nodded his dark brows. And the armor fitted itself onto Hektor’s body, and Ares, the dread war-god, entered into him, and his limbs were filled with courage and strength. Then he sped among the noble allies with a mighty cry, and in the flashing of his armor he seemed to all of them like Peleus’ great-hearted son. And he came to each one and encouraged him with his words—Mesthles and Glaukos and Medon and Thersilochos and Asteropaios and Deisenor and Hippothoös and Phorkys and Chromios and the augur Ennomos—all these he encouraged and spoke winged words to them: “Listen, you countless tribes of allies

that dwell all around. I was not seeking or longing for mere numbers when I gathered each of you from your cities, but that you might zealously guard the 'Trojans' wives and little ones from the war-loving Achaians. Because of this I am wearing out my people by taking gifts and food from them to nurse the courage of each of you. Now therefore let everyone turn straight against the foe and live or die, for such is the tender embrace of war. And whoever will drag Patroklos, though he is dead, back among the horse-taming men of Troy, and make Aias yield, to him I will award half the spoils, keeping half myself; so his glory will be as great as mine."

So he spoke, and they charged against the Danaans with all their weight, leveling their spears, and their hearts were high with hope to drag the corpse from under Aias, Telamon's son. Foolish men—he tore the life from a great many over that corpse. And then Aias spoke to Menelaos of the loud war-cry: "Dear Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, I no longer reckon that we two ourselves will return home out of the war. Nor am I so concerned for the corpse of Patroklos, which will soon glut the dogs and birds of the men of Troy, as for your head and mine lest some evil fall on them, for everything is shrouded by a storm-cloud of war, by Hektor himself, and sheer doom stares us in the face. But come, call to the best men of the Danaans, if perhaps any will hear."

So he spoke, and Menelaos of the loud war-cry did not ignore him, but shouted to the Danaans in a voice heard far off: "O friends, leaders and counselors of the Argives, who by the side of the sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaos, drink at the public expense and are all commanders of the host, to whom comes glory and honor from Zeus, it is hard for me to distinguish each leader amid the crowd, such blaze there is of the conflict of war. But let each of you go forward and be angry at heart that Patroklos should become a plaything for the dogs of Troy."

So he spoke, and Oileus' son swift Aias heard him clearly and was the first to run along the battle to meet him, and after him came Idomeneus, and Idomeneus' brother-in-arms, Meriones, equal of the man-slaying war-god. And who could tell the names of the rest

from his own memory, of all who next to these aroused the battle of the Achaians?

Now the Trojans charged forward close together, and Hektor led them. Just as when at the mouth of some rain-swollen river a mighty sea wave roars back against the stream and arouses the high cliffs' echo as the salt sea bellows on the beach, in the same way the cry with which the Trojans came on was thunderous. But the Achaians stood firm around Menoitios' son with one soul, walled in with shields of bronze. And over their bright helmets the son of Kronos shed thick darkness, for in earlier times Menoitios' son was not unloved by him, while he was still alive and companion of the grandson of Aiakos. So Zeus was not willing that he should become a prey of the dogs of his enemies at Troy and stirred his comrades to do battle for him.

Now the Trojans thrust back the quick-eyed Achaians, who shrank before them and left the dead, yet the proud Trojans did not kill any of them with their spears, though they wanted to, but attempted to capture the corpse. But the Achaians would not hold back from it for long, for Aias swiftly rallied them—Aias the first in presence of mind and in deeds of all the Danaans next to the noble son of Peleus. Right through the fighters in the front line of battle he rushed, like a wild boar in his might that in the mountains when he turns at bay easily scatters dogs and vigorous young men through the glades. In the same way, proud Telamon's son, the glorious Aias, pressed hard on the Trojan battalions and easily scattered them from where they had stood over Patroklos, eager to drag him to their city and win glory.

Then Hippothoös, the glorious son of Pelasgian Lethos, began to drag him by the foot through the violent struggle, binding him by the ankle with a strap around the sinews, to please Hektor and the Trojans. But an evil thing came quickly upon him from which none of his companions could save him, as much as they wanted to. For the son of Telamon attacked him through the pressure of battle and struck him from close at hand through the bronze-cheeked helmet. And the horsehair-plumed helmet broke around the spear point, struck by the great spear and stout arm, and brains and blood spout-

ed from the wound through the vizor. And Hippothoös' strength was unstrung, and from his hands he let great-hearted Patroklos' foot fall to the ground, and he fell prone upon the corpse, far from deep-soiled Larisa, and never repaid his dear parents for rearing him, for his span of life was cut short as he fell beneath the spear of great-hearted Aias. And Hektor in his turn hurled his bright spear at Aias, but the other saw the bronze weapon as it came and barely avoided it; yet Schedios, the son of great-hearted Iphitos, the best man of the Phokians, who had his dwelling in famous Panopeus and was king over many men—this man Hektor struck beneath the middle of his collar bone, and the point of the bronze spear went right through and stuck out through the lower part of his shoulder. And he fell with a crash, and his armor rang upon him. And Aias in his turn struck Phorkys, the wise son of Phainops, in the middle of the belly as he stood over Hippothoös, and broke the plate of his war belt, and the bronze let forth his bowels, and he fell in the dust and grasped at the earth with his hand. And the front fighters and glorious Hektor drew back, and the Argives shouted aloud and pulled out the dead men, Phorkys and Hippothoös, and took off the armor from their shoulders.

Then the Trojans in turn would have been driven back into Ilios, overcome in their weakness by the Achaians, dear to Ares, and the Argives would have won glory even against the plan of Zeus by their power and might. But Apollo himself aroused Aineias, putting on the appearance of Periphas the herald, the son of Epytos, who grew old with his old father in his role as herald, with friendly thoughts toward Aineias. In his likeness, Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke: "Aineias, how could you ever guard high Ilios if it were against the will of God? I have seen other men who trust in their own might and power and valor, and in their army, even when they have few people to lead. But here, although Zeus is far more willing to give victory to us than to the Danaans, still you are greatly discouraged and do not fight."

So he spoke, and Aineias recognized the Archer Apollo when he looked in his face; and he spoke to Hektor, shouting aloud: "Hektor and you other leaders of the Trojans and their allies, it would be

shameful if, overcome in our weakness, we were driven back into Ilios by the Achaians, dear to Ares. A god who stands by my side says that Zeus, the highest Arranger of things, is our helper in this fight. Therefore let us go straight on against the Danaans. Let them not take dead Patroklos to the ships without a struggle.”

So he spoke and leapt forth far ahead of the fighters in the front. And the Trojans rallied and stood up against the Achaians. Then with his spear Aineias wounded Leokritos, son of Arisbas, Lykomedes’ valiant comrade. And as he fell, Lykomedes, dear to Ares, grieved for him and came close to him and stopped and hurled his bright spear and struck Hippias’ son Apisaon, shepherd of the host, in the liver beneath the waist and immediately unstrung his knees. Apisaon, who had come from deep-soiled Paionia, was their best man in battle next to Asteropaios. And as he fell, warlike Asteropaios grieved for him and rushed forward eagerly to do battle against the Danaans; but he could do nothing, for they were fenced on every side with shields as they stood around Patroklos and held their spears in front of them. For Aias strode among them all and called on them again and again and commanded that none of the Achaians should give way behind the corpse nor fight in front of the rest but keep close beside the dead man and wage battle hand to hand. So mighty Aias commanded them, and the earth was wet with dark blood, and the dead fell thickly, both of the Trojans and their brave allies, and also of the Danaans, for these too did not fight a bloodless fight, yet far fewer of them died, for they were always careful to fend off death from one another in the pressure of battle.

So they struggled as though on fire, nor would you have thought there was still sun or moon, for over the whole battle where the chiefs fought around the slain son of Menoitios they were covered in darkness, while the other Trojans and strong-armored Achaians fought easily in the clear air, and piercing sunlight was spread over them, and on all the earth and hills no cloud was seen; and they ceased fighting now and then, avoiding each other’s terrible darts and staying far apart. But those who were in the middle of the battle suffered the affliction of the darkness and the battle, and all the best

men of them were exhausted by the pitiless weight of their bronze armor and weapons. Yet two men, famous warriors, Thrasymedes and Antilochos, did not yet know that noble Patroklos was dead, but thought that he was still alive and fighting against the Trojans in the frontlines of the battle. So those two, guarding against the death or flight of their companions were fighting away from the rest, since Nestor had commanded them to do this when he had roused them to the battle from the black ships.

In this way the mighty struggle of their terrible conflict grew all day long, and the knees and legs of each man were bathed in the sweat of toil without ceasing, and their arms and eyes also, as the two armies battled around the brave companion of the swift grandson of Aiakos. Just as when a man gives the hide of a great bull to his people to stretch, all soaked in fat, and they take and stretch it standing in a circle, and immediately the moisture in it leaves and the fat soaks in under the pulling of many hands, and it is all completely stretched; in the same way, those on both sides pulled the dead man this way and that in the narrow space, for their hearts were high with hope—the Trojans that they would drag him to Ilios, and the Achaians that they would drag him to the hollow ships; and around him the battle grew wild, and not even Ares, arouser of armies, nor Athene would despise the sight of it, even if they were very angry.

All this was the terrible conflict of men and horses over Patroklos which Zeus caused on that day. But as yet, noble Achilleus knew nothing of Patroklos' death, for they were fighting far away from the swift ships beneath the wall of the men of Troy. Therefore he never considered in his heart that he was dead, but that he would come back alive after he had reached the gates; nor did he in any way have that other thought, that Patroklos would sack the stronghold without his help, for he had often heard from his mother, listening to her apart from the others as she brought news to him of the purposes of mighty Zeus. But indeed his mother had never told him what a great evil had happened—that his most beloved companion was dead.

Now the rest attacked relentlessly around the dead man with their sharp spears and slew each other. And someone among the

armored Achaians would speak in this way: “Friends, indeed it would not be glorious for us to go back to the hollow ships; instead, let the black earth open beneath our feet for us all. That would be far better for us immediately if we let the horse-taming Trojans drag this man to their city and win glory.”

And on the other side one of the great-hearted Trojans would say: “Friends, even if it is our fate that we all be killed together beside this man, still let no one give backward from the battle.”

In this way men would speak and stir up the spirit in each other. So they fought on, and the iron din went up through the high desert air to the bronze sky. But the horses of the grandson of Aiakos that stood apart from the battle were weeping, since first they were aware that their charioteer had fallen in the dust beneath the hand of man-slaying Hektor. Indeed Automedon, Diores’ valiant son, whipped them often with blows of the swift lash, and often with gentle words he spoke to them and often with rebuking, yet they would neither go back to the ships at the broad Hellespont nor to the battle after the Achaians, but like a pillar that stands on the tomb of a dead man or woman remains firm, so they remained with the beautiful chariot immovably, hanging their heads to the ground. And hot tears flowed from their eyes to the earth as they mourned in sorrow for their charioteer, and their rich manes were soiled as they drooped from beneath the yoke-cushion on both sides next to the yoke. And when the son of Kronos saw them mourning, he had compassion on them and shook his head and spoke to his own heart: “Oh unfortunate pair, why did we give you to King Peleus, a mortal man, while you are immortal and always young? Was it so that you would suffer sorrows among ill-fated men? For I think there is nothing more pitiful than a man among all things that breathe and creep upon the earth. But indeed Hektor, Priam’s son, will not drive you and your wonderfully-crafted chariot; that I will not allow. Is it a small thing that he has the armor and vainly boasts about it? No, I will put courage into your knees and heart that you may bring Automedon safe out of the war to the hollow ships also. And still further I will increase victory to the men of Troy, so that they slaughter until they come to the well-timbered ships, and the sun sets and divine night comes down.”

So saying, he breathed great courage into the horses. And they shook to earth the dust from their manes and easily drew the swift chariot among Trojans and Achaians. And behind them Automedon fought, although in grief for his companion, swooping with his chariot like a vulture on wild geese; for easily he would flee out of the attack of the Trojans and then easily charge, pursuing them through the tight battle. Yet he could not kill any man while he rushed to pursue them, for being alone in his glorious chariot, it was impossible to both attack them with the spear and guide his swift horses. Then at last he saw a companion, Alkimedon, son of Laerkes, son of Haimon, and Alkimedon paused behind the chariot and spoke to Automedon: “Automedon, what god has put into your heart useless counsel and taken wisdom from you, that you are fighting alone in this way against the Trojans in the very front of the conflict? Your companion just now was slain, and Hektor goes proudly, wearing on his own shoulders the armor of the grandson of Aiakos.”

And Automedon, son of Diores, answered him, saying: “Alkimedon, what other Achaian has equal skill to guide the spirit of immortal steeds, except Patroklos, equal of the gods in counsel, while he still lived? But now death and fate have overtaken him. But you take the lash and shining reins, and I will get down from my horses to fight.”

So he spoke, and Alkimedon leapt onto the swift war chariot and quickly took the lash and reins in his hands, and Automedon leapt down. Then noble Hektor saw them and immediately spoke to Aineias as he stood near: “Aineias, counselor of well-armored Trojans, I see the two horses of the swift grandson of Aiakos coming out to battle with weak charioteers. Therefore I hope to take them if you in your heart are willing, since they could not withstand our attack and stand to do battle against us.”

So he spoke, and the brave son of Anchises did not ignore him. And the two went straight onward, their shoulders shielded by ox-hides, dried and tough, and bronze thickly overlaid. And both Chromios and godlike Aretos went with them, and their hearts were full of high hope to kill the men and drive off the strong-necked

horses—foolish hope, for they were not to get back from Automedon without lost blood. Praying to Father Zeus, Automedon was filled in the depths of his heart with courage and strength. And immediately he spoke to Alkimedon, his faithful companion: “Alkimedon, hold the horses not far from me but with their very breath on my back; for I think that Hektor, the son of Priam, will not hold back from his fury until he has mounted behind Achilleus’ horses with the noble manes after slaying us two and dismaying the ranks of Argive men, or else he himself falls among the foremost.”

So he spoke and called upon the Aiantes and Menelaos: “You Aiantes, leaders of the Argives, and Menelaos, I commit the corpse to whomever may best be able to stand over it and resist the ranks of men, and go toward the day of doom from us who remain alive, for here in the sorrowful war Hektor and Aineias, the best men of the Trojans, are attacking hard. But indeed these issues lie in the lap of the gods: I too will throw my spear, and Zeus will decide the rest.”

He spoke and poised his far-shadowing spear and hurled it, and it struck the circle of the shield of Aretos, and the shield could not withstand the spear, but the bronze went right through, and he forced it into his belly low down through his belt. Just as when a strong man with a sharp axe, striking behind the horns of an ox of the homestead, cleaves the sinew apart, and the ox leaps forward and falls, in the same way Aretos leaped forward and fell on his back, and the piercing spear, quivering in his entrails, unstrung his limbs. And Hektor threw at Automedon with his bright spear, but he watched the bronze javelin steadfastly as it came at him and he avoided it, for he stooped forward, and the long spear fixed itself in the ground behind him, and the javelin-butt quivered, and there dread Ares took away its force. And then they would have slashed at each other with their swords hand to hand, if the Aiantes had not parted them in their fury, when they had come through the tight battle at their companions’ call. Before them Hektor and Aineias and godlike Chromios shrank backward and gave ground and left Aretos mortally wounded where he lay. And Automedon, equal of swift Ares, stripped off the armor of the dead, and spoke exultingly: “Truly I have eased the

grief of my heart a little for the death of Menoitios' son, although it is a worse man than him that have I slain."

So saying, he took up the bloody spoils and set them in his chariot and got in himself, with his feet and hands all bloody, like a lion that has devoured a bull.

So again the violent conflict, cruel and sorrowful, was waged over Patroklos. And Athene, having descended from heaven, roused their strife, for far-seeing Zeus sent her to spur on the Danaans, for his mind was changed. Just as Zeus stretches out a gleaming rainbow from heaven to be a sign to mortals, whether of war or of a bitter storm that makes men cease from their works on the face of the earth and troubles the flocks, so Athene, clothing herself in a gleaming cloud, entered the Achaians' army and roused each man in it. First she urged on Atreus' son, strong Menelaos, for he was close to her, and she spoke to him, making herself like Phoinix in shape and untiring voice: "To you indeed, Menelaos, it will be shame and a reproach if beneath the wall of the men of Troy swift dogs tear the faithful companion of proud Achilles. No, bear yourself up sturdily and urge on all the host."

Then Menelaos of the loud war-cry answered her, saying: "O Phoinix, ancient father from older times, if only Athene would give me strength and keep off the assault of spears. Then I would be very eager to stand by Patroklos and to shield him, for his death touched me very close at heart. But Hektor has the terrible fury of fire, and he does not cease to cause havoc with his spear, for Zeus gives him glory."

So he spoke, and the bright-eyed goddess Athene was glad because he prayed to her first of all the gods. And she put force into his shoulders and his knees and in his breast the boldness of the fly that although driven away again and again from the skin of men is still eager to bite, and the blood of men is sweet to it; with such boldness the goddess filled his inmost heart, and he stood over Patroklos and hurled with his bright spear. Now among the Trojans was one called Podes, son of Eëtion, a rich and brave man, and Hektor honored him especially among the people because he was his dear and close companion. Fair-haired Menelaos struck him in the belt as he started

to flee, and drove his spearhead straight through, and he fell with a crash, and Menelaos, Atreus' son, dragged his body from among his companions', from the company of Trojans.

But Apollo came and stood near Hektor and roused him, in the likeness of Asios' son Phainops, who was dearest of all guest-friends to him and had his home in Abydos. In his likeness the Archer Apollo spoke to Hektor: "Hektor, what other man of the Achaians will fear you any more, if now you shrink from Menelaos who formerly was not a hardy warrior? Now he alone has seized a dead Trojan from among our ranks and has slain your faithful companion, a good man among the fighters in the front, Podes, son of Eëtion."

So he spoke, and a black cloud of grief fell on Hektor, and he went through the front lines of the battle, armored in flashing bronze. Then the son of Kronos took up his glittering tasseled aegis and shrouded Ida in clouds and sent lightning and thundered mightily and shook the earth, and he gave victory to the Trojans, but he dismayed the Achaians.

The first to set dismay on foot was Peneleos the Boiotian. For he was struck in the shoulder by a javelin grazing the surface, as he always kept his face toward the enemy; the spear point of Poulydamas scratched the bone, for he threw it from close at hand. Then again in close combat Hektor wounded Leïtos, the son of great-hearted Alektryon, on the wrist and kept him from the joy of battle; and he shrank back as he gazed around him, because he could no longer hope to hold his spear in his hand to fight against the men of Troy. Then Idomeneus struck Hektor on his chest-plate beside the nipple as he pursued Leïtos, but the long spear broke at the socket and the Trojans shouted. And Hektor hurled at Idomeneus, son of Deukalion, just as he had mounted his chariot, and missed him by a little, but he struck Koiranos, Meriones' brother-in-arms and charioteer who had followed him from strong-founded Lyktos. For Idomeneus came first from the curved ships on foot and would have yielded great triumph to the Trojans if Koiranos had not quickly driven up his swift horses, and thus come as help to Idomeneus and guarded him from the day of death, but he himself lost his life at the hands

of man-slaying Hektor. Hektor smote him beneath the jaw and ear, and the spear-point smashed out his teeth and cut his tongue in two in the middle. And he fell out of the chariot and let the reins fall to the ground. Then Meriones stooped and gathered them in his own hands from the earth and spoke to Idomeneus: “Now lash the horses on till you come to the swift ships; you know too that triumph is no longer with the Achaians.”

So he spoke, and Idomeneus lashed the noble-maned horses back to the hollow ships, for fear had fallen upon his soul.

Aias Remembers Achilleus

Now great-hearted Aias and Menelaos knew that Zeus gave the Trojans their turn of victory. First of these to speak was great Aias, son of Telamon: “Now any man, even if he is a complete fool, would know that Father Zeus himself is helping the Trojans. For the spears of all of them strike, whoever hurls them, whether he is a good man or a bad one—Zeus still guides them to their marks. But all our spears fall idly to the earth. Let us ourselves plan some excellent means by which we may both retrieve the corpse and ourselves return home to the joy of our friends, who grieve as they look here and consider that the fury of man-slaying Hektor’s unapproachable hand will no longer restrain itself, but will fall upon the black ships. If only there were some companion to carry news quickly to the son of Peleus, since I do not think he has even heard the terrible news that his dear companion has been slain. But I cannot see such a man anywhere among the Achaians, for they and their horses too are wrapped in darkness. O Father Zeus, deliver the sons of the Achaians from the darkness and make clear sky and grant sight to our eyes. Let it be in the light that you kill us, since it is your good pleasure that we die.”

So he spoke, and the Father grieved to see him weep and immediately scattered the darkness and drove away the mist, and the sun shone out on them, and the whole battle was revealed. Then Aias

spoke to Menelaos of the loud war-cry: “Look around now, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, if perhaps you can see Antilochos, great-hearted Nestor’s son, still alive and rouse him to go swiftly to wise Achilles to tell him that his most beloved companion is slain.”

So he spoke, and Menelaos of the loud war-cry did not disregard him, but went out as a lion from a farmstead when he is tired of harassing men and dogs that will not allow him to devour the fat oxen and keep watch all night, but he, hungry for meat, presses hard yet can do nothing, for the spears fly thickly against him from sturdy hands with blazing torches from which he shrinks in spite of all his fury, and in the morning he goes far away with grief in his heart; in the same way Menelaos of the war-cry went from Patroklos, very reluctantly; for he feared greatly lest the Achaians be driven back and leave him a prey to the enemy. And he strictly commanded Meriones and the Aiantes, saying: “Aiantes, leaders of the Argives, and Meriones, now let each of you remember the kindness of unfortunate Patroklos, for he was gentle to all while he was still alive; now death and fate have overtaken him.”

Saying this, fair-haired Menelaos departed, looking all around, like an eagle which men say has the keenest sight of all birds under heaven, and even when he is high in heaven the swift-footed hare does not escape him by crouching beneath a leafy bush, but the eagle swoops and swiftly seizes her and takes her life; in the same way at that time, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, you turned your shining eyes everywhere through the multitude of the host of your comrades, if perhaps you might see Nestor’s son still alive. He soon saw him at the left of the whole battle, encouraging his companions and rousing them to fight. And fair-haired Menelaos came and stood near and said to him: “Antilochos, beloved of Zeus, come here that you may learn sorrowful news—if only it had never happened. Before now, I think, you too have known by observing that God rolls mischief upon the Danaans, and victory is with the Trojans. And the best man of the Achaians, Patroklos, has been slain, and great sorrow is brought on the Danaans. But run to the ships of the Achaians and quickly tell this to Achilles, if perhaps he might immediately recov-

er the naked corpse back to his ship. But his armor is held by Hektor of the shining helmet.”

So he spoke, and Antilochos was horrified by the word he heard. And for a long time speechlessness possessed him, and his eyes were filled with tears, and his full voice choked. Yet in spite of all this he did not disregard the urging of Menelaos, but began to run, when he had given his armor to a noble companion, Laodokos, who was driving his swift-footed horses nearby.

So his feet carried him weeping out of the battle to Achilles, son of Peleus, carrying a terrible tale. But your heart, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, chose not to stay to help the exhausted companions whom Antilochos had left, and there was great sorrow among the Pylans. But Menelaos sent noble Thrasymedes to them, and he himself went again to stand over the hero Patroklos. And he hurried and stood beside the Aiantes and immediately spoke to them: “I have sent that man to the fast ships to go to swift-footed Achilles. But I do not think that he will come now, in spite of all his wrath against noble Hektor, for he could not fight unarmed against the men of Troy. But let us ourselves devise some good plan, both how we might drag the dead away and how we ourselves might escape death and fate amid the Trojans’ battle-cry.”

Aias Covers the Retreat with Patroklos’ Body

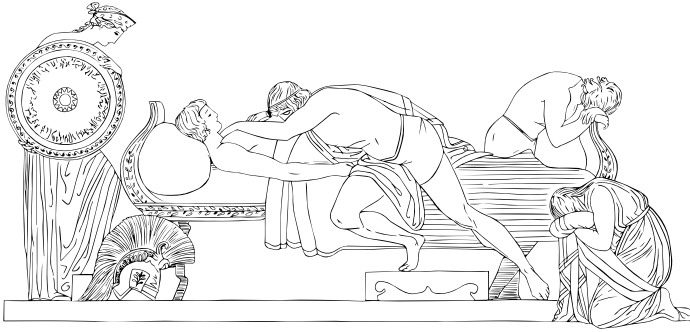
Then great Aias, Telamon’s son, answered him, saying: “All this you have said well, most noble Menelaos. But you and Meriones put your shoulders beneath the dead and lift him and carry him swiftly out of the battle, while behind you we two will fight off the Trojans and noble Hektor, one in heart just as we are in name, for we have always faced fierce battle side by side.”

So he spoke, and the others took the dead man in their arms and mightily lifted him up high. But the Trojan host behind cried aloud when they saw the Achaians lifting the corpse and charged

like hounds that leap in front of young hunters upon a wounded wild boar, and for a while run hastily to tear at him, but when he wheels around among them, trusting in his might, then they give ground and shrink back here and there; in this way for a while the Trojans pressed on with all their power, striking with swords and double-headed spears, but when the Aiantes turned around and stood fast against them, then they changed color and no one dared to attack further around the dead.

So those two were struggling to carry the corpse out of the battle toward the hollow ships, but the stress of war grew fierce around them, just as fire that leaps on a city of men and bursts into a sudden blaze, and houses are destroyed in the mighty glare, and it roars under the strength of the wind; in this way the unrelenting din of horses and of fighting men roared against the bearers as they went. Just as mules that throw their great strength into the harness and drag some beam or huge ship timber out of the mountain down a rugged track, and their hearts are worn out with toil and sweat as they struggle, in this way those two were struggling to carry the corpse. And behind them the two Aiantes held their ground, like a wooded ridge that happening to stretch its whole length across the plain holds back a flood and stops even the devastating streams of mighty rivers and turns their whole current wandering into the plain, nor does the violence of the stream break through it; in this way, the Aiantes continually kept back the Trojans' battle, but they pressed hard close by, and among them the first two were Aineias, Anchises' son, and glorious Hektor. As a flock of starlings or of crows flies with confused cries when they see a hawk coming, the bringer of death to small birds, so the Achaian youths fell back before Aineias and Hektor, confusedly shouting, and forgot the joy of battle. And the noble spears fell thickly all around the trench, as the Danaans fled, and there was never a pause in the fight.

Book XVIII: The Shield of Achilles



Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles

Achilleus Hears of Patroklos' Death

So the rest fought on like blazing fire. Meanwhile, Antilochos came as a swift-footed messenger to Achilles. He found him in front of his ships with their curved horns, pondering in his soul the things which had happened. And terribly troubled he spoke to his great heart: "Why are the flowing-haired Achaians flocking to the ships again and flying pursued over the plain? May the gods not have brought against me the awful fears in my heart, which my mother revealed and told me that while I am still alive the best man of the Myrmidons will forsake the light of the sun by the hands of the men of Troy. Surely now Menoitios' valiant son must be dead—foolhardy man! I commanded him that when he had beaten back the fire of the enemy he should return to the ships and not fight with Hektor."

While he debated this way in his heart and soul, noble Nestor's son came close to him, shedding hot tears, and spoke his woeful news: "Ah me, wise Peleus' son, you must hear very bitter news, things I wish had never happened. Patroklos has fallen, and they are fighting around his naked body, for his armor is held by Hektor of the shining helmet."

So he spoke, and a black cloud of grief surrounded Achilles, and with both hands he took dark dust and poured it over his head and defiled his handsome face, and black ashes fell on his fragrant tunic. And he himself lay in the dust, mighty and mightily fallen, and with his own hands he tore and fouled his hair. And the handmaidens whom Achilles and Patroklos took captive cried aloud in the grief of their hearts and ran out around valiant Achilles, and all beat on their breasts with their hands, and the knees of each of them were unstrung. And on the other side Antilochos wailed and shed tears, holding Achilles' hands while he groaned in his noble heart, for he feared lest he should cut his own throat with the sword. Then Achilles moaned terribly, and his lady mother heard him as she sat in the depths of the sea beside her ancient father. And hearing him, she uttered a cry, and the goddesses flocked around her, all the daughters of Nereus that were in the depths of the sea. There were Glauke and Thaleia and Kymodoke, Nesaia and Speio and Thoë and ox-eyed Halie and Kymothoë and Aktaia and Limnoreia and Melite and Iaira and Amphithoë and Agauë and Doto and Proto and Pherousa and Dynamene and Dexamene and Amphinome and Kallianeira, Doris and Panope and noble Galateia and Nemertes and Apseudes and Kallianassa; and there were Klymene and Ianeira and Ianassa and Maira and Oreithyia and fair-haired Amatheia, and other Nereids that were in the depths of the sea. The bright cave was filled with them, and they all beat on their breasts together, and Thetis led the lament: "Listen, sister Nereids, so that you all hear and know well what sorrows are in my heart. Oh unhappy me, who bore to my sorrow the noblest of men! For after I had born a son noble and strong, the greatest of heroes, and he shot up like a young branch, then when I had reared him as a plant in a very fruitful field I sent him in curved ships to Ilios to fight against the men of Troy; but I will never again welcome him back to his home, to the house of Peleus. And while he still lives in my sight and sees the light of the sun, he sorrows, and I cannot help him at all even if I go to him. But I will go, so that I may see my dear child, and learn what sorrow has come to him though he holds back from the war."

So she spoke and left the cave; and the nymphs went with her, weeping, and around them the surge of the sea was parted. And when they came to deep-soiled Troy-land they went up onto the shore in order, where the ships of the Myrmidons were drawn up thickly around swift Achilles. And as he groaned heavily his lady mother stood beside him and with a shrill cry clasped the head of her child and spoke to him winged words of mourning: “My child, why do you weep? What sorrow has come to your heart? Tell, and do not hide it. One thing at least has been accomplished by Zeus according to the request you made, lifting up your hands to him—that the sons of the Achaians should all be penned in at the ships, through your absence, and should suffer shameful things.”

Then groaning heavily, swift-footed Achilles spoke to her: “My mother, the Olympian has indeed accomplished that prayer for me. But what delight do I have in that when my dear companion is dead, Patroklos whom I honored above all my companions as though he were my very self? I have lost him, and Hektor, who killed him, has stripped from him the great and glorious armor, a wonder to behold, which the gods gave to Peleus as a splendid gift on the day when they laid you in the bed of a mortal man. If only you had remained among the deathless daughters of the sea, and Peleus had married a mortal wife! But now, to increase a thousandfold the sorrow in your heart for a dead son, you will never welcome him back home, since my soul urges me not to live any longer and remain among men, unless Hektor is killed by my spear and yields his life and pays for his slaughter of Patroklos, Menoitios son.”

Then Thetis answered him, shedding tears: “You will not live long, then, I think, my child, by what you say, for your death is fated to come immediately after Hektor’s.”

Then mightily moved, swift-footed Achilles spoke to her: “Then may I die immediately, since I could not help my companion at his death. He has fallen far from his country and lacked my help in his terrible need. Now therefore, since I do not go back to my beloved native land, nor have I been any help at all to Patroklos nor to all my other companions who have been slain by noble Hektor, but

I sit beside my ships a useless burden on the earth, I who in war am such as no other of the Achaians is, though in council others are better—may strife perish utterly among gods and men, and bitterness that stirs even a wise man to be angry and grows like smoke in the breasts of men to be far sweeter than trickling honey, just as I have been angry against Agamemnon, king of men. But we will set aside things that have been, in spite of all our pain, curbing the heart in our breast from necessity. Now I will go forth that I may find Hektor, the destroyer of him that I loved; then I will accept my death whenever Zeus and the other immortal gods choose to bring it about. For not even the mighty Herakles escaped death, though he was most dear to the king, the son of Kronos, but Fate and Hera's cruel wrath overcame him. So I too will lie low, if my fate has been made like his, when I am dead. But now let me win great glory, let me set some Trojan woman, some deep-bosomed daughter of Dardanos, wiping with both hands the tears on her tender cheeks and wailing bitterly; let them know that I have come back, though I stayed long from the war. Do not hold me back from the battle out of love, for you will not persuade me."

Then Thetis, the silver-footed goddess, answered him, saying: "Indeed, my child, there is no blame in warding off sheer destruction from your companions in their distress. But your beautiful shining armor of bronze is now held by the Trojans. Hektor of the shining helmet bears it on his shoulders in triumph; yet I think he will not glory in it for long, for death is very close to him. But do not go down into the tumult of war yet, until you see me with your eyes coming here. In the morning I will return, at the rising of the sun, bringing glorious armor from the King Hephaistos."

So she spoke and turned to go from her son, and as she turned she spoke among her sisters of the sea: "Go down now into the wide ways of the deep to visit the Ancient One of the Sea and our father's house and tell him everything. I am going to high Olympos to Hephaistos of great skill, if perhaps he will give noble armor, shining gloriously, to my son."

So she spoke, and they immediately went down beneath the surge of the sea. And the silver-footed goddess Thetis went on to Olympus so that she might bring noble armor to her son.

So her feet carried her to Olympus. But the Achaians were fleeing before man-slaying Hektor with terrible cries, till they came to the ships and to the Hellespont. And the well-greaved Achaians could not drag the corpse of Patroklos, Achilles' companion, out from the spears, for the soldiers and the horses of Troy and Hektor, son of Priam, again overwhelmed him in power like a blaze of fire. Three times glorious Hektor seized him from behind by the feet, resolved to drag him away, and loudly called upon the men of Troy. Three times the Aiantes, clothed with violent power, beat him back from the dead man; but in spite of it, he would now charge into the throng, trusting in his might, and now stand and shout loudly, but he gave no ground at all. Just as when shepherds in the field are unable to chase a fiery lion in his fierce hunger away from a carcass, in the same way the two warrior Aiantes were unable to scare Hektor, son of Priam, from the dead man. And now he would have won the body and gained inexpressible glory, if swift wind-footed Iris had not come speeding from Olympus with a message to the son of Peleus to prepare himself, unknown to Zeus and the other gods, for Hera sent her. And she stood close and spoke winged words to him: "Rouse yourself, son of Peleus, most fearsome of all men! Help Patroklos, for whose body there is a terrible battle in front of the ships. There they kill each other, these guarding the dead corpse, while the men of Troy are desperate to drag him into windy Ilios, and most of all noble Hektor is eager to drag him, and his heart urges him to impale the head on the stakes of the wall when he has cut it from the tender neck. But arise, do not keep lying here like this! Let shame enter your heart if Patroklos becomes the sport of the dogs of Troy. The shame will be yours if he goes down mangled among the dead."

Then swift-footed noble Achilles answered her: "Goddess Iris, what god sent you as a messenger to me?"

And wind-footed swift Iris spoke to him again: "It was Hera that sent me, the prudent wife of Zeus, but the high-throned son of

Kronos does not know, nor do any other of the immortals who have their dwelling-place on snowy Olympos.”

And Achilleus, fleet of foot, answered her and said: “And how can I go into the battle? The Trojans have my armor; and my dear mother commanded me to refrain from preparing myself until with my own eyes I see her coming back, for she promised to bring glorious armor from Hephaistos. I do not know of any other man whose armor I could put on, except for the shield of Aias, Telamon’s son. But I think that he himself is in the very front of the tumult, dealing out death with his spear around dead Patroklos.”

Then again wind-footed swift Iris spoke to him: “We are also well aware that your armor is kept from you. But go out to the trench just as you are and show yourself to the men of Troy, and perhaps they will shrink back and refrain from battle, and the warlike sons of the Achaians can catch their breath amid their struggle, for there is little time to breathe in the thick of battle.”

Achilleus Drives off the Trojans

So spoke swift-footed Iris and went her way. But Achilleus, dear to Zeus, arose, and Athene threw her tasseled aegis around his strong shoulders, and around his head the bright goddess set a crown of a golden cloud, and from it she kindled a blazing flame. Just as when smoke rises from a city into the upper air from an island far off that enemies besiege, while the others fight all day from their city in hateful war, but when the sun goes down the beacon fires blaze out in a line, and the glare shoots up high aloft for those who live nearby to see, if perhaps they may come with ships to help in need; in the same way that blaze soared up from the head of Achilleus toward the heavens. And he went and stood beyond the wall beside the moat, but did not mingle with the Achaians, for he remembered the wise command of his mother. There he stood and shouted hugely, and in the distance Pallas Athene raised her voice, and unspeakable ter-

ror spread among the men of Troy. Clear as the voice of a trumpet when it sounds because of murderous enemies who besiege a city, in the same way the voice of the grandson of Aiakos rang out clearly. And when they heard the brazen voice of the grandson of Aiakos, the souls of all of them were terrified, and the horses, with noble manes, were eager to turn the chariots back, for they felt terror in their hearts. And the charioteers were astounded when they saw the unwearying fire blaze fiercely on the head of the great-hearted son of Peleus, for it was the bright-eyed goddess Athene who made it blaze. Three times from over the trench, noble Achilles shouted powerfully, and three times the men of Troy and their allies were confounded. Indeed, twelve of their best men died then and there under their own chariot wheels and spears.

But with joy the Achaians pulled Patroklos out from the spears and laid him on a litter, and his dear companions stood around lamenting him; and swift-footed Achilles followed them, shedding hot tears, for he saw his true companion lying on the pallet, mangled by the sharp bronze. He had sent him out with chariot and horses into the battle, but he would never again welcome him home.

Then Hera, the ox-eyed queen, sent the untiring Sun to go down, unwilling, into the streams of Ocean. So the Sun set, and the noble Achaians ceased from the stress of battle and the perilous war.

Now the men of Troy on their side, when they had come back out of the violent fray, unyoked their swift horses from the chariots and gathered themselves in assembly before they thought about supper. They stood on their feet in the assembly, and no one was willing to sit, for fear had fallen upon them all because Achilles had come out after withholding so long from the cruel battle. Then wise Poulydamas, son of Panthoös, began to speak among them, for he alone saw before and after. He was a companion of Hektor, and both were born in the same night, but the one was far better in speech, the other with the spear. So with goodwill toward them he addressed them and spoke: “Consider carefully, my friends; for my part I would urge you now to go up to the city, not wait for bright morning on the plain beside the ships, for we are very far from the walls. As long as this

man was angry with noble Agamemnon, the Achaians were easier to fight against; I too rejoiced when I camped near their swift ships, trusting that we would seize the curved ships for a prey. But now am I very afraid of the swift son of Peleus; his heart is so exceedingly fierce, he will not choose to stay in the plain where Trojans and Achaians both in the middle share the spirit of war, but the prize he does battle for now will be our city and our wives. Let us go up to our stronghold; listen to me, for it must be this way. Now divine night has stopped the swift son of Peleus, but if he finds us remaining here tomorrow, fully armored for the attack, we will each know for certain that it is he, for whoever flees will be glad to get into sacred Ilios, but dogs and vultures will devour many of the men of Troy—may I never hear of that. But if, though reluctantly, we heed my words, we will still be strong in our council-chambers tonight, and the city will be guarded by her towers and high gates and tall well-polished doors that shut tightly. But at dawn we will take our stand in full armor along the towers. He will not do well if he comes from his ships to fight with us to gain the wall. He will go back to his ships when he has given his strong-necked horses their fill of having rushed everywhere beneath the city. But he will never have the strength to force his way into it, nor ever to lay it waste; he will be devoured by swift dogs before that.”

Then with a stern gaze, Hektor of the shining helmet spoke to him: “Poulydamas, your speaking no longer pleases me, since you urge us to go back and be penned up inside the town. Have you not already had your fill of being trapped behind the towers? In times past all mortal men could talk about this city of Priam because of all the gold and bronze in it, but now its noble treasures have gone from its dwellings and much treasure is sold away to Phrygia and pleasant Maonia, since mighty Zeus dealt cruelly with us. But now when the son of crooked-counseling Kronos has granted me to win glory at the ships and to pen the Achaians beside the sea, stop giving such counsels among the people, foolish man. No man of Troy will listen to you; I will not allow it. But let us all be persuaded to do as I say. Take supper now in your ranks throughout the host and keep good

watch, with each sentinel in his place. And whoever of the Trojans is worried beyond measure about his goods, let him gather them together and give them to the people to consume in common, for it is better that they enjoy them than the Achaians. Then at dawn, in full armor at the hollow ships we will stir up fierce war. Even if noble Achilles has truly risen beside the ships, he will not fare well, if that is what he desires. I at least will not flee from him out of the din of war, but I will stand facing him fully, to see whether he, or I, will win great glory. The war-god is impartial and also kills the one who would kill.”

So Hektor spoke, and the men of Troy applauded with foolish hearts, for Pallas Athene robbed them of their wits. And they assented to the unsound advice of Hektor, but no one listened to Poulydamas, who counseled well. Then they took their supper throughout the host; but the Achaians mourned all night for Patroklos. And first of them all in the loud lamentation was the son of Peleus, laying his man-slaying hands on the breast of his companion and moaning terribly, just as a deep-bearded lion whose young some stag-hunter has snatched away out of a deep wood; and the lion, coming later, grieves, and through many hollows he ranges on the track of the footsteps of the man, if perhaps he might find him anywhere, for a most bitter anger seizes him; in this way Achilles, moaning heavily, spoke among the Myrmidons: “Ah me, my words were empty that I uttered on that day when I comforted the hero Menoitios in his halls and said that I would bring his son back in glory to Opous from the sack of Ilios with the share of spoil that would be his. Zeus does not fulfill all the purposes of men for them. It is destined that both of us will redden the same earth with our blood here in Troy-land, for the old King Peleus will not welcome me back home within his halls either, nor my mother, Thetis, but right here the earth will keep hold of me. But now, Patroklos, since I will follow you under the earth, I will not hold your funeral till I have brought here the armor and the head of Hektor, your proud killer, and I will cut the throats of twelve noble sons of the men of Troy in front of your pyre, because of my anger that you have been killed. Till then you will lie beside

the beaked ships as you are, and around you deep-bosomed women, Trojan and Dardanian, will mourn you, weeping night and day, the women we struggled to win by our strength and our long spears when we sacked rich cities of mortal men.”

So spoke noble Achilles and commanded his companions to set a great tripod on the fire, so that they could wash the bloody gore from Patroklos as soon as possible. So they set a tripod for washing on the burning fire and poured water into it and took wood and kindled it beneath; and the fire surrounded the belly of the tripod, and the water grew hot. And when the water boiled in the bright bronze, then they washed him and anointed him with olive oil and filled his wounds with fresh ointment and laid him on a bier and covered him with soft cloth from head to foot, and over that they laid a white robe. Then all night around swift-footed Achilles the Myrmidons lamented and mourned for Patroklos.

The Shield of Achilles

Meanwhile, Zeus spoke to Hera, his sister and wife: “You have accomplished this, Hera, ox-eyed queen; you have stirred up swift-footed Achilles. The flowing-haired Achaians must truly be your own offspring.”

Then Hera, the ox-eyed queen, answered him: “Most dread son of Kronos, what is this word you have said? I think that even a man will do what he can for another man, though he is mortal and does not have the wisdom that we do. How then could I, who consider myself the greatest of goddesses both by birth and because I am called your wife—and you are king among all immortals—how could I not devise evil in my anger against the men of Troy?”

So they argued this way with one another. But Thetis of the silver feet came to the house of Hephaistos, imperishable, starlike, bright among the dwellings of immortals, a house of bronze, made by the crooked-footed god himself. She found him sweating in labor

and busy at his bellows, for he was forging twenty tripods to stand around the walls of his well-founded hall, and beneath the base of each one he had set golden wheels, so that, moving themselves, they might enter the assembly of the gods and return again to his house, a marvelous thing to see. They were nearly finished, only the handle loops were not yet attached; he was making these ready and welding chains. While he was working at these with careful attention, Thetis, goddess of the silver feet, came near. And lovely Charis of the shining crown, whom the renowned lame god had married, came forward and saw her. And she clasped her hand in hers and spoke and called her by her name: “Long-robed Thetis, honored and beloved as you are, why have you come to our house? You have not been a frequent guest before this. But come with me so that I may set godly hospitality before you.”

So spoke the bright goddess and led her on. She set her on a silver-studded throne, noble, of clever craftsmanship, and a footstool was beneath her feet; and she called to Hephaistos, the famed artisan, and said to him: “Hephaistos, come here, Thetis has need of you.”

And the renowned lame god answered her: “Truly she who is in our house is an awesome and honored goddess in my sight, since she delivered me when pain overwhelmed me from my great fall through the evil intentions of my shameless mother who wanted to get rid of me because I was lame. Then I would have suffered agony of heart if Eurynome and Thetis had not taken me into their bosom—Eurynome, the daughter of Ocean which always flows back upon himself. For nine years I made clever works of bronze—brooches and spiral arm-bands and cups and necklaces, in the hollow cave with them, while around me the stream of Okeanos with murmuring foam flowed forever. And no one of gods or of mortal men knew of it, only Thetis and Eurynome who rescued me. And now Thetis comes to our house; therefore it is only right for me to repay lovely-haired Thetis in any way I can for saving my life. But set gracious entertainment beside her, while I put away my bellows and all my gear.”

He spoke and limping he rose from the anvil, a huge bulk, but under him his slender legs moved nimbly. He set the bellows away

from the fire and gathered all his gear with which he worked into a silver chest, and with a sponge he wiped his face and hands and sturdy neck and shaggy breast and put on his tunic and took a stout staff and went limping out; but there were handmaidens made of gold that moved to help their lord, which resembled living young women. There is understanding in their hearts, they have voices and strength, and they have the skill of the immortal gods. These moved beneath their lord, and haltingly he got near to where Thetis was and seated himself on a bright seat and clasped her hand in his and spoke and called her by name: “Long-robed Thetis, honored and beloved, why have you come to our house? You have not been a frequent guest before this. Say what is in your heart; my soul is eager to accomplish it if I can, and if it is destined to be.”

Then Thetis answered him, shedding tears: “Hephaistos, have there been any goddesses on Olympus that have endured as many terrible sorrows at heart as the sorrows that Zeus, son of Kronos, has put upon me beyond all others? He chose me from among the sisters of the sea to enslave me to a man, Peleus the son of Aiakos, and I endured wedlock with a man against my will. Now he lies in his halls worn out with sorrowful age, but other griefs are mine. He gave me a son to bear and nourish, the greatest of heroes, and he shot up like a young branch. Like a plant in a most fruitful field I reared him and sent him away on beaked ships to Ilios to fight against the men of Troy, but I will never again welcome him back to his home within the house of Peleus. And while he still lives in my sight and sees the light of the sun, he sorrows, and I cannot help him at all, though I go to him. The girl whom the sons of the Achaians chose out to be his prize, the King Agamemnon has taken back out of his hands. In grief for her he wore out his heart while the men of Troy were driving the Achaians against their ships and did not allow them to come away from them. And the elders of the Argives begged him and offered many noble gifts. Then though he himself refused to fend off destruction from them, he put his armor on Patroklos and sent him into the war and many people with him. All day they fought around the Skaian gates and that same day would have sacked the town, but

when Menoitios' valiant son had caused great damage, Apollo killed him in the very battlefield and gave glory to Hektor. Therefore now I am coming to you as a suppliant at your knees, if perhaps you would be willing to give my short-lived son a shield and helmet and noble greaves fitted with ankle-pieces and breastplate. For the armor that he had before, his faithful companion lost when he fell beneath the men of Troy, and my son lies on the earth with anguish in his soul."

Then the lame god of great renown answered her: "Be of good courage, do not let these things trouble your heart. If only I could hide him far from sorrowful death, when dreaded fate comes upon him, as surely as noble armor will be ready for him, which all men afterward, whoever sees it, will be astonished at."

So saying, he left her there and went to his bellows and aimed them at the fire and commanded them to work. And the bellows, twenty in all, blew on the crucibles, sending careful blasts on every side, now to help his labor and now for whatever Hephaistos wished, and the work went on. And he threw bronze that does not wear out into the fire, and tin and precious gold and silver, and next he set a great anvil on an anvil stand and took in his hand a sturdy hammer and in the other he took the tongs.

First he fashioned a shield, great and strong, decorating it all over, and set on it a shining rim, triple, bright-flashing, and from it a silver sword-belt. The shield itself was made of five folds, and on it he created much clever work from his wise heart. On it he crafted the earth and the heavens and the sea and the unwearying sun and the moon waxing full and every one of the signs with which the heavens are crowned—the Pleiades and Hyades and Orion's might and the Bear that men also call the Wagon that turns in its place and watches Orion and alone does not bathe in the waters of Okeanos.

Also he fashioned on it two lovely cities of mortal men. In one there were espousals and marriage feasts, and beneath the blaze of torches they were leading the brides from their chambers through the city, and the bridal song rose loud. And young men were whirling in the dance, and among them flutes and lyres sounded; and the women, each one standing at her door, were marveling. And there were

people gathered in the assembly place, for a strife had risen between two men over the blood-price of a slain man. One claimed he would pay full atonement, explaining it to the people, but the other refused and would take nothing, and both were eager to receive resolution by a judge. And the people were cheering for both, as they took part on either side. And heralds kept order among the people, while the elders were sitting on polished stones in the sacred circle and holding staves from the loud-voiced heralds in their hands. Then they rose up before the people and each in turn gave his judgment. And in the midst lay two talents of gold, to be given to the one who should argue before them most justly.

But around the other city there were two armies in glittering armor, ready for war. And two plans were favored among them, either to sack the town or to share with the townspeople everything the fair city held in it. But the besieged were not yet yielding, but preparing themselves for an ambush. Their beloved wives and little children stood on the wall to guard it, and the old men with them, but the rest went out, and their leaders were Ares and Pallas Athene, both worked in gold, and the robes they wore were golden. They were noble and gigantic in their armor, like gods, visible from far, and the people at their feet were smaller. And when they came where it seemed good to them to ambush, in a river bed where there was a common watering-place for herds, there they settled, armored in glittering bronze. And they posted two scouts far off to spy the coming of flocks and of oxen with crooked horns. And soon the cattle came and two herdsmen with them, playing on pipes, who had no thought at all of treachery. Then when the others saw these, they ran at them and quickly cut off the herds of oxen and fair flocks of white sheep and killed the shepherds as well. But the besiegers, as they sat in council and heard the great din among the oxen, mounted immediately behind their high-stepping horses and came up swiftly. Then they arranged their battle and fought beside the riverbanks and smote one another with bronze-shod spears. And Strife and Tumult mingled among them and cruel Death, grasping one man alive freshly wounded, another unhurt, and dragging another dead man

through the melee by the feet; and the garment on her shoulders was red with the blood of men. Like living mortals they hurled together and fought, and each hauled away the corpses of the other's slain.

Furthermore he set in the shield a soft, freshly-ploughed field with rich tilled soil and wide, ploughed three times; and many ploughers in it drove their yoked animals back and forth as they went around. Whenever they came to the boundary of the field and turned, then a man would come to each one and put into his hands a goblet of sweet wine, while others would be turning back along the furrows, eager to reach the boundary of the deeply-tilled soil. And the field grew black behind and seemed as if it really were being ploughed, though it was made of gold, and this was the great wonder of the workmanship.

Furthermore he set on it the domain of a king, where laborers were reaping with sharp sickles in their hands. Some armfuls were falling to the earth in rows along the swathe, while the sheaf-binders were binding others in twisted bands of straw. Three sheaf-binders stood over them, while behind boys, who were gathering grain and carrying it in their arms, gave it constantly to the binders; and among them the king was standing at the swathe in silence with his staff, rejoicing in his heart. And a little ways off servants were preparing a feast beneath an oak and butchering a great ox they had sacrificed, while the women were scattering white barley to be a supper for the workers.

Also he set on it a vineyard teeming heavily with clusters, worked beautifully in gold; the grapes were black, but the vines hung everywhere on silver poles. And around it he ran a ditch of deep blue and around that a fence of tin; and one single pathway led to it, where the vintners could go when they gathered the vintage. And girls and youths in childish glee carried the sweet fruit in woven baskets. And in the midst of them a boy made sweet music on a clear-voiced lyre, and he sang along with it a sweet song for Linos¹ with a delicate voice, while the rest kept time with their feet moving together with the music and song.

1 "Song for Linos"—an ancient Near Eastern dirge, perhaps also a harvest song.

Also he worked onto it a herd of oxen with upright horns, and the oxen were fashioned of gold and tin, and with lowing they hurried from the sheds to the pasture beside a murmuring river, beside the waving reeds. And herdsmen of gold were following with the oxen, four of them, and nine swift-footed dogs came after them. But two terrible lions had seized a loud-roaring bull among the leading oxen and he bellowed mightily as they pulled at him, and the dogs and the young men sped after him. The lions, rending the great bull's hide, were devouring his vitals and his black blood while the herdsmen vainly urged on their swift dogs to attack, for they shrank from biting the lions but stood close by and barked and swerved away.

Also the glorious lame god worked onto it a pasture in a beautiful valley, a great pasture of white sheep, and a farmstead and roofed huts and sheepfolds. And the glorious lame god devised a dancing-floor like that which Daidalos once made for Ariadne of the lovely hair in wide Knosos. There were young men and girls wooed with costly gifts, all dancing, their hands upon one another's wrists. The girls wore fine linen, and the youths wore well-woven tunics faintly glistening with oil. The maidens had lovely wreaths, and the youths wore daggers of gold hanging from silver belts. And now would they run lightly around with deft feet, just as when a potter sitting by his wheel that fits between his hands tests whether it will run, and now again they would run in lines to meet each other. And a great company stood around the lovely dance, full of joy, and among them a divine minstrel was making music on his lyre, and through the midst of them, leading the measure, two tumblers whirled.

Also he set on it the great might of the River of Okeanos around the outermost rim of the cleverly fashioned shield.

Now when he had created the great and strong shield, then he worked a breastplate brighter than a flame of fire, and he crafted a massive helmet to fit his forehead, noble and engraved, and set on it a crest of gold, and he fashioned greaves of worked tin.

So when the renowned lame god had finished all the armor, he took it and laid it before the mother of Achilleus. Then like a falcon she sprang down from snowy Olympos, carrying the shining armor from Hephaistos.

Book XIX: Achilleus Returns



Achilleus on a Chariot (from the doors of the Achilleion Museum)

Reconciliation of the Quarrel

Now saffron-robed Dawn arose from the streams of Okeanos to bring light to gods and men, and Thetis came to the ships, bearing his gift from the god. She found her dear son fallen by Patroklos and lamenting loudly, and around him many of his companions mourned. And the bright goddess stood beside him in their midst and clasped his hand in hers and spoke and called him by name: “My child, we must let the dead man be, in spite of all our pain, for he was brought down by the will of the gods from the beginning. But you must take from Hephaistos the glorious armor, splendid beyond telling, such as no man has ever before worn on his shoulders.”

So the goddess spoke and laid the armor in front of Achilleus, and it rang out in all its glory. And awe fell on all the Myrmidons, and no one dared to gaze on it, for they were awe-struck. But when Achilleus looked on it, then fury came over him all the more, and his eyes blazed terribly like a flame beneath their lids; he was glad as he held in his hands that splendid gift of a god. But when he had satisfied his soul in gazing on the glory of the armor, immediately he

spoke winged words to his mother: “My mother, the armor the god has given is what the work of immortals should be, and no mortal man should have made them. Now I will arm myself in them, but I fear that in the meantime flies will light on the gaping wounds of Menoitios’ valiant son and worms will breed and defile his corpse, for the life is gone from him, and his flesh will rot.”

Then Thetis, goddess of the silver feet, answered him: “Son, have no worry in your mind about this. I will ward off from him the cruel swarms of flies which prey on men killed in battle; even if he were to lie here for a year, his flesh will remain sound, or even better than now. So call the Achaian warriors to the assembly place and renounce your wrath against Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, and then arm swiftly for battle and put on your strength.”

So saying, she filled him with great might, while she shed on Patroklos ambrosia and red nectar through his nostrils, so that his flesh would constantly remain the same.

But noble Achilles went down the beach of the sea, crying his terrible war-cry, and roused the Achaian warriors. And those who before were used to remaining in the circle of the ships, who were helmsmen and steered the ships, or were stewards and dealt out the food, even all these came to the place of assembly, because Achilles had come out after staying away for so long from the sorrowful war. Two of Ares’ company came, limping, Tydeus’ son, staunch in battle, and noble Odysseus, each leaning on his spear, for their wounds were still terrible, and they went and sat down in the very front of the assembly. And last came Agamemnon, king of men, with his wound on him, for in the stress of battle Koön, Antenor’ son, had wounded him too with his bronze-tipped spear. But when all the Achaians were gathered, then swift-footed Achilles rose up and spoke in their midst: “Son of Atreus, was this at all the better way for you and me, when with grief in our hearts we grew fierce in soul-devouring anger for the sake of a girl? If only Artemis had slain her with her arrow at the ships on the day when I took her for myself, when I had sacked Lyrnessos; then so many Achaians would not have bitten the wide earth beneath their enemies’ hands because of my great fury. It has

been well for Hektor and the Trojans, but the Achaians I think will long remember the anger that was between you and me. But we will let the past go, in spite of all our pain, and curb by force the hatred in our hearts. I will now restrain my anger; it is not seemly for me to be angry forever. Rouse the flowing-haired Achaians swiftly to battle, so that I can go out against the men of Troy and test them to see whether they are eager to remain by the ships. I think that some among them will be glad to rest their knees when they had fled out of the ferocity of the battle and from before our spears.”

He spoke, and the strong-armored Achaians rejoiced that the great-hearted son of Peleus had renounced his wrath. Then Agamemnon, king of men, spoke among them from the place where he sat, not rising to stand up in their midst: “O Danaan friends and heroes, men of Ares’ company, it is well to listen to the one who stands to speak, nor is it wise to break in on his words; that would be hard even for a skilled man. For in the uproar of many men how could one listen, much less speak? Even the clearest-voiced speech is muffled. To the son of Peleus I will declare myself, but you other Argives pay attention and each of you listen to my words carefully. The Achaians have often said this to me and rebuked me; but I am not the cause, but rather it is Zeus and Destiny and Erinys, who walks in darkness, who put into my soul fierce madness on the day when in the assembly I, yes I, robbed Achilles of his reward. What could I do? It is God who accomplishes all things. The eldest daughter of Zeus is Ate, an evil power who deludes everyone. Her feet are delicate, for she does not walk on the earth but above the heads of men, making them stray. And she entangles this one or that one. Even Zeus was blinded once, he who they say is greatest among gods and men; yet Hera deceived even him with female wiles, that day when Alkmene was to give birth to the strength of Herakles in fair-crowned Thebes. For he proclaimed solemnly among all the gods, ‘Hear me, all of you gods and goddesses, while I declare the intentions of my soul within my heart. This day Eileithyia, the help of women in labor, will bring into the light a man sprung from my blood who will be lord over all who dwell around him.’ And Queen Hera spoke to him cleverly, ‘You

will be a cheat and will not fulfill your word. Now, Olympian, swear to me a firm oath that truly that man who this day will fall between a woman's feet, he out of all those sprung from your blood, will be lord over all who dwell around him.' So she spoke, and Zeus in no way recognized her subtlety, but swore a mighty oath, and because of this he was terribly deceived. For Hera flew from Olympos' peak, and came swiftly to Achaian Argos, where she knew lived the noble wife of Sthenelos son of Perseus. She also was carrying a child and was in her seventh month. Hera brought her son into the light, though his number of months was not fulfilled, but she stopped Alkmene's labor and kept the Eileithyiai from helping her. Then she herself brought the news and spoke to Kronos' son, Zeus, 'Father Zeus of the bright lightning, I will speak a word for you to hear. Today a man of valor is born who will rule over the Argives—Eurystheus, son of Sthenelos, the son of Perseus, of your blood. It is proper that he be lord over the Argives.' She spoke, but agony struck at the depths of his soul, and immediately he seized Ate by her bright-haired head in the anger of his soul, and swore a mighty oath that she who blinds everyone equally should never again come to Olympos and the starry heaven. He spoke, and whirling her with his hand he flung her from the starry heaven, and swiftly she fell down among the works of men. And he always groaned against her when he saw his beloved son suffering cruelly under the commands of Eurystheus. In the same way I too, when great Hektor of the shining helmet was slaughtering Argives at the sterns of our ships, could not forget Ate, who deluded me at the beginning. But since I was deceived this way and Zeus robbed me of my wits, I am eager to make amends and pay back many times over for the wrong. Only rise to the battle and rouse the rest of the host. I am ready to offer all those gifts that noble Odysseus promised yesterday in your shelter. So, if you will, stay back from the battle for a little while, though you are eager, and attendants will bring the gifts from my ship and carry them to you, so that you can make sure that what I give is enough for you."

Then swift-footed Achilleus answered him: "Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, it is for you to choose to give or

withhold the gifts, however it seems best. But now let us think of battle with all speed; this is not the time to dally here with subtleties, for there is a great work still not done. Achilles must be seen in the frontlines of the battle once more, laying waste with his bronze spear the battalions of the men of Troy. Let each of you think on this as he fights with his foe.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him and said: “God-like Achilles, in spite of all your valor, do not yet lead the sons of the Achaians against Ilios without food to fight the men of Troy, since the battle will not be short once the ranks of men meet and God shall breathe courage into both. But urge the Achaians to taste food and wine at the fast ships; for that is where courage and might come from. For no man fasting from food will be able to fight with the foe all day till the sun goes down; for though his spirit may be eager for battle yet his limbs grow weary before he knows it, and thirst and hunger attack him, and his knees give out as he goes. But the man who has his fill of food and wine and fights all day against the enemy, his heart will be of good cheer within him, and his limbs will not tire before all the fighting stops. So come, dismiss the people and urge them to prepare their meal. And let Agamemnon, king of men, bring out the gifts into the middle of the assembly, so that all the Achaians may see them with their eyes and so that you will be glad at heart. And let him swear an oath to you, standing in the midst of the Argives, that he has never gone into the girl’s bed or lain with her, O prince, as is the custom of man with woman; and let your own spirit be peaceable in your breast. Then let him make for you a rich feast of reconciliation in his shelter, so that you lack nothing that is rightfully yours. And you, son of Atreus, must be more just toward others after this; for it is no shame for a man who is a king to make amends if he has been the first to act violently.”

Then Agamemnon, king of men, spoke to him: “Son of Laertes, I rejoice to hear your words, for you have gone over everything well. I am willing to swear the oath; indeed my heart bids me to do it, and I will not break it before God. Let Achilles remain for awhile though he is eager for battle, and all you others remain together until the

gifts come from my shelter and we make a true oath with a sacrifice. But I command and urge you yourself to choose young men, princes of the Achaian people, and bring my gifts from my ship, all that we promised yesterday to Achilles, and bring with you the women. And let Talthybios speedily make ready for me a boar in the midst of the wide Achaian army, to sacrifice to Zeus and to the Sun.”

And swift-footed Achilles spoke to him in answer: “Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, at some other time it would be well for you to be busied this way, when perhaps there would be a pause in the war, and the spirit within my breast would be less fierce. But now they lie mangled on the field—those whom Hector, son of Priam, killed when Zeus gave him glory—and you call men to their food. For my part I would urge the sons of the Achaians to fight now unfed and fasting and later with the setting sun prepare a mighty meal, when we have avenged the shame. Till then no food or drink shall go down my throat at least, since my companion is dead. He is lying in my hut, mangled by the sharp spear, with his feet toward the door, and around him our companions mourn. Therefore there is no thought of those other matters in my heart, but of slaying and blood and grievous moans of men.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him: “O Achilles, Peleus’ son, mightiest of Achaians by far, you are more than a little better and mightier than I am with the spear, but in counsel I may surpass you greatly, since I was born first and know more things; therefore let your heart be patient to listen to my speech. Men soon have enough of battle when the sword scatters most straw while the harvest is thinnest, as Zeus, who is the Decider of the wars of men, inclines his scales. But the Achaians cannot fast to mourn a corpse, for every day so many fall thickly; when would there ever be rest from toil? No, it is best to bury him who is dead, hardening our hearts, when we have wept him for a day, but those who are left alive from bitter war must think about food and drink, so that we may fight still more relentlessly against our foes, clad in hard bronze. Then let none of the people hold back awaiting some other summons. This is the summons, and it will be evil for whoever is left behind at the Argive

ships; but all together as one we will rouse up the fury of war against the horse-taming Trojans.”

He spoke and took with him the sons of noble Nestor and Meges, son of Phyleus, and Thoas and Meriones and Lykomedes, son of Kreion, and Melanippos. And they went on their way to the shelter of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son. As soon as the word was spoken the deed was done. They carried seven tripods from the hut, as he promised him, and twenty bright cauldrons and twelve horses, and soon they led out seven women skilled in noble arts and the eighth was lovely-faced Briseis. Then Odysseus, having weighed ten talents of gold in all, led the way, and with him young men of the Achaians carried the gifts. They set these in the midst of the place of assembly, and Agamemnon rose up, and alongside that shepherd of the host stood Talthybios, whose voice was like a god’s, and he held a boar between his hands. And the son of Atreus, his hands drawing his knife which always hung beside the mighty scabbard of his sword, cut off the first hairs from the boar and, lifting up his hands, he prayed to Zeus, and all the Argives sat silent in their places, carefully listening to the king. And he prayed aloud, looking up to the wide heaven: “Let Zeus, highest and best of gods, be witness before all, and let Earth and Sun and the Furies, who under the earth take vengeance upon men whoever swears falsely, that I have never laid hand on the girl Briseis, neither to lie with her nor in any other way, but she has dwelt untouched within my shelters. And if anything that I swear be false, may the gods multiply to me all the sorrows that they send on him who sins against them in his oath.”

He spoke and cut the boar’s throat with the pitiless knife. And Talthybios whirled the body and threw it into the great wash of the grey sea, to be the food of fishes; but Achilles rose up and spoke in the midst of the Argive warriors: “Father Zeus, indeed you deal out terrible madness to men. Never could the son of Atreus have stirred the soul within my breast, nor led off the damsel completely against my will, if Zeus had not willed that death should come upon many of the Achaians. But now go to your meals, that we may go to battle afterward.”

So he spoke and quickly dismissed the assembly. The rest were scattered, each to his own ship, but the great-hearted Myrmidons took up the gifts and carried them to the ship of godlike Achilles. And they laid them in the shelters and settled the women there, and noble attendants drove the horses into the herds.

Rites and Laments

But when Briseis, who was like golden Aphrodite, saw Patroklos mangled by the sharp spear, she fell on him and lamented piercingly and with her hand tore at her breast and tender neck and beautiful face. And that woman like the goddesses spoke in her weeping: “Patroklos, dearest to my unlucky heart, I left you alive when I left this shelter, but now, prince of the people, I have come back to find you dead; evil always follows evil in my fate. I saw my husband, to whom my father and lady mother gave me, mangled with the sharp spear in front of our city, and my three beloved brothers whom my own mother bore, who all met their day of doom. But when swift Achilles slew my husband and devastated godlike Mynes’ city, you urged me not to weep and said that you wouldst make me godlike Achilles’ wedded wife, and that you would take me in your ships to Phthia and make for me a marriage feast among the Myrmidons. Therefore I mourn your death with all my soul, for you were always kind.”

So she spoke, weeping, and at that the other women wailed, seemingly for Patroklos, but each for her own sorrow. But the leaders of the Achaians gathered around Achilles, begging him to eat, yet he refused them with a groan: “I beg you, if any kind companion will listen to me, do not urge me to satisfy my heart with food and drink, since terrible grief has come upon me. Till the sun goes down I will refrain and hold out until then.”

He spoke and made the other leaders depart, but the two sons of Atreus stayed, and noble Odysseus and Nestor and Idomeneus and Phoinix, that ancient warrior, soothing him in his great sorrow, but he could in no way be soothed until he had entered the mouth of

bloody war. And remembering him, he sighed very heavily and spoke aloud: “You too, unlucky one, dearest of my friends, would indeed in times past readily set out in our shelter a savory meal when the Achaians were urgent to wage sorrowful war against the horse-taming Trojans. But now you lie mangled, and my heart desires none of the food and drink that stands ready, because of longing for you. I could suffer nothing worse than this, not even if I should hear of my father’s death, who now in Phthia I believe is shedding huge tears for lack of a son so dear—me, who in a foreign land wages war with the men of Troy for the sake of wicked Helen—nor even if it were my beloved son who is raised for me in Skyros (if godlike Neoptolemos is still alive). For up till now my soul within me was sure that I alone would perish far from horse-pasturing Argos, here in the Trojan land, but that you would return to Phthia, so that you might take my child in your swift black ship from Skyros and show him everything—my wealth and servants and high-roofed mighty hall. For I think Peleus must already be dead and gone, or else living a feeble life; he has the sorrow of hateful old age and of waiting constantly for bitter news of me till he hears that I am dead.”

So he spoke weeping, and the elders mourned with him, each thinking of what he had left at home. And when the son of Kronos saw them sorrowing he pitied them and immediately spoke winged words to Athene: “My child, you have utterly abandoned the man your heart loves. Does Achilles no longer have a place in your thoughts? He sits beside the steep-prowed ships mourning his dear companion; the rest have gone to their meal, but he is fasting and unfed. But go, infuse nectar and pleasant ambrosia into his breast, so that no pains of hunger come over him.”

Achilleus Prepares for Battle

So saying, he sent out Athene who already was eager. And like a falcon wide-winged and shrill-voiced, she hurled herself out from

heaven through the upper air. So while the Achaians were arming themselves throughout the camp, she infused nectar and pleasant ambrosia into Achilles' breast, so that terrible hunger would not weaken his knees, and then she returned to the great house of her mighty father. Then the Achaians poured out from the swift ships. Just as when thick snowflakes flutter down from Zeus, frozen beneath the blast of Boreas born in the upper air, in the same way thickly from the ships streamed bright glittering helmets and embossed shields, strong-plated breastplates and ash spears. And their shining went up to heaven, and all the earth around laughed in the flashing of bronze, and there went a great sound beneath the feet of the men, and in the midst of them noble Achilles armored himself. His teeth gnashed together and his eyes blazed like the flame of a fire, for intolerable anguish had entered into his heart. In fury against the men of Troy he put on the gift of the god which Hephaistos had made for him by his art. First on his legs he set the fair greaves fitted with silver ankle-pieces, and next he put on the breastplate about his chest. Then around his shoulders he slung the bronze sword silver-studded; then lastly he took the great and strong shield, and its brightness shone far off like the moon's, or as when over the sea the brightness of a burning fire appears to sailors, and it burns high on the mountains in some lonely farmstead—sailors carried by storm blasts unwillingly over the sea, the home of fishes, far from those they love; so from Achilles' noble and beautifully-decorated shield its brightness shot up toward heaven. And he lifted the stout helmet and set it on his head, and that horsehair-crested helmet shone like a star, and around it waved the plumes of gold that Hephaistos had set thickly around the crest. Then noble Achilles tested himself in his armor to discover whether it fitted him and whether his glorious limbs moved freely, and it became to him like wings and lightly carried the shepherd of the people.

And from its stand he drew his father's spear, heavy and great and strong; none of the other Achaians could wield that spear, but Achilles alone could wield it, the Pelian ash spear that Cheiron gave to his dear father, from a peak of Pelion, to be the death of warriors.

And Automedon and Alkimos moved about to yoke the horses and put on them the noble breast-straps and bits within their jaws, and they stretched the reins behind to the strongly-built chariot. Then Automedon took the bright lash, fitted to his hand, and sprang up behind the horses, and after him Achilles mounted, armed, splendid in his armor like bright Hyperion. And fiercely he called to the horses of his father: “Xanthos and Balios, famed children of Podarge, take care to bring your charioteer safely back to the Danaan people in a different way, when we are done with battle and not leave him as you left Patroklos to lie there dead.”

Then the horse Xanthos of the quick feet answered him from beneath the yoke, and he bowed his head, and all his mane fell from the yoke-cushion beside the yoke and touched the ground, for the white-armed goddess Hera gave him speech: “Indeed for this time, fierce Achilles, we will still carry you safely, but your death-day is close at hand, though we shall not be the cause of it but a mighty god and forceful Fate. For it was not through any sloth or carelessness of ours that the men of Troy stripped the armor from Patroklos’ shoulders, but the best of the gods, whom bright-haired Leto bore, slew him in the forefront of the battle and gave glory to Hektor. We could run with the wind of Zephyr, the swiftest of all winds, they say; nevertheless it is destined for you to be slain in battle by a god and by a man.”

When he had spoken this way the Furies stopped his voice. And terribly troubled, swift-footed Achilles answered him: “Xanthos, why do you prophesy my death? It is in no way proper for you. I well know myself that it is appointed for me to perish here, far from my dear father and mother; nevertheless, I will not stop till I give the Trojans their fill of war.”

He spoke and with a cry among the front ranks reined his swift-footed horses onward.

Book XX: The “Aristeia” of Achilles



The Gods Descending to Battle

The Gods Join the Battle

So the Achaians armed themselves by the beaked ships around you, son of Peleus, hungry for war; and opposite them were the men of Troy, on the high ground of the plain.

But Zeus commanded Themis to call the gods to council from many-folded Olympos' peak, and she ranged all around and sent them to the house of Zeus. There was no river that did not come up, except Okeanos, or any nymph of all that haunt the fair thickets and springs of rivers and grassy water-meadows. And they came to the house of Zeus, who gathers the clouds, and sat down in the polished porticos which Hephaistos had made in the cleverness of his heart for Father Zeus.

So they gathered in the halls of Zeus; neither was the Earth-shaker heedless of the goddess' call, but came up from the salt sea after the rest and set himself in the midst of them and asked about the purpose of Zeus: "Why have you called the gods to council again, Lord of the bright lightning? Tell us, are you pondering something

concerning the Trojans and Achaians? Their war and fighting are kindled very high.”

And Zeus, who gathers the clouds, answered him, saying: “You know, Earthshaker, the purpose within my breast, for which I gathered you here; even though they are dying I think of them. As for me I will remain here, sitting in a cleft of Olympos, where I will gladden my heart with gazing; but you all go down among the Trojans and Achaians and help these or those, however each of you desires. For if Achilles alone fights against the Trojans, they will not hold back the swift-footed son of Peleus for even a little while. Even before now they trembled when they saw him; now that his fury because of his friend has grown terrible, I fear that he may go beyond the bounds of fate and storm the wall.”

So spoke the son of Kronos and stirred up unceasing war. For the gods went out to war on both sides. Hera and Pallas Athene went to the company of the ships, and Poseidon, the Earth-Enfolder, and the Helper Hermes, foremost in subtle thoughts; and with these went Hephaistos in the greatness of his strength, lame though his shrunken legs still moved nimbly under him. But Ares of the shining helmet went to the Trojans, and with him went Phoibos of the unshorn hair, and Archer Artemis, and Leto and Xanthos and laughter-loving Aphrodite.

Now as long as the gods were still far from mortal men the Achaians grew in glory because Achilles had come out among them, and his long ceasing from grim battle was at an end. And the Trojans were struck with terrible trembling in their limbs, every one of them in terror when they saw the son of Peleus, swift of foot, blazing in his armor, the equal of man-slaying Ares. But when the Olympians had come down among the tumult of men, then Strife, the rouser of armies, leaped up in her might, and now Athene, standing by the hollowed trenches outside the wall, gave a shout, and now she shouted aloud on the echoing shores. And Ares uttered a cry against her, terrible as the blackness of the storm, calling clearly to the Trojans, now from the height of the city, or again as he sped along Simois shore by Kallikolone.

So the blessed gods urged both armies to battle, then they themselves burst into fierce war. And the Father of gods and men thundered terribly from heaven above and from beneath Poseidon made the vast earth and the steep mountain tops shake. Then all the spurs of many-fountained Ida trembled and all her crests and the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Achaians. And the Lord of the underworld, Aïdoneus, was terrified in hell and leaped from his throne in that terror and cried aloud, lest the world be split apart above him by Poseidon, Shaker of Earth, and his dwelling-place be laid bare to mortals and immortals—his vast grim halls, loathsome to the gods—so loud was the roar that rose from that clash of gods. For Phoibos Apollo with his winged arrows stood against King Poseidon, and Athene, the bright-eyed goddess, stood against Enyalios, and she of the golden shafts and echoing chase, Archer Artemis, sister of the Archer Apollo, stood against Hera; and the strong Helper Hermes against Leto, and against Hephaistos stood the great deep-eddying River, whom gods call Xanthos but men call Skamandros.

Thus gods were matched with gods. Meanwhile Achilles longed above all to meet Hektor, son of Priam, in battle for his spirit urged him to glut Ares, the stubborn Lord of war, with that blood most of all. But immediately Apollo, Rouser of armies, moved Aineias to go to meet the son of Peleus, and he filled him with courageous spirit, and he made his own voice like the voice of Lykaon the son of Priam. In his likeness Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke: “Aineias, counselor of Trojans, where now are those threats with which you boasted to the Trojan lords over your wine, saying you would stand up in battle against Achilles, Peleus’ son?”

And Aineias answered him and said: “Son of Priam, why do you urge me in this way to face the fierce son of Peleus in battle when I am not willing? This will not be the first time I match myself with Achilles, swift of foot; once before he drove me with his spear from Ida, when he harassed our cattle and laid waste to Lyrnessos and Pedasos, but Zeus delivered me out of his hand and put strength into my knees so that they were swift. Otherwise I would have fallen under the hands of Achilles and of Athene, who went before him

and gave him light and urged him to slay Leleges and Trojans with his spear of bronze. So it is impossible for a man to face Achilles in a fight, because some god is always at his side to ward off death. Yes, and whenever his spear flies straight, it does not stop until it has pierced through the flesh of a man. But if God will once give us a fair field of battle, he will not easily overcome me, even if he boasts that he is made entirely of bronze.”

And Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke to him in answer: “Hero, you also must pray to the everliving gods, for you too, men say, were born of Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, and Achilles’ mother is of lower degree among the gods. For your mother is the daughter of Zeus, but his is the daughter of the Ancient One of the Sea. Bear up your untiring spear against him, do not let him in any way turn you back with reviling and bitter words.”

He spoke and breathed great courage into the shepherd of the people, and he went onward through the forefront of the fighting, armored in shining bronze. But white-armed Hera did not fail to notice Anchises’ son as he went through the crush of men to meet the son of Peleus and, gathering the gods about her, she spoke among them in this way: “Consider, you two, Poseidon and Athene, within your hearts, what the result will be of these things that are happening. There is Aineias going forth armored in shining bronze to meet the son of Peleus, and it is Phoibos Apollo who has sent him. Then let it be our work to turn him back immediately, or else let one of us stand beside Achilles also and give him mighty power, so that his spirit does not fail and that he will know that those who love him are the best of the immortals, and that those who have always kept war and fighting from the Trojans are as empty as the wind. All of us from Olympos have come down to mingle in this fight so that he suffers no injury by the Trojans on this day; later he will suffer whatever Fate has spun for him with her thread from his beginning when his mother bore him. If Achilles does not learn this from a divine voice, then he will be afraid when some god comes against him in battle; for when gods are revealed they are terrifying to look upon.”

Then Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, answered her: “Hera, do not be angry beyond what is wise; it is not fitting. I at least am not eager to pit gods against gods in battle. Let us go now to some high place away from the rest and sit there to watch, and the battle can be left to men. Only if Ares or Phoibos Apollo join in the battle, or hinder Achilles from fighting, then immediately the battle-cry will go up from us too. Very quickly, I think, they would leave the conflict and go back to Olympos to the company of the gods, overcome by the force of our hands.”

So spoke the dark-haired god and led the way to the mounded wall of heaven-born Herakles, that lofty wall built for him by the Trojans and Pallas Athene so that he could escape the monster and be safe from it when it might attack from the sea to the beach. There Poseidon and the other gods sat down and covered their shoulders with an impenetrable cloud. And those on the other side sat down on the brows of Kallikolone around you, Archer Phoibos, and Ares, waster of cities. So on either side they sat devising plans, but all of them shrank from beginning battle; and Zeus from his high seat goaded them on.

Achilleus and Aineias

Meanwhile the whole plain was filled with men and horses and blazing with bronze; and the earth rang with the noise of their feet as they rushed together in the conflict. Two men, far better than the rest, were meeting in the middle between the armies, eager for battle—Aineias, Anchises’ son, and noble Achilles. First Aineias came on threateningly, tossing his strong helmet; he held his impetuous shield before his breast and brandished his bronze spear. And on the other side the son of Peleus rushed to meet him like a lion, a ravaging lion whom men wish to kill, the whole tribe together, and first he goes his way paying no attention, but when some young warrior has struck him with a spear, then he gathers himself open-mouthed, and

foam comes around his teeth, and his stout spirit groans in his heart, and with his tail he lashes his ribs and flanks on both sides and goads himself on to fight and, glaring, is carried by his passion straight at them, to test whether he can kill one of the men or die himself at the front of the throng. In this way Achilles was driven by his passion and fiery spirit to go out to meet great-hearted Aineias. And when they had come close to each other, then swift-footed noble Achilles spoke first to Aineias: “Aineias, why have you come so far forward from the crowd to stand against me? Does your heart urge you to fight with me in hope of gaining Priam’s honor and lordship among the horse-taming Trojans? No, even if you kill me, Priam will not give his kingdom into your hands for that reason, for he has sons, and is sound and of stable mind. Or have the Trojans offered to you some piece of ground more choice than all the rest, good land for crops and orchard, so that you live there if you kill me? But I think you will find the killing hard, for once before, I think, I have made you run from my spear. Have you forgotten the day when you were alone with the cattle, and I made you run swift-footed down Ida’s slopes in a rush? Then you did not look behind you in your flight; you fled from there to Lyrnessos, but I wasted it, having fought against it with the help of Athene and of Father Zeus, and carried away women captive, robbing them of their day of freedom. But Zeus and the other gods shielded you. But I do not think they will shield you this time, as you imagine in your heart; therefore I urge you to go back into the throng and do not come out against me while you are still unhurt—after the event even a fool is wise.”

Then Aineias spoke to him in answer again: “Son of Peleus, do not think to frighten me with words as though I were a child, since I too know very well how to speak taunts and unjust speech. We know each other’s race and lineage for we have heard the tales told by mortal men, but you have never set eyes on my parents, or I on yours. They say that you are the son of noble Peleus and of Thetis of the lovely hair, the daughter of the sea; the father I claim is great-hearted Anchises and my mother is Aphrodite. One or the other of these pairs will mourn their dear son today, for surely we two will not end

our hostility with idle words and depart out of the battle. But if you wish, you can learn this so that you may know my lineage well—it is known to many men. First Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, fathered Dardanos, and he established Dardania, for holy Ilios was not yet built on the plain to be a city of mortal men, but they still lived on the slopes of many-fountained Ida. Then Dardanos fathered a son, King Erichthonios, who became the richest of mortal men. He had three thousand mares that pastured along the marsh meadow, rejoicing in their tender foals. Boreas fell in love with them as they grazed, and in the form of a dark-maned horse he coupled with them; when they conceived they bore twelve fillies. When they bounded over Earth, the grain-giver, they would run upon the topmost ripened ears of corn and not break them, and when they bounded over the broad backs of the sea they would run upon the crests of the breakers of the grey saltwater. Then Erichthonios fathered Tros to be lord over the Trojans, and three noble sons were born to Tros, Ilos and Assarakos and godlike Ganymedes, who became the most beautiful of mortal men. The gods took him up to be the cupbearer of Zeus, because of his beauty, so that he might dwell among immortals. Then in turn Ilos fathered a son, noble Laomedon, and Laomedon fathered Tithonos and Priam and Lampos and Klytios and Hiketaon, of the line of Ares. And Assarakos fathered Kapys, and Kapys Anchises, and Anchises me; but Priam fathered noble Hektor.

“I declare to you that I am of this blood and lineage. But as for valor, Zeus increases or diminishes it in men just as he pleases, for he is lord of all. But now let us no longer talk together this way like children, standing in the middle of battle. For there are plenty of insults for both of us to utter—a hundred-oared ship would not be enough for the load of them. The words of men are shallow, and there are many words of every kind, and speech ranges widely here and there. Whatever word you speak, that is what you will hear in answer. But why should we throw strife and wrangling at each other like women who, when they grow angry because of some heart-devouring quarrel, go out into the middle of the street and fling insults at one another with both true and false words—for anger makes them utter both.

But you will not turn me with mere words away from the battle that I desire, until we have fought together, spear point to spear point. Let us immediately test each other with bronze-headed spears.”

He spoke and hurled his spear against that other’s dreadful and mighty shield, and the shield rang loud beneath the spear-point. And the son of Peleus held the shield away from him with his strong hand in fear, for he thought that the far-shadowing spear of great-hearted Aineias would easily pierce it through—foolish man, for he did not know in his mind and heart that the glorious gifts of gods do not yield easily to the force of mortal men. So the great spear of wise Aineias did not pierce that shield, for the gold resisted it, the very gift of the god. Yet he drove it through two folds, but three remained, for the lame god had welded five folds—two of bronze, and two inside of tin, and one of gold; the ash spear was stopped there.

Then Achilles in his turn hurled his far-shadowing spear and struck the circle of the shield of Aineias, beneath the edge of the rim where the bronze ran thinnest around and the bull-hide there was thinnest; and the Pelian ash spear sped right through, and the shield cracked under it. And Aineias crouched and held up the shield away from him in dread, and the spear flew over his back and stuck fast in the earth, having broken apart the two circles of the sheltering shield. And having escaped the long spear he stood still, and a great anguish drowned his eyes, frightened that the spear was planted by him so near. But Achilles drew his sharp sword and furiously rushed at him, crying his terrible cry. Then Aineias grasped in his hand a stone such as two men, as men now are, would not be able to lift—a mighty deed—but with ease he wielded it all alone. Then Aineias would have struck him with the stone as he charged, either on his helmet or his shield, which had fended off bitter death from him, and then the son of Peleus would have closed in and killed him with his sword, if Poseidon, Shaker of Earth, had not quickly noticed it and immediately spoken among the immortal gods: “Alas for great-hearted Aineias, who soon will go down to Hades, slain by the son of Peleus, because he listened to the words of Apollo the Archer, foolish man; but the god will not help him avoid sorrowful

death in any way. But why must he now suffer evil in his innocence, without cause and for the wickedness of others, and yet his offerings to the gods who live in the wide heavens are always welcome? Let us guide him out of death's way, lest the son of Kronos be angry if Achilles kills him; for it is his destiny to escape so that the race of Dardanos does not perish without descendants, Dardanos whom the son of Kronos loved more than all the children born to him from the daughters of men. For Zeus has already hated the race of Priam. But this way the might of Aineias will reign among the Trojans, and his children's children, who shall be born in future years.”

And Hera, the ox-eyed queen, then answered him: “Shaker of Earth, decide within yourself whether you will save Aineias or leave him to be slain, brave though he is, by Achilles, Peleus' son. For we two, Pallas Athene and I, have sworn by many oaths among all the immortals, never to help the Trojans avoid their evil day, not even when all Troy burns in fierce fire; and those who burn her will be the warlike sons of the Achaians.”

When Poseidon, Shaker of Earth, heard that, he went up into the middle of the battle and the clash of spears, and came to where Aineias and renowned Achilles were. Then he shed a mist over the eyes of Achilles, Peleus' son, and pulled the bronze-headed ash spear from the shield of great-hearted Aineias and set it at Achilles' feet and lifted Aineias and swung him high from off the earth. Over many ranks of warriors, over many horses, Aineias went soaring in the hand of the god and landed at the farthest edge of the confused battle where the Kaukones were arming themselves for war. Then Poseidon, Shaker of Earth, stood close to him and spoke winged words aloud to him: “Aineias, what god is it who urges you to fight blindly against Peleus' violent son, who is both a better man than you and dearer to the immortals? No, you must withdraw whenever you come close to him, lest in spite of your fate you enter the house of Hades. But when Achilles has met his death and doom, then be of good courage to fight among the foremost, for no other of the Achaians will kill you.”

He spoke and left him there after he had told him all these things. Then he quickly purged the mist from Achilleus' eyes, and he stared with wide eyes and, troubled, spoke to his proud soul: "Truly I see a great marvel here with my eyes; my spear lies here on the ground, and I cannot at all see the man at whom I hurled it intending to kill him. Truly then Aineias is dear to the immortal gods also, although I thought that his boasting about it was merely vanity. Enough of him. He will not find the courage to test me again, now that once more he has escaped death to his joy. But now I will call on the warlike Danaans and go out to test some other Trojan face to face."

He spoke and leaped into the battle lines and called upon each man: "Do not stand far away from the men of Troy any longer, noble Achaians, but let every man stand against man and throw his soul into the fight. It is hard for me, though I am strong, to attack so vast an army and fight them all; not even Ares, though he is an immortal god, nor Athene could plunge into the jaws of such a tumult and fight in it. But I will not withhold my utmost power of hands and feet and strength, not the slightest, I say; but I will drive forward right through their line, and I do not think any Trojan will be glad who comes near my spear."

"Aristeia" of Achilleus

So he spoke, urging them on. But glorious Hektor called aloud to the Trojans and proclaimed that he would go out against Achilleus: "High-hearted Trojans, do not fear Peleus' son. I too could fight even immortals in words, but it would be harder with the spear, for they are far stronger. Achilleus will not fulfill all his words; some of them he will fulfill, but some will be broken apart halfway through. I will go out against him, even if his hands are like fire—yes, though his hands be as fire and his fierceness like flashing steel."

So he spoke, urging them on, and the Trojans raised their spears for battle, and their fierceness was mingled together and the bat-

tle-cry arose. Then Phoibos Apollo stood by Hektor and spoke to him: “Hektor, do not challenge Achilles any longer in the front lines, but wait for him in the throng and from amid the roar of the battle, lest he spear you or come near and strike you with his sword.”

So he spoke, and Hektor again fell back into the crowd of men, for he was amazed when he heard the sound of a god’s voice.

But Achilles sprang in among the Trojans, his heart clothed in strength, crying his terrible cry, and first he killed Iphition, Otrynteus’ valiant son, a leader of many people, born of a Naiad nymph to Otrynteus, waster of cities, beneath snowy Tmolos in Hydē’s rich domain. As he came straight on, Achilles smote him with his hurled spear, down through the center of his head, and it was broken open completely. And he fell with a crash, and great Achilles rejoiced over him: “You lie low, son of Otrynteus, most formidable of men; here is your death, though your birth was on the Gygaian lake, where your father’s domain is, by Hyllos rich in fish and eddying Hermos.”

So he spoke exulting, but darkness fell upon the eyes of Iphition; the chariots of the Achaians cut him apart with their wheel rims in the forefront of the battle, and above him Achilles pierced Demoleon in the temples, through his bronze-cheeked helmet—Demoleon, brave defender in battle, Antenor’s son. The bronze helmet was no hindrance, but the spear-head sped through and broke the bone, and the brain within was all scattered; that stroke ended his zeal. Then Achilles wounded Hippodamas in the back with his spear as he leaped from his chariot and fled before him, and he breathed out his spirit with a roar just as when a dragged bull roars that the young men drag to the altar of the Lord of Helike—for the Earth-shaker delights in this; in the same way Hippodamas roared as his proud spirit fled from his bones. But with his spear Achilles went after godlike Polydoros, Priam’s son. His father was always forbidding him to fight, because among his children he was the youngest and most beloved and defeated everyone in the swiftness of his feet. Just then in boyish folly, showing off the swiftness of his feet, he was rushing through the front fighters until he lost his life. Swift-footed Achilles smote him with a javelin in his back as he ran through the

crowd—struck him where his belt’s golden buckles clasped, and the breast and back plates overlapped; and right through beside the navel went the spear-head, and he fell on his knee with a cry, and a dark cloud covered him over, and he clasped his bowels to him with his hands as he sank.

Then when Hektor saw his brother, Polydoros, clasping his bowels with his hands and sinking to the earth, a mist fell over his eyes, and he could not bear to stay so far away any longer, but he came up against Achilles brandishing his sharp spear, like a flame of fire. And when Achilles saw him, he sprang up and spoke exultingly: “Behold the man who has struck deepest into my soul, who slew my dearly-prized friend; we will not shrink from each other much longer now along the paths of the war.”

He spoke, looking grim, to noble Hektor: “Come near, so that you may arrive sooner at the goal of death.”

Then, unafraid, Hektor of the shining helmet said: “Son of Peleus, do not try to frighten me with words as though I were a child, since I too know how to speak taunts and unjust speech. And I know that you are a man of might and a far better man than I am. Yet this issue lies in the lap of the gods, whether I, though weaker, will take your life with my hurled spear, for mine too has been found to be sharp before this.”

He spoke and poised his spear and hurled it, and with a breath Athene turned it back from glorious Achilles, breathing very softly; and it came back to noble Hektor and fell there before his feet. Then Achilles fiercely attacked him, eager to kill him, crying his terrible cry. But Apollo caught Hektor up, very easily, as a god can, and hid him in thick mist. Three times swift-footed noble Achilles attacked with his spear of bronze, and three times struck only the thick mist. But when for the fourth time he had come on like a god, then with a terrible shout he spoke winged words to him: “Dog, you have now escaped from death again; yet evil came very close to you. Yet Phoibos Apollo has saved you, to whom you must surely pray when you go out amidst the clash of spears. Indeed I will kill you yet

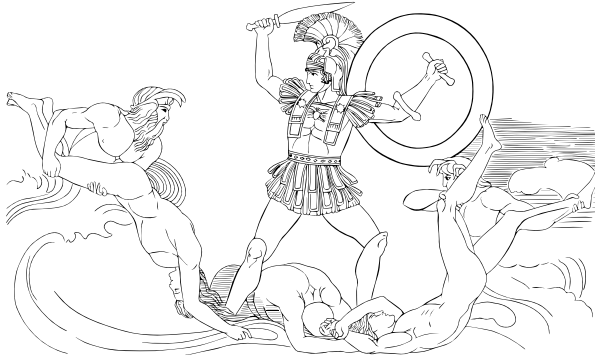
when I meet you after this, if any god is helping me too. Now will I go after the rest, whomsoever I can seize.”

So speaking, he pierced Dryops in the middle of his neck with his spear, and he fell down before his feet. But he left him where he lay and hurled at Demuuchos, Philetor’s son, a good man and a tall one, and stopped him with a stroke at his knees then smote him with his mighty sword and robbed him of life. Then leaping on Laogonos and Dardanos, sons of Bias, he thrust both from their chariot to the ground, one with a spearcast and the other in close battle with his sword. Then Tros, Alastor’s son, came and clasped his knees to beg him to spare him and let him go alive and not kill him, having compassion on his similar age; foolish man, he did not know that he would not gain his petitions. For that man was in no way soft or tenderhearted, but in a ferocious mood. With his hands he clasped Achilles’ knees, eager to beg him, but he smote him in the liver with his sword, and his liver fell from him, and black blood from it filled his insides, and he swooned, and darkness covered his eyes. Then Achilles came close and struck Moullos in the ear, and the bronze spearhead went right through the other ear. Then he smote Agenor’s son, Echecklos, on the center of the head with his hilted sword, and the whole sword grew hot with blood from it, and dark death and forceful fate seized his eyes. Then he pierced Deukalion with his bronze spear-head next, through the forearm, just where the sinews of the elbow join, so he stood with his arm dangling down, seeing death in front of him; and Achilles, striking the neck with his sword, swept both the head and helmet far away, and the marrow rose out of the backbone, and the corpse lay stretched upon the earth. Then he went onward after Peires’ noble son, Rhigmos, who had come from deep-soiled Thrace; he struck him in the middle with his hurled javelin and the point fixed in his lung, and he fell out of his chariot. And he pierced Areithoös, his attendant, in the back with his sharp spear as he turned the horses round, and thrust him from the chariot, and the horses ran wild with fear.

Just as through deep glens a fierce fire rages on some parched mountain-side, and the deep forest burns, and the wind driving it

whirls the flame every direction, so he raged every way with his spear, as if he were a god, pressing hard on the men he killed; and the black earth ran with blood. Just as when someone yokes wide-browed bulls to tread white barley in a firm threshing-floor, and quickly it is trodden out under the feet of the loud-lowing bulls, in the same way beneath great-hearted Achilles his swift-footed horses trampled corpses and shields all together; and the whole axletree below and the rims that ran around the chariot were sprinkled with blood, for blood-drops from the horses' hooves splashed them, and blood-drops from the rims of the wheels. But the son of Peleus pressed on to win glory for himself, spattering with blood his unstoppable hands.

Book XXI: The Battle with the River



Achilleus Battles the River

The River God Attacks Achilleus

But now when they came to the ford of the fair-flowing river, eddying Xanthos whom immortal Zeus fathered, there he separated them and chased one part to the plain toward the city, where the Achaians were flying in fright the day before when glorious Hektor was in his fury—there some poured in flight, and Hera spread before them a thick mist to hinder them—but the other part were trapped at the deep-flowing silver-pooled river and fell into it with a mighty noise, and the steep channel sounded, and the banks all around rang loudly, for they swam here and there, shouting and whirled around in the eddies. And just as when at the onrush of a fire locusts take wing to fly into a river, and the unwearying fire flames forth on them with a sudden attack, and they huddle in the water, so before Achilleus the stream of deep-eddyding Xanthos was filled with the roar and the throng of horses and men.

Then the seed of Zeus left behind him his spear upon the bank, leaning it against tamarisk bushes, and he leaped in like a god, keeping only his sword, and planned grim work in his heart and struck

as he turned every direction; and their groaning went up ghastly as they were struck by his sword, and the water turned red with blood. As before a dolphin with wide open mouth, other fish flee in terror and fill the nooks of some lovely and sheltered bay because he ferociously devours whichever of them he can catch, so along the channels of that dreadful stream the Trojans crouched beneath the steep sides. And when his hands were weary of slaughter he chose twelve young men alive out of the river to be an atonement for Patroklos, Menoitios' son, who was dead. He brought these out, bewildered like fawns, and bound their hands behind them with well-cut thongs which they themselves wore on their soft jackets and gave the youths to his comrades to lead down to the hollow ships. Then he attacked again, thirsty for slaughter.

There met he a son of Dardanian Priam in flight out of the river, Lykaon, whom once he himself had captured and brought by force out of his father's orchard in a night raid; he was cutting with sharp bronze some young shoots of a wild fig tree to be handrails of a chariot, but an unexpected evil, noble Achilles, came upon him. Then Achilles sold him into well-populated Lemnos, sending him on board a ship, and the son of Jason bought him; and from there a guest friend, Eëtion of Imbros, freed him with a great ransom and sent him to noble Arisbe; from there he fled secretly and came back to his father's house. For eleven days he had rejoiced among his friends after he had come from Lemnos, but on the twelfth God put him once more into the hands of Achilles who was to send him all unwilling to the house of Hades. Swift-footed noble Achilles saw him without helmet, shield, or spear, which he had thrown all to the ground, for he sweated terribly as he tried to flee out of the river, and his knees were failing him from exhaustion. Then in anger Achilles spoke to his great heart: "Indeed I see a great marvel with my eyes. Surely the proud Trojans whom I have slain will rise up again from beneath the murky gloom, since this man has escaped from his pitiless fate, though sold into noble Lemnos, and the deep of the grey sea, which holds many against their will, has not kept him. But now he will taste our spear's point so that I can see and learn in my mind

whether he will recover even from that, or whether the life-giving earth will hold him down, for she holds even the very strong.”

So he pondered as he stood; but the other came near, bewildered, wanting to touch his knees, for his soul longed greatly to flee from evil death and black destruction. Then noble Achilles lifted his long spear, intending to smite him, but Lykaon ducked and ran under it and caught his knees; and the spear went over his back and stuck in the ground, hungry for the flesh of men. Then Lykaon begged him, with one hand holding his knees while with the other he held the sharp spear and kept it still and spoke winged words to him: “I beg you for mercy, Achilles; consider and have pity on me. I am in the bonds of a suppliant to you, beloved of Zeus. For I first tasted the fruit of Demeter at your table on the day when you took me captive in the well-ordered orchard and sold me away from my father and my friends into noble Lemnos, and I brought you the price of a hundred oxen. And now I have been ransomed for three times that amount, and this is my twelfth day since I returned to Ilios after much pain. And now once again ruinous fate has delivered me into your hands; surely I must be hated by Father Zeus, since he has handed me over to you a second time. My mother bore me to a short life—Laothoë, old Altes’ daughter, Altes who rules among the war-loving Leleges, possessing steep Pedasos on the Satnioeis. Priam had his daughter as a wife, with many others, and two of us were born from her and you will butcher both of us. You laid him low among the foremost of the foot-soldiers—godlike Polydoros—when you struck him with your sharp spear; and now will it go badly with me here, for I have no hope of escaping your hands, since God has delivered me into them. Yet I will tell you one thing, and you should lay it to heart: do not slay me since I am not of the same mother as Hektor, who killed your noble and brave companion.”

So the noble son of Priam spoke to him, begging him with words, but he heard an implacable voice: “Fool, offer me no ransom, nor these words. Until Patroklos met his destined day it was more pleasing to my soul to spare the men of Troy, and I took many alive and sold them beyond the sea. But now no one will escape death,

whoever God shall deliver into my hands in front of Ilios—yes, all the Trojans, but especially among Priam’s sons. So, friend, you too must die. Why do you lament so much? Patroklos is dead, who was a far better man than you. Do you not also see what kind of man I am for strength and nobility? My father was a good man and a goddess was my mother. Yet over me too death and forceful fate hang. A morning or evening or noon will come when some man will take my life in battle, whether he strikes me with a spear or with an arrow from the string.”

So he spoke, and the other’s knees and heart went limp. He let go of Achilles’ spear and sat back with both hands outspread. But Achilles drew his sharp sword and smote him on the collar-bone beside the neck, and the two-edged sword sank into him, and he lay stretched out upon the earth, and blood flowed dark from him and soaked the earth. Achilles seized him by the foot and flung him down the stream and, exulting over him, spoke winged words: “Lie there among the fishes, which will carelessly lick your wound’s blood; your mother will not lay you on a bed and mourn for you, but Skamandros will carry you on his eddies into the broad depths of the sea. Many fish, leaping along the waves, will dart up to the dark ripple to eat the white flesh of Lykaon. Let all die, until we reach the citadel of sacred Ilios, you fleeing and I coming behind and destroying. Not even the River, fair-flowing and silver-pooled, will help you, to whom for a long time you have sacrificed many bulls and thrown swift-footed horses alive into his eddies. In spite of all this you will die your deaths, until you all pay for Patroklos’ slaying and the slaughter of Achaians whom you killed at the swift ships while I lingered far away.”

So he spoke, but the River grew continually more angry in his heart and pondered in his soul how he could hinder noble Achilles from his work and ward off destruction from the Trojans. Meanwhile the son of Peleus with his far-shadowing spear leaped, eager to slay him, upon Asteropaios son of Pelegon, whom wide-flowing Axios fathered with Periboia, eldest of the daughters of Akessamenos, for that deep-eddying River lay with her. Achilles attacked him, and

Asteropaios stood against him by the river, holding two spears; for Xanthos put courage into his heart, angry for the dead youths whom Achilles was slaughtering along the stream and taking no pity on them. Then when the two had come close in their attack on each other, swift-footed noble Achilles spoke to him first: “Who are you and from where, you who dare to come against me? They are unfortunate whose children match themselves with my might.”

And Pelegon’s noble son answered him: “High-hearted son of Peleus, why do you ask my lineage? I come from deep-soiled Paionia, a land far away, leading Paionian men with their long spears, and this now is the eleventh morning since I have come to Ilios. I am descended from wide-flowing Axios, who fathered Pelegon, famous with the spear, and he, men say, was my father. Now let us fight, noble Achilles!”

So he spoke in defiance, and noble Achilles lifted the Pelian ash; but the warrior Asteropaios hurled with both spears together, for he could use both hands equally, and with one spear smote the shield, but did not pierce it clean through, for the gold stopped it, the gift of a god; with the other he grazed the elbow of Achilles’ right arm, and dark blood sprang forth, but the point went beyond him and fixed itself in the earth, eager to feed on flesh. Then in his turn Achilles hurled at Asteropaios his straight-flying ash, eager to kill him, but missed the man and struck the high bank, and he left the ash spear with half its length quivering in the bank. Then the son of Peleus drew his sharp sword from his thigh and leaped fiercely at him, and he was not able to draw Achilles’ ashen shaft from the steep bank with his stout hand. Three times he shook it, struggling to draw it out, and three times gave up the struggle; the fourth time he was trying to bend and break the ash spear of the seed of Aiakos, but before that Achilles closed on him and robbed him of life with his sword. For he struck him in the belly beside the navel, and all his intestines gushed out on the ground, and darkness covered his eyes as he lay gasping. Then Achilles, trampling on his breast, stripped off his armor and spoke exultingly: “Lie there! It is hard to strive against the children of Kronos’ mighty son, even if one is descended

from a River-god. You rightly declared yourself the offspring of a wide-flowing River, but I claim the lineage of great Zeus. My father is a man ruling many Myrmidons, Peleus, the son of Aiakos, and Aiakos was fathered by Zeus. As Zeus is mightier than seaward-murmuring rivers, so the seed of Zeus is mightier than the seed of a River. Indeed, there is a great river right next to you, if that will help, but it is impossible to fight against Zeus, the son of Kronos. For not even King Acheloios is a match for him, nor even the great strength of deep-flowing Okeanos, from whom all rivers and every sea flow, and all springs and deep wells; even he fears the lightning of great Zeus and his terrible thunder, when it peals out of heaven.”

He spoke and drew his bronze spear from the steep bank and left Asteropaios whom he had slain, lying there in the sands, and the dark water flooded him. Eels and fishes swarmed around him, tearing and gnawing the fat about his kidneys. But Achilles went on after the charioted Paiones who still huddled along the eddying river in fear when they saw their best man in the stress of battle violently slain by the hands and the sword of the son of Peleus. There he slew Thersilochos and Mydon and Astypylos and Mnesos and Thrasios and Ainios and Ophelestes; and Achilles would have slain even more of the Paiones, had not the deep-eddy River called to him in anger, in the appearance of a man, and from an eddy’s depth sent forth a voice: “O Achilles, your might and your evil work are beyond the measure of men; for gods themselves are always helping you. If indeed the son of Kronos has delivered to you all the Trojans to destroy, at least drive them away from me and do your grim deeds on the plain, for my pleasant bed is filled with dead men, and I cannot pour my stream to the great sea since I am choked with corpses, and you continue to slay ruthlessly. Let it be; I am astonished, leader of armies.”

And swift-footed Achilles answered him: “Let it be as you have said, heaven-born Skamandros. But I will not stop slaying the proud Trojans until I have driven them into their city and have tested Hector face to face to see whether he is to conquer me or I him.”

Thus saying, he attacked the Trojans, like a god. Then the deep-eddy River spoke to Apollo: “Enough, Lord of the Silver Bow, child

of Zeus, you have not kept the word of Kronos' son, who commanded you strictly to stand by the Trojans and to help them until evening comes with late-setting light and darkens the deep-soiled earth."

He spoke, and spear-famed Achilles sprang from the bank and leaped into the middle of the River; but he rushed on him in a furious wave and stirred up all his streams in tumult and swept down the many dead who lay thick in him, slain by Achilles; he cast these bodies out onto the land with a bellowing like a bull, but kept the living under his fair streams, hiding them within eddies deep and wide. But his tumultuous wave arose terribly around Achilles, and the stream struck violently against his shield, and he could not stand on his feet. Then he grasped a tall well-grown elm, and it fell, uprooted, and tore away all the bank, and reached over the fair river bed with its thick branches and dammed the River himself, falling completely over him; and Achilles, struggling out of the eddy, hurried to fly over the plain with his swift feet, for he was afraid. But the great god did not cease, but rose upon him with dark crests in order to hinder noble Achilles from slaughter and fend off destruction from the men of Troy. And the son of Peleus rushed away about a spear's throw, with the swoop of a black eagle, the mighty hunter, both the strongest and swiftest of winged birds. Like him he sped, and on his breast the bronze rang terribly as he fled from beneath the attack, and behind him the River rushed on with a mighty roar. Just as when a farmer leads water from a dark spring along a channel through crops and garden grounds with a hoe in his hands, pulling obstacles from the ditch, and as it flows all the rocks and pebbles are swept down, and swiftly gliding it murmurs down a slope, and runs faster than the man guiding it; in this way the River wave always caught up to Achilles in spite of all his speed, for gods are mightier than men. For whenever swift-footed noble Achilles struggled to stand against it and to know whether all the immortals who inhabit the wide heaven were against him, then a great wave of the heaven-born River would beat upon his shoulders from above, and he sprang upward with his feet, terribly enraged in his heart; and the River was wearing out his knees with the violent rush beneath and cutting the earth from under his feet.

Then the son of Peleus cried aloud, looking up to the broad heaven: “Zeus, Father, none of the gods take pity on me to save me from the River. After this, let come what may. No other of the inhabitants of Heaven is responsible so much, but only my dear mother, who deceived me with false words, saying that under the wall of the well-armored men of Troy I would die by the swift arrows of Apollo. If only Hektor, the best of men bred here, had slain me; then the killer would have been a great man, and he would have slain a great man. But now I am doomed to die a wretched death, trapped in this mighty river, like a swineherd boy whom a torrent sweeps away as he tries to cross it in a storm.”

So he spoke, and quickly Poseidon and Athene came near and stood beside him in the likeness of men and, taking his hands in theirs, reassured him in words. And the first who spoke was Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth: “Son of Peleus, do not tremble or be afraid, for we are your helpers from the gods, sent of Zeus, Pallas Athene and I, for to be destroyed by a river is not your destiny. He will soon give back, and you yourself will see it, but we will give you sound advice, if you will obey it: do not hold back your hand from ferocious battle until you have trapped the Trojan army inside Ilios’s famous walls, all who flee from you. But when you have taken the life of Hektor, go back to the ships; we grant you to gain this glory.”

Having said this, they departed to the immortals, but he went toward the plain, for the command of the gods was strong upon him, and the whole plain was filled with floodwater, and much beautiful armor and the corpses of slain youths were drifting there. So he lifted his knees as he rushed straight on against the stream, and the wide-flowing River did not hinder him, for Athene put great strength in him. But Skamandros did not slacken his fierceness, but raged even more against the son of Peleus, and he curled into crests the billows of his stream, lifting himself high, and he called on Simoeis with a shout: “Dear brother, let us both join to stop the strength of this man, since he will quickly lay waste the great city of King Priam, and the Trojans can not stand against him in the battle. Help me quickly and fill your banks with water from your springs and urge on

all your torrents and raise up a great wave and stir a huge roaring of tree-stumps and stones, so that we can hinder the fierce man who is now lording it over all and thinks himself a match for the gods. For I do not think strength will help him or beauty or that glorious armor, when they are all covered with slime deep under water; and I will wrap him in sand and pour a vast amount of rubble around him, and the Achaians will not know where to gather his bones, so vast a shroud of silt will I heap over them. Where he dies will be his tomb, nor will he need to have a burial mound raised when the Achaians make his funeral.”

He spoke and rushed in tumult on Achilleus, raging from on high, thundering with foam and blood and bodies of dead men. Then a dark wave of the heaven-born River stood towering up and would have overwhelmed the son of Peleus. But Hera cried aloud in terror for Achilleus, lest the great deep-eddying River sweep him away, and immediately she called to Hephaistos, her dear son: “Rise, lame god, O my son; we thought eddying Xanthos should be matched against you in battle. Help quickly; send out a large blast of flame. Then I will go to raise a strong storm out of the sea by the west wind and the white south wind which will completely consume the dead Trojans and their armor, fanning the angry flame. Burn up the trees along Xanthos’ banks and wrap him in fire, and do not let him turn you back by soft words or by threats, and do not cease your rage until I call you with my voice; then you may stop the unwearying fire.”

So she spoke, and Hephaistos prepared a fierce-blazing fire. First of all fire blazed on the plain and burned up the many dead who lay there thickly, slain by Achilleus, and the whole plain was parched and the bright water stopped. And just as when in late summer the north wind quickly dries out a newly watered orchard, and the one who tills it is glad, so the whole plain was parched, and Hephaistos consumed the dead. Then he turned his gleaming flame against the River. Elms burned, and willow-trees and tamarisks, and lotus burned, and rushes and galingale which grew in multitudes around the lovely streams of the river. And the eels and fishes beneath the eddies suffered and tumbled this way and that through the lovely streams, in anguish at

the blast of crafty Hephaistos. And the strong River burned and then spoke and called to him by name: “Hephaistos, there is no god who can match you, and I will not fight you this way, blazing with fire. Cease the conflict. Let noble Achilles drive the Trojans immediately out of their city; what do I have to do with this strife?”

So he spoke, burned with fire, for his lovely streams were bubbling. And as a cauldron boils, set over a great fire, melting the lard of some fattened hog spurting up on all sides, and logs of firewood lie underneath; in the same way his fair streams burned in the fire and the water boiled. He had no inclination to flow, but held back, for the breath of cunning Hephaistos violently afflicted him. Then he spoke winged words to Hera, desperately begging her: “Hera, why has your son attacked my stream to harass it above others? I am less guilty than all the rest who are helping the Trojans. But look, I will stop, if you will, and let your son cease too. And further I will swear that I never will ward off the day of evil from the Trojans, not even when all Troy is burning in the blaze of hungry fire, and the warlike sons of Achaians are the ones doing the burning.”

Then when the white-armed goddess Hera heard his words, immediately she spoke to Hephaistos, her dear son: “Hephaistos, hold back, glorious son; it is not fitting to do violence to an immortal god for a mortal’s sake.”

So she spoke, and Hephaistos quenched the fierce-blazing fire, and the waves once more rolled down the fair river-bed.

The Gods Fight

So when the rage of Xanthos was overcome, both gods ceased, for Hera halted them, though they were still angry. But terrible bitter strife erupted among the other gods, and their hearts were torn in different directions in their breasts. And they clashed together with a great noise, and the wide earth groaned, and the trumpet blast of great Heaven rang all around. Zeus listened as he sat on Olympos,

and his heart within him laughed pleasantly when he saw that conflict of the gods. Then they no longer stood apart, for Ares, piercer of shields, began the battle and first of all made straight for Athene with his bronze spear and spoke a taunting word: “You dogfly, why do you match gods with gods in strife, with impetuous daring as your great spirit moves you? Do you not remember how you moved Diomedes, ‘Tydeus’ son, to wound me, and you yourself took a spear and thrust it at me and pierced through my fair skin? Therefore I think that you will pay me now for all that you have done.”

So saying, he smote on the dreadful tasseled aegis that not even the lightning of Zeus can overcome—blood-stained Ares struck it with his long spear. But she, giving back, grasped with her stout hand a stone that lay upon the plain—black, rugged, huge, which men in time past had set to be the landmark of a field; this she hurled and struck impetuous Ares on the neck and unstrung his limbs. He covered seven acres in his fall and fouled his hair with dust, and his armor rang upon him. And Pallas Athene laughed and spoke winged words to him exultingly: “You fool, you still have learned how much better than you I claim to be, and you match your might with mine this way. In this way you will fulfill the curses of your mother, who plots evil against you in her anger, because you have abandoned the Achaians and give aid to the proud Trojans.”

Having said this, she turned her shining eyes away from him. Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, took him by the hand and led him away, groaning constantly, for he had barely gathered his spirit back to himself. But when the white-armed goddess Hera noticed them, immediately she spoke winged words to Athene: “For shame, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, invincible maiden; see there, the dogfly is leading Ares, destroyer of men, past the throng and out of the conflict of battle; pursue her.”

She spoke, and Athene sped after her with an exulting heart and went at her and struck her with her stout hand upon the breast, and immediately her knees and heart went limp. So those two lay on the rich earth, and she spoke winged words exultingly: “If only this would happen to everyone who gives aid to the Trojans when they

fight against the armored Argives, even if they are as bold and brave as Aphrodite when she came to help Ares and defied my might. Then we long ago would have been done with war, having laid waste to the strong-founded citadel of Ilios.”

She spoke, and the white-armed goddess Hera smiled. Then the Earth-shaking Lord spoke to Apollo: “Phoibos, why do we stand to the side? It is not fitting after the rest have begun; it would be shameful if we were to go to Olympos, to the bronze-thresholded house of Zeus, without fighting. Begin, for you are younger; it would not be fitting for me, since I was born first and know more. Foolish god, how foolish is your heart! You do not remember all the evils we two alone of all the gods suffered at Ilios, when by the command of Zeus we came to proud Laomedon and served him for a year for a promised reward, and he commanded us. I built a wall for the Trojans around their city, wide and beautiful, so that the city would never be taken, and you, Phoibos, herded shambling crook-horned cattle among the spurs of woody, many-folded Ida. But when the happy season brought about the end of our time of service, then powerful Laomedon robbed us of our reward and sent us off with threats. He threatened that he would bind together our feet and hands and sell us into far-away islands, and he vowed to shear off the ears of both of us with the sword. So we went home with angry hearts, furious over the fee he promised and did not give us. And now you show favor to his people and do not attempt to discover with the rest of us how the Trojans may be brought low and perish miserably with their children and noble wives.”

Then King Apollo the Archer answered him: “Shaker of the Earth, you would consider me of unsound mind if I fought against you for the sake of pitiful mortals, who like leaves live now in glowing life, consuming the fruit of the earth, and then dwindle into death. Let us immediately cease from combat, and let them do battle by themselves.”

So saying, he turned away, for he felt ashamed to trade blows with his father’s brother. But his sister, the queen of wild beasts, huntress Artemis, rebuked him sharply, and spoke a taunting word:

“So then you run, Archer, and have utterly yielded the victory to Poseidon and given him glory for nothing! Foolish god, why do you vainly carry that ineffectual bow? Do not ever let me hear you boast again in the halls of our father, as before among the immortal gods, that you would stand up to fight against Poseidon.”

So she spoke, but Archer Apollo did not answer her. But the noble wife of Zeus angrily rebuked the Archer Queen with taunting words: “How is it that you are pleased to set yourself against me, you bold vixen? It would be hard for you to match my might, though you carry a bow, since Zeus made you a lion among women and lets you kill whoever of them you wish. Indeed, it is better to slay wild beasts and deer on the mountains than to fight with one mightier than you. But if you wish, try fighting, so that you may know how much stronger I am, since you want to match your might with mine.”

She spoke and with her left hand caught both the other’s hands by the wrist, and with her right she took the bow from off Artemis’ shoulders and, smiling, beat her on the ears with it as she turned this way and that, and the swift arrows fell out of her quiver. And the goddess fled weeping from before her like a dove that flies from before a falcon to a hollow rock, a cleft, for she was not fated to be caught; so Artemis fled weeping and left her bow and arrows where they lay. Then the Guide, the slayer of Argus, spoke to Leto: “Leto, I will not fight with you; it is a terrible thing to come to blows with the wives of Cloud-Gathering Zeus; but boast to your heart’s content among the immortal gods that you vanquished me by might and main.”

So he spoke, and Leto gathered up the curved bow and arrows that had fallen here and there amid the whirl of dust; so taking her daughter’s bow she departed. And the girl came to Olympos, to the bronze-thresholded house of Zeus and, weeping, sat on her father’s knee, while around her her divine robes quivered. And her father, Kronos’ son, pulled her to him and asked her, laughing gently: “Who of the inhabitants of heaven, dear child, has dealt with you this way, as though you had been doing something wrong?”

And the fair-crowned queen of the echoing chase spoke to him in answer: “It was your wife that beat me, Father, the white-armed Hera, from whom conflict and fighting have come upon the immortals.”

So they talked to one another in this way. Then Phoibos Apollo went into sacred Ilios, for he was troubled about the wall of the strongly-built city, lest the Danaans waste it that day before its hour had come. But the other immortal gods went to Olympos, some angry and some excessively triumphing, and sat down beside Zeus who hides himself in dark clouds.

The Press to the City

Now Achilleus was still slaying the Trojans, both men and their swift-footed horses. Just as when smoke goes up to the wide sky when a city burns, kindled by the wrath of gods, and causes trouble to all and sorrows to many, so Achilleus caused toil and sorrow to the Trojans. And the old man Priam stood on the sacred tower and saw terrible Achilleus—how the Trojans thronged away from him in flight, and no help was found in them. Then with a cry he went down from the tower, to rouse the noble guards along the walls: “Hold open the gates in your hands until the people come to the city as they flee, for Achilleus is chasing them closely—now I think there will be deadly deeds. But when they are gathered within the wall and catching their breath, then shut the firmly-built gates again; for I fear lest that murderous man leap within our walls.”

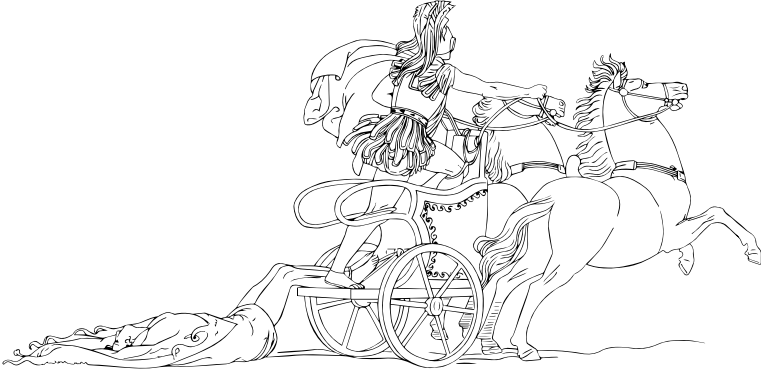
So he spoke, and they opened the gates and thrust back the bolts; and the gates flung back gave safety. Then Apollo leaped to the battlefield so that he might ward off destruction from the Trojans. They were fleeing straight for the city and the high wall, parched with thirst and dust-grimed from the plain, and Achilleus chased them intently with his spear, for a ferocious frenzy continually possessed his heart, and he thirsted to win glory. Then the sons of the Achaians would have taken high-gated Troy, had not Phoibos Apollo aroused

noble Agenor, Antenor's son, a strong and princely man. Into his heart Apollo put great courage and stood by his side, leaning against the oak, so that he might ward off the terrible approach of death, and he was shrouded in thick mist. So when Agenor saw Achilles, waster of cities, he halted, and his heart wavered greatly as he stood and, troubled, he spoke to his great heart: "Woe is me, if I flee before mighty Achilleus where the rest are driven terror-struck; nevertheless he will overtake me and slaughter me as a coward. What if I leave these others to be driven before Achilleus, the son of Peleus, and flee on my feet from the wall by another way to the Heian plain, until I come to the spurs of Ida and hide in the undergrowth? Then in the evening, having bathed in the river and washed off the sweat, I might return to Ilios. But no, why does my heart debate this way within me? He might see me as I go from the city to the plain and, rushing after me, he would overtake me with his swift feet; then it will no longer be possible to avoid the coming of death, for he is mighty beyond all men. But then what if I go out to meet him in front of the city? Surely his flesh can be pierced by sharp bronze, and there is only one life in him, and men say he is mortal, although Zeus, the son of Kronos, gives him glory."

So saying, he gathered himself to wait for Achilleus, and within him his stout heart was set to strive and fight. Just as a leopardess goes out from a deep thicket to confront a huntsman and is not afraid in her heart and does not flee when she hears the bay of the hounds, for though the man strikes her first with spear thrust or throw, still even pierced through with the spear she does not give up her courage until she grapples or is killed; so noble Antenor's son, great Agenor, refused to flee till he put Achilleus to the test, but he held out in front of him the circle of his shield and aimed at him with his spear and cried aloud: "Undoubtedly you hope in your heart, noble Achilleus, to sack the city of the proud men of Troy today. Foolish man; many sorrowful things will still be done before it, for within it are many staunch men who keep Ilios safe in front of our dear parents and wives; but you will meet death here, no matter how formidable and bold a man of war you are."

He spoke and hurled his sharp spear with his powerful hand and struck him on the leg beneath the knee and did not miss his mark, and the shin-guard of newly-worked tin rang terribly on him; but the bronze spear bounded back from him and did not pierce him, for the god's gift drove it back. Then the son of Peleus in his turn ran at god-like Agenor, but Apollo did not allow him to win glory, but snatched Agenor away and shrouded him in thick mist and sent him out of the battle in peace. Then by a trick he kept the son of Peleus away from the people, for in an imitation of Agenor he himself stood before Achilles, who rushed to chase him. And while he chased him over the wheat-bearing plain, edging him toward the deep-eddying River Skamandros as he ran just a little in front of him—for Apollo tricked him so that Achilles always kept hoping to overtake him in the race—meanwhile the other Trojans fleeing all together came gladly into their fortress, and the city was filled with the throng of them. They did not have the courage to await one another outside the city wall, and to find out who might have escaped and who had perished in the fight, but impetuously they poured into the city, whoever could be saved by his feet and knees.

Book XXII: The Death of Hektor



Hektor's Body Dragged at the Chariot of Achilles

Three Speeches

So throughout the city, frightened like fawns, the Trojans were cooling their sweat and drinking and quenching their thirst, leaning on the great battlements, while the Achaians drew near the wall, leaning their shields over their shoulders. But deadly fate bound Hektor to stay in his place in front of Ilios and the Skaian gates. Then Phoibos Apollo spoke to the son of Peleus: "Son of Peleus, why do you pursue me with swift feet when you are mortal and I am a deathless god? You have not even recognized yet that I am a god, but keep striving furiously. You abandon your task of attacking the Trojans whom you have terrified into gathering inside their city while you have wandered here. You will never kill me, for I am not subject to death."

Then, moved deeply, swift-footed Achilles spoke to him: "You have thwarted me, Archer, most evil of all the gods, by turning me here away from the wall; otherwise a great many of them would have bitten the dust before they could get into Ilios. Now have you robbed me of great glory and have saved them easily, because you feared no

retribution afterward. Indeed, I would take revenge on you, if I only had the power.”

Saying this, he was gone toward the city, proud in his heart, rushing like some victorious horse in a chariot that runs lightly at full speed over the plain; in the same way Achilles swiftly moved his feet and knees.

The old man Priam saw him first as he sped across the plain, blazing like the star that appears at harvest-time, and his rays shine out, plainly seen amidst the host of stars in the darkness of night, the star that men call Orion’s Dog.¹ It is the brightest of all, yet is an evil sign, for it brings great fever upon unfortunate men. In the same way, the bronze gleamed on the breast of Achilles as he ran. And the old man cried aloud and beat his head with his hands as he raised them high and with a loud cry called on his dear son, for he was standing in front of the gates, furious for battle with Achilles. And the old man spoke piteously to him, stretching out his hands: “Hektor, beloved son, I beg you not to wait for this man alone with no one beside you, lest you quickly meet your doom, slain by the son of Peleus, since he is far mightier, a merciless man. If only the gods loved him the way I do! Then dogs and vultures would quickly devour him on the field, taking the pain from my heart—this man who has robbed me of many brave sons, killing them or selling them as slaves to far-off places. Even now, two of my children, Lykaon and Polydoros, I cannot see among the Trojans who throng into the fortress, sons whom Laothoë bore me, a princess among women. If they are still alive amid the enemy’s people, then we will ransom them with bronze and gold, for there is treasure within; the old man, renowned Altes, gave many possessions to his son. But if they are dead, then even in the house of Hades they will be a grief to my soul and to their mother, us who gave them birth, though to the rest of the people a shorter sorrow, if only you do not die at the hand of Achilles. Come within the wall, my child, so that you can preserve the men and women of Troy and not give great triumph to the son of Peleus and yourself be

1 Sirius, the “dog-star,” southwest of Orion, seen in evenings throughout winter, but in the mornings in summer.

robbed of sweet life. Have compassion also on me, the helpless one, who can still feel though ill-fated, whom the Father, Kronos' son, will bring to nothing by means of a horrible doom in the journey of old age, having seen a great many evils—his sons dying and his daughters carried away captive and his chambers destroyed and babies hurled to the ground in the terrible war and his sons' wives dragged away by the ruinous hands of the Achaians. And last of all, the ravening dogs will tear me apart at the door to the street, when some one by a sword stroke or throw of the sharp bronze spear has robbed my limbs of life—the very dogs I raised in my halls around my table and to guard my door, which having drunk my blood, maddened at heart, will lie in the gateway. For to a young man everything seems glorious, even to be slain in war, to be torn by the sharp bronze and lie dead on the field; though he is dead it all seems honorable about him, whatever is seen. But when dogs defile the grey head and grey beard and the private parts of an old man who has been slain, this is the most piteous thing that can happen to unfortunate men.”

So spoke the old man, and he clutched at his grey hairs, plucking them from his head, but he did not persuade Hektor's soul. Then his mother in turn wailed tearfully, loosening the folds of her robe, while with the other hand she showed her breast and through her tears spoke winged words to him: “Hektor, my child, have pity on this bosom and on me, if I ever consoled you with my breast. Think of this, dear child, and from this side of the wall drive back the enemy and do not stand in front of them to meet him. He is merciless; if he kills you it will not be on a bed where I or your wife, courted with many gifts, can mourn you, my own dear child; far away from us by the ships of the Argives swift dogs will devour you.”

In this way they spoke to their dear son, wailing, begging him strongly, yet they did not persuade Hektor's soul, but he stood awaiting Achilles as he drew close in huge might. Just as a serpent in the mountains waits at his den for a man, full of evil poisons, and terrible anger has entered into it, and he stares wickedly as he coils himself near his den; in the same way, with unquenchable courage, Hektor did not give ground, leaning his shining shield against a jutting tower.

Then, terribly troubled, he spoke to his own great heart: “Ah me, if I go inside the gates and walls, Poulydamas will be the first to reproach me, since he urged me to lead the Trojans into the city during this ruinous night when noble Achilles came back. But I ignored him, though surely it would have been far better. And now that I have destroyed the people by my own recklessness, I am ashamed before the men of Troy and the women of trailing robes, lest at some time some worse man than me might say, ‘By trusting in his own might, Hektor destroyed the people.’ This is what they will say; therefore for me it would be far better to face Achilles and either kill him and go home, or to die myself, gloriously, in front of the city. Or what if I lay down my embossed shield and my stout helmet and lean my spear against the wall and go myself to meet noble Achilles and promise him that we will give Helen, and with her all the possessions that Alexandros brought in hollow ships to Troy, the cause of the strife, back to the sons of Atreus to take away, and in addition to divide in half with the Achaians everything else that this city holds, and then after that obtain an oath from the Trojan elders that they will hide nothing but divide everything in two, whatever wealth the beautiful city holds in it? But why does my heart debate this way? I might come to him and he would not pity or respect me at all, but quickly slay me unarmed as though I were just a woman, if I take off my armor. This is no time to dally with him from oak tree or from rock, like a young man with a girl, the way they flirt with one another. It is better to join battle quickly; we will see to which of us the Olympian will grant glory.”

The Chase

He pondered these things as he stood, but now Achilles, equal of the Lord of battle, warrior of the waving helmet, came close to him, brandishing from his right shoulder the Pelian ash, his terrible spear, and the bronze on him flashed all around like the gleam of blazing fire or of the Sun as it rises. And trembling seized Hektor as

he was aware of him, and he could not bear to remain in his place, but left the gates behind him and fled in fear. And the son of Peleus darted after him, trusting in his swift feet. Just as a falcon upon the mountains, swiftest of winged things, swoops quickly after a trembling dove, and she flees before him while he with shrill screams, close at hand, still darts at her, for his heart urges him to seize her; in the same way Achilles, in hot pursuit, rushed straight for him, and Hektor fled beneath the Trojans' wall and moved his knees swiftly. They sped past the watching place and wind-tossed wild fig tree, away from under the wall, along the wagon track, and came to the two fair-flowing springs where two fountains rise that feed deep-eddying Skamandros. One flows with warm water, and steam rises up from around it as if from a blazing fire, while the other even in summer flows out cold as hail or snow or ice that forms in water. And there beside the springs are broad washing-troughs close by, smooth troughs of stone, where wives and lovely daughters of the men of Troy would wash the bright clothing, in the days of peace, before the sons of the Achaians came. They ran beside these, one fleeing, one pursuing. The one who fled was great, but far mightier was the one who pursued. For they were not striving for a beast of sacrifice or for an oxhide, prizes for men's speed of foot, but they raced for the life of horse-taming Hektor. Just as when victorious, sure-footed horses run rapidly around the turning-points, and some great prize lies in sight, whether a tripod or a woman, in honor of a man who has died, so three times around Priam's city those two circled with flying feet, and all the gods were watching.

Then the Father of gods and men spoke first among them: "I see a beloved man pursued around the wall. My heart is full of sorrow for Hektor, who has burned for me many thighs of oxen on the peaks of many-folded Ida and at other times on the city-height; but now noble Achilles is pursuing him with swift feet around Priam's town. Give your counsel, gods, and consider whether we will save him from death or now at last slay him, brave though he is, by the hand of Achilles, Peleus' son."

Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene answered him: “O Father, Lord of the bright lightning and the dark cloud, what is this you have said? Would you redeem back from ominous death a man who is a mortal, doomed long ago by fate? Do it, but we other gods will not all approve.”

And Cloud-Gathering Zeus spoke to her in answer: “Be of good cheer, Triton-born, dear child; I do not entirely mean it, and I am inclined to be kind to you. Do as it seems good to your mind, and do not hold back.”

Saying this, he stirred up Athene, who was already set on it, and from the peaks of Olympos she darted down.

But swift Achilles still sped after Hektor, chasing him furiously. Just as when a hound hunts a young deer on the mountains, having jumped it from its hiding place, through valleys and meadows, and if it hides under a bush to confuse him, yet scenting it out the hound runs constantly until he finds it; in the same way Hektor could not throw off Peleus’ swift-footed son. As often as he set himself to dart under the well-built walls near the Dardanian gates, hoping that they might help him from overhead with spears, just as often Achilles would gain on him and turn him toward the plain, while he himself always kept on the city side. Just as in a dream a man can never quite catch one whom he is chasing—the one can never quite escape and the other never quite catch up—in the same way Achilles could not overtake Hektor in the race, and Hektor could not escape. In this way Hektor might have avoided the coming of death, if this had not been the very last time when Apollo came close to him, he who supported his strength and his swift knees. Noble Achilles kept shaking his head at his people to forbid them to hurl sharp spears against Hektor, lest any of them should gain glory by striking him and he himself come second.

Fight and Death of Hektor

But when they had reached the springs for the fourth time, then the Father hung his golden balances, and set in them two lots of black death, one of Achilleus and one of horse-taming Hektor, and he held them in the middle and poised. Then Hektor's fated day sank down and fell to the house of Hades, and Phoibos Apollo abandoned him. But the bright-eyed goddess Athene came to Peleus' son and, standing close, spoke to him winged words: "Now, glorious Achilleus, dear to Zeus, I hope that we two shall bring great glory to the ships for the Achaians, having slain Hektor, in spite of all his thirst for fight. No longer is it possible for him to escape us, not even if darting Apollo labors greatly, groveling before the Father, aegis-bearing Zeus. But stand still now and catch your breath, and I will go and persuade this man to confront you in battle."

So spoke Athene, and he obeyed and was glad in his heart and stood, leaning on his bronze-pointed ashen spear. And she left him and came to noble Hektor, like Deïphobos in appearance and in strong voice and standing near spoke winged words to him: "Dear brother, swift Achilleus is pressing you violently, chasing you around Priam's town with swift feet; but come, let us make a stand and await him to defend ourselves."

Then great Hektor of the shining helmet answered her: "Deïphobos, before this you were far the dearest of my brothers, whom Hekabe and Priam brought forth, but now I think I will honor you even more because you have dared to come out from behind the walls for my sake, when you saw me, while the others hang back inside."

Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene spoke to him again: "Dear brother, indeed my father and lady mother and my companions around me begged me in turns to remain there, for they are all so terrified of him; but my heart within me was sore with dismal grief. Now we will fight with firm resolve, and let there be no sparing of spears, so that we may know whether Achilleus is to slay us and carry our bloody spoils to the hollow ships, or whether he might be conquered by your spear."

So saying, Athene led him on in her deceit. And when they had come close to one another to attack, Hektor of the shining helmet spoke to Achilles first: “No longer, son of Peleus, will I run away from you as before I ran three times around the great town of Priam and did not remain to await your attack. Now my heart commands me to stand up against you; I will either slay or be slain. But come here and let us vow by our gods, for they are the best witnesses of covenants: I will not treat you outrageously if Zeus grants me to outlast you and take your life, but when I have taken your glorious armor, O Achilles, I will give your dead body back to the Achaians, and you do the same.”

But swift-footed Achilles spoke to him with a grim gaze: “Hektor, you madman, do not talk to me about covenants. Just as there can be no pledge of faith between men and lions, nor can wolves and sheep be of one mind, but they continually think evil against each other, in the same way it is impossible for you and me to be friends, nor shall there be any pledge between us until one or the other has fallen and glutted Ares, the stubborn god of war, with blood. Remember all your battle skills now; now is the time for you to be a good spearman and courageous man of war. There is no longer any way of escape for you, but Pallas Athene will immediately subdue you under my spear; and now in one moment you will pay back all my sorrows for my friends whom you have slain in the fury of your spear.”

He spoke and poised his far-shadowing spear and hurled it. And noble Hektor watched it coming and avoided it; for with his eye on it he avoided it, and the bronze spear flew over him and fixed itself in the earth; but Pallas Athene snatched it up and gave it back to Achilles without Hektor, shepherd of the people, knowing about it. Then Hektor spoke to the noble son of Peleus: “You have missed; so you have not yet discovered from Zeus the hour of my doom, godlike Achilles, though you thought so. You are cunning of tongue and a deceiver in speech, hoping that I might forget my courage and strength, fearing you. You will not plant your spear in my back as I run away, but drive it straight through my breast as I attack you, if god has granted you to do it. Now it is your turn to avoid my spear

of bronze. If only you would take it all into your flesh! Then the war would be lighter for the Trojans, if only you were dead, for you are their greatest curse.”

He spoke and poised his long-shadowed spear and hurled it and smote the middle of the shield of Peleus’ son and did not miss him; but the spear bounded far back from the shield. And Hektor was furious that his swift weapon had left his hand in vain, and he stood downcast, for he had no second ashen spear. And he called with a loud shout to Deïphobos of the white shield and asked him for a long spear, but he was nowhere near. Then Hektor knew the truth in his heart and spoke and said: “Woe is me, certainly now the gods have summoned me to death. I thought the warrior Deïphobos was by my side, but he is within the wall, and it was Athene who deceived me. Now therefore evil death has come very near me, not far off, and there is no way of escape. This, then, was always the will of Zeus and of the Archer, the son of Zeus, who before would both help me; but now my fate has found me. At least let me not die without a struggle or shamefully, but in some great deed of arms which men yet to be born shall hear of.”

So saying, he drew his sharp sword that hung great and strong by his side and gathered himself and swooped like a soaring eagle that darts to the plain through the dark clouds to seize a tender lamb or crouching hare. So Hektor swooped, brandishing his sharp sword, and Achilles attacked him, for his heart was filled with wild fierceness, and he covered his breast with his beautiful engraved shield and tossed his bright, four-plated helmet; and around it waved the lovely golden plumes that Hephaistos had set thick around the crest. As a star moves among stars in the darkness of night, Hesperos,² loveliest of all stars set in heaven, in the same way a light flashed forth from the keen spear Achilles poised in his right hand, planning evil against noble Hektor, eyeing his fair flesh to find the best place. The rest of his flesh was covered by the fair bronze armor he stripped from strong Patroklos when he slew him, but there was an opening

2 Venus, the evening star.

where the collar bones coming from the shoulders clasp the neck at the throat, where the destruction of life comes quickest; there, as he came on, noble Achilles drove at him with his spear, and right through the tender neck went the point. Yet the bronze-weighted ashen spear did not cut through the windpipe, and he was still able to speak words of answer to his enemy. He fell down in the dust, and noble Achilles spoke exultingly: “Hektor, while you were spoiling Patroklos, you thought that you would be safe and thought nothing about me who was far off, you fool. But away among the hollow ships his companion, a mightier man by far, was left behind—I who now have unstrung your knees. The dogs and birds will tear you foully, but the Achaians will hold a funeral for Patroklos.”

Then Hektor of the shining helmet spoke to him with faint breath: “I beg you by your life and knees and parents, do not leave me for the dogs of the Achaians to devour by the ships, but take the great treasure of bronze and gold, gifts that my father and lady mother will give to you, and give them back my body again, so that the Trojans and Trojans’ wives can give me my due of fire after my death.”

But swift-footed Achilles spoke to him with a grim gaze: “Do not beg me, dog, by knees or parents. If only my heart would drive me to carve up and eat your flesh raw for the evil you have caused me; there is nothing that will keep the dogs from you, not even if they bring ten or twenty times the ransom and weigh it out here and promise even more; not even if Priam, Dardanos’ son, offered to pay your weight in gold; not even then will your lady mother lay you on a bed so she can mourn her son, but dogs and birds will devour you utterly.”

Then, dying, Hektor of the shining helmet spoke to him: “Truly I know you and see you for what you are; I was not destined to persuade you; your heart in your breast is iron. Take heed now lest I draw the wrath of the gods down onto you, on that day when Paris and Phoibos Apollo kill you, in spite of all your valor, at the Skaian gate.”

He ended, and the shadow of death came down upon him, and his soul flew from his limbs and was gone to the house of Hades, wailing her³ fate, leaving her vigor and youth. Then noble Achilles

3 “Her” refers to Hektor’s soul; see the footnote at the end of Book 16 for a discussion of this.

spoke to the dead man: “Die; as for my death, I will accept it whenever Zeus and the other immortal gods wish to bring it about.”

Three Speeches

He spoke and pulled his bronze spear from the corpse and set it aside, and he stripped the bloody armor from the shoulders. And the other sons of the Achaians ran up and gazed on the stature and marvelous beauty of Hektor. All who stood near stabbed him, and many a man would say, looking at his neighbor: “Truly Hektor is far easier to handle now than when he burned the ships with blazing fire.” They would speak this way and wound him as they stood near. And when swift, noble Achilleus had stripped him of his armor, he stood up among the Achaians and spake winged words: “Friends, leaders and councilors of the Argives, since the gods have granted to us to destroy this man who has done us more evil than all the rest together, come, let us go armored around the city, so that we may know something of the Trojans’ purpose, whether since he has fallen they will forsake the citadel, or whether they are inclined to remain even though Hektor is gone. But why does my heart debate this way? A dead man lies by the ships unmourned, unburied—Patroklos; I will not forget him while I remain among the living and my knees can stir. Even if the dead forget their dead in the house of Hades, I will remember my dear companion even there. But come, sons of the Achaians, let us now go back to the hollow ships, singing our song of victory, and take with us our enemy. We have won great glory; we have slain the noble Hektor, to whom the Trojans prayed throughout their city as if he had been a god.”

He spoke and arranged foul treatment of noble Hektor. He slit the tendons behind both feet, from heel to ankle-joint, and thrust cords of ox-hide through and tied him to his chariot, leaving his head to trail. And when he had mounted the chariot and lifted the famous armor into it, he lashed his horses to run, and they flew on eagerly.

And dust rose around the dragged man, and his dark hair flowed loose on either side and his once handsome head lay in the dust, for now Zeus had handed him over to his enemies to treat foully in his own native land.

So his head was all grimed with dust. But when his mother saw her son, she tore her hair and threw her shining veil far from her, and she cried aloud with an exceedingly bitter cry. And his father moaned piteously, and around them the people began crying and moaning throughout the town. It seemed as though all high Ilios was burning in fire. The people could scarcely keep back the old man in his hot desire to go out of the Dardanian gates. For he begged them all, throwing himself down in the muck and calling on each man by his name: “Stay back, friends, and though you love me, let me go out of the city alone to the ships of the Achaians. Let me beg this accursed horror-working man, if perhaps he may feel shame before his companions and pity an old man. He also has a father such as I am, Peleus, who fathered and reared him to be a curse of Trojans—and most of all to me he has brought sorrow. So many sons of mine he has slain in their flower—yet in spite of all sorrow for the rest I mourn them all less than this one alone, Hektor, for whom my sharp grief will bring me down to the house of Hades. If only he had died in my arms; then we would have wept and wailed our fill, his mother who bore him to her sorrow, and I myself.”

So he spoke, wailing, and all the men of the city moaned with him. And among the women of Troy, Hekabe led the wild lament: “My child, ah, woe is me! Why should I live on in my pain, now that you are dead—you who night and day were my boast through the city and a blessing to all, both men and women of Troy throughout the town who hailed you as a god, for you were a very great glory to them in your life. Now death and fate have overtaken you.”

So she spoke, wailing. But Hektor’s wife did not know yet, for no faithful messenger had come to tell her how her husband had remained outside the gates, but in an inner chamber of the lofty house she was weaving a double purple robe and embroidering on it many flowers. Then she called to her lovely-haired handmaids throughout

the house to set a great cauldron on the fire so that Hektor could have a warm bath when he came home out of the battle—foolish heart, unaware how, far from all bathings, bright-eyed Athene had slain him by the hand of Achilles. But she heard shrieks and groans from the battlements, and her limbs shook, and the shuttle fell from her hands to the ground. Then among her lovely-haired maids she spoke: “Two of you come this way with me so that I may see what is happening. I heard the voice of my husband’s noble mother, and in my own breast my heart leaps to my mouth and my knees are numb beneath me: surely some evil thing against the children of Priam is close by. If only such words would never reach my ear! Yet I fear terribly lest noble Achilles has cut off bold Hektor from the city by himself and chased him to the plain and ended his dangerous pride that possessed him, for he would never linger among the throng of men but ran out before them, yielding place to no man in his bravery.”

So saying, she rushed through the chamber like a mad woman, her heart pounding, and her handmaidens went with her. But when she came to the battlements and the throng of men, she stood still on the wall and looked and saw him being dragged in front of the city; swift horses dragged him carelessly toward the hollow ships of the Achaians. Then dark night came over her eyes and shrouded her, and she fell backward and gasped out her spirit. The bright adornments fell off her head, the frontlet and cap and woven band and the veil that golden Aphrodite gave her on the day when Hektor of the shining helmet led her out of the house of Eëtion, having given countless bride-gifts. And around her thronged her husband’s sisters and his brothers’ wives, and they held her up among them, for she despaired to the point of death. But when at last she came to herself and her soul returned into her breast, then wailing with deep sobs she spoke among the women of Troy: “O Hektor, woe is me! We were born to one fate then, you in Troy in the house of Priam, and I in Thebe under woody Plakos, in the house of Eëtion, who reared me from a little one—ill-fated father of a cruel-fated child. Oh, if only he had not begotten me! Now you go to the house of Hades beneath the secret places of the earth, and you leave me a widow in bitter mourning in

your halls; and your son is only an infant child—son of unhappy parents, you and me—and you can not help him. Hektor, since you are dead, he cannot help you either. For even if he escapes the Achaians' horrible war, labor and sorrow will cling to him from now on, for other men will take his lands. Becoming an orphan tears a child from his friends, and his head is always held low, and his cheeks are wet with tears. And in his need the child seeks his father's friends, plucking this one and that one by their cloak, and one of them who pities him holds his cup to his mouth a little and moistens his lips, but he does not satisfy his mouth. And some child who is not an orphan thrusts him out from the feast with blows and taunting words, 'Out with you! You have no father at our table.' Then he will return weeping to his widowed mother—Astyanax, who used to eat only marrow and the fat flesh of sheep upon his father's knee; and when sleep fell on him and he stopped his childish play, then he would sleep in bed, in his nurse's arms softly nestled, having satisfied his heart with good things. But now that he has lost his father, Astyanax will suffer many evils—the Trojans gave him that name, because you, Hektor, were the defender of their gates and their long walls. But now by the beaked ships, far from your parents, coiling worms will devour you when the dogs have had their fill, as you lie naked; yet in these halls clothing of yours still lies, delicate and lovely, wrought by the hands of women. But indeed I will destroy all these with burning fire, since they are no benefit to you, for you will never wear them, but this will be an honor to you from the men and the women of 'Troy.'"

So she spoke, wailing, and the women joined her cries.

Book XXIII: Ceremonies for Patroklos



The Winds Light the Pyre of Patroklos

Funeral Rites for Patroklos

So throughout the city they mourned. But when the Achaians came to the ships and to the Hellespont they scattered, each man to his own ship; but Achilles did not allow the Myrmidons to be scattered, but he spoke among his companions who delighted in war: “Swift-horsed Myrmidons, my trusty companions, let us not unyoke our swift-footed horses from their chariots, but let us go near and mourn for Patroklos with our horses and chariots, for this is the way to honor of the dead. Then when we have our fill of sorrowful wailing, we will unyoke the horses and eat together here.”

He spoke, and they made their laments with one voice, and Achilles led their mourning. They drove their well-groomed horses three times around the dead, mourning, and Thetis stirred up among them the desire for wailing. The sands were wet with tears, and so was the warriors’ armor, for they sorrowed for such a great and dreadful lord. And Peleus’ son led their loud wailing, laying his man-slaying hands on his companion’s breast: “All hail, Patroklos, even in the house of

Hades; for everything that I promised you before am I fulfilling now, since I have dragged Hektor here to give to the dogs to devour raw, and also twelve noble sons of the Trojans to slaughter at your pyre, because of my anger at your killing.”

He spoke and thought of foul treatment of noble Hektor, stretching him prone in the dust beside the bier of Menoitios’ son. And the rest took off their glittering bronze armor and unyoked their proudly-neighing horses and sat down in their great numbers beside the ship of swift-footed Aiakides, and he served them an ample funeral feast. Many sleek oxen were stretched out, their throats cut with iron, and many sheep and bleating goats, and many white-tusked boars well-grown in fat were put on spits to singe in the flame of Hephaistos; so blood was flowing in cupfuls on all sides around the corpse.

But the Achaian leaders brought the swift-footed prince, the son of Peleus, to noble Agamemnon, barely able to persuade him to go, for his heart was full of anger for his companion. And when they had come to Agamemnon’s shelter, immediately they commanded clear-voiced heralds to set a great tripod on the fire, if perhaps they might persuade the son of Peleus to wash the bloody gore off himself. But he refused steadfastly and furthermore swore an oath: “No, indeed by Zeus, who is the highest and best of the gods, it is not lawful that water should come near my head before I have laid Patroklos on the fire and heaped a burial mound and shaved my hair; because another grief will never reach my heart like this while I remain among the living. Yet now for the present let us give ourselves to our mournful meal; but in the morning, O king of men, Agamemnon, rouse the people to bring wood and furnish all that it is right for a dead man to have when he goes beneath the misty gloom, so that unwearying fire can burn him quickly from out of our sight, and the people can return to their work.”

So he spoke, and they listened readily to him and obeyed, and each one eagerly prepared his meal and ate, and their souls had no lack of equal share in the feast. But when they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, each of the rest went down to his shelter to take his rest; but the son of Peleus lay groaning deeply on the beach of

the loud-sounding sea amid the host of Myrmidons, in an open place where waves were breaking on the shore.

Now when sleep took hold of him, easing the cares of his heart, a deep sleep that came over him—for his glorious knees were terribly tired from the attack on Hektor near windy Ilios—then the spirit of unfortunate Patroklos came to him, in every way like his living self in size and bright eyes and voice, and the clothing on his body was the same; and he stood over Achilles' head and spoke to him: "You sleep and have forgotten me, Achilles. In my life you were never forgetful of me, but you are in my death. Bury me quickly, so that I can pass the gates of Hades. The spirits banish me far away, the thin phantoms of dead men, and they do not let me mingle with them beyond the River; in vain I wander beside the wide-gated dwelling of Hades. Now I beg you pitifully, give me your hand, for I will never again come back from Hades, when you have given me my due, the fire. Never among the living will we sit apart from our dear companions and make plans together, but the harsh fate which was appointed to me from my birth has swallowed me up. Yes, and you yourself, Achilles, equal of the gods, are doomed to die beneath the wall of the noble Trojans. Yet I will say one thing and command you, if perhaps you will obey it. Do not lay my bones apart from yours, Achilles, but together, just as we were raised in your house, when Menoitios brought me as a child from Opous to your country because of a terrible manslaughter, that day when I killed Amphidamas' son, not intending to, in childish anger over dice. Then the Lord Peleus took me into his house and raised me kindly and made me your attendant. So let one vessel contain our bones, a two-handed golden vessel, your lady mother's gift."

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him: "Why have you come here, my brother, and commanded me to do all these things? Indeed I will fulfill them all and obey your commands. But stand closer to me; for one moment let us throw our arms around each other and take our fill of sorrowful mourning."

He spoke and reached out with his hands, but could not clasp him; for like a vapor the spirit went down beneath the earth with a

faint shriek. And Achilles sprang up astonished and struck his hands together and spoke words of grief: “Ah, even in the house of Hades a spirit and phantom of the dead remains, though the life is not it in any real way; for all night long the spirit of unfortunate Patroklos stood over me, wailing and moaning, and commanded me all the things that I should do, and it seemed amazingly like his living self.”

So he spoke and stirred in all of them a longing to lament; and rosy-fingered Dawn shone out on them while they still mourned around the pitiful corpse. Then Lord Agamemnon sped mules and men from all the shelters to fetch wood, and a man of valor watched over it, Meriones, the attendant of gracious Idomeneus. They went out with wood-cutting axes in their hands and strong-woven ropes, and the mules went in front of them, and uphill and downhill and sideways and across they went. But when they came to the spurs of many-fountained Ida, immediately they began to heartily chop down tall, leafy oaks with the long-edged bronze, and the trees fell with a loud crash. Then after splitting them, the Achaians bound them behind the mules, and they tore up the earth with their feet as they struggled toward the plain through the thick underbrush. And all the wood-cutters carried logs, for Meriones, attendant of gracious Idomeneus, had commanded this. And on the shore they threw them down in a line where Achilles planned a mighty tomb for Patroklos and for himself.

Then when they had laid down great piles of wood all around, they sat down together and waited. Immediately Achilles commanded the warlike Myrmidons to put on their armor and to yoke the horses to their chariots; so they rose and put their armor on and mounted their chariots, both fighting men and charioteers. In front were the men in chariots, and a host of infantry, countless, followed after them. And in the midst his companions carried Patroklos. They heaped the whole corpse with their hair that they cut off and threw onto the body; and behind them noble Achilles held the head, sorrowing, because he was sending a noble companion down to the realm of Hades.

And when they came to the place to which Achilles had commanded them, they set down the dead man and piled great quantities of wood for him. Then swift-footed noble Achilles thought of one more thing; standing away from the pyre he cut off a golden lock, the lock he had grown to offer to the River Spercheios, and, terribly troubled, he spoke, looking out over the wine-dark sea: “Spercheios, my father Peleus vowed something different to you—that when I returned there to my native land I would cut my hair for you and offer a holy great sacrifice and would sacrifice fifty rams there above your springs where your sacred enclosure is and the altar with incense smoking on it. This is what the old man vowed, but you have not fulfilled his desire for him. And now, since I will not return to my beloved native land, I give this hair to the hero Patroklos to take away.”

So saying, he placed the hair in the hands of his dear companion and stirred in all of them the desire to mourn. And so the light of the sun would have gone down on their lamentation, if Achilles had not said quickly to Agamemnon as he stood beside him: “Son of Atreus, the host of the Achaians will regard your words most; they will have enough of mourning, so now dismiss them from the fire and urge them to prepare their meal. And we to whom the dead is dearest will see to these other things; but let the leaders remain close.”

When Agamemnon, king of men, heard this, he immediately dismissed the host among the trim ships, but those nearest to the dead man remained there and piled the wood and made a pyre a hundred feet long and wide, and on the pyre’s top they placed his corpse with anguish in their hearts. And they skinned many strong sheep and shambling crook-horned oxen and prepared them in front of the pyre; and taking the fat from all of them, great-hearted Achilles wrapped the corpse in it from head to foot and piled the flayed bodies around it. And he set on the pyre two-handled jars of honey and oil, leaning them against the bier; and he swiftly threw four strong-necked horses on the pyre, groaning aloud. The dead leader had nine house-dogs; Achilles slew two of them and threw them on the pyre. And he killed the twelve valiant sons of great-hearted Trojans with his sword—for he harbored hatred in his heart—and he kindled the

merciless might of the fire to feed on all these. Then he moaned aloud and called on his dear companion by name: “All hail to you, O Patroklos, even in the house of Hades, for all that I promised you before I am now fulfilling. See how the fire devours the twelve valiant sons of great-hearted Trojans in company with you, but I will never give Hektor, son of Priam, to the fire to feed on, but to dogs.”

So he spoke, threatening, but no dogs would touch Hektor, for day and night Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus, kept the dogs away and anointed him with rose-sweet ambrosial oil so that Achilles would not tear him when he dragged him. And over him Phoibos Apollo brought a dark cloud from heaven to earth and covered the whole place where the dead man lay, so that the sun’s strength would not shrivel his flesh around his sinews and limbs.

But the pyre of dead Patroklos did not kindle. Then swift-footed noble Achilles had a further thought; standing aside from the pyre he prayed to the two Winds of North and West and promised them great offerings, and, pouring large drink-offerings from a golden cup, he begged them to come, so that the corpses might burn quickly in the blaze and the wood swiftly catch fire. Then Iris, when she heard his prayer, went swiftly with the message to the Winds. They were feasting all together at their meal within the house of the blustery West Wind when Iris sped there and stopped on the stone threshold. And when their eyes saw her, every one jumped up and called to her to sit by him. But she refused to sit and spoke her word: “I will not sit; I must go back to the streams of Okeanos, to the Ethiopians’ land where they offer great sacrifices to the immortal gods, that I too may feast at their rites. But Achilles is begging the North Wind and the loud West to come and promising them great offerings if you will kindle the pyre where Patroklos lies, whom all the Achaians are mourning.”

Having said this, she departed, and they arose with a mighty roar, rolling the clouds before them. And swiftly they came blowing over the sea, and the waves towered beneath their violent blast; and they came to deep-soiled Troy and hit the great pile, and the mighty fire roared thunderously. So all night long they drove the flame of

the pyre together, blowing with a shrieking blast; and all night swift Achilles, holding a two-handled cup, drew wine from a golden bowl and poured it out and drenched the earth, calling upon the soul of unhappy Patroklos. Just as a father wails when he burns the bones of his newly-married son whose death is sorrow to his unhappy parents, so Achilles wailed as he burned the bones of his companion, moving heavily around the burning pile with many cries.

But at the hour when the Morning Star shines to promise light on the earth, the star that yellow-robed Dawn follows and spreads over the salt sea, then the burning slowed and the flame died down. And the Winds went back again to their home over the Thracian main, and the sea roared with a violent swell. Then the son of Peleus turned away from the burning and lay down exhausted, and sweet sleep came over him. But those who were with Atreus' son gathered all together, and the noise and din of their approach aroused Achilles; and he sat up and spoke a word to them: "Son of Atreus and you other leaders of the Achaians, first quench the burning with gleaming wine as far as the fire's strength has reached, and then let us gather up the bones of Patroklos, Menoitios' son, separating them carefully; they are easy to discern, for he lay in the middle of the pyre, while the rest, horses and men, burned mingled at the edge. And let us put his bones into a golden urn, wrapped in double folds of fat, until I myself am hidden in Hades. But I urge you not to build a huge burial mound; raise nothing more than a fitting one, then afterward you Achaians can build it broad and high, whoever of you may be left in the benched ships after I am gone."

So he spoke, and they obeyed the swift-footed son of Peleus. First they quenched the burning with gleaming wine as far as the flame had gone, and the ash settled deep; then with lamentation they gathered up the white bones of their gracious companion into a golden urn and double-folded fat and placed the urn in the shelter and covered it with a linen veil. And they marked the circle of the burial mound and set the foundations of it around the pyre and immediately heaped onto it a pile of earth. Then when they had heaped up the burial mound they prepared to go back. But Achilles kept the

men there and made them sit in a great assembly, and from his ships he brought out prizes—cauldrons and tripods and horses and mules and strong oxen and lovely-robed women and grey iron.

Funeral Games for Patroklos

First, for the swift chariot-racers he set out a noble prize: a woman skilled in beautiful handcraft for the winner to lead home, and a tripod with handles that held twenty-two measures, all these for the first man; and for the second he set out an unbroken six-year-old mare with a mule foal in her womb; and for the third he offered a great cauldron untouched by fire, holding four measures, as bright as when it was first made; and for the fourth he set out two talents of gold; and for the fifth a two-handled urn untouched by fire. Then he stood up and spoke a word among the Argives: “Son of Atreus and you other strong-armored Achaians, for the chariot-racers these prizes lie awaiting them at the racing ground. If we Achaians were holding our games in some other man’s honor, I would win the first prize and take it to my shelter; for you know by how far my pair of horses are first in excellence, for they are immortal, and Poseidon gave them to my father Peleus, and he gave them in turn to me. But I will not remain here, I and my swift-hooved horses, since they have lost so glorious a charioteer, and one so kind, who so often poured smooth oil on their manes when he had washed them in clear water. They stand and mourn for him, and their manes are trailing on the ground, and they stand there with sorrow in their hearts. But you others throughout the army get to your places, whoever of the Achaians trusts in his horses and firm-jointed chariot.”

So spoke the son of Peleus, and the swift chariot-racers gathered. First of all to rise up was Eumelos, king of men, Admetos’ son, a skillful charioteer; and next to him rose Tydeus’ son, valiant Diomedes, and yoked his horses of the breed of Tros, which once he had seized from Aineias when Apollo saved their master. And after him

rose Atreus' son, fair-haired heaven-born Menelaos, and yoked for himself a swift pair—Aithe, Agamemnon's mare, and his own horse, Podargos. Anchises' son, Echebolos, had given her as payment to Agamemnon, so that he might avoid following him to windy Ilios and could enjoy himself at home; for Zeus had given him great wealth, and he dwelt in Sikyon with spacious lawns—so Menelaos yoked her, and she strained eagerly for the race. And fourth, Antilochos prepared his lovely-maned horses—Antilochos, the noble son of Nestor, the great-hearted king, who was the son of Neleus—and swift horses bred at Pylos drew his car. And his father, standing by his side, gave profitable advice, though he was wise enough himself: "Antilochos, although you are young, Poseidon has loved you and taught you skill with horses, so there is no great need to teach you, for you well know how to wheel around the turning-post; but your horses are slow in the race, therefore I think there will be sad work for you. For the horses of the others are faster. But the men do not have more cunning than you have; so dear son, keep in mind all your knowledge, so that the prize does not escape you. A woodsman is better by skill than by force; a helmsman on the wine-dark deep sea steers his swift ship buffeted by winds by skill; and by cunning one charioteer can get the better of another. For whoever, trusting in his horses and chariot alone, turns thoughtlessly and wide at the ends of the course, his horses swerve on the course and he does not keep them in hand. But whoever has a crafty mind, even if he drives worse horses, always keeping his eye on the post turns very close to it, nor is unaware how far at the beginning to force his horses by the ox-hide reins; but he keeps them carefully in check and watches the leader in the race. Now will I tell you a clear sign and it will not escape your eye. A fathom's¹ height above the ground stands a withered stump of oak or pine which does not decay in the rain, and two white stones on either side of it are set at the meeting of the tracks, and all around it is smooth driving ground. Whether it is a monument for some man dead long ago, or was made as a goal for a race by ancient men, this now is the

1 Six feet.

mark used by swift-footed noble Achilles. So you must drive close and steer your horses and chariot close to it and lean your body on the well-built chariot slightly to their left and call on the off-horse with your voice and the lash and give him some rein from your hand. But let the near horse hug the post so that the hub of the well-wrought wheel seems to graze it, yet beware of touching the stone, lest you wound the horses and break the chariot; that would be a triumph to the rest and shame to yourself. But, dear son, be sharp and on your guard; for if at the turning-post you pass the rest, there is no one who will overtake you from behind or pass you, not even if he drove the great Arion in pursuit, the swift horse of Adrastos, of divine descent, or the horses of Laomedon, best of all bred in this land.”

So spoke Neleus’ son Nestor and sat down again in his place when he had told his son all about this.

Meriones was the fifth to prepare his sleek-coated horses. Then they went to their chariots and cast the lots, and Achilles shook them, and the lot of Antilochos, Nestor’s son, leaped out; Lord Eumelos had the next lot, and next to him the son of Atreus, spear-famed Menelaos, and next to him Meriones drew his place; then last the son of Tydeus, far the best of all, drew his lot for his chariot’s place. Then they stood side by side, and Achilles showed them the turning-post, far off on the smooth plain; and beside it he placed an umpire, god-like Phoinix, his father’s attendant, so that he could watch the race and know the truth about it.

Then all of them lifted the lashes above their horses and whipped them with the reins and called to them eagerly with words; and they immediately sped swiftly over the plain, leaving the ships behind, and beneath their breasts billowed the rising dust like a cloud or whirlwind, and their manes waved on the blowing wind. And the chariots sometimes ran on the rich earth and other times would bound into the air. And the drivers stood in the chariots, and the heart of every man beat fast in longing for victory, and every man called to his horses that flew amid the dust across the plain.

But when the swift horses were now running the last part of the course, back toward the grey sea, then the prowess of each became

clear, and the horses strained in the race; and soon the swift mares of Pheres' grandson rushed to the front, and next to them Diomedes' stallions of the breed of Tros, not far away, but very close, for they always seemed as though they would mount Eumelos' chariot, and his back and broad shoulders were warm with their breath, for they bent their heads close to him as they flew along. In this way Tydeus' son would either have outstripped the other or made it a dead heat, had not Phoibos Apollo been angry with him and struck from his hand the shining lash. Then tears of anger streamed from his eyes, for he saw the mares still going at great speed, even faster than before, while his own horses were thrown off by running without being spurred. But Athene was not unaware of Apollo's trick against the son of Tydeus, and she quickly sped after the shepherd of the people and gave him back the lash and put spirit into his horses. Then the goddess went after the son of Admetos in anger and broke his horses' yoke, and the mares ran sideways off the course, and the pole was twisted to the ground. And Eumelos was hurled out of the chariot beside the wheel, and his elbows and mouth and nose were torn, and his forehead was bruised above his eyebrows; and his eyes filled with tears and his vigorous voice was choked. Then the son of Tydeus held his swift-footed horses to one side, darting out far in front of the rest, for Athene put spirit into his horses and shed glory on him. Next after him came golden-haired Menelaos, Atreus' son. But Antilochos called to his father's horses: "Move in, strain to your fastest pace. Indeed I do not urge you to compete with those horses of wise Tydeus' son, to which Athene has now given great speed and shed glory on their charioteer. But overtake the son of Atreus' horses quickly and do not be outrun by them, or else Aithe who is just a mare will heap scorn on you. Why are you outrun, brave steeds? I will tell you this, and it will come to pass—you will find no lenience with Nestor, shepherd of men, but he will slaughter you promptly with the edge of the sword if we only win the worse prize through carelessness. Go after them at your fastest, and as for me, I will devise a plan to pass them in the tightest part of the course, and this will not fail me."

So he spoke, and, fearing the voice of the prince, they ran faster for awhile; and soon the good warrior Antilochos saw a narrow place in a sunken part of the path. There was a rift in the earth where torrential water gathered and eroded part of the track away and hollowed out the spot. Menelaos drove there, avoiding encountering the other wheels. But Antilochos turned his swift-footed horses out of the track and followed him a little to one side. And the son of Atreus was alarmed and shouted to Antilochos: “Antilochos, you are driving recklessly; keep your horses in hand! The road is narrow, but soon you can pass me in a wider place, or else you might run afoul of my chariot and wreck us both.”

So he spoke, but Antilochos drove even more fiercely than before, working his lash, as though he had not heard him. As far as the range of a disk swung from the shoulder when a young man hurls it, trying his strength, that far they ran on; then the mares of Atreus’ son fell back, for he ceased urging them on lest the swift-footed horses should collide on the track and overturn the well-built chariots, and the drivers fall in the dust in their zeal for victory. So scolding Antilochos, golden-haired Menelaos spoke: “Antilochos, no mortal man is more malicious than you. Go on your mad way, since we Achaians have falsely called you wise. But even so you will not carry off the prize without being challenged to swear an oath.”

So saying he called aloud to his horses: “Do not hold back or stand still with sorrow in your hearts. Their feet and knees will grow weary before yours, for they both lack youth.”

So he spoke, and, fearing the voice of the prince, they sped on faster, and were soon close to the others.

Now the Argives sitting in assembly were watching the horses, and they came flying amidst their dust over the plain. And the first to see them was Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, for he was sitting outside the assembly in the highest viewing place, and when he heard the voice of someone shouting, though far off, he knew who it was; and he saw a horse showing clearly in the front, a chestnut over most of his body, but on the forehead he was marked with a white star, round like the moon. And Idomeneus stood upright and spoke to

the Argives: “Friends, leaders, and counselors of the Argives, do I alone see the horses, or do you also? A new pair seem to me to be in front now, and a new charioteer is showing; the mares which led in the outward course must have been thrown off out there in the plain. For I saw them turn first around the nearer post, but now I cannot see them anywhere, though my eyes are gazing everywhere along the Trojan plain. Did the reins escape the charioteer so that he could not drive correctly around the post and failed in the turn? I think he must have been thrown out and broken his chariot, and the mares must have left the course in the wildness of their hearts. But you all stand up too and look, for I myself cannot see clearly, but the first man seems to me to be one of Aitolian race, and he rules among Argives, the son of horse-taming Tydeus, strong Diomedes.”

Then swift Aias, Oileus’ son, rebuked him in a shameful way: “Idomeneus, why are you a braggart from a long time past? The high-stepping mares are still far off as they race over the wide plain. You are not by far the youngest among the Argives, and your eyes do not see the keenest from your head, yet you continually brag. It would be better for you not to be a braggart, for there are better men here. And the mares leading are the ones that led before, Eumelos’ mares, and he stands and holds the reins in the chariot.”

Then the leader of the Cretans spoke angrily in answer: “Aias, master of insults, ill-advised, in everything else you are behind the other Argives, for your mind is hostile. Let us wager a tripod or cauldron, and make Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, our umpire about which mares are leading, so that you may pay and learn.”

So he spoke, and immediately swift Aias, Oileus’ son, rose angrily to answer with harsh words, and strife between the two would have gone further had not Achilles himself stood up and spoke a word: “Do not answer each other with harsh words any longer, Aias and Idomeneus, for evil words are not fitting. Surely you are displeased with any one else who would do this. Sit in the assembly and keep your eyes on the horses; soon they will be here in their zeal for victory, and then you will each recognize the Argives’ horses—which ones follow, and which lead.”

He spoke, and the son of Tydeus came driving up, and with his lash struck now and again from the shoulder, and his horses were stepping high as they sped swiftly on their way. And sprinklings of dust always struck the charioteer, and his chariot overlaid with gold and tin ran behind his swift-footed steeds, and there was very little trace of the wheel-tires behind him in the fine dust, as they flew swiftly on. Then he drew up in the midst of the assembly, and great quantities of sweat poured from the horses' heads and chests to the ground. And Diomedes leaped to earth from the shining chariot and leaned his lash against the yoke. Then faithful Sthenelos did not delay, but promptly took the prize and gave the woman and the double-handled tripod to his proud companions to take away, and he freed the horses from the yoke.

Next Antilochos, grandson of Neleus, drove in his horses, having passed Menelaos not by swiftness but by craftiness, yet even now Menelaos held his swift horses near. As far as a horse which pulls his master is from the wheel, straining with the car over the plain, his hindmost tail-hairs touch the tire, for the wheel runneth very close nor is there much space between as he speeds far over the plain; by that much was Menelaos behind high-born Antilochos, although at first he was a whole disk-cast behind, but quickly he was catching up to Antilochos, for the high spirits of Agamemnon's mare, sleek-coated Aithe, were rising in her. And if they had further to run he would have passed his rival and not even made it a draw. But Meriones, the stout attendant of Idomeneus, came in a spear-throw behind famous Menelaos, for his sleek-coated horses were last of all, and he himself was the slowest chariot-driver in the race. Last of them all came Admetos' son, dragging his noble chariot, driving his horses in front of him. When swift-footed noble Achilles saw him he pitied him, and he stood up and spoke winged words among the Argives: "The best man of them all drives his swift-footed horses in last. But let us give him a prize, as is right, the prize for second place; but let the son of Tydeus take the prize for first place."

So he spoke, and everyone applauded his decision. And he would have given him the mare, for the Achaians applauded, had not Anti-

lochos, son of great-hearted Nestor, risen up and answered Peleian Achilles in defense of his rights: “O Achilles, I will be very angry with you if you do this, for you are thinking of taking away my prize, because you think about how things went badly for his chariot and swift horses, and him too, though he is a good man. No, he should have prayed to the immortals, and then would he not have come in last of all in the race. But if you pity him and he is dear to your heart, there is a lot of gold in your shelter, and there is bronze and sheep, handmaids are there, and swift-hooved horses. Take some of that and later give him an even richer prize, or now, so the Achaians can applaud you. But I will not give up the mare; let any man who wishes try to battle me for her.”

So he spoke, and swift-footed noble Achilles smiled, pleased with Antilochos, for he was his dear companion; and he spoke winged words in answer to him: “Antilochos, if you would have me give Eumelos something else from my house instead, I will do that. I will give him a breastplate that I took from Asteropaios, made of bronze, on which there is a casting of tin overlaid, and it will be very valuable to him.” He spoke and told his beloved companion Automedon to bring it from the hut, and he went and brought it. Then he put it in Eumelos’ hands, and Eumelos took it gladly.

But Menelaos also arose among them, vexed in his heart, very angry at Antilochos, so the herald put the staff in his hand and called for silence among the Argives; then that godlike man spoke among them: “Antilochos, you who once were wise, what thing is this you have done? You have shamed my skill and made my horses fail, thrusting your own far worse horses in front. You leaders and counselors of the Argives, judge between us two and do not favor either one, so that none of the armor-clad Achaians can ever say, ‘By forcing Antilochos through false words Menelaos took the mare, though his horses were far worse, because he has the advantage in rank and power.’ No, I myself will resolve the issue, and I think that none of the Danaans will reproach me, for the trial will be just. Antilochos, beloved of Zeus, come here, and as it is established, stand up before your horses and chariot and take in your hand the supple lash you

drove with and, touching your horses, swear by the Enfolder and Shaker of the Earth that you did not intentionally interfere with my chariot by trickery.”

Then wise Antilochos answered him: “Be patient with me, for I am far younger than you, King Menelaos, and you precede me and are my better. You know how a young man’s sins come about, for his thoughts are hastier and his planning is shallow. So let your heart tolerate me, and I will myself give to you the mare I have taken. Indeed, if you ask some other greater thing from my house, I am willing to give it to you immediately, rather than lose forever my place in your heart, O beloved of Zeus, and sin against the gods.”

So spoke great-hearted Nestor’s son and brought the mare and put her in Menelaos’ hands. And his heart was glad, as when the dew comes upon the ears of ripening grain, when the fields are bristling for harvest, so pleased was your soul, Menelaos, within your heart. And he spoke winged words to Antilochos: “Antilochos, now I will of my own free will put away my anger against you, since you have never before been flighty or light-minded, even though just now your reason was overcome by youthfulness. Another time be reluctant to outwit better men. No other Achaian could have easily persuaded me, but you have suffered and worked hard, and so has your noble father and brother, for my sake; therefore I will listen to your supplication, and I will even give you the mare, though she is mine, so that these others may know that my heart was never haughty or hard.”

He spoke and gave the mare to Noëmon, Antilochos’ companion to lead away, and then he took the shining cauldron. And Meriones took the two talents of gold for fourth place, as he had come in. So the fifth prize was left unclaimed, a two-handled cup; Achilles gave this to Nestor, carrying it to him through the assembly of Argives, and stood by him and said: “Let this be a treasure for you too, old man; a memorial of the burial of Patroklos”; for you will see him no more among the Argives. Now I give you this prize freely, for you will not be competing in boxing, or wrestling, nor will you enter the javelin contest, or race with your feet; for grim old age already weighs on you.”

Saying this, he placed it in his hand, and Nestor accepted it gladly and spoke winged words: “Truly, you have said all fittingly, my son; for my limbs are no longer firm, friend, nor are my feet, and my arms do not swing lightly from my shoulders. If only my youth and force were so firm as when the Epeians were burying Lord Amarynkeus at Bouprasion, and his sons held the king’s funeral games. Then no man was like me, neither of the Epeians nor of the Pylians themselves or of the great-hearted Aitolians. In boxing I overcame Klytomedes, son of Enops, and in wrestling I beat Angkaïos of Pleuron, who stood up against me, and in the foot-race I outran Iphiklos, a very good man, and with the spear I outthrew Phyleus and Polydoros; only in the chariot-race the two sons of Aktor beat me, by crowding their horses in front of me, jealous for victory, because the best prizes were left at home. They were twins; one always held the reins, yes, he always held the reins while the other one commanded the horses with the lash. I was once that way, but now let younger men join in such feats; I must bow to sorrowful age, but back then I was notable among heroes. But now you too hold the funeral for your companion with games. I accept this gift with gladness, and my heart rejoices that you always remember my friendship to you—and I do not forget you either—and the honor which it is proper that I should be given among the Achaians. And may the gods grant you the grace you deserve for this.”

So he spoke, and the son of Peleus went back down to the full assembly of the Achaians when he had listened to all the thanks of Neleus’ son. Then he proclaimed prizes for the violent boxing match; he led out a sturdy mule and tethered it amidst the assembly, a six-year-old unbroken mule, the hardest of all to break; and for the loser he set out a two-handled cup. Then he stood up and spoke a word among the Argives: “Son of Atreus and you other strong-armored Achaians, for these rewards we summon two of the best men to lift up their hands to box with all their might. He to whom Apollo grants endurance to the end, and all the Achaians acknowledge it, let him take the sturdy mule and return with her to his shelter; and the loser will take with him the two-handled cup.”

So he spoke, and immediately a great and valiant man, skilled in boxing, arose; it was Epeios, son of Panopeus, and he laid his hand on the sturdy mule and said aloud: “Let someone come to carry off the two-handled cup; I say that none of the other Achaians will take the mule in victory with his fists, for I claim to be the best man here. Is it not enough that I am less skilled than in battle? It is not possible for a man to be skilled in all arts. This I declare and it will be fulfilled: I will completely bruise my opponent’s body and break his bones; so his friends should remain here to carry him out once he is conquered by my hands.”

So he spoke, and they all remained silent. Then alone rose up against him Euryalos, a godlike man, son of King Mekisteus, the son of Talaos; Mekisteus who came once to Thebes when Oedipus had fallen, to his burial, and there he conquered all the sons of Kadmos. So the son of Tydeus, famous with the spear, got Euryalos ready for the fight, encouraging him with his words, and greatly desired victory for him. First he put on a belt, and next he gave him well-cut thongs of the hide of an ox from the field. And when the two boxers were ready, they went into the middle of the ring, and, both lifting up their strong hands, they began, and their hands joined battle terribly. Then was there terrible grinding of teeth, and sweat flowed from all their limbs. And noble Epeios attacked, and as the other man looked for an opening, he struck him on the cheek, and he could not stand any longer, for his noble limbs failed immediately under him. Just as when a fish leaps from under the North Wind’s ripple near a weed-covered beach, and then the black wave hides it again, so Euryalos leaped and fell at that blow. But great-hearted Epeios took him in his hands and set him upright, and his beloved companions stood around him, and led him through the ring with his feet dragging, spitting out clotted blood, his head drooping sideways, and they set him down in his swoon among them and they themselves went out and fetched the two-handled cup.

Then Peleus’ son immediately proclaimed the prizes for a third contest, offering them to the Danaans, for the terrible wrestling match; for the winner a great tripod for standing over the fire, valued

by the Achaians at twelve oxen's worth; and for the loser he brought a woman into the midst, skilled in many kinds of work, and they valued her at four oxen. And he stood up and spoke a word among the Argives: "Rise, any who wishes to enter this contest."

So he spoke, and great Aias, son of Telamon, arose; and also Odysseus of many wiles, the crafty one, stood up. And the two being prepared went into the middle of the ring, and each clasped the other in his arms with strong hands, like the rafters of a lofty house which some famed craftsman locks together, to withstand the wind's force. And their backs creaked, gripped firmly under vigorous hands, and sweat ran down in streams, and frequent welts sprang up along their ribs and shoulders, red with blood, while they continually struggled with all their might for victory, to win the wrought tripod. Odysseus could not trip Aias and bring him to the ground, nor could Aias Odysseus, for Odysseus' strength withstood him. But when the strong-armed Achaians began to be annoyed, then great Aias, Telamon's son, said to Odysseus: "Heaven-born son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, either you lift me, or I will lift you, and the outcome will be up to Zeus." Having said this, he lifted him, but Odysseus remembered his craft. He deftly struck behind the hollow of Aias' knee and loosened his limbs and threw him down backward, and Odysseus fell upon his chest, and the people stared and were amazed. Then in his turn much-enduring noble Odysseus tried to lift Aias and moved him a little from the ground but did not lift him, so he crooked his knee within the other man's, and they both fell on the ground close to each other and were covered with dust. And now rising up again a third time they would have wrestled, if Achilles had not himself arisen and held them back: "Stop struggling with each other; do not wear yourselves out with pain. Victory is with both of you; take equal prizes and depart, so that other Achaians may contend."

So he spoke, and they were willing to hear and to obey, and they wiped the dust from them and put their jackets on.

Then immediately the son of Peleus set out other prizes for swiftness of foot; a mixing-bowl with silverwork, it held six measures, and for beauty it was by far the best in the world, for craftsmen

of Sidon had crafted it skillfully and Phoenician men brought it over the misty sea and landed in harbour with it and gave it as a gift to Thoas; and Euneos, the son of Jason, gave it to the hero Patroklos as a ransom for Lykaon, Priam's son. Achilles set this cup forth as a prize in honor of his friend, for whoever would be fastest on his feet. For second place he set out a great and very fat ox, and for the last prize half a talent of gold. And he stood up and spoke a word among the Argives: "Rise up, you who wish to enter this contest."

So he spoke, and immediately swift Aias, Oileus' son, rose up, and Odysseus of many wiles, and after them Nestor's son, Antilochos, for he was best of all the young men in the footrace. Then they stood side by side, and Achilles showed them the goal. The running was vigorous from the start, but Oileus' son promptly shot to the front, and close behind him came noble Odysseus, as close as a weaving-rod is to a lovely-robed woman's breast when she pulls it skilfully with her hands, drawing the spool along the warp, and holds the rod close to her breast; so close Odysseus ran behind Aias and stepped right in his footsteps before the dust even settled, and the breath of noble Odysseus fell on his head as he ran lightly on, and all the Achaians applauded his struggle for the victory and called out to him as he struggled hard. But when they were running the last part of the course, Odysseus quickly prayed in his soul to bright-eyed Athene: "Hear me, goddess, come be a good helper for my feet."

So he prayed, and Pallas Athene heard him and made his limbs feel light, both feet and hands. But when they were now almost to the prize, then Aias slipped as he ran, for Athene wrecked his running, where gore had been thrown from the slaughter of the loud-bellowing oxen that swift Achilles butchered in honor of Patroklos; and Aias' mouth and nostrils were filled with that filth of oxen. So much-enduring noble Odysseus, as he came in first, took the mixing-bowl, and famous Aias took the ox. And he stood holding in his hand the horn of the ox of the field, sputtering out the filth, and spoke among the Argives: "It was the goddess who wrecked my running, she who always stands by Odysseus' side and helps him like a mother."

So he spoke, but they all laughed happily to see him. Then Antilochos, smiling, carried off the last prize and spoke his word among

the Argives: “Friends, you will all bear witness when I say that even in this too the immortals favor elder men. For Aias is a little older than I, but Odysseus is of an earlier generation and earlier race of men. His is a youthful old age, they say, and it would be for any Achaian to rival him in speed, except Achilles.”

So he spoke and honored the swift son of Peleus. And Achilles answered him and said: “Antilochos, your praise will not go unnoticed; I will give you a half-talent of gold over and above.” He spoke and set it in his hands, and Antilochos accepted it gladly.

Then Peleus’ son brought a long-shadowed spear into the ring and laid it there, and a shield and helmet, the armor of Sarpedon which Patroklos had taken from him. And he stood up and spoke a word among the Argives: “To win these arms we urge two of the best warriors to put on their armor and take up flesh-cleaving bronze to try each other before the people, to see which of the two shall first reach the other’s fair flesh and touch the inward parts through armor and dark blood. I will give to him this silver-studded sword, a noble Thracian sword that I took from Asteropaios; and let both carry off this armor to hold in common, and we will give them a noble feast in the shelters.”

So he spoke, and then Telamon’s son, great Aias, and Tydeus’ son, stalwart Diomedes, rose up. So when they had armed themselves on either side of the assembly, they met together in the middle, eager for battle, with ferocious looks; and amazement came over all the Achaians. But when they had come close to each other to attack, three times they came on and three times drew close to strike. Then Aias smote on the round shield, but did not pierce to the flesh, for the breastplate behind it kept off the spear. But the son of Tydeus, looking over his great shield, kept aiming at the neck with the point of his bright spear. Then fearing for Aias the Achaians urged them to stop and each take an equal prize. But the hero gave the great sword to Tydeus’ son, bringing it with its scabbard and well-cut belt.

Then the son of Peleus set an unshaped iron mass which long ago the mighty Eëtion used to throw; but swift noble Achilles slew him and brought the mass in his ships with his other possessions.

And he stood up and spoke a word among the Argives: “Rise, whoever wants to try this contest. The winner of this, even if his rich fields are very far distant, will have it to use for five years, and his shepherd or ploughman will not have to go into the town for lack of iron, but this will give it to them.”

So he spoke, and then warlike Polypoites rose up, and the valiant strength of godlike Leonteus, and Aias, son of Telamon, and noble Epeios. They stood in order, and noble Epeios took the weight and whirled and flung it; and all the Achaians laughed to see it. Then next Leonteus, descended from Ares, threw; and thirdly great Aias, Telamon’s son, hurled it from his stout hand, and surpassed the marks of them all. But when warlike Polypoites took the mass he flung it as far as a herdsman flings his staff when it flies whirling through herds of cattle, so far he threw it beyond all the rest, and the people shouted aloud. And the companions of strong Polypoites rose and carried the king’s prize to the hollow ships.

Then for the archers he set a prize of dark iron—ten double-headed axes and ten single; and he set up the mast of a dark-prowed ship far off in the sands and tied a pigeon to it by the foot with a fine cord and declared it to be the target: “Whoever hits the pigeon may take all the double axes home with him, and whoever misses the bird but hits the cord will take the single axes, since his shot is worse.”

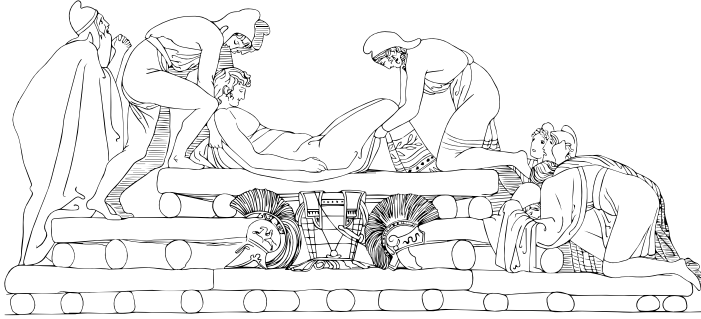
So he spoke, and then the strength of the chief Teukros rose up, and Meriones arose, Idomeneus brave brother-in-arms. And they took lots and shook them in a bronze helmet, and Teukros drew the first place by lot. Immediately he shot an arrow with great force, but made no vow to offer a great sacrifice of first-born lambs to the Lord of archery. He missed the bird—Apollo begrudged him that—but he struck the cord beside its foot, where the bird was tied, and the sharp arrow cut the cord clean away. Then the bird shot up toward heaven, and the cord hung loose toward earth, and the Achaians shouted. Then Meriones hurried and took the bow from Teukros’ hand—he had an arrow ready while Teukros had been aiming—and he vowed to Archer Apollo a great sacrifice of first-born lambs. He saw the pigeon high up under the clouds; there, as she circled around, he struck

her in the middle beneath her wing, and the arrow went right through her and fell back and stuck in the ground in front of Meriones' foot; but the bird, lighting on the mast of the dark-prowed ship, hung her neck, and her feathered pinions drooped, and quickly the life fled from her limbs, and she fell down from the mast; and the people watched and were amazed. So Meriones took all the ten double axes, and Teukros carried the single axes to the hollow ships.

Then Peleus' son brought a far-shadowing spear and set it in the ring, and also a cauldron that had never been in the fire, worth an ox, embossed with flowers; and men who were javelin-throwers rose. There rose Atreus son, wide-ruling Agamemnon, and Meriones, Idomeneus' brave squire. And swift-footed noble Achilles spoke among them: "Son of Atreus, because we know by how far you excel everyone, and how much greater you are in the might of your throw, take this prize with you to the hollow ships; and to the hero Meriones let us give the spear, if you are willing in your heart; this at least is what I suggest."

So he spoke, and Agamemnon, king of men, did not ignore him, but gave the spear of bronze to Meriones, and to his herald Talthybios the hero gave the nobler prize.

Book XIV: The Recovery of Hektor's Body



The Funeral Pyre of Hektor

The Gods Intervene for Priam

Then the assembly was broken up, and the clans were scattered to go each to their own swift ships. The rest thought of supper and the pleasure of sweet sleep, but Achilles wept, remembering his dear companion, and sleep that conquers all did not take hold on him, but he kept turning from one side to another, longing for Patroklos' manliness and great valor and all the deeds he achieved with him and the sorrows he bore, the battles of men and the terrible waves. As he thought of these things he shed big tears, now lying on his side, now on his back, now on his face; and then after a while he would rise to his feet and roam wildly beside the beach of the salt sea. He did not fail to notice Dawn when she rose over the sea and shores. But when he had yoked the swift horses to his chariot he would bind Hektor behind it to drag him; and having dragged him around the burial mound of the dead son of Menoitios three times, he rested again in his shelter, and left Hektor lying stretched on his face in the dust. But Apollo kept all defilement away from his flesh, for he had pity on him even in death and covered him all with his golden aegis, so that Achilles would not tear him when he dragged him.

In this way Achilles in his anger treated noble Hektor shamefully; but when the blessed gods saw this they pitied Hektor and urged the clear-sighted slayer of Argus to steal the corpse away. This seemed good to all the others, but not to Hera or Poseidon or the bright-eyed Maiden, but they remained as when sacred Ilios became hateful to them at the beginning, along with Priam and his people, because of the sin of Alexandros in insulting those goddesses when they came to his dwelling, and he chose her who rewarded his lustfulness which would bring such evil.

But when the twelfth dawn after that day rose, then Phoibos Apollo spoke out among the immortals: “You are hard of heart and cruel, you gods. Has Hektor never burnt for you thigh-bones of unblemished bulls and goats? You have not even had the heart to rescue his corpse for his wife to look upon, and his mother and his child and his father Priam and his people, who would quickly burn him in the fire and conduct his funeral. But you are willing to help evil Achilles, you gods, whose mind is not just at all, nor can the purposes in his heart be changed, but he is cruel-minded like a lion that in great strength and at the urging of his proud heart goes out against men’s flocks to find his food, in the same way Achilles has no pity nor shame, which both harm and profit men greatly. Must men lose someone even dearer than Patroklos was, a brother born from the same womb, or perhaps a son; yet he brings his wailing and lamentation to end, for the Fates have given an enduring soul to men. But Achilles, after robbing noble Hektor of his life, binds him behind his horses and drags him around the tomb of his dear companion, and that is not honorable or better for him. Let him be careful lest we grow angry with him, though he is a good man, for in his fury he is treating the senseless clay shamefully.”

Then white-armed Hera spoke to him in anger: “You could speak in this way, Lord of the Silver Bow, if you give equal honor to Achilles and to Hektor. But Hektor is only a mortal and nursed at a woman’s breast, but Achilles is the child of a goddess whom I myself raised and brought up and gave to a man to be his wife, to Peleus who was dearest of all men to the immortals’ hearts. And all of you

gods came to her wedding, and among them you yourself were feasting with your lyre, you lover of bad company, always faithless.”

Then Zeus who gathers the clouds spoke to her in answer: “Hera, do not be so angry at the gods. The honor of these two men is not the same, yet Hektor too was dearest to the gods of all mortals that are in Ilios. So he was at least to me, for he did not fail in any way to bring me the gifts that I loved—my altar never went without a noble feast, drink-offering, and the smoke of sacrifice, the honor that is due to us. We will speak no more about stealing brave Hektor away, for that could not be hidden from Achilles, since his mother always remains close to him night and day. But I wish that one of the gods would call Thetis to come to me, so that I may speak a wise word to her, so that Achilles may receive gifts from Priam and give Hektor back.”

So he spoke, and light-footed Iris sped forth on the errand and leaped into the black sea between Samothrace and rocky Imbros, and the waters closed above her with a moan. And she sped to the bottom like a lead weight mounted on the horn of a field-ox which sinks down, bringing death to hungry fish. And she found Thetis in a hollow cave; other goddesses of the sea sat gathered around her, and she was wailing in their midst for the fate of her noble son who would perish in deep-soiled Troy, far from his native land. And standing close by, swift-footed Iris spoke to her: “Rise, Thetis; Zeus of immortal counsels calls for you.”

And Thetis the silver-footed goddess answered her: “Why does that mighty god command me? I dread mingling among the immortals, for I have countless sorrows at heart. Yet I will go, and whatever he says, his words will not be empty.”

Having said this, the noble goddess put on a dark-colored robe—no blacker garment could be found than that one. Then she went forth, and wind-footed swift Iris led the way before her, and the surge of the sea was parted around them. And when they had come out on the shore they sped up to heaven and found the far-seeing son of Kronos, and all the other blessed and immortal gods sat gathered around him. Then she sat down beside Father Zeus, and Athene gave her seat to her. And Hera set a fair golden cup in her hand and

comforted her with her words, and Thetis drank and gave back the cup. Then the Father of gods and men began to speak to them: “You have come to Olympus, divine Thetis, in sorrow, with violent grief in your heart; I know this. Nevertheless I will tell you why I called you here. For nine days there has been a dispute among the immortals concerning the corpse of Hektor and Achilleus, waster of cities. The gods wish to send clear-sighted Argeiphontes to steal the body away, but now hear what glory I grant to Achilleus, so that I will have your respect and good will through times to come. Go quickly to the army and carry to your son my command. Say to him that the gods are displeased at him, and that I, more than all the immortals, am angry, because he keeps Hektor at the beaked ships with a furious heart and has not given him back; and perhaps he will fear me and give Hektor back. But I will send Iris to great-hearted Priam to command him to go to the ships of the Achaians to ransom back his beloved son, and carry gifts to Achilleus that may gladden his heart.”

So he spoke, and Thetis, the silver-footed goddess, did not disobey his word and sped away, darting down from the peaks of Olympus. And she came to her son’s shelter; there she found him moaning sorrowfully, and around him his dear companions were quickly finishing their early meal, and a great fleecy sheep was being sacrificed in the shelter. Then his lady mother sat down close beside him and stroked him with her hand and addressed him by name: “My child, how long will you eat out your heart with lamentation and sorrow, thinking neither of food nor sleep? Even a woman’s embrace would be a good thing, for you will not be left alive to me for long; already death and violent destiny are standing close to you. But listen to me now, for I am the messenger of Zeus to you. He says that the gods are displeased at you, and that he himself more than all the immortals is angry, because you keep Hektor at the beaked ships with a furious heart and have not given him back. Restore him, and take a ransom for the dead.”

Then swift-footed Achilleus answered her: “So be it: whoever brings a ransom, let him take back the dead, if indeed the Olympian commands it himself from his heart.”

So the mother and son spoke many winged words to each other in the assembly of the ships. But the son of Kronos commanded Iris to go to holy Ilios: “Go, swift Iris; leave Olympos and carry my message into Ilios to great-hearted Priam that he should go to the ships of the Achaians and ransom his beloved son and carry gifts to Achilleus that may gladden his heart; let him go alone, and let no other man of the Trojans go with him. Only let some older herald attend him to guide the mules and smooth-wheeled wagon and carry back to the city the dead man whom noble Achilleus killed. Do not let death be in his mind nor any fear; we will provide such a guide for him—the slayer of Argus, who will lead him to Achilleus. And when he has led him into the shelter, Achilleus himself will not kill him nor allow any other to do it, for he has sense and is far-sighted and not wicked, but will show courtesy and spare a suppliant man.”

Priam Prepares for the Journey

So he spoke, and wind-footed Iris sped forth on the errand. And she came to the house of Priam and found crying and moaning in it. His children sitting around their father within the court were moistening their garments with their tears, and the old man in their midst was wrapped all around in his cloak; on his head and neck was dung that he had gathered in his hands as he groveled on the earth. And his daughters and his sons' wives were wailing throughout the house, thinking of all those valiant men who had lost their lives at the hands of the Argives and were lying low. And the messenger of Zeus stood beside Priam and spoke softly to him, and trembling came over his limbs: “Be comforted in your heart, Priam, son of Dardanos, and do not be frightened about anything, for I do not come here to bring an evil message to you but good; I am the messenger of Zeus, who, though he is far off, has great concern and pity for you. The Olympian commands you to ransom back noble Hektor and carry gifts to Achilleus that will gladden his heart. Go alone; let none other of the

Trojans go with you. Only let some older herald attend you to guide the mules and the smooth-wheeled wagon to carry back to the city the dead man whom noble Achilles killed. Do not let death be in your mind, nor any fear; the slayer of Argus will go with you as your guide, and he will lead you to Achilles. And when he has led you into the shelter, Achilles himself will not kill you nor will he allow anyone else to do so, for he has sense and is far-sighted and not wicked, but will show courtesy and spare a suppliant man.”

Having spoken this swift Iris left him; and he commanded his sons to prepare the smooth-wheeled mule wagon and attach the wicker carriage onto it. And he went down to his fragrant, high-roofed chamber of cedar wood which held a great many jewels; and he called to Hekabe his wife and spoke: “Lady, an Olympian messenger has come to me from Zeus, saying that I must go to the ships of the Achaians and ransom my dear son and carry gifts to Achilles that may gladden his heart. Tell me how this seems to your mind, for my desire and heart urge me powerfully to go to the ships and enter the wide camp of the Achaians.”

So he spoke, but his wife lamented loudly and answered him: “Woe is me; what has happened to your mind, for which you have always been famous among foreigners and among those whom you rule? How can you intend to go alone to the ships of the Achaians, to meet the eyes of the man who has killed so many of your brave sons? Your heart is iron. For if he once sees you with his eyes, this savage and untrustworthy man will not pity you nor respect you at all. No; now let us sit in the hall and weep away from others. This is what violent Fate long ago spun for Hektor with her thread when he was born, when I myself bore him: that he would glut the swift-footed dogs, far from his parents, in the dwelling of a violent man whose inner vitals I wish I could seize and eat; then he would be paid back for his deeds against my son, who was no coward when he was killed by him, but championing the men and the deep-bosomed women of Troy, without thinking of shelter or flight.”

Then the old man, godlike Priam, spoke and answered her: “Do not hold me back, for I intend to go; do not be a bird of evil omen

in my halls, for you will not change my mind. If it were some other, a mortal, who commanded me to do this, whether some prophet or one of the priests that prophesy from sacrifices, then we would declare it false and have no part in it; but since I have heard the voice of the goddess myself and looked in her face, I will go, and her word will not be empty. And if it is my fate to die by the ships of the armor-clad Achaians, then that is how I would have it; let Achilles slay me quickly, when once I have held my son in my arms and have satisfied my desire with mourning.”

He spoke and opened the decorated lids of chests from which he chose twelve very lovely women's robes and twelve cloaks of single fold and a similar number of coverlets and of lovely sheets and of tunics. And he weighed and brought out ten talents of gold and two shining tripods and four cauldrons and a very beautiful goblet that men of Thrace had given him when he went there on an embassy, an extremely valuable possession, yet the old man did not begrudge that from his halls, for he was exceedingly eager in his heart to ransom his beloved son. Then he drove all the Trojans out from the colonnade, chiding them with words of rebuke: “Get out, you who dishonor me and do me shame! Can you not mourn on your own at home but you must come here to add to my grief? Do you think it is a small thing that Zeus, Kronos' son, has given me this sorrow—to lose him who was the best man of my sons? No, but you too will feel it, for it will be far easier for the Achaians to kill you now that he is dead. But as for me, before I see the city sacked and wasted with my own eyes, let me go down to the house of Hades.”

He spoke and with his staff he chased away the men, and they went out from the old man in his fury. Then he called his sons, rebuking Helenos and Paris and noble Agathon and Pammon and Antiphonos and Polites of the loud war-cry and Deiphobos and Hippothoös and proud Dios; there were nine whom the old man called and commanded: “Hurry now, you wretched sons, my shames. If only all of you had been killed at the ships instead of Hektor! Woe is me, I am cursed, since I fathered the best sons in wide Troy-land, but none of them is left to me, not godlike Mestor, nor Troilos with his

chariot of war, nor Hektor who was a god among men and did not seem like the son of a mortal man but of a god—all these Ares has slain, and all the shameful ones are left to me: liars, dancers, plunderers of your own people's sheep and goats. Will you not quickly prepare for me a wagon and lay all these treasures on it, so that we can go on our way?"

So he spoke, and, fearing their father's voice, they brought out the smooth-running mule chariot, handsome and new, and bound the body of it to the frame; and from its peg they took down the mule yoke, a boxwood yoke with a knob well-fitted with guiding-rings; and they brought out the yoke-band of nine cubits¹ with the yoke. They set the yoke firmly at the end of the polished pole and slipped the ring over the upright pin, which they lashed to the knob with three turns of the band, and then snugged it close around the pole and put the tongue under it. Then they brought the countless ransom for Hektor's head from the chamber and heaped it on the polished wagon and yoked strong-hooved harness mules which the Mysians had given to Priam for a splendid gift. But to Priam's chariot they yoked the horses that the old man kept for his own use, fed at the polished manger.

In this way, the chariots of Priam and the herald were being yoked in the high palace, and cautious thoughts were in everyone's hearts, when Hekabe came up to them, grieved at heart, with honey-sweet wine in her right hand in a golden cup so that they could make a drink-offering before they went. And she stood in front of the horses and spoke a word to Priam by name: "Make a drink-offering now to Father Zeus and pray that you may come back home from among the enemy, since your heart sends you to the ships, though I wish you would not go. And pray to the son of Kronos, Lord of the storm-cloud, the god of Ida, who sees all Troy-land beneath, and ask him for a bird of good omen, the swift messenger that is dearest of all birds to him and mightiest in strength, to appear upon your right, so that seeing the sign with your own eyes you may be able to go

1 About thirteen to fourteen feet.

confidently to the ships of the swift-horsed Danaans. But if far-seeing Zeus will not grant to you his messenger, I at least will not urge you to go among the ships of the Achaians, no matter how much you wish it.”

Then godlike Priam answered and spoke to her: “Lady, I will not ignore this request of yours, for it is good to lift up hands to Zeus, if perhaps he will have pity.”

So the old man spoke and commanded a housemaid who served him to pour pure water on his hands; and she came near to serve him with water in a basin. And when he had washed his hands he took a goblet from his wife; then he stood in the midst of the court and prayed and poured out wine as he looked up to heaven and spoke aloud: “Father Zeus who rules from Ida, most glorious and most great, grant that I find welcome and pity under Achilleus’ roof; and send a bird of omen, the swift messenger that is dearest of all birds to you and mightiest in strength, to appear upon the right, so that seeing this sign with my own eyes I may go confidently to the ships of the swift-horsed Danaans.”

So he spoke, praying, and Zeus of the wise counsels heard him and immediately sent an eagle, the best omen of winged birds, the dark hunter men call the Black Eagle. As wide as the well-fitted, tightly-locked door of some rich man’s high-roofed hall were his wings on both sides; and he appeared to them, speeding on the right hand above the city. And when they saw the eagle they rejoiced and all their hearts were glad within their breasts.

Then the old man hurried to climb up into his chariot, and he drove out through the doorway and the echoing portico. In front the mules drew the four-wheeled wagon, and wise Idaios drove them; behind came the horses which the old man urged with the lash quickly through the city, and his friends all followed, lamenting loudly as though he were going to his death, but when they had come down from the city and were now on the plain, then his sons and all his relatives went back again to Ilios. But the two coming out upon the plain were not unseen by far-seeing Zeus. He looked upon the old man and had compassion on him and immediately spoke to Hermes

his dear son: “Hermes, since it is especially dear to you to accompany men, and you listen to whomever you wish, go and guide Priam to the hollow ships of the Achaians so that no man of all the Danaans’ army sees or is aware of him until he comes to the son of Peleus.”

So he spoke, and the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, was not disobedient to his word. Immediately he bound his fair sandals under his feet, golden, divine, which carry him over the water and over the wide land with the blast of the wind. And he took up his wand with which he entrances the eyes of whoever he wishes, while others he wakens out of sleep—he took this in his hand and flew onward. Quickly he came to Troy-land and the Hellespont and went on his way in appearance as a young prince with the new beard on his chin, in that age when young men are most handsome.

Now the others, when they had driven beyond the great burial mound of Ilos, halted the mules and horses at the river to drink; for darkness had come down over the earth. Then the herald saw Hermes nearby and pointed him out and spoke and said to Priam: “Consider, son of Dardanos; this is a matter for careful thought. I see a man; I think we will soon be torn in pieces. Let us flee in our chariot, or else at least touch his knees and beg him to have mercy on us.”

So he spoke, and the old man was confused and terribly frightened, and the hair on his bent limbs stood up, and he stood still, astonished. But the Helper² himself came closer and took the old man’s hand and spoke and questioned him: “Where are you guiding these horses and mules through the mysterious night, father, when other mortals are asleep? Are you not afraid of the fierce-breathing Achaians, your bitter enemies who are close by you? If one of them should see you carrying such treasures through the swift black night, what could you think then? You are not young, and your companion here is old, and neither of you could make a defense against any man who attacked you. But I will not harm you in any way; indeed, I will keep anyone else from harming you, for I see in you the likeness of my own beloved father.”

2 Literal translation of the Greek word in the passage, “*eriounios*” (“the helper”).

Then the old man, godlike Priam, spoke to him in answer: "Kind son, all things are just as you say. Nevertheless, some god has covered me with his hand, because he has sent to me a wayfarer such as you, a bearer of good fortune, by the nobility of your form and appearance; and you are wise of heart and sprung from blessed parents."

Then the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, spoke to him again: "All this, old sir, you have spoken well. But say this and tell me truly whether you are carrying a great and costly treasure to foreign men, where it may be kept safely for you, or whether by this time you are all abandoning holy Ilios in fear because by far the best man among you, your son, has perished; for he never slackened at all in battle with the Achaians."

And the old man, godlike Priam, spoke to him in answer: "Who are you, noble sir, and from whom are you born? For you have spoken correctly about the fate of my unfortunate son."

And the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, spoke to him again: "You are testing me, old sir, in asking me about noble Hektor. I have often seen him with my own eyes in glorious battle, when at the ships he was slaughtering the Argives that he had driven there, piercing them with the keen bronze, and we stood still and marveled at the sight, for Achilles would not allow us to fight, since he was angry against Atreus' son. I am Achilles' soldier, and I came in the same well-crafted ship. I come from the Myrmidons, and Polyktor is my father. He is wealthy and an old man like you, and he has six other sons, and I am his seventh. I cast lots with the others, and it fell to me to go here with the army. And now I have come from the ships to the plain, for at dawn the shining-eyed Achaians will begin the battle around the town. For it chafes them to be sitting here, and the Achaian lords can not hold back the men's fury for the battle."

And the old man, godlike Priam, answered him, saying: "If you really are a soldier of Achilles, Peleus' son, tell me truly whether my son is still by the ships, or whether by now Achilles has torn him limb from limb and thrown him to the dogs."

Then the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, spoke to him again: "Old sir, the dogs and birds have not yet devoured him, but he still

lies there by Achilles' ship where he fell among the shelters, and the twelfth morning has now risen upon him, and his flesh does not decay at all, nor do worms consume it, as they devour men slain in war. Indeed, Achilles drags him recklessly around the burial mound of his dear companion as often as the glorious day dawns, but he cannot mar him; you would marvel if you could see for yourself how he lies fresh as the dew and is washed clean of blood and is nowhere defiled, and all the wounds with which he was struck are closed up, though many plunged their spears into him. That is how much care the gods show toward your son, even though he is just a dead corpse, for they hold him dear to their hearts."

So he spoke, and the old man rejoiced and answered him, saying: "My child, it is truly a good thing to give the offerings due to the immortals, for my son—if indeed I ever had that son—never forgot in our halls the gods who inhabit Olympus. Because of this they have remembered him, even though his lot is death. But come now, receive this noble goblet from me, and guard me and guide me, under heaven, so that I may come to the hut of Peleus' son."

Then the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, spoke to him again: "Old sir, you are testing me; I am younger than you, but you will not prevail upon me in urging me to take gifts from you without Achilles' knowledge. I would be afraid and ashamed at heart to defraud him, lest some evil come to pass on me later. But I will be your guide even as far as famous Argos, accompanying you carefully and gently in a swift ship or on foot. No one would attack you from scorn for your guide then."

So spoke the Helper and, leaping on the chariot behind the horses, he swiftly took the lash and reins into his hand and breathed courage into the horses and mules. When they came to the towers and trench of the ships, there were the sentinels preparing their supper. Then the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, shed sleep over them all, and immediately he opened the gates and thrust back the bars and brought Priam and the splendid gifts on his wagon inside. And they came to the lofty shelter of the son of Peleus, which the Myrmidons had made for their king and had hewed timber from pines

and thatched it with downy thatching-rushes that they mowed in the meadows, and around it they had made for their king a great court with close-set palisades; and the door was barred by a single bolt of pine that required three Achaians to push that mighty bar in, and three to draw it back—three of the rest, but Achilles by himself could open or close it.

Then the Helper, Hermes, opened the door for the old man and brought in the splendid gifts for Peleus' swift-footed son and came down from the chariot to the earth and spoke aloud: "Old sir, I who have come to you am an immortal god, Hermes, for my Father sent me to accompany you on your way. But now I will leave you and not come into Achilles' sight; it would be a cause of anger if an immortal god should show favor openly to mortals in this way. But you go in and clasp the knees of Peleus' son and beg him for the sake of his father and of his mother of the lovely hair and for his child's sake, so that you may soften his soul."

Priam Goes to Achilles

So Hermes spoke and departed to high Olympos. But Priam leapt from the car to the earth and left Idaios in his place; he stayed to watch over the horses and mules; but the old man went straight for the house where Achilles, dear to Zeus, was accustomed to sit. And inside he found the man himself, and his companions sitting some distance away; only two, the hero Automedon and Alkimos, descended from Ares, were attending him; and he had just finished his supper, his eating and drinking, and the table still stood beside him. But they were unaware of great Priam as he came in, and so stood he close and clasped in his hands the knees of Achilles and kissed his terrible, manslaying hands, which slew many of Priam's sons. Just as when a terrible curse comes upon a man who has slain another man in his own country and escapes to a land of strangers, to the house of some rich man, and wonder comes over those who look at him,

in the same way Achilles wondered when he saw godlike Priam, and the rest also wondered and stared at each other.

Then Priam spoke and begged him, saying: “O Achilles, like the gods, think about your father whose years are like mine, on the sorrowful pathway of old age. Perhaps those who live around him are treating him badly, and there is no one to keep ruin and evil from him. Nevertheless, while he hears that you are still alive, he rejoices in his heart and hopes every day that he will see his dear son returning from Troy-land. But I am utterly unblest, since I fathered the best sons in Troy-land, but I tell you none of them are left. I had fifty when the sons of the Achaians came; nineteen were born to me from one mother, and concubines bore the rest within my halls. Now violent Ares has unstrung the knees of most of them, and Hektor, who was still left and guarded the city and its men, you slew just now as he fought for his country. For his sake I come to the ships of the Achaians so that I may win him back from you, and I bring with me an untold ransom. Reverence the gods, Achilles, and have compassion on me, thinking of your own father. And look, I am even more pitiful than he and have braved what no other man on earth has braved before—I caress the cheek of the killer of my sons.”

So he spoke and stirred within Achilles the longing to lament for his father. And he touched the old man’s hand and gently moved him back. And as they both thought about their dead, Priam wept terribly for man-slaying Hektor as he was fallen before Achilles’ feet, and Achilles wept for his own father, and then for Patroklos, and their moaning echoed throughout the house. But when noble Achilles had his fill of lamenting, and the desire for it departed from his heart and limbs, immediately he stood up from his seat and raised the old man up with his hand, pitying his grey head and grey beard, and spoke winged words to him and said: “Ah, unfortunate man! You have endured many evil things in your heart. How have you dared to come alone to the ships of the Achaians and to meet the eyes of the man who had slain so many of your brave sons? Truly your heart is iron. Come and sit on a seat, and we will let our sorrows lie quietly in our hearts, in spite of all our pain, for there is no help in cold lamen-

tation. This is the fate the gods have spun for miserable men—that men should live in misery, while the gods themselves have no sorrows. Two urns stand before Zeus filled with evil gifts and with good ones. When Zeus, whose joy is in the lightning, deals a mingled lot to a man, that man has sometimes evil and sometimes good; but when he deals out only from the evil one, he brings that man to scorn, and terrible famine chases him over the noble earth, and he is a wanderer honored by neither gods nor men. In this way the gods gave Peleus splendid gifts from his very birth, for he excelled all men in good fortune and wealth and was king of the Myrmidons, and though he was a mortal the gods gave him a goddess to be his bride. Yet God brought evil even on him, since there was no offspring of princely sons in his halls, except that he fathered one son fated to die an early death. I cannot care for him as he grows old, since I dwell in Troy-land, very far from my country, harassing you and your children.

“And we have heard about you, old sir, how in times past you were happy, how you were richest in wealth and in sons of all the folk in the land bounded by Lesbos, seat of Makar, to the north, and Phrygia farther up, and the vast Hellespont. But then the Powers of heaven brought this curse on you, continuous battles and slaughter around your city. Keep your courage and do not lament unceasingly in your heart, for grieving for your son will not help you at all, nor will you bring him back to life before some new evil comes upon you.”

Then the old man, godlike Priam, answered him: “Do not urge me to sit, beloved of Zeus, so long as Hektor lies neglected at the shelters, but immediately give him back so that I may see him with my eyes, and accept you the great ransom that we bring. May you find pleasure in it and return to your native land, since you have spared me.”

Then swift-footed Achilles looked sternly at him and said: “Do not provoke me, old sir; I am myself inclined to give Hektor back to you, for a messenger from Zeus came to me, my mother who bore me, the daughter of the Ancient One of the Sea. And I know, Priam, in my mind, and am not unaware that it was some god who has guided you to the swift ships of the Achaians. For no mortal man, even though in the prime of youth, would dare to come among the army,

for he could not escape the eyes of the watch nor easily thrust back the bolt of the doors. Therefore, do not stir up my heart anymore amid my own troubles, lest I do not leave you in peace, old sir, within my shelter, though you are my suppliant, and lest I transgress the commandment of Zeus.”

So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and obeyed his word. And the son of Peleus leaped like a lion through the door of the house, but not alone, for with him went two attendants, the hero Automedon and Alkimos, whom Achilles honored beyond all his companions, except Patroklos, who was dead. They then freed from under the yoke the horses and mules and led in the old man’s herald and set him on a chair, and from the noble wagon they took the countless ransom for Hektor’s head. But they left two robes and a well-spun tunic, with which Achilles might wrap the dead when he gave him back to be carried home. And he called handmaids and commanded them to wash and anoint Hektor when they had carried him off to one side so that Priam would not see his son, lest he be unable to restrain his anger in his sorrowing heart when he looked at his son; then Achilles’ heart would be vexed at him and he would slay him and transgress the commandment of Zeus. So when the handmaids had washed the body and anointed it with oil and had thrown over it a fair robe and a tunic, then Achilles himself lifted it and laid it on a platform, and his companions lifted it onto the polished wagon. Then he groaned aloud and called on his dear companion by name: “Patroklos, do not be angry with me if you hear even in the house of Hades that I have given back noble Hektor to his beloved father, for the ransom he has given me is not unworthy and I will give your rightful share of it to you.”

The Return and Burial of Hektor

So spoke noble Achilles and went back into the shelter and sat down on the cleverly-crafted couch from which he had risen by the

opposite wall, and he spoke a word to Priam: “Your son, old sir, has been given back as you wished; he lies on a platform, and at dawn you will see him yourself as you transport him. But for now let us think of supper. For even faired-haired Niobe thought of food, she whose twelve children perished in her halls, six daughters and six vigorous sons. In his anger against Niobe, Apollo killed the sons with arrows from his silver bow, and Archer Artemis killed the daughters, because Niobe matched herself against fair-cheeked Leto, saying that the goddess bore only two children but she herself had borne many; so those, though they were only two, destroyed all the others. For nine days they lay in their blood, and there was no one to bury them, for the son of Kronos turned the people to stones. Yet on the tenth day the gods of heaven buried them, and then Niobe thought of food, when she was exhausted from weeping tears. And somewhere now among the cliffs, on the lonely mountains, on Sipylos, where they say the sleeping places of the nymphs that dance around Ache-loos are, there she, though a stone, still broods over her troubles from the gods. But come, noble father, let us also think of food, and afterward you can mourn over your beloved son as you take him back to Ilios; and he deserves many tears.”

Swift Achilles spoke and rose quickly, and he slaughtered a pure white sheep, and his companions skinned it and prepared it properly and divided it carefully and pierced it with spits, and they roasted it thoroughly and then took it off. And Automedon brought bread and served it on a table in lovely baskets while Achilles dealt out the meat. And they reached out their hands to the cheering meal lying ready before them. But when they had put off the desire for food and drink, then Priam, son of Dardanos, marveled at Achilles to see how great he was and how noble, for he was like a god to look upon. And Achilles marveled at Priam, son of Dardanos, seeing his noble appearance and listening to his words. But when they had gazed their fill upon one other, then the old man, godlike Priam, spoke to Achilles: “Now give me a place to lie down, beloved of Zeus, so that we may take our fill of sweet sleep; for my eyes have not closed beneath their lids since my son lost his life at your hands, but

I continually mourn and brood over my countless griefs, groveling in the courtyard in the dung. Now I have at last tasted bread and swallowed bright wine, but till now I had tasted nothing.”

He spoke, and Achilles commanded his companions and handmaids to set a bedstead beneath the portico and to throw on it shining rugs and to spread coverlets over it and to lay thick mantles on it to cover it all. And the maids went out from the inner hall with torches in their hands and quickly spread two beds. Then swift-footed Achilles spoke with irony to Priam: “You must sleep outside the hall, beloved sir, in case one of the counselors of the Achaians comes here, one of those who always counsels with me as the custom is. If any of those should see you through the swift black night, he might immediately tell it to Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, and then there would be a delay in giving back the dead body. But say, and tell me this truly, for how many days’ time do you intend to hold the funeral rites for noble Hektor, so that I myself will refrain and also restrain our army?”

And the old man, godlike Priam, answered him saying: “If you are indeed willing to let me complete noble Hektor’s funeral rites by doing as you say, Achilles, you will do me a benefit. For you know how we are trapped within the city, and we have far to go to fetch wood from the mountain, and the Trojans are very afraid. We will mourn for him in our halls for nine days, and on the tenth we will hold the funeral rites and the people will feast, and on the eleventh we will make a funeral mound over him, and on the twelfth we will do battle if that is what must be.”

Then swift, noble Achilles again spoke to him, saying: “It will be as you urge, aged Priam; I will hold back the battle as long as you tell me.”

So speaking, he clasped the old man’s right hand at the wrist, lest he should be afraid at heart for any reason. So Priam and the herald laid themselves down in the forecourt of the house, with prudent thoughts in their hearts, but Achilles slept in a recess of the firmly-built shelter, and beside him lay fair-cheeked Briseis.

Now all the other gods and warriors, lords of chariots, slumbered all night, overcome by soft sleep. But sleep did not take hold of the Helper, Hermes, as he sought within his heart for how he should guide King Priam out from the ships unnoticed by the faithful watchmen. And he stood over his head and spoke a word to him: "Old sir, you have no thought of any evil, while you sleep among men who are your enemies, though Achilles spared you. You have won back your beloved son, and at a great price. But your sons whom you have left behind will be offering three times as much ransom for your own life if Agamemnon, Atreus' son, becomes aware of you, along with all the Achaians."

So he spoke, and the old man was afraid and roused the herald. And Hermes yoked the horses and mules for them, and he himself drove them carefully through the camp, and no one was aware of them.

But when they came to the crossing of the fair-flowing River, pooling Xanthos, fathered by immortal Zeus, then Hermes departed and went up to high Olympus, and Dawn of the yellow robe spread over all the earth. And with wailing and mourning they drove the horses to the city, and the mules pulled the dead. No man or lovely-robed woman noticed them until Cassandra, equal of golden Aphrodite, who had gone up onto Pergamos, became aware of her beloved father as he stood in the chariot, and the herald that was messenger to the city. Then she saw who lay on the wagon behind the mules, and at the sight she wailed and cried aloud throughout the whole town: "Men and women of Troy, come here and look upon Hektor, if ever while he was alive you rejoiced when he came back from battle, since he was a great joy to the city and all the people."

So she spoke, and no man or woman was left within the city, for unbearable grief came upon them all. Near the gates they met Priam bringing home the dead. First his beloved wife and lady mother wailed for him as they threw themselves on the smooth-wheeled wagon and caressed his head; and around them the people stood and wept. They would have lamented Hektor outside the gate all day long until the setting of the sun, if the old man had not spoken from

the chariot among the people: “Make room for the mules to pass through; afterward you will have your fill of mourning when I have brought him to his house.”

So he spoke, and they parted and made way for the wagon. And when they had brought him to the great house, the others laid him on a carved bed and set beside him singers who led the dirge, who wailed a mournful song, while the women wailed with them. And among the women white-armed Andromache led the lamentation, while in her hands she held the head of Hektor, slayer of men: “Husband, you are gone from life while young, and you leave me a widow in your halls. And the child is still just a little one, a child of ill-fated parents, you and me, and I do not think he will grow up to manhood, for before then this city will be utterly destroyed. For you who guarded it are now dead, you who guarded it and kept safe its noble wives and infant little ones. Soon these shall be voyaging in the hollow ships, and I also with them, and you, my child, will either go with me to a place where you will work at lowly tasks, laboring in front of some harsh lord, or else some Achaian will take you by the arm and hurl you from the city walls, a horrible death, being angry because Hektor killed his brother or father or son, since a great many of the Achaians have bitten the earth at Hektor’s hands. For your father had no tender hand in the terrible battle. So the people lament him throughout the city, and you have left inexpressible sorrow and mourning to your parents, Hektor, but for me most of all the terrible pain will remain. For you did not reach out your hands to me from a deathbed or speak some memorable word to me that I could have remembered forever as my tears fall night and day.”

So she spoke, wailing, and the women joined in with their moans. And among them Hekabe again led the loud lament: “Hektor, of all my children far dearest to my heart, indeed while you were alive you were dear to the gods, and even in your death they have cared for you—for other sons of mine whom he took captive swift Achilles would sell beyond the unaging sea to Samos and Imbros and smoking Lemnos, but when he had robbed you of your life with the sharp-edged bronze he was eager to drag you often around the tomb of his

companion whom you killed, though he could not raise up Patroklos by that means. But now you lie all dewy and fresh in our halls, like one on whom Apollo, Lord of the Silver Bow, has descended and killed with his gentle arrows.”

So she spoke, wailing, and stirred unending moans. Then thirdly, Helen led their sorrowful lament: “Hektor, far dearest to my heart of all my brothers in Troy! For indeed my husband is godlike Alexandros who brought me to Troy-land—if only I had died before that. For this is now the twentieth year since I went from there and left my own native land, but I never heard an evil or spiteful word from you; no, if any other perhaps rebuked me in the palace-halls, whether brother or sister of yours or your brother's fair-robed wife, or your mother—for your father is always kind to me as if he were my own father—then you would calm them with words and restrain them by the gentleness of your spirit and of your words. Therefore I mourn for you with pain at heart, and I mourn for my unfortunate self too, for no one is left in wide Troy-land to be my friend and to be kind to me, but all men shudder at me.”

So she spoke, wailing, and at that the great multitude of the people groaned. But the old man Priam spoke a word among the people: “Bring wood to the city, men of Troy, and do not be at all afraid of a crafty ambush by the Achaians; for Achilleus gave me this message when he sent me from the black ships, that they would do us no harm until the twelfth dawn comes.”

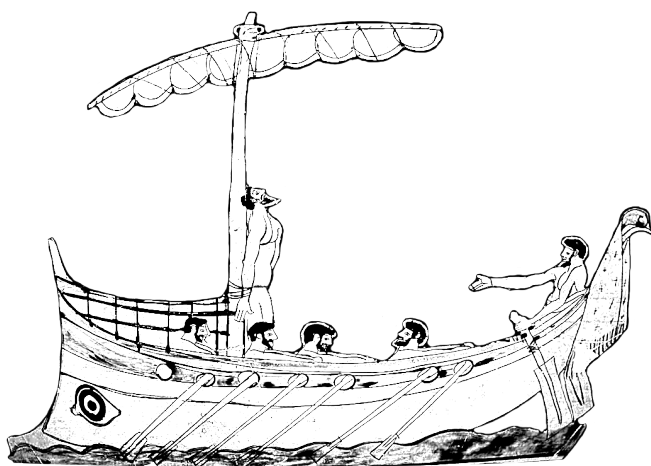
So he spoke, and they yoked oxen and mules to wagons, and they quickly flocked before the city. So for nine days they gathered a huge store of wood. And when the tenth morning rose with light for men, then they carried out brave Hektor, weeping tears, and they laid the dead man on a lofty pyre and threw fire on it.

But when the daughter of Dawn, rosy-fingered Morning, shone out, then the people gathered around glorious Hektor's pyre. First they quenched all the burning with bright wine, wherever the fire's strength went, and then his brothers and companions gathered his white bones, lamenting, and big tears flowed down their cheeks. And they took the bones and laid them in a golden urn, shrouding them

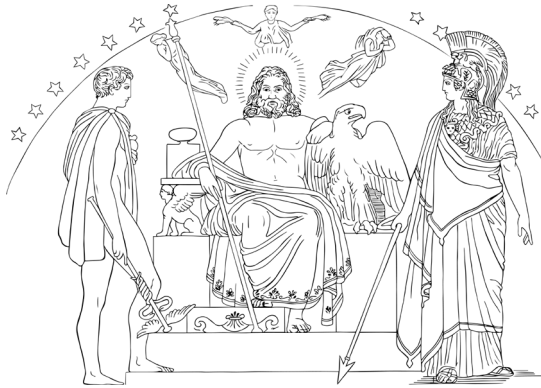
in soft purple robes, and immediately laid the urn in a hollow grave and piled great close-set stones on it and quickly heaped up a burial mound while watchmen were set all around, lest the well-greaved Achaians should attack before the time. And when they had heaped the mound, they went back and gathered together in a noble feast at the palace of Priam, the Zeus-beloved king.

Such was the funeral for Hektor, tamer of horses.

THE ODYSSEY



Book I: Athene Visits Telemachos



The Council of Zeus, Athena, and Hermes

The Council of the Gods

Tell me, Muse, about the man of many turnings,¹ who wandered far and wide, after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose minds he learned, and many the woes he suffered in his heart upon the deep sea, striving for his own life and the return of his companions. Even so he could not save his companions, though he desired it greatly, for they perished through the blindness of their own hearts, the fools, who

1 The Greek word is *polytropos*, seen as ambiguous since ancient times, referring either to Odysseus' resourceful mind or to his geographical wanderings in his journey home or to both. Most scholars, ancient and modern, take it in the first sense. But a number of early church fathers use *polytropos* in spiritual writings to refer to a distracted, unfocused mind, which only Christ can make *monotropos*—whole and undivided (*Fifty Spiritual Homilies of Pseudo-Macarius*, Classics of Western Spirituality, pg 287). Hebrews 1:1 in the New Testament says that of old, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets "polymeros kai *polytropos*"—"at many times and in many ways"—but the second verse goes on to say that "[God]...hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son..." "With the coming of the Only One into your heart, plurality vanishes, says Basil the Great," (Colliander, *Way of the Ascetics*, Ch. 18. I owe this last observation to my friend Jeff Moss). These early Christian uses of the word add to the ambiguity and so to the depth and richness of the *Odyssey* and its hero from the very first line.

devoured the oxen of Helios, son of Hyperion,² and the god took away from them their day of returning. Of all these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, from wherever you have heard them, tell them now to us.³

Now all the rest,⁴ as many as fled from sheer destruction, were at home and had escaped both war and the sea, but Odysseus only, longing for his wife and his homeward way, was held by the lady nymph Kalypso,⁵ the lovely goddess, in her hollow caves, longing to have him for her lord. But now when the year had come, in the round of the seasons in which the gods had ordained that he should return home to Ithaka, not even then was he free of his troubles or back with his loved ones. But all the gods had pity on him except Poseidon, who raged continually against godlike Odysseus, until he came to his own country.

But Poseidon had now departed for the distant Ethiopians,⁶ who are divided in two, the remotest of men, some living where Hyperion sinks and some where he rises. There he waited to receive the great sacrifice of bulls and rams, there he rejoiced sitting at the feast, but the other gods were gathered in the halls of Olympian Zeus.

2 Helios is the sun god and Hyperion, a Titan, is his father, so I have translated it that way in this line. But often in Homer, as is clear a few lines below, Hyperion is just another name for the sun god. I've deliberately retained the ambiguity; as with *polytropos* it's part of what makes Homer such a delight.

3 In the Greek text, this paragraph is ten lines of poetry and is the *prooimium* (*exordium* in Latin), the introduction to the poem, introducing the hero, the clever Odysseus, and the main theme, his return home to Ithaka after ten years of war and nearly ten more years of wandering the Mediterranean lands, and his blamelessness regarding the loss of his men. The *prooimium* of the *Iliad* is the first seven lines.

4 That is, the rest of the Achaeans (Greeks) who had been at the Trojan War.

5 This is of course Kalypso, who appears in Book 5. Here Athene says Kalypso is the daughter of Atlas (who holds up the sky), but in the *Theogony* of Hesiod (a younger contemporary of Homer) she is the daughter of the Titans Okeanos and Tethys, brother and sister offspring of Uranos (sky) and Gaia (earth). She is a nymph, a minor female nature deity, who lives on the island of Ogygia, which has been located by ancient and modern scholars in various places around the Mediterranean. See Odyssey Map 1.

6 This is not the people occupying the modern nation of Ethiopia. In Homer they generally are understood to live far to the East or far to the West ("some where Hyperion sinks and some where he rises"). Throughout antiquity they had the reputation from Homer onward as the most righteous of all men, loved by the gods, and we must keep this background in mind when considering the New Testament episode of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26).

Then among them the father of gods and men began to speak, for he thought in his heart of noble Aigisthos, whom the son of Agamemnon, far-famed Orestes, slew. Thinking about him, he spoke out among the Immortals, “Look now, how vainly mortal men blame the gods! For they say evil comes from us, but it is they who bring upon themselves, through the blindness of their own hearts, sorrows beyond what is ordained. Even lately, Aigisthos, beyond what was ordained, took to himself the wife of the son of Atreus and killed her lord on his return, and he did it with sheer doom before his eyes. For we had warned him by sending Hermes the sharp-sighted, the slayer of Argus,⁷ that he should neither kill the man nor court his wife, for the son of Atreus would be avenged by the hand of Orestes as soon as he came of age and longed for his own country. So spoke Hermes, yet he did not persuade the heart of Aigisthos, for all his good intention, and now he has paid the price for it all.”

And the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him, saying, “Our father, son of Kronos, throned in the highest, that man certainly suffered a death that he earned; let all who do such deeds perish the same way! But my heart is torn for wise Odysseus, that unfortunate one, who far from his friends suffers affliction for so long on a wave-washed island, the navel of the sea, a wooded island, and in it a goddess⁸ has her dwelling, the daughter of malevolent Atlas, who knows the depths of every sea and upholds the tall pillars which keep earth and sky apart. It is his daughter who holds the unfortunate man in sorrow, and always with soft and soothing tales she charms him to forgetfulness of Ithaka. But Odysseus, longing to see but the smoke rising upward from his own land, has a desire to die. As for you, your heart does not care at all, Olympian! Did not Odysseus, by the ships of the Argives, freely offer sacrifices to you in the wide Trojan land? Why then are you so angry with him, O Zeus?”

7 Argus was the hundred-eyed giant which Hera set as guard over Io, the beautiful young woman with whom Zeus had fallen in love but turned into a heifer to hide her from Hera. Hera asked Zeus for the beautiful heifer, and Zeus couldn't refuse. Hera then set Argus to keep Zeus away from Io, but Zeus had Hermes distract and then kill Argus. The Greek title for Hermes is *Argeiphontes* or “Argus-Slayer.”

8 Kalypso.

And Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, answered her and said, “My child, what word has escaped the door of your lips? How could I forget divine Odysseus, who in understanding is beyond mortals and more than all men has sacrificed to the deathless gods who keep the wide heaven? No, it is Poseidon, the Encircler of the Earth, who has been angry continually with undying anger because of the *Kyklops* whose eye he blinded, godlike *Polyphemos* whose power is greatest over all the *Kyklopes*. His mother was the nymph *Thoösa*, daughter of *Phorkys*, lord of the barren sea, and in its hollow caves she lay with Poseidon. From that day on, Poseidon the Earth-Shaker does not indeed destroy Odysseus but drives him wandering far from his own country. But now let us all take good counsel here about his return, so that he may be got home; so Poseidon will let go of his anger, for in no way will he be able to strive alone against all the deathless gods.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed *Athene*, answered him and said, “Our father, son of *Kronos*, throned in the highest, if indeed this plan is now pleasing to the blessed gods, that wise Odysseus should return to his own home, then let us quickly send *Hermes* the Messenger, the slayer of *Argus*, to the island of *Ogygia*. There with all speed let him declare to the lady of the braided tresses our sure counsel, the return of patient Odysseus, so that he may come to his home. But as for me, I will go to *Ithaka* that I may rouse his son all the more, planting strength in his heart, to call an assembly of the long-haired *Achaians* and speak out to all the suitors who continually slaughter the sheep of his thronging flocks and his cattle with trailing feet and shambling gait. And I will guide him to *Sparta* and to sandy *Pylos* to seek news of his beloved father’s return, if perhaps he may hear of it, and so that he might gain a good reputation among men.”

She spoke and bound beneath her feet her lovely, immortal, golden sandals that carried her over both the wet sea and the endless land, swift as the breath of the wind. And she seized her mighty spear, clad with sharp bronze, weighty and huge and strong, with which she subdues the ranks of heroes, those with whom she, the daughter of the mighty father, is angry.

Athene Visits Telemachos

Then from the heights of Olympos she came flashing down, and she stood in the land of Ithaka at the entry of the gate of Odysseus on the threshold of the courtyard, holding in her hand the spear of bronze, in the appearance of a stranger, Mentès the captain of the Taphians. And there she found the lordly suitors; they were taking their pleasure at draughts⁹ in front of the doors, sitting on hides of oxen, which they themselves had slaughtered. And some of the attendants and the servants were mixing wine and water for them in bowls, and some were washing the tables with porous sponges and setting them, and others were carving meat in great quantities.

And godlike Telemachos was far the first to observe her, for he was sitting with a heavy heart among the suitors, imagining his noble father, if perhaps he might come from somewhere and scatter the suitors throughout the palace and gain honor and establish rule among his own possessions. Thinking about this as he sat among the suitors, he saw Athene, and he went straight to the outer porch, for he thought in his heart that it was shameful that a stranger should stand long at the gates and, stopping near her, he clasped her right hand and took from her the spear of bronze and lifted his voice and spoke winged words to her: “Greetings, stranger. You will be kindly treated with us, and afterward, once you have eaten, you may tell us what you need.”

With that he led the way, and Pallas Athene followed. And when they were inside the spacious house, he set her spear which he carried against a tall pillar in the polished spear-stand where many other spears stood also, those of Odysseus of the stout heart, and he led the goddess and seated her on a beautifully carved chair and spread a linen cloth under it, and beneath was a footstool for the feet. For himself he placed an inlaid seat close by, away from the crowd of the

9 This is the British word for what Americans call checkers, a board game which, in variations, has been played for thousands of years from the ancient Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Greeks to the Romans and medieval Europeans.

suitors, lest the stranger should be disturbed by the noise and should be put off from the meal, having come among arrogant men, but also so that he might ask him about his father who was gone from his home.

Then a handmaid carried water for washing hands in a noble, golden pitcher and poured it out over a silver basin to wash with and pulled next to them a polished table. And a dignified maid brought wheat bread and set it nearby and laid on the table many delicacies, freely giving whatever she had close at hand. And a carver lifted and placed beside them platters of various kinds of meats and near them he set golden bowls, and an attendant walked back and forth pouring wine for them.

Then the haughty suitors came in, and they sat down in rows on chairs and on high seats, and attendants poured water on their hands, and maidservants piled wheat bread by them in baskets, and servants filled up the bowls with drink, and they stretched out their hands to the good food spread before them. When the suitors had satisfied the desire for food and drink, they thought of other things, the song and dance, for these are the crown of the feast. And an attendant placed a beautiful lyre in the hands of Phemios, who was bard for the suitors against his will. As he touched the lyre, he lifted up his voice in sweet songs.

But Telemachos spoke to grey-eyed Athene, holding his head close to her so that those others could not hear: “Dear stranger, will you indeed be angry at what I will say? Those men truly care for such things as these, the lyre and song, thoughtlessly, as those who consume the livelihood of another without repayment, of that man whose white bones, it may be, lie rotting in the rain on the mainland, or the waves tumble them in the salt sea. If only these men were to see him returned to Ithaka, they would all pray more for greater speed of foot than for gain of gold and fine clothing. But now he has perished, a terrible fate, and there is no comfort for us, no, even though any earthly man should say that he will come again. Gone is the day of his returning! But tell me this, and tell me everything clearly: who are you of the sons of men, and where are you from? Where

is your city and where are those who begot you? On what kind of ship did you come, and how did sailors bring you to Ithaka, and who did they claim to be? For in no way do I think that you came here by land. And tell me this truthfully, that I may know for certain whether you are a newcomer or whether you are a familiar guest of the house, since many strangers used to come to our home because my father had traveled much among men.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him: “I will plainly tell you everything. I call myself Mentès, son of wise Anchialos, and I rule the Taphians, lovers of the oar. And now I have come to shore, as you see, with ship and crew, sailing over the wine-dark sea to men of strange speech, even to Temese, in search of copper, and my cargo is shining iron. And my ship is lying there toward the upland, away from the city, in the harbor of Rheithron beneath wooded Neion. And we declare ourselves to be friends of one another and from friendly houses from a long time past. If you desire assurance, go ask the old man, the hero Laertes,¹⁰ who they say does not come to the city any more but far away toward the upland suffers grief with an ancient woman for his handmaid, who places food and drink near him whenever weariness takes hold of his limbs as he hobbles along the knoll of his vineyard plot. And now I have come, for indeed I was told that he, your father, was among his people, but the gods obstruct his journey. For noble Odysseus has not yet perished on the earth, but I think still lives and is kept on the wide deep in a wave-washed island, and perhaps rough, wild men keep him harshly against his will. But now indeed I will utter my word of prophecy, as the Immortals bring it into my heart, and I think it will be accomplished, though I am no prophet, nor am I skilled in the omens of birds. After this time he will not be far from his beloved country for long, not even if bonds of iron bind him; he will plan a way to return, for he is a man of many devices. But tell me this plainly, whether indeed, as tall as you are, you are sprung from Odysseus. Truly your head and bright eyes are wonderfully like his, for many times we have

10 Odysseus’ father.

talked together before he set sail for Troy, where the others too, the bravest of the Argives, went in their hollow ships. From that day onward I have not seen Odysseus, nor has he seen me.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her and said, “I will plainly tell you everything. My mother indeed says that I am his; as for me I do not know, for no man ever knew his own descent himself. If only I had been the son of some blessed man whom old age overtook among his own possessions! But they say that I am the son of that man who is the most unfortunate of mortals, since you question me about that.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him and said, “Surely the gods have not ordained a nameless lineage for you in days to come, since Penelope bore such a noble man as you. But tell me this plainly: what feast, or rather, what dissipation is this? What do you have to do with it? Is it a clan drinking or a wedding feast, for this is not a banquet where each man brings his share. In this way, swollen with insolence, they seem to me to revel wantonly throughout the house, and any man might well be angry to see so many deeds of shame, if any wise man came among them.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her and said, “Sir, since you question me about these things and inquire about them, our house was once rich and honorable, while that man was still among his people. But now the gods have willed it otherwise, with evil intent, for they have made him pass utterly out of sight like no one ever before. Indeed, I would not grieve so much even for his death, had he fallen among his companions in the land of the Trojans or in the arms of his friends when he had wound up the war. Then the whole Achaean host would have built him a barrow,¹¹ and he would have won great glory even for his son in after days. But now the spirits of the storm¹² have swept him away into obscurity. He is gone, lost to

11 Burial mound (cf. the mound heaped up for Patroklos in Book 23 of the *Iliad*).

12 The word here is often translated as “storm winds” (e.g., Lattimore), but it certainly refers to personified winds, whose genealogy is given in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, and this would have been recognized by Homer’s (and later) audiences. Many of what we take as merely material elements of nature in Homer and other early Greek literature (especially poetry) were understood by the ancient Greeks as animated and personified.

sight, lost to knowledge, but for me he has left grief and lamentation, nor is it for him alone that I mourn and weep, since the gods have caused other terrible sorrows for me. For all the noblest princes in the isles, in Doulichion and Same and wooded Zakynthos, and all who lord it over rocky Ithaka, all these court my mother and waste my house. But as for her, she neither refuses the hated marriage nor has the heart to end the matter; so they devour and waste my house, and before long they will make havoc of me too.”

Then in great displeasure Pallas Athene spoke to him: “What a shame! Surely you are greatly in need of far-off Odysseus to stretch forth his hands upon the shameless suitors. If only he could come now and stand at the entrance of the gate with helmet and shield and two spears, as mighty a man as when I first saw him in our house drinking and rejoicing at that time he came up out of Ephyre from Ilos, son of Mermeros! For Odysseus had gone there on his swift ship to seek a deadly drug, that he might have it to smear on his bronze-shod arrows, but Ilos would in no way give it to him, for he was in awe of the gods who live forever. But my father gave it to him, for he loved him greatly. If only Odysseus might in that same strength deal with the suitors; they would all have a swift fate and a bitter wedding! However, these things surely lie on the knees of the gods, whether he shall return or not and take vengeance in his halls. But I urge you to consider how you might drive out the suitors from the hall. Come now, listen and heed my words. Tomorrow call the Achaean lords to the assembly and announce your words to all and take the gods as witness. Bid the suitors to disperse, each one to his own place, and as for your mother, if her heart is inclined to marriage, let her go back to the hall of that mighty man her father, and her people will furnish a wedding feast and arrange for the many courtship gifts that should go with a dearly beloved daughter. And to you I will give a word of wise counsel, if you will listen. Outfit a ship, the best you have, with twenty oarsmen and travel to inquire about your father who is so far off, if perhaps anyone will tell you anything, or if you may hear the voice of Zeus, which above all brings news to men. Go first to Pylos and inquire of noble Nestor, and from there to Sparta to Menelaos of

the fair hair, for he came home last of all the well-armored Achaians. If you hear news of the life and the return of your father, then indeed you can endure the troubles for another year. But if you hear that he is dead and gone, then return to your own dear country and pile his burial mound and over it serve the burial rites, as many as is fitting, and give your mother to a husband. But when you have done all this, then consider in your mind and heart how you might slay the suitors in your halls, whether secretly or openly, for you should not continue thinking as a child, since you are no longer of the age for it. Have you not heard what glory noble Orestes got for himself among all men because he killed the slayer of his father, treacherous Aigisthos, who killed his famous father? And you too must be courageous, my friend, for I see that you are noble and tall, so that even men not yet born will praise you. But now I will go down to the swift ship and to my men, who I think are very impatient waiting for me. Take heed and listen to my words.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “Sir, indeed you speak these things from a friendly heart, as a father to his son, and I will never forget them. But now I beg you to stay here, even though you are eager to be gone, so that after you have bathed and enjoyed yourself, you may make your way to your ship joyful in spirit, with a costly and very noble gift, to be a remembrance of my giving, such as dear friends give to friends.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him: “Do not keep me any longer, for I am eager to be on my way. But give to me whatever gift your heart urges you when I come back again for me to carry home; bring out from your stores a most noble gift, and you will receive its worth in return.”

So grey-eyed Athene spoke and departed, and like an eagle of the sea she flew away, but in his spirit she planted strength and courage and brought to his mind his father even more than before. And he saw and was amazed, for he realized that it was a god, and soon he went back among the suitors, a godlike man.

Telemachos Rebukes the Suitors

Now the famous bard was singing to the suitors, and they sat listening in silence, and his song was of the pitiful return of the Achaians,¹³ that Pallas Athene laid on them as they came back from Troy. And from her upper chamber the daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, heard the glorious music, and she went down the high stairs from her chamber, not alone, for two of her handmaids kept her company. Now when the fair lady had come to the suitors, she stood by the pillar of the well-built roof holding up her shining veil before her face, and a faithful maiden stood on either side of her. Then she began weeping and spoke to the divine bard:

“Phemios, since you know many other songs for mortals, deeds of men and gods, which bards rehearse, sing of these as you sit by them and let them drink their wine in silence, but stop this pitiful tune that continually wastes my heart within my breast, since to me beyond all women has come a sorrow without comfort. So dear a head do I long for in constant memory, that man whose fame is praised everywhere from Hellas to the middle of Argos.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her and said, “Mother, why do you refuse to let the glorious bard gladden us as his spirit moves him? It is not bards who are at fault, but rather Zeus, I think, who is at fault, for he gives to all men, who live by bread, what he will. As for the bard, do not blame him if he sings about the unfortunate travels of the Danaans, for men always prize that song the most which rings newest in their ears. But let your heart and mind bear up to listen, for Odysseus is not the only one who lost the day of his homecoming in Troy, but many others also perished. Nevertheless, go to your chamber and attend to your tasks, the loom and spindle, and urge your handmaids to work at their tasks. Speech will be for men—for all, but for me most of all, for I am the lord of the house.”

13 Compare this with the songs of Demodokos in Book 8 which have the same themes. The stories of the Trojan War and the *nostoi* (homecomings) of the Achaians have already circulated widely throughout the eastern Mediterranean by this time.

Then in amazement she went back to her chamber, and she laid up the wise saying of her son in her heart. She ascended to her upper chamber with the women who were her handmaids and then wailed for Odysseus, her dear lord, till grey-eyed Athene cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Now the suitors clamored throughout the shadowy halls, and each one uttered a prayer to be her bedfellow. And wise Telemachos spoke out among them:

“Suitors of my mother, men outrageous beyond measure, let us feast now and make merry and let there be no brawling; it is a good thing to listen to a bard such as this one, like the gods in his voice. But in the morning let us all go to the assembly and sit down, so that I may announce my words clearly: that you leave these halls and busy yourselves with other feasts, consuming your own wealth, going in turn from house to house. But if you think this a likelier and a better thing, that one man’s goods should perish without repayment, then waste it as you please, and I will call upon the everlasting gods, if perhaps Zeus may grant that revenge be made; then you would perish within these halls without making atonement.”

So he spoke, and all who heard him bit their lips and marveled at Telemachos, because he spoke boldly.

Then Antinoös, son of Eupheithes, answered him: “Telemachos, indeed the gods themselves have taught you to be so proud and bold in your speech. May the son of Kronos never make you king in sea-encircled Ithaka, though it is your inheritance by right!”

Then wise Telemachos answered him and said: “Antinoös, will you indeed be angry at the word that I will speak? Yes, at the hand of Zeus I would be eager to take this thing upon me. Do you say that this is the worst thing that can happen to a man? No, it is not a bad thing to be a king; the house of such a man quickly grows rich, and he himself is held in greater honor. However, there are many other kings of the Achaians in sea-encircled Ithaka, both young and old; one of them will surely obtain this kingship since noble Odysseus is dead. But as for me, I will be lord of our own house and servants, which noble Odysseus won for me with his spear.”

Then Eurymachos, son of Polybos, answered him, saying, “Telemachos, surely it lies on the knees of the gods what man is to be king over the Achaians in sea-encircled Ithaka. But may you keep your own possessions and be lord in your own house! May no one ever come to force violently from you your wealth against your will while Ithaka still stands. But I would ask you, friend, about the stranger—where is he from, and of what land does he claim to be? Where are his people and his native fields? Does he bring some news of your father on his journey, or does he come to conduct some business of his own? So suddenly he started to leave, and then he was gone, and he did not linger so we could know him—and yet he seemed to be no ordinary man to look upon.”

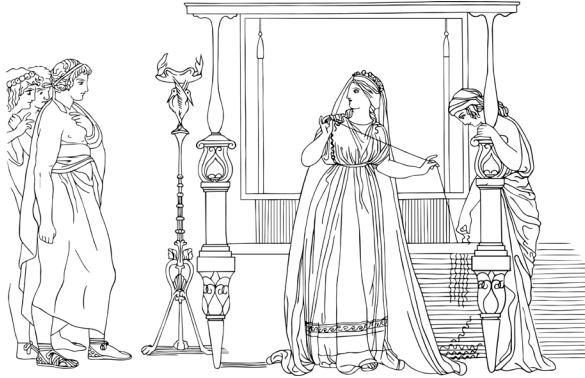
Then wise Telemachos answered him and said: “Eurymachos, surely the day of my father’s returning has passed. Therefore, I do not put faith in news any more, no matter where they come from, nor do I care for prophecies, about which my mother has inquired from the mouth of a soothsayer, when she has invited him to the hall. But as for that man, he is a friend of my house from Taphos, and he says he is Mentès, son of wise Anchialos, and he is lord over the Taphians, lovers of the oar.”

So spoke Telemachos, but in his heart he had recognized the immortal goddess. Now the suitors turned to the dance and the delightful song and made merry and waited till evening should come. And as they made merry, evening came upon them. Then each one went to his own house to lie down to rest.

But Telemachos, where his chamber was built high up in the noble court, in a place with a wide view, went to his own bed, pondering many thoughts in his mind, and with him went trusty Eurykleia and carried burning torches for him. She was the daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor, and Laertes bought her once upon a time with his wealth, while she was still in her youth, and paid twenty oxen for her. And he honored her as much as he honored his beloved wife in the halls, but he never lay with her, for he avoided the anger of his lady. She went with Telemachos and carried the burning torches for him, and of all the women of the household she loved him most, for she

had nursed him when he was little. Then he opened the doors of the well-built chamber and sat on the bed and took off his soft tunic and put it in the wise old woman's hands. So she folded the tunic and smoothed it and hung it on a pin by the jointed bedstead and went away from the room and pulled the door closed with the silver handle and pulled the bar shut with the leather strap. There, all night long, wrapped in a wool fleece, he meditated in his heart about the journey that Athene had revealed to him.

Book II: Telemachos Calls an Assembly



Penelope Surprised by the Suitors

Telemachos Speaks to the Assembly

Now when rosy-fingered Dawn shone forth early,¹ the dear son of Odysseus got up from his bed and put on his garments and threw his sharp sword over his shoulder, and beneath his smooth feet he bound his noble sandals, and he stepped out from his chamber in appearance like a god. And immediately he commanded the clear-voiced heralds to call the long-haired Achaians to the assembly. And the heralds called the gathering, and the Achaians were assembled quickly. Now when they were gathered together, he went on his way to the assembly, holding in his hand a spear of bronze, but he did not go alone, for two swift hounds kept him company. Then Athene shed a wonderful grace on him, and all the people marveled at him as

1 The most famous epithet for Dawn is *rhododaktylos eos* ("rosy-fingered Dawn"). *Rhodo* is familiar in "rhododendron," which means "rosy-tree," and *daktylos* is familiar in "pterodactyl," which means "winged finger." Often she is also called *eos erigeneia*, which means "early-rising Dawn." In Homer she not only rises early to herald the coming of her brother Helios, the sun-god himself, but seems to accompany him across the sky all day, because 1) he is often not even mentioned with her, so she stands for both herself and him, and 2) she often appears in the evening sky as well.

he came. And he sat in his father's seat, and the elders yielded their place to him.

Then the lord Aigyptios spoke among them first; he was bowed down with age but skilled in countless things. So he said that his dear son, the warrior Antiphos, had gone in the hollow ships to Ilios of the noble horses, but the savage Kyklops slew him in his hollow cave and made a meal of him.² Aigyptios had three other sons, and one, Eurynomos, was allied with the suitors, but two remained in their father's fields, but still he did not forget that son, mourning and sorrowing. So weeping for his sake, he spoke up among them:

"Listen now to me, men of Ithaka, to the word that I shall say. Our assembly or session has never met since the day noble Odysseus departed in the hollow ships. And now who thought to assemble us? Upon what man has such terrible need come, of the young men or of the elder born ones? Has he heard some tidings of the host returning now, which he could clearly tell to us, if he learned of it first, or does he claim to tell some other matter about the common welfare? I think he is a sound man—good luck be with him! May Zeus grant him something good in return, whatever is his heart's desire!"

So he spoke, and the beloved son of Odysseus was glad at the omen of the word, nor did he sit much longer now, but he burned to speak, and he stood in the middle of the assembly, and the herald Peisenor, skilled in wise counsels, placed the staff in his hands. Then he spoke, addressing the old man first:

"Old sir, he is not far off, and soon you will know for yourself who called the folk together. It is I, for sorrow has come to me most of all. I have not heard any news of the host returning now, which I could plainly declare to you, if I had heard it first. Nor do I reveal or tell of any other matter concerning all, but my own need, for evil has befallen my house, a double sorrow. First, I have lost my noble father, who once was king among you here and was a gentle father, and now there is a far greater evil, which surely shall soon wreak terrible havoc on my whole house and ruin all my livelihood. My

2 An intriguing detail which most readers will have forgotten when they come across the more famous Kyklops episode involving Odysseus in Book 9.

mother has been beset much against her will by suitors, sons of those men that are the noblest in this region. They are too cowardly to go to the house of her father Ikarios, so that he could himself set the bride-price for his daughter and give her to whomever he wished, to him who finds favor in his sight.

“But coming to our house daily, they sacrifice oxen and sheep and fat goats and carouse and drink the dark wine recklessly, and our great wealth is consumed, for there is no man now alive such as Odysseus was to keep ruin from the house. As for me, I am nothing like him in strength to guard what is mine; indeed, to the end of my days I will be weak and unskilled in might.³ Truly I would defend myself if I had strength, for intolerable deeds have been done, and now my house is utterly wasted beyond any pretense of right. Be indignant in your own hearts, and consider your neighbors who dwell nearby, and tremble at the anger of the gods, lest they turn on you in anger at your evil deeds.⁴ I beg you by Olympian Zeus and by Themis, who scatters and gathers the meetings of men, let me be, my friends, and leave me alone to waste away in bitter grief—unless my father, the good Odysseus, from an evil heart worked harm on the strong-armed Achaians, and you now work harm on me in return out of evil hearts and spur on these men. It would be better for me that you yourselves should consume my treasures and my flocks; if you did so, before long some retribution would come, for we would proclaim our case throughout the town, begging for the return of our substance, until everything was restored. But now there is no remedy for the pains you cause in my heart.”

So he spoke in anger and dashed the staff to the ground and broke out in tears, and pity fell on all the people. Then all the others remained quiet, and no one had the heart to answer Telemachos with harsh words, except Antinoös who answered him, saying:

3 In the Greek in this sentence, Telemachos speaks in the first person plural (the royal “we”), as though to underscore the fact that though he is weak he is still master of the house by right.

4 The importance of *xenia*, the guest-host relationship in the Homeric stories, cannot be understated. Telemachos is warning the assembly that what they, his “guests,” do to him in their violation of *xenia* by taking advantage of him, their “host,” may someday be done to them by their own neighbors, and bring down the wrath of the gods, especially Zeus Xenios (Zeus as guardian of *xenia*).

“Telemachos, proud of speech and unrestrained in fury, what is this you have said to put us to shame, and would you put reproach on us? Look, the fault is not in the Achaean suitors, but in your own mother, for she is the craftiest of women. For it is now the third year, and the fourth is quickly going by, since she began to deceive the minds of the Achaians in their hearts. She gives hope to all and makes promises to every man and sends them messages, but her mind is set on other things. And she has devised in her heart this trick too: she set up in her halls a great tapestry, fine in weaving and very wide, which she would weave, and then she spoke among us this way:

“You noble youths, my suitors, now that noble Odysseus is dead, wait patiently, however eager to pursue marriage with me, until I finish the robe. I would not wish the threads to perish futilely, this shroud for the hero Laertes, made for the day when ruinous doom brings him low, death that stretches men out at their length. So none of the Achaean women in the land will blame me, as might be the case if he were to lie without a grave-sheet, a man that had acquired great possessions.’

“So she spoke, and our proud hearts agreed to this. So in the daytime she would weave the mighty web, but in the night she would unravel it, when she had torches placed by her. So for three years she hid this trick by craft and beguiled the minds of the Achaians, but when the fourth year arrived, and the seasons came round, then at last one of her women who knew all about it told it, and we found her unraveling the splendid web. So she finished it under threat and very much against her will. But as for you, the suitors answer you this way, that you may know it in your own heart, you and all the Achaians! Send away your mother and bid her to be married to whomever her father commands and whomever is pleasing to her. But if she continues to vex the sons of the Achaians for a long time, pondering in her heart those things that Athene has given to her more than all other women, knowledge of all fair handcrafts, yes, and cunning wit and cleverness—so be it! Such tricks as hers we have never heard that even the women of old knew, those who in old times were fair-haired Achaean ladies—Tyro and Alkmene and Mykene with the bright

crown. Not one of these in the imaginations of their hearts was like Penelope, yet in this at least her imagining was no good. For in spite of her the suitors will consume your wealth and goods, as long as she continues in the purpose the gods now put in her heart; she wins great renown for herself, but for you, regret for your lost wealth. But we will neither go back to our own lands, nor anywhere else, until she marries the man whom she wishes from among the Achaians.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Antinoös, I will in no way throw out of the house, against her will, the woman who bore me, who reared me while my father is far away on the earth, whether alive or dead. Moreover, it would be hard for me to make heavy restitution to Ikarios,⁵ as I must, if of my own will I send my mother away. For I would receive evil from his hand, from the hand of her father, and some god will give me more besides, for my mother will call down the terrible Furies⁶ as she departs from the house, and I will be blamed by men; certainly then I will never speak this word. No, if your own heart is indignant, leave my halls and occupy yourselves with other feasts, eating your own substance and going in turn from house to house. But if you think it is a better and more useful thing that one man’s goods should perish without penalty, then plunder as you wish, but I will call upon the everlasting gods, if perhaps Zeus may grant that acts of retribution be made; in this way you would perish in these halls without atonement.”

So Telemachos spoke, and in answer to his prayer Zeus, of the far-carrying voice, sent forth two eagles in flight from on high, from the mountain-crest. For a while they flew as swift as the blasts of the wind, side by side, straining their wings. But when they had reached the middle of the assembly, the place of many voices, there they wheeled about and flapped their powerful wings and looked down upon the heads of all, and destruction was in their gaze. Then with their talons they tore each other’s cheeks and necks on both sides

5 Penelope’s father. He was brother to Tyndareus, Helen’s father, so Penelope was Helen’s cousin. Ikarios required any man who wished to marry Penelope to defeat him in a footrace, which Odysseus did.

6 Greek *erinyes*, terrifying female underworld deities who avenge crimes against kin.

and then sped to the right across the houses and the city of the people. And the men were amazed at the birds when they saw them and pondered in their hearts the things that might happen. Yes, and the old man, the lord Halitherses, son of Mastor, spoke out among them, for he surpassed all those of his age in his knowledge of birds and in speaking about omens. With good intentions he addressed them and spoke among them:

“Listen to me now, men of Ithaka, to the word that I will say, and mainly to the suitors do I declare and say these things, seeing that a mighty woe is rolling upon them. For Odysseus will not be away from his friends for long; no, even now, it may be, he is near and sowing the seeds of death and fate for these men, every one of them, and he will be a curse to many others also of us who dwell in shining Ithaka. But long before that happens let us consider how we may end their mischief; yes, let them end it themselves, for this would be better for them, as will soon be seen. For I prophesy not as someone inexperienced but with sure knowledge; indeed, I say that all things have now come to pass for him, just as I told him when the Argives departed for Ilios, and he went with them, the wise Odysseus. I said that after terrible suffering, with the loss of all his company, he would come home in the twentieth year unknown to all. And look, all these things now are being fulfilled.”

Then Eurymachos, son of Polybos, answered him, saying, “Go on, old man, go home and prophesy to your own children, lest perhaps they suffer harm soon; in this I am a far better prophet than you. Though there be many birds that fly to and fro under the sun’s rays, not all are birds of fate. As for Odysseus, he has perished far away, and I wish that you too had been destroyed along with him, then you would not have babbled so much prophecy, nor would you keep harassing Telemachos who is already angry, expecting a gift for your house on the chance that he might give you something. But now I will speak out, and my word will surely come to pass. If you, who know so much ancient lore, will deceive with words a younger man and rouse him to indignation, first it will be a great grief to him, and he can count on no help from these who hear him, while upon you,

old man, we will lay a fine, that you might pay it and be indignant in your heart and have great grief. And I myself will give a word of counsel to Telemachos in the presence of you all. Let him command his mother to return to her father's house, and her relatives will supply a wedding feast and arrange a great many courtship gifts, all that should go with a dearly loved daughter. For until then, I assure you, we sons of the Achaians will not stop our harsh wooing, since, no matter what, we fear no man and certainly not Telemachos, though he is full of words. Nor do we care about prophecies, about which you, old man, chatter on idly and are hated even more. His substance also will be greatly devoured, and no payment will ever be made, so long as she keeps putting off the Achaians in the matter of her marriage, while we, in anticipation from day to day, compete with each other for the prize of her perfection instead of courting other women whom it would be more proper for us to marry."

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, "Eurymachos and all you other haughty suitors, I will no longer entreat you concerning this or speak about it, for the gods know of it now, and so do all the Achaians. But come, give me a swift ship and twenty men, who will help me make my voyage away and back. For I will go to Sparta and to sandy Pylos to enquire about the return of my father who is so long away, if perhaps any man can tell me anything, or if I may hear the voice of Zeus, which of all voices brings news to men. If I hear news of the life and the returning of my father, then indeed I may endure the plundering for another year, but if I hear that he is dead and gone, let me then return to my own dear country and pile up his funeral mound and over it pay as many burial rites as is right, and then I will give my mother away to a husband."

So with that word he sat down, then in the midst rose Mentor, the companion of noble Odysseus. It was he to whom Odysseus, as he departed with the fleet, had given command to all his household that it should obey the old man, and that he should keep all things safe. With good intentions he now addressed and spoke out among them:

"Listen to me now, men of Ithaka, to the word that I say. From now on do not let any sceptred king be kind and gentle with all his

heart nor inclined to act justly, but let him always be a harsh man and work unrighteousness; for see, of all the people whose lord glorious Odysseus was, there is none who remembers him, he who was gentle as a father. Nevertheless, it is not that I am angry at the haughty suitors for their deeds of violence in the evil intentions of their heart. For at the risk of their own heads, they violently devour the household of Odysseus and say about him that he will never come back again. But I am indeed angry with the rest of the people to see how you all sit speechless this way and do not call shame upon the suitors and put them down, you who are so many while they are so few.”

Then Leokritos, son of Euenor, answered him, saying, “Foolish Mentor, with your wandering wits, what word have you spoken to call on them to put us down? No, it is a harsh thing to fight about a feast, especially with men who are greater in number than you. Though Odysseus of Ithaka himself should come and were eager in his heart to drive out of the hall the haughty suitors who feast throughout his house, even so his wife would gain no joy from his coming, though she longs for him. But there he would meet his evil doom, if he fought with those who outnumber him.⁷ So you have not spoken right. But as for the nobles, come, scatter to your own lands, and Mentor and Halitherses will hasten this man’s voyage, for they are friends of his house from long ago. Yet I think that for a long time he will wait, seeking news in Ithaka, and never succeed in this journey.”

So he spoke, and quickly they broke up the assembly, and they scattered, each one to his own home, while the suitors departed to the house of glorious Odysseus.

Then Telemachos, going far off to the shore of the sea, washed his hands in the grey sea-water and prayed to Athene, saying, “Hear me, you who yesterday came in divinity to our house and commanded me to go in a ship across the misty seas, to seek news of the return

7 Notice that the suitors’ greatest evil is not that they want to marry Penelope, but that they want to kill the rightful king of the island if he returns; that is, they are guilty of treason. This explains the great violence with which he punishes them—and especially the collaborators of his own household—toward the end of the story.

of my father who is gone so long, but the Achaians delay all my purposes and mainly the suitors in the wickedness of their pride.”

So he spoke, and Athene came close in the likeness of Mentor, in appearance and in voice, and she spoke and greeted him with winged words:

“Telemachos, you will never be cowardly or witless if indeed you have a drop of your father’s blood and any of his spirit; he was always one to fulfill both word and work. Nor, since this is so, will your voyage be vain or unfulfilled. But if you are not the true offspring of him and of Penelope, then I have no hope that you will accomplish your desire. For few children, truly, are like their father; indeed, most of them are worse, and only a few are better than their father. But since you will never from here on be cowardly or witless, nor has the wisdom of Odysseus failed you completely, there is good hope of your accomplishing this work. So do not pay attention to the advice or intentions of the senseless suitors, for they are in no way wise or just, and they know nothing of death and black fate, which already is close to them, that they are all to be destroyed in a single day. But the voyage on which your heart is set will not be lacking for long, for I am a faithful friend of your father, and I will equip you with a swift ship and will myself accompany you. So go to the house and talk with the suitors and prepare wheat and stow it all in vessels; stow the wine in jars and the barley-flour, which nourishes men, in well-sewn skins. I will quickly gather from the town a crew that offers themselves willingly. There are many ships, new and old, in sea-washed Ithaka; I will choose from these the best for you, and we will quickly outfit her and launch her on the broad sea.”

So spoke Athene, daughter of Zeus, and Telemachos did not delay when he had heard the voice of the goddess. He went on his way towards the house, heavy at heart, and there he found the haughty suitors in the halls, skinning goats and singeing pigs in the courtyard. And Antinoös laughed and went straight to Telemachos and grasped his hand and spoke and addressed him:

“Telemachos, proud in speech and unrestrained in anger, let no evil word or deed be in your heart any longer. But let me see you eat

and drink as you used to. The Achaians will make everything ready for you without fail, a ship and chosen oarsmen, so that you may go more quickly to lovely Pylos, to seek news of your noble father.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Antinoös, in no way can I eat in peace in your haughty company, nor make merry with a quiet mind. Is it a small thing, you suitors, that in time past you consumed so many good things belonging to me while I was still a child? But now that I am a grown man and hear the story from the lips of others, and my spirit grows hot within me, I will seek to let loose evil fates upon you, however I can, going either to Pylos for help or remaining here in this country. Yes, I will go, and the voyage I speak of will not be in vain; I will go as a passenger on someone else’s ship, since I am not allowed a ship or oarsmen of my own. This seems to be how your mind thought it best.”

He spoke and snatched his hand from the hand of Antinoös, lightly, and all the while the suitors were busy feasting throughout the palace, and they mocked him and harshly taunted him, and some haughty youth would speak this way: “So, Telemachos plans our destruction. He will bring help either from sandy Pylos or maybe even from Sparta, he is so furiously set on destroying us. Or else he will go to Ephyre, a fruitful land, to bring a poisonous drug that he can put into the bowl and make an end of us all.”

And another haughty youth would say: “Who knows? Perhaps if he leaves on the hollow ship, he himself may die wandering far from his friends, just as Odysseus did. Then we will have more work to do, for then we will have to divide among us all his substance, and also give the palace to his mother to possess it, and to him that marries her.”

Telemachos Prepares for His Journey

So they spoke, but he stepped down into the vaulted treasure-chamber⁸ of his father, a huge room, where gold and bronze lay piled, and garments in chests, and plenty of fragrant olive oil. And there stood barrels of aged sweet wine, casks full of the glorious unmixed drink, all arranged in order by the wall, ready if ever Odysseus should come home after much suffering and pain. And the close-fitted folding doors were shut, and night and day there a woman remained in charge who guarded everything in her great wisdom, Eurykleia, daughter of Ops, son of Peisenor. Telemachos now called her into the chamber and spake unto her, saying,

“Mother,⁹ come pour for me sweet wine in jars, the choicest next to that which you always keep in readiness for that ill-fated one, Odysseus of the seed of Zeus, if perhaps he may come from some unknown place, having avoided death and the fates. So fill twelve jars and close each with its lid and pour for me barley-meal into well-sewn skin bags and let there be twenty measures of the grain of crushed barley-meal. Let no one know about this but you! Let all these things be gathered, for this evening I will take them with me, when my mother has gone to her upper chamber¹⁰ and turned her thoughts to sleep. I am going to Sparta and sandy Pylos to seek news of my beloved father’s return, if I can hear any.”

So he spoke, and the good servant Eurykleia wept aloud and, grieving, spoke winged words to him: “Ah, beloved child, why has such a thought arisen in your heart? How will you travel over the wide earth, you who are an only child and well-beloved? As for Od-

8 See Odyssey Map 2, the plan of the palace. The storerooms were ranged around the main rooms, as can still be seen in the excavated foundations of the great palace at Pylos and other Mycenaean sites.

9 Or even, “Mama”—the Greek word *mai* is an intimate, affectionate form of address (like the modern Greek *ya-ya* or Russian *babushka*) used not only by Telemachos for his old nurse-maid, but also Odysseus (Book 19) and Penelope (Books 17 and 23).

10 Again see the plan of the palace for the sleeping chambers which, like the storerooms, are set around the main great rooms.

ysseus of the seed of Zeus, he has perished far from his own country in the land of strangers. And these men, as soon as you are gone, will plot evil against you, so that you will die by their deceit, and they will share among them all your wealth. No, stay here, settled on your own lands; you have no need to go wandering and suffer evil on the deep, unharvested sea.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “Take heart, nurse, for my plan came from a god. But swear to say nothing about it to my dear mother, till at least the eleventh or twelfth day from now, or till she misses me herself and hears of my departure, so that she will not mar her lovely face with tears.”

So he spoke, and the old woman swore a great oath by the gods not to reveal it. And when she had sworn that oath, immediately she poured the wine for him in jars and poured barley-meal into well-sewn skins, and Telemachos departed to the house and talked with the suitors.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, turned to other thoughts. In the likeness of Telemachos, she went through the whole city and stood by each one of the men and spoke and commanded them to gather at the swift ship. Furthermore, she asked for a swift ship from Noëmon, famous son of Phronios, and gladly he promised it.

Now the sun sank and everything was dark. Then she caused the swift ship to be dragged down to the sea and stored within it all the gear that decked ships carry. And she moored it at the far end of the harbor, and the good company was gathered together, and the goddess encouraged them all.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, turned to other thoughts. She went on her way to the house of godlike Odysseus, and there she shed sweet sleep on the suitors and made them confused in their drinking and dashed the cups from their hands. And they rose to go to their rest throughout the city, not staying longer, for slumber was falling on their eyelids. Now grey-eyed Athene spoke to Telemachos and called him out of the glorious halls, taking the likeness of Mentor in appearance and voice: “Telemachos, your strong-armored companions are already sitting ready at their oars; they are waiting

for your command. Let us go, so that we do not delay them from the journey.”

With that, Pallas Athene led the way quickly, and he followed close in the footsteps of the goddess. When they had come down to the ship and the sea, they found the long-haired youths of the company on the shore, and the mighty prince Telemachos spoke among them: “Come, friends, let us carry the grain on board, for everything is now gathered together in the storeroom, and my mother knows nothing of it, nor do any of the maidens of the house; only one woman heard of my plans.”

So he spoke and led the way, and they went with him. So they brought everything and stowed it in the decked ship, according to the command of the beloved son of Odysseus. Then Telemachos boarded the ship, and Athene went ahead of him, and she sat down in the stern, and Telemachos sat near her. And the men untied the ropes and climbed on board themselves and sat down upon the benches. And grey-eyed Athene sent them a favorable breeze, a strong west wind, singing over the wine-dark sea.

And Telemachos called out to his companions and commanded them to lay hold of the tackling, and they obeyed his voice. So they raised the mast made of a pine tree and set it in the hole of the cross plank and made it secure with forestays and hauled up the white sails with twisted ropes of oxhide. And the wind filled the belly of the sail, and the dark wave seethed loudly around the stem of the running ship, and she sped over the waves, accomplishing her journey. Then they made everything secure in the swift black ship and set out mixing bowls full of wine and poured a drink offering to the deathless gods who live forever and especially to the grey-eyed daughter of Zeus. So all night long and into the Dawn the ship cut her way.

Book III: Telemachos Visits Nestor



Telemachos in Search of his Father

Telemachos Welcomed by Nestor

Now the sun rose and left the lovely sea, speeding to the bronze heaven to give light to the immortals and to mortal men on the grain-giving earth, and they reached Pylos,¹ the established palace of Neleus. There the people were making sacrifice on the seashore, slaughtering black bulls without blemish to the dark-haired god, the Shaker of the Earth. Nine companies of men were there, and five hundred men sat in each one, and in every company they held nine bulls ready to slaughter. Just as they had tasted the inner parts and were burning the slices of the thighs on the altar to the god, the others² were heading straight to land and rolled up the sails of the gallant ship and moored her and then came ashore. And Telemachos too stepped out of the ship, and Athene led the way. And the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him, saying,

“Telemachos, do not be at all shy now. You sailed over the sea for this very reason, to hear news of your father, where the earth

1 See Iliad Maps 2 and 5 and Odyssey Map 1.

2 Telemachos and his companions.

closed over him and how he died. So now, go straight to Nestor, tamer of horses; let us learn what counsel he has, hidden in his breast. And beg him to give you an accurate answer, and he will not lie to you, for he is very wise.”

Wise Telemachos answered, saying, “Mentor, and how shall I go, how shall I greet him, I, who am untried in words of wisdom? Furthermore, a young man may well be hesitant to question an elder.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him again: “Telemachos, you will think of something in your own heart, and the god will give you something to say. For I think that you, of all men, were not born and bred apart from the will of the gods.”

So spoke Pallas Athene and led the way quickly, and he followed close in the footsteps of the goddess. And they came to the gathering and the companies of the men of Pylos. There Nestor was seated with his sons, and around him his company was preparing the feast and roasting some of the flesh and spitting the rest. Now when they saw the strangers, they all went together and clasped their hands in welcome and had them sit down. First Peisistratos, son of Nestor, came close and took the hands of each and made them sit down at the feast on soft fleeces on the sand of the shore beside his brother Thrasymedes and his father. And he gave them portions of the inner meat and poured wine into a golden cup and, pledging her, he spoke to Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis:

“Pray now, my guest, to the lord Poseidon, since it is his feast upon which you have come when you arrived. And when you have offered the drink offering and prayed, as is right, give also to your friend the cup of honeyed wine to make an offering from it, since he too, I think, prays to the deathless gods, for all men have need of the gods. But since he is younger and my equal in years, I give you the golden cup first.”

With that, he placed in her hand the cup of sweet wine. And Athene rejoiced in the wisdom and judgment of the man, because he had given to her first the golden cup. And immediately she prayed to the lord Poseidon:

“Hear me, Poseidon, Circler of the Earth, and do not begrudge the fulfillment of this journey in answer to our prayer. To Nestor first and to his sons grant renown, and after that grant to all the people of Pylos a gracious repayment for this splendid sacrifice. Grant, furthermore, that Telemachos and I may return, when we have accomplished that for which we came here with our swift black ship.”

Now as she prayed this way, she herself was also fulfilling the prayer. And she gave Telemachos the lovely two-handled cup, and then, in the same way, the beloved son of Odysseus prayed. Then, when the others had roasted the outer parts and taken them off the spits, they divided the portions and shared the glorious feast. When they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, spoke first among them:

“Now is the right time to ask the strangers who they are, now that they have had their delight in food. Strangers, who are you? From where do you sail over the watery ways? Are you wandering over the salt sea on some trading enterprise or on an adventure like sea-bandits who wander, risking their own lives, bringing evil to foreign men?”

Then wise Telemachos answered him and spoke with courage, for Athene herself had put boldness in his heart, that he might ask about his father who was far off, and that he might have a good reputation among men:³ “Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, you ask where we come from, and I will certainly tell you everything. We have come from Ithaka which is below Neïon, and this quest I tell about is a personal matter, not a public one. I seek reports of my father abroad, if perhaps I may hear something about him, the noble steadfast Odysseus, who at one time, men say, fought

3 “...and that he might have a good reputation among men...” is generally considered to be a later addition, as it is missing from most medieval manuscripts and several ancient papyri. It is an exact repeat of line 95 in Book 1, where it is known to be original. If this line here was not in the original, not only would it not affect the context, but would not affect the poetic rhythm either. This question—is a particular passage a part of the original text?—has occupied scholars through the ages, as does the same question about various passages in the Bible. But just as with the Bible, the great body of historical usage surrounding Homer over the millennia—commentary on the text and wide usage in literature—is a good guide not only to what the original text might have been, but to the meaning of the text, regardless of whether a particular line is original, so that knowing precisely what the original was is a less threatening question than a narrow focus on the question might suggest.

by your side and sacked the city of the Trojans. For of all the others, all who warred with the Trojans, we hear news, and where each one fell by a pitiful death, but the death of this man the son of Kronos has left untold. For no one can tell with certainty the place where he has perished, whether he was struck down by enemies on the mainland, or lost upon the sea among the waves of Amphitrite. So now I have come here to your feet, if perhaps you are willing to tell me of his pitiful death, as one who saw it with your own eyes or heard the story from some other wanderer, for his mother bore him for great sorrow. And speak no soft words out of pity, but tell me plainly what sight you have had of him. I beg you, if ever my father, noble Odysseus, promised you regarding words or labor and fulfilled those promises in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaians suffered sorrows; these things, I beg you to remember now and tell me truly.”

Nestor Narrates the Returns of the Achaians

Then Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, answered him: “My friend, since you have brought sorrow back to mind, listen. This is the story of the woe which we endured in that land, we sons of the Achaians, unrestrained in fury, and of all that we bore in wanderings after spoil, sailing with our ships over the misty deep wherever Achilles led, and of our war around the mighty fortress of king Priam. Yes, and there the best of us were slain. There lies valiant Aias and Achilles and Patroklos, the equal of the gods in counsel, and there lies my own dear son, strong and noble Antilochus, who excelled in speed of foot and in the fight. And many other evils we suffered besides these: who of mortal men could tell the tale? None, though you were to remain here for five years or six and ask about all the evils which the noble Achaians then endured. Before all was told, you would be weary and return to your own country. For nine whole years we were busy, plotting the Trojans’ ruin with all kinds of cleverness, and the son of Kronos barely brought it to pass. There no man

ever dared match wits with Odysseus, for noble Odysseus far outdid the rest of all kinds of craftiness, Odysseus your father, if indeed you are his son; amazement comes upon me as I look at you, for truly your voice is like his, and no one would ever have said that a younger man would speak so much like an elder one. Now listen, all the while that myself and noble Odysseus were there, we never spoke contrary to each other either in the assembly or in the council but always were of one mind and advised the Argives with understanding and sound counsel, how everything might best be done. But after we had sacked the high city of Priam and had departed in our ships, and a god had scattered the Achaians, then Zeus devised in his heart a pitiful homecoming for the Argives, for in no way were they all careful or just. Because of this, many of them met with an evil fate because of the deadly anger of the grey-eyed goddess, the daughter of the mighty father, who caused division between the two sons of Atreus. And those two called to the assembly all the Achaians, recklessly and out of order, at the going down of the sun, and the sons of the Achaians came heavy with wine. And the two sons of Atreus spoke and told the reason why they had assembled the army. Then indeed, Menelaos urged all the Achaians to think of returning over the broad back of the sea, but in no way did he please Agamemnon, whose desire was to keep back the army and to offer holy and great sacrifices, that so he might appease that terrible anger of Athene. The fool! For he did not know that she was never to be appeased, for the minds of the everlasting gods are not easily changed. So these two stood exchanging harsh words, but the strong-armored Achaians sprang up with a great uproar, and two opposing counsels found favor among them. So that night we rested, thinking harsh things against each other, for Zeus was planning for us a disastrous doom. In the morning, we on one side drew our ships to the fair salt sea and put aboard our treasure and the well-girdled Trojan women. But the other half of the people remained steadfastly there with Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the people, and so half of us embarked and went to sea and swiftly the ships sailed, for a god made the sea smooth over its deeps. And when we came to Tenedos, we sacrificed to the gods,

being eager to make our way home, but Zeus did not yet allow our returning, so harsh was he, and he roused once more an evil strife among us. Then some turned their curved ships back and went their way, the company of Odysseus, the wise and manifold in counsel, once again showing favor to Agamemnon, son of Atreus. But I fled on with the squadron that followed me, for I knew now how the god plotted evil. And the warlike son of Tydeus fled and roused his men to do so also. And later, behind us, came Menelaos of the fair hair, who found us in Lesbos, pondering about the long voyage, whether we should go to the seaward of craggy Chios by the isle of Psyros, keeping the isle upon our left, or inside Chios past windy Mimas. So we asked the god to show us a sign, and he declared a sign to us and urged us to cut a path across the middle sea to Euboia, so that we could run the swiftest way from sorrow. And a shrill wind arose and blew, and the ships ran very swiftly over the bountiful ways, and in the night they touched shore at Geraistos.⁴ So there we sacrificed many thighs of bulls to Poseidon, from joy that we had journeyed so great a stretch of sea. It was the fourth day when the company of Diomedes, son of Tydeus, tamer of horses, moored their brave ships at Argos, but I held on for Pylos, and the breeze never dropped from the hour that the god sent it out to blow. And so I came, dear son, without news, nor do I know anything about those others, which of the Achaians were saved and which were lost. But everything that I hear, told about as I sit in our halls, you will learn as is right, and I will hide nothing from you. They say that the Myrmidons came away safely, the wild spearmen, whom the famous son of high-spirited Achilles led, and Philoktetes, the glorious son of Poias, came away safely too. And Idomeneus brought all his company to Krete, all that escaped the war, and the sea took no one from him. And even you yourself have heard about the son of Atreus, though you live

4 To cut across the open Aegean Sea from Lesbos on the eastern side to Euboia on the western side saved a great deal of time over following the coastline. But it was very dangerous. Coasting was the most common practice because navigation out of sight of land was most uncertain due to the extreme difficulties of determining longitude, though not latitude. Geraistos was a well-known harbor on the southern part of Euboia, mentioned later by the Greek historian Thucydides and the Roman historian Livy.

far away—how he got home, and how Aigisthos plotted his terrible ending, but indeed, he himself paid a terrible price. It is a good thing that a son of the dead man should be left, since that son also took vengeance on the killer of his father, deceitful Aigisthos, who murdered his famous father. And you too, my friend—for I see that you are very handsome and tall—be courageous, that men yet to be born may praise you.”

And wise Telemachos answered him and said: “Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaians, indeed Orestes⁵ took vengeance, and the Achaians shall proclaim his fame everywhere, that even those yet to be born may hear of it. Oh that the gods would clothe me with such strength as his, that I might take vengeance on the suitors for their cruel violations, who recklessly plot against me their insane deeds! But the gods have not woven for me the web of any such good fortune, for me or for my father, so now I must endure it however I can.”

Then Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, answered: “Dear friend, since you call these things to my remembrance and speak about them, they tell me that many suitors for your mother’s hand plot mischief within the halls in contempt for you. Tell me, do you willingly submit yourself to their oppression or do the people throughout the land hate you, obedient to the voice of a god? Who knows but that Odysseus may someday come and repay their evil, either he himself alone or all the host of the Achaians with him. Oh, if only grey-eyed Athene were inclined to love you as she used to care so much for renowned Odysseus in the land of the Trojans where we Achaians suffered terribly, for never yet have I seen the gods show such obvious love as Pallas Athene did then, standing clearly by him; if only she would be pleased to love you so much and to care for you, then some of them might completely forget about this marriage.”

And wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Old man, in no way do I think this saying will be accomplished. This is a hard saying

5 Orestes, son of Agamemnon, killed Aigisthos for murdering his father. The whole story is most famously told in the play *Agamemnon*, by the fifth-century BC playwright Aeschylus.

of yours, and awe comes over me. In spite of my hopes this will not come to pass, not even if the gods willed it to be so.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him again: “Telemachos, what word has escaped the door of your lips? If he wished it, a god might easily bring a man safely home even from far off. I would rather have sorrow and pain myself before I came home and saw the day of my returning than come back easily but immediately die on my own hearth-stone, as Agamemnon perished by deceit at the hands of his own wife and of Aigisthos. But the gods themselves cannot turn aside death, which is common to all, from the man they love when the ruinous doom of death which stretches men out at length brings him low.”

And wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “Mentor, let us speak of these things no longer, sorrowful though we be. There is no assurance anymore of his returning, but already the deathless gods have planned death and black fate for him. But now I would like to ask Nestor of another matter, as one who more than all men knows judgment and wisdom, for men say that he has been king through three generations of men; to look at him he seems like an immortal to me. Nestor, son of Neleus, tell me truly, how did the son of Atreus die, Agamemnon of the wide domain? Where was Menelaos? What death did crafty Aigisthos plan for him, to kill a man more valiant by far than he? Or was Menelaos not in Argos of Achaia but wandering elsewhere among men, so that another could take heart and slay Agamemnon?”

Then Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, answered him: “Yes, my son, I will tell you the whole truth. Indeed, you have guessed rightly yourself what would have happened if Menelaos of the fair hair, the son of Atreus, when he came back from Troy, had found Aigisthos alive in the halls. Then when he was dead they would not have heaped the piled earth over him, but dogs and birds of the air would have devoured him as he lay on the plain far from the town. Nor would any of the Achaian women have mourned for him, so terrible was the deed he contrived. We sat in camp there, achieving many adventures, but he meanwhile, in peace in the heart of Argos,

the pastureland of horses, spoke often, tempting the wife of Agamemnon. Indeed, fair Klytaimnestra at first would have nothing to do with the evil deed, for she had good understanding. Furthermore, there was with her a bard⁶ whom the son of Atreus strictly commanded when he went to Troy to watch over his wife. But when at last the doom of the gods bound her to her ruin, then Aigisthos had the bard taken to a lonely island and left him there to be the prey and spoil of birds, while as for her, he led her to his house, a willing lover with a willing lady. And he burned many thigh pieces upon the holy altars of the gods and hung up many offerings, woven-work and gold, thinking that he had accomplished a great deed, beyond all hope. Now we, I say, were sailing together on our way from Troy, the son of Atreus and I, as loving friends. But when we had reached holy Sounion,⁷ the headland of Athens, there Phoibos Apollo slew the pilot of Menelaos' ship with his gentle shafts, as he held in his hands the rudder of the running ship—Phrontis, son of Onetor, who excelled the tribes of men in piloting a ship when the storm-winds were hurrying by. In this way Menelaos was held there, though he was eager for the journey, till he could bury his friend and pay the last rites over him.⁸ But when he in his turn, journeying over the wine-dark sea in hollow ships, reached in swift course the steep mount of Maleia,⁹ then Zeus of the far-carrying voice plotted an evil path and cast on them the breath of the shrill winds, and great swelling waves rose like mountains. There he broke the fleet in two parts, and one part he brought close to Krete, where the Kydonians live near the

6 The bard as protector of the queen has puzzled scholars from ancient times, for nowhere else in ancient Greek literature does this role for a bard appear. Even if the bard was not blind, according to the stereotype, he was not a warrior; one theory is that he was to sing songs about feminine virtue as a reminder to her. This is sometimes seen as Homer suggesting the power of the bard to promote virtue.

7 Modern Cape Sounio, 43 miles SE of Athens, where the extensive remains of a beautiful fifth-century BC temple to Poseidon stand on a prominent headland that was an important landmark for sailors as far back as the Mycenaean age.

8 In 1940, Charles Picard claimed to have identified Phrontis' tomb NE of Poseidon's temple, buried under many feet of soil.

9 The easternmost of the three southern capes of the Peloponnese (see *Iliad* Map 2). It has been notorious all through recorded history for violent storms.

streams of Iardanos. Now there is a certain cliff, smooth and sheer towards the sea, on the border of Gortys,¹⁰ in the misty deep, where the South-West Wind drives a great wave against the left headland, towards Phaistos, and a little rock keeps back the mighty water. One part of the fleet came there, and the men barely escaped destruction, but the ships were broken by the waves against the rock; while the second part, the other five dark-prowed ships, the wind and the water blew and brought to Egypt. So Menelaos, gathering goods and gold, wandered there with his ships among men of strange speech, while even then Aigisthos planned that terrible deed at home. And for seven years he ruled over Mycenae, rich in gold, after he killed the son of Atreus, and the people submitted to him. But in the eighth year noble Orestes, back from Athens, came upon him to be his curse and slew the slayer of his father, treacherous Aigisthos, who killed his famous father. Now when he had slain him, he made a funeral feast for the Argives over his hateful mother and over the cowardly Aigisthos. And on the same day Menelaos of the loud war-cry came to him, bringing great treasure, all the freight of his ships. So you, my friend, do not wander far away from home for long, leaving your wealth behind, with such haughty men in your house, lest they divide and utterly devour all your wealth, and you will have gone on a vain journey. Instead, I urge and command you to go to Menelaos, for he has recently come from a strange country, from the land of men from which none could hope in his heart to return, once the storms have driven them wandering into such a wide sea. Not even the birds can make their way there in the space of a year, it is so great and terrible a sea. But go now with your ship and with your companions, or, if you are inclined to travel by land, I have a chariot and horses at your service and my sons to do your will; they will be your guides to noble Lakedaimon, where Menelaos of the fair hair lives. Beseech

10 An ancient city on the southern coast of Krete where mythology says Zeus lay with Europa after taking her from Phoenicia (modern Kretans still show visitors the plane tree under which they are said to have slept). In later Roman times it was the capital of a Roman province. Titus was appointed first bishop of Krete by the apostle Paul most likely there, and some of the earliest Christian churches are to be found there, many dedicated to St. Titus.

him, that he may give you an accurate answer. He will not lie to you, for he is very wise.”

So he spoke, and the sun went down and darkness came on. Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke among them, saying, “Yes, old sir, you have told your story well. But come, cut up the tongues of the sacrificed oxen and mix the wine, so that we may pour it out before Poseidon and the other deathless gods, and then think of sleep, for it is the hour for it. For already the light has gone beneath the west, and it is not right to sit too long at a banquet of the gods, but to be going home.”

So spoke the daughter of Zeus, and they obeyed her voice. And the servants poured water over their hands, and pages filled the mixing bowls with drink and served the wine to all, after they had first poured some for a libation into each cup in turn, and they threw the tongues on the fire and stood up and poured the drink offering on it. When they had poured it out and had drunk to their heart’s content, Athene and godlike Telemachos were both set on returning to the hollow ship, but Nestor desired them to stay and addressed them, saying, “Zeus forbid it, and all the other deathless gods, that you should leave my house for the swift ship, as from the dwelling of one who is completely poor or a needy man, who has not many rugs or blankets in his house on which he or his guests may sleep softly. No, I have rugs and beautiful blankets here. Never, I hope, will the beloved son of Odysseus lay himself down on a ship’s deck while I am alive, and my children after me are left in my hall to entertain strangers, whoever may happen to come to my house.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him again: “In this you have spoken well, dear father, and Telemachos may well obey you, for this is proper above all things. He shall now go with you, to sleep in your halls; as for me, I will go to the black ship that I may encourage my companions and tell them everything. For I am the one elder among them; those others are but younger men, who accompany him out of love for him, all of them the same age as high-souled Telemachos. There I will lie down by the black hollow ship tonight, but in the morning I will go to the Kaukonians high of

heart, where something is owing to me, neither a small debt nor a recent one. But send this man on his way with your chariot and your son, since he has come to your house, and give him the swiftest and strongest horses.”

With that, grey-eyed Athene departed in the appearance of a sea-eagle, and all who saw it were amazed, and the old man marveled when his eyes beheld it. And he took Telemachos by the hand and spoke and addressed him:

“My friend, I think that you are in no way a coward or weakling if even in your youth the gods follow you this way to be your guides. For truly this is none other of those who live in the mansions of Olympos but the daughter of Zeus, the driver of the spoil, the Triton-born maiden, she who honored your noble father too among the Argives. Be gracious, Queen Athene, and grant great renown to me and to my sons and to my honored wife. And in turn I will sacrifice to you a young broad-browed heifer which no man has ever yoked. I will offer this to you and will cover her horns with gold.”

So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athene heard him. Then Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, led his sons and the husbands of his daughters to his own noble house. But when they had reached this prince’s famous halls, they all sat down in order on seats and high chairs, and when they had come, the old man mixed well for them a bowl of sweet wine, which now in its eleventh year the housekeeper opened, and broke the seal that fastened the lid. The old man mixed a bowl from this and prayed devoutly to Athene as he poured some out before the daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis.

After they had poured the libations and had drunk to their heart’s content, each one went to his own house to lie down to rest. But Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, insisted that Telemachos, son of divine Odysseus, sleep there on a jointed bedstead beneath the echoing gallery, and by him Peisistratos of the strong ash spear, the leader of men, who was the only one of his sons in his halls not yet married. Nestor himself slept within the inmost chamber of the lofty house, and the lady his wife arranged his bed and bedding.

Nestor Sends Telemachos on His Way

When early Dawn shone rosy-fingered, then Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, got up from his bed and went forth and sat down on the smooth stones which were before his lofty doors, all polished, white and glistening, on which Neleus, equal to the gods in counsel, used to sit in older times. But stricken by fate, he had long ago gone down to the house of Hades, and today Nestor of Gerenia, guardian of the Achaeans, sat there in his turn with his staff in his hands. And around him his sons gathered and came together, coming out from their chambers—Echephron and Stratios, and Perseus and Aretos and the godlike Thrasymedes. And sixth and last came the hero Peisistratos. And they led godlike Telemachos and set him by their side, and Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, spoke first among them:

“Quickly, my dear sons, fulfill my desire, that first of all the gods I may propitiate Athene, who appeared to me visibly at the rich feast of the god. Then let one of you go to the pasture for a heifer, that she may be brought here as soon as possible, driven by the herdsman, and let another go to the black ship of high-souled Telemachos to bring his entire company, leaving only two men. And also let one urge Laerkes the goldsmith to come here so that he may cover the horns of the heifer with gold. And you others, remain here together and tell the serving women inside to prepare a banquet in our glorious halls, and fetch seats and logs to set around the altar, and bring clear water.”

So he spoke, and they all hurried to work. The heifer came from the field, and from the swift gallant ship came the companions of great-hearted Telemachos; the goldsmith came carrying his tools, the instruments of his craft—anvil and hammer and well-made pincers, with which he worked the gold. Athene also came to receive her sacrifice. And the old prince Nestor gave gold, and the goldsmith crafted it skilfully and gilded the horns of the heifer with it, so that the goddess might be glad at the sight of her noble offering. And Stratios and noble Echephron led the heifer by the horns. And Aretos came forth from the chamber, bearing water for washing of hands in a

basin ornamented with flowers, and in the other hand he held the barley-meal in a basket, and Thrasymedes, steadfast in battle, stood nearby holding in his hand a sharp axe, ready to strike the heifer. And Perseus held the dish for the blood, and the old man Nestor, driver of chariots, performed the first rite of the washing of hands and the sprinkling of the meal, and he prayed urgently to Athene as he began the rite, throwing into the fire the lock of hair from the head of the sacrificial victim.

When they had prayed and tossed the sprinkled grain, immediately the son of Nestor, noble Thrasymedes, stood by and struck the blow, and the axe severed the tendons of the neck and loosened the might of the heifer, and the women raised their cry, the daughters and the sons' wives and Nestor's honored wife, Eurydike, eldest of the daughters of Klymenos. And now they lifted the victim's head from the wide-wayed earth and held it, while Peisistratos, leader of men, cut the throat. And after the black blood had gushed out, and the life had left the bones, quickly they cut up the body and neatly cut slices from the thighs and wrapped them in the fat, folding them double, and laid raw flesh on it. Then the old man burned them on the split wood and poured over them the red wine, and by his side the young men held in their hands the five-pronged forks. After the thighs were completely consumed, and they had tasted the inner parts, they cut the rest up small and spitted and roasted it, holding the sharp spits in their hands.

Meanwhile, lovely Polykaste, the youngest daughter of Nestor, son of Neleus, bathed Telemachos, and after she had bathed him and anointed him with olive oil and put over him a noble mantle and a tunic, he came out from the bath in appearance like the deathless gods. He went and sat down by Nestor, shepherd of the people.

When they had roasted the outer flesh and taken it off the spits, they sat down and began feasting, and honorable men waited on them, pouring wine into the golden cups. But when they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, first spoke among them:

“Now, my sons, yoke for Telemachos horses with flowing manes and lead them to the chariot that he may start on his way.”

So he spoke, and they listened and obeyed, and quickly they yoked the swift horses to the chariot. And the housekeeper who tended to the supplies put in the chariot grain and wine and delicacies eaten by princes, the beloved of Zeus. So Telemachos stepped up into the noble chariot, and Peisistratos, son of Nestor, leader of men, also climbed into the chariot and grasped the reins in his hands, and he touched the horses with the whip to start them, and unreluctantly the pair raced towards the plain and left the steep citadel of Pylos. So all day long they shook the yoke they bore on their necks.

Now the sun sank, and all the paths were darkened. And they came to Pherai, to the house of Diokles, son of Ortilochos, the son fathered by Alpheios. There they rested for the night, and he set before them refreshment proper for guests.

As soon as early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, they yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot. And they drove out from the gateway and the echoing gallery, and Peisistratos touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew onward eagerly. So they came to the wheat-bearing plain, and from there they pressed toward the goal; in this manner the swift horses sped onward. Then the sun sank, and all the ways were darkened.

Book IV: Telemachos Visits Menelaos



Penelope's Dream

Telemachos Welcomed by Menelaos

They came to Lakedaimon,¹ lying low among the caverned hills, and drove to the dwelling of renowned Menelaos. They found him giving a feast in his house to many friends of his kin, a feast for the wedding of his noble son and daughter. His daughter he was sending to the son of Achilleus, cleaver of the ranks of men, for in Troy he had promised to give her, and now the gods were bringing about their marriage. So now he was speeding her on her way with chariot and horses to the famous city of the Myrmidons, whom her lord ruled. And he was bringing to his home the daughter of Alektor out of Sparta for his well-beloved son, strong Megapenthes, born of a slave woman for the gods showed no more promise of offspring to Helen from the day that she bore a lovely child, Hermione, as beautiful as golden Aphrodite. So they were feasting throughout the great vaulted hall, the neighbors and the relatives of renowned Menelaos,

¹ Lakedaimon was a son of Zeus and one of the Pleiades (daughters of Atlas); he married Sparta, a daughter of Eurotas, king of Laconia, and named the kingdom after himself and the city after his wife. The names Lakedaimon and Sparta are generally both used interchangeably for the city and region, so Lakedaimon is Sparta. See *Iliad* Map 2.

rejoicing, and among them a divine bard was singing, accompanied by a lyre, and, as he began the song, two tumblers in the company whirled through the midst of them.

Meanwhile, those two, the hero Telemachos and the splendid son of Nestor, halted at the entry of the gate, they and their horses. And the lord Eteoneus, the prompt attendant of famed Menelaos, came out and saw them, and he went through the palace to tell the news to the shepherd of the people and standing near spoke to him with winged words:

“Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, two strangers are here, whoever they are, two men like the descendants of great Zeus. Tell me, shall we free their swift horses from the yoke, or send them onward to some other host who will receive them kindly?”

Then in great displeasure Menelaos of the fair hair spoke to him: “Eteoneus, son of Boëthoös, indeed, you were not a fool before, but now, like a child you speak folly. Surely we ourselves received great hospitality from other men, before we two came here, even if from now on Zeus gives us rest from sorrows. No, go, unyoke the horses of the strangers, and, as for the men, lead them here to the house to feast with us.”

So he spoke, and Eteoneus hurried from the hall and called the other ready attendants to follow with him. So they loosed the sweating horses from beneath the yoke and fastened them at the stalls of the horses, and they threw down beside them grain and mixed white barley with it and leaned the chariot against the shining faces of the gateway and led the men into the glorious hall. And they saw and were amazed as they gazed throughout the palace of the king, beloved of Zeus, for there was a gleam as though from the sun or moon throughout the lofty palace of renowned Menelaos. But after they had gazed their fill, they went to the polished baths and bathed. Now when the maidens had bathed them and anointed them with olive oil and put on them thick cloaks and tunics, they sat on chairs near Menelaos, son of Atreus. And a maidservant carried water for their hands in a lovely golden pitcher and poured it out over a silver basin to wash with, and at their side she placed a polished table, and

a dignified housekeeper carried in food and set it near them and laid on the table many delicacies, giving plentifully of whatever she had near her, and a carver lifted and placed near them platters of various kinds of meat, and near them he set golden bowls. So Menelaos of the fair hair greeted the two and spoke:

“Eat and rejoice, and then when you have eaten, we will ask who you are, for the blood of your parents is obvious in you; you are from the line of men that are sceptred kings, the beloved of Zeus, for no commoners could father sons like you.”

So he spoke and set before them the roasted fat backstrap of an ox, which had been given to him as his own food to honor him. And they reached out their hands to the good things set before them. Now when they had satisfied the desire of food and drink, Telemachos spoke to the son of Nestor, leaning his head close to him, that those others would not hear:

“Son of Nestor, delight of my heart, see the flashing of bronze through the echoing halls and the flashing of gold and of amber and of silver and of ivory. I think the court of Olympian Zeus is like this, so many wonderful things are here; amazement overwhelms me as I look at it.”

And as he spoke Menelaos of the fair hair heard him and spoke to them in winged words:

“Beloved sons, truly no mortal man may compete with Zeus, for his mansions and his treasures are everlasting, but of men there may be one who will rival me in treasure, or there may be none. For after many sorrows and many wanderings, I brought my wealth home in ships and in the eighth year came here. I roamed over Cyprus and Phoenicia and Egypt and reached the Aithiopians and Sidonians and Eremboi and Libya, where lambs are horned from birth. For there the ewes bear three times in a year; there neither king nor shepherd lacks cheese or meat or sweet milk, but the flocks continually yield milk. While I was still roaming in those lands, gathering great treasure, another man killed my brother secretly, by the treachery of his accursed wife. And so, you see, I have little rejoicing in my lordship over all these possessions, and you are likely to have heard about this

from your fathers, whoever they are, for I have suffered much and let a house go to ruin that was well established and had in it great treasure. I wish that I had but a third part of those riches and dwelt in my halls with those men safe, who have died long ago in the wide land of Troy, far from Argos, the pastureland of horses. Still, though I weep for them all and suffer sorrow often as I sit in our halls—sometimes I satisfy my soul with mourning, and then again I cease, for soon a man has enough of cold mourning—yet for none of them do I sorrow so much as for one who causes me to loath both sleep and food when I think of him. For no one of the Achaians labored so greatly as Odysseus toiled and risked himself, but to him it was to be but struggle and trouble, while to me it is grief without comfort because of him, so long has he been far off, nor do we know anything about it, whether he is alive or dead. I am certain that they lament him, old Laertes and the faithful Penelope and Telemachos, who was just a new-born child in his house.”

So he spoke, and in the heart of Telemachos he stirred a longing to weep for his father, and at his father’s name a tear fell from his eyelids to the ground, and he held up his purple mantle with both his hands before his eyes. And Menelaos observed him and pondered in his mind and his heart whether he should let him speak of his father or first question him and test him with many careful words.

Menelaos and Helen Speak of the Trojan War

While he pondered these things in his mind and in his heart, Helen came out from her fragrant vaulted chamber, like Artemis of the golden arrows, and with her came Adreste who set out for her the well-crafted chair, and Alkippe carried a rug of soft wool, and Phylo carried a silver basket which Alkandre gave her, the wife of Polybos, who lived in Thebes of Egypt, where is the greatest quantity of wealth in the palaces. He gave two silver basins to Menelaos, and

two tripods and ten talents of gold.² And besides all this, his wife gave to Helen lovely gifts; she gave her a golden distaff³ and a silver basket with wheels under it, and the rims of it were finished with gold. It was this that the handmaid Phylo brought and set beside her, filled with dressed yarn, and across it was laid a distaff full of wool of violet blue. So Helen sat down in the chair, and below was a footstool for the feet. And soon she spoke to her lord and questioned him about every detail:

“Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, do we know now who these men claim to be, who have come under our roof? Shall I hide my thoughts or shall I speak the truth? No, I am inclined to tell it. I have never seen anyone look so much like another one as this man—I am amazed as I look at him—looks like the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachos, whom he left as a new-born child in his house, when for my sake, shameless woman that I was, you Achaians went to Troy with fierce war in your hearts.”

And Menelaos of the fair hair answered her, saying, “Now I too, lady, notice the resemblance as you describe it. For his feet were like this, and his hands and the looks of his eyes and his head and even his hair. Yes, and just now I was speaking of Odysseus, as I remembered him, about all his sorrowful sufferings for my sake, when he let a bitter tear fall from beneath his brows, and he held his purple cloak up before his eyes.”

And Peisistratos, son of Nestor, answered him, saying, “Menelaos, son of Atreus, beloved of Zeus, leader of the people, certainly this is the son of that very man, just as you say. But he has a serious mind and thinks it shameful in his heart on his first coming, to seem presumptuous in your presence, in whose voice we two delight as in the voice of a god. Now Nestor of Gerenia, lord of chariots, sent me

2 The word *talent* comes from *talonton*, the word for “scales” (with which to weigh things) and means a definite weight or measure but it is uncertain how much that was in Homer’s day—it must have been very different from the later classical talent of nearly 60 pounds. Walter Leaf (of Lang, Leaf, and Meyer, who translated the *Iliad* in 1883) suggests that the Homeric talent was worth the value of an ox, which makes sense in the context of the many places the word is used.

3 The tool, like a rod or wand, held in the hand, upon which are wound the unspun fibers during the spinning process. A golden one would be absurdly heavy to use, so it may have been ornamental.

to be his guide on the way, for he longed to see that you might put into his heart some word or work. For a son has many griefs in his halls when his father is away, if he has no one to stand by him. That is how it is now with Telemachos; his father is away, and he has no others in the land to defend him in his distress.”

And Menelaos of the fair hair answered him and said: “Truly, there has come to my house the son of a friend indeed, who for my sake endured many hardships. And I hoped to welcome him on his coming more nobly than all the other Argives, if only Olympian Zeus of the far-carrying voice had granted us a safe return over the sea in our swift ships. And in Argos I would have given him a city to dwell in and established a palace for him and brought him from Ithaka with his wealth and his son and all his people, emptying one city of those that lie nearby in my own domain. Then we could often have conversed here, and nothing would have parted us, the welcoming and the welcomed, before the black cloud of death overshadowed us. However, the god himself, I think, must have been jealous about that, for he cut off the return of that unfortunate man alone.”

So he spoke, and in the hearts of all he stirred the desire for mourning. Argive Helen herself wept, Helen, the daughter of Zeus, and Telemachos wept, and Menelaos, the son of Atreus, nor did the son of Nestor keep dry eyes. For he thought in his heart about noble Antilochus, whom the glorious son of the bright Dawn had slain. Thinking about him he spoke winged words:

“Son of Atreus, old Nestor in his own halls always used to say that you were wise beyond man’s wisdom whenever we mentioned you and asked one another about you. And now, if it is possible, be persuaded by me, who for one have no pleasure in weeping at supper time—the new-born day will soon enough be upon us. Not that I consider it blameworthy at all to weep for any mortal who has died and met his fate. This is the only honor we can pay to miserable men, to cut the hair and let the tear fall from the cheek. For I too have a dead brother, not in any way the least of the Argives, and you are likely to have known him, but as for me I never met him or saw him.

But men say that Antilochos surpassed everyone, being excellent in speed of foot and in the fight.”

And Menelaos of the fair hair answered him and said: “My friend, you have said all that a wise man might say or do, yes, even one older than you, for you are descended from such a father, too, and, therefore, you speak wisely. The offspring of that man for whom the son of Kronos weaves the web of luck at marriage and at the birth of children is easily known, just as he has granted prosperity to Nestor for all his days, that he himself should grow into a smooth old age in his halls, and his sons also should be wise and the best of spearsmen. But we will end our weeping now, and let us think again of our supper, and let them pour water over our hands. Again in the morning there will be tales for Telemachos and me to tell to each other, right up to the end.”

So he spoke, and Asphalion, the alert attendant of famous Menelaos, poured water over their hands. And they reached out their hands to the good food spread before them.

Then Helen, daughter of Zeus, had a new thought, and soon she put a drug⁴ into the wine which they drank, a drug to lull all pain and anger and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow. Whoever would drink from it, when it is mixed in the bowl, on that day he would let no tear fall down his cheeks, not even if his mother and his father had died, not even if men slaughtered his brother or beloved son with the sword before his face, and his own eyes saw it. The daughter of Zeus had medicines of such power and usefulness which Polydamna, the wife of Thon, had given her, a woman of Egypt, where earth the grain-giver gives herbs in the greatest quantity, many that are healing in the cup, but many evil. There each man is a healer skilled beyond all other humans, for they are of the race of Paiëon. After she had

4 Some scholars suggest this was opium, but that drug was not mentioned by name in Greek literature before the fourth century BC, and it is difficult to get used to, so the two young men would not have enjoyed the experience. Some suggest henbane, a poisonous plant related to deadly nightshade, but there are no mentions in the ancient literature of it being mixed with wine. Another possibility is an Egyptian mixture of spices and incense known in the ancient world to have analgesic and psychotropic effects, and it was indeed mixed with wine. The rest of this paragraph directly states that Helen acquired this drug from the Egyptians, quite possibly when she and Menelaos were blown off course on their return home from the war.

put in the drug and commanded the wine to be poured, she spoke to her husband:

“Son of Atreus, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, and you sons of noble men, since Zeus gives good and evil sometimes to one and sometimes to another, because for him all things are possible, now sit down and feast in the halls and rejoice in the telling of tales, and I will tell you one that fits the moment. I could not tell all of them or count them, the adventures of Odysseus of the sturdy heart were so many, but, oh, what a deed this one was which he did and dared in his courage in the land of the Trojans, where you Achaians suffered affliction. He covered his body with horrible lash wounds and threw a ragged covering around his shoulders, and in the guise of a slave he went down into the wide-wayed city of the enemy, and he hid himself in the disguise of a beggar, though in no way was he like that at the ships of the Achaians. In this appearance he went into the city of the Trojans, and they did not know who he was, and only I knew him in that disguise, and I kept questioning him, but in his cleverness he avoided me. But when at last I was washing him and anointing him with olive oil and had put clothing on him and had sworn a great oath not to reveal Odysseus to the Trojans before he reached his swift ships and huts, then finally he told me the plans of the Achaians. And after killing many of the Trojans with the long sword, he returned to the Argives and brought back all the news. Then the other Trojan women wept aloud, but my soul was glad, for already my heart was yearning to go back again to my home, and now at last I moaned for the blindness that Aphrodite gave me, when she led me far away from my own country, abandoning my child and my bridal chamber and my husband, who lacked nothing in wisdom and beauty.”⁵

And Menelaos of the fair hair answered her, saying, “Indeed, you have told this whole story well, my lady. Before now have I heard of the counsel and the mind of many heroes and traveled over many

5 The story Helen tells bears a resemblance to an episode in the *Little Iliad*, one of the lost epics written in the seventh century BC. This one was in four books and was summarized by a second-fifth-century AD author named Proclus. But there are differences from that story, probably Homer’s inventions for the specific purpose of this episode in the *Odyssey*.

a land, but my eyes have never seen anyone with the courage of heart as has Odysseus; in his stoutness of heart, he worked another such deed in the crafted horse in which all we chiefs of the Argives sat, bringing death and doom to the Trojans. Soon you came there, and surely some god must have urged you who wished to bring glory to the Trojans. Yes, and godlike Deïphobos⁶ went with you as you went. You walked around the hollow ambush three times and touched it, calling aloud to the chiefs of the Argives by name and making your voice like the voices of the wives of the Argives. I and the son of Tydeus and noble Odysseus sat in the middle and heard you calling, and indeed we two longed to leap up and come out or at least to answer from inside, but Odysseus prevented us and held us there, in spite of our eagerness. Then all the other sons of the Achaians held their peace, but Antiklos still desired to answer you. However, Odysseus firmly clamped his mouth shut with his strong hands and so saved all the Achaians, and he held him tight until Pallas Athene led you away.”⁷

Then wise Telemachos answered him and said: “Menelaos, son of Atreus, beloved of Zeus, leader of the host, it is all the more sorrowful, for in no way did this courage fend off from him pitiful destruction, even though his heart within him was hard like iron. But come, let us go to bed, so that immediately we may enjoy rest under the spell of sleep.”

So he spoke, and Argive Helen commanded her handmaids to lay out bedsteads in the gallery and spread over them lovely purple blankets and coverlets on top and on them to lay thick mantles to be a covering over all. So they went from the hall with torches in hand and spread the beds, and the attendants led the guests there. So they slept there in the vestibule of the house, the hero Telemachos, and the splendid son of Nestor. But the son of Atreus slept, as his cus-

6 Brother of Hektor and Paris, son of Priam and Hekabe; after Paris’ death (between the end of the *Iliad* and the end of the Trojan War) Helen was given to him, though she despised him. In the sack of Troy Menelaos found him and slaughtered him (according to Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Helen had betrayed him to Menelaos, to whom she wished to return).

7 This curious story may be Homer’s own invention as there are no other references to it in the ancient literature.

tom was, in the innermost chamber of the lofty house, and by him lay long-robed Helen, that lovely lady.

News of the Achaians' Return and of Odysseus

As soon as early, rosy-fingered Dawn shone out, Menelaos of the loud war-cry got up from his bed and put on his robes, and he put his sharp sword around his shoulder and on his smooth feet bound his noble sandals, and he stepped out from his bed-chamber, godlike in his demeanor, and sat down by Telemachos and spoke and addressed him:

“What need has brought you here, hero Telemachos, to lovely Lakedaemon, over the broad back of the sea? Is it a matter of public good or of your own? Tell me plainly.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him and said, “Menelaos, son of Atreus, beloved of Zeus, leader of the people, I have come hoping that you could tell me some news about my father. My dwelling is being consumed and my rich lands ruined, and my house is full of hostile men who continually slaughter my thronging flocks and my cattle with dragging feet and shambling gait; they are my mother’s suitors, vicious beyond measure. So now I have come here to your knees as a suppliant, hoping that you are willing to tell me of his sorrowful death, as one that perhaps saw it with his own eyes or heard the story from some other wanderer, for his mother bore him to excessive sorrow. And tell me no soft words in compassion or pity, but tell me plainly what you saw of him. Oh, I beg you, if ever in any way my father, good Odysseus, promised you words or work and fulfilled it in the land of the Trojans where you Achaians suffered affliction, these things, I beg you, remember now and tell me truly.”

Then in grave anger Menelaos of the fair hair spoke to him, “Curse them, for truly they wished to lie in the bed of a brave-hearted man, cowards that they are! Just as when a deer has concealed her new-born unweaned fawns in a strong lion’s den and searches out the

mountain knolls and grassy hollows, seeking pasture, but afterward the lion comes back to his bed and wreaks horrible death on that pair, in the same way, Odysseus will send forth terrifying destruction upon the suitors. If only our father Zeus and Athene and Apollo were willing that with the same might he showed when in older times in well-founded Lesbos he rose up and wrestled a match with Philomeleides and threw him mightily, and all the Achaians rejoiced; if only in that same strength Odysseus would deal with the suitors. Then they would all have a swift fate and a bitter wedding! But as for that which you ask and beg me, be sure I will not swerve from the truth in anything that I say nor deceive you, but of all that the ancient one of the sea, whose speech is truth, declared to me, I will not hide a word or keep it from you.

“Though I was eager to press on toward home, the gods kept me in the river Aegyptus,⁸ for I had not offered them the acceptable great sacrifices, and the gods have always desired that men should be obedient to their commandments. Now there is an island where the ocean waves wash against Aegyptus, and men call it Pharos,⁹ one day’s voyage out in a hollow ship, when shrill winds blow fair in her wake. And there is a good harbor there, from which men launch their noble ships into the deep when they have drawn a store of good water. There the gods held me for twenty days, and the sea-winds that serve to waft ships over the broad back of the sea never blew. And now all of our grain would have been spent, and also the strength of the men, unless some goddess had taken pity on me and saved me—Eidothea, daughter of mighty Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea. For I most of all moved her heart when she met me wandering alone apart from my company; they were always roaming around the island, fishing with bent hooks, for hunger was gnawing at their bellies. So she stood close by and spoke and uttered her voice, saying, ‘Are you so

8 The name by which Homer always calls the Nile. In the next sentence he may mean the mouth of the Nile, or he may simply mean the coast of the country.

9 The island where the Alexandrian lighthouse, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was later located, is actually only about a mile from the Egyptian coast, even in the ancient world when there was less siltification in the harbor.

very foolish and feeble-witted, stranger, or are you deliberately foolish and take pleasure in suffering? Are you kept on the island for such a long time and can find no way out, while the hearts of your men fail in them?’

“So she spoke in this way, and I answered her, saying, ‘I will speak forth, whatever goddess you are, and tell you that I am not held here in any way by my own will, but it must be that I have sinned against the immortal gods, who rule the wide heaven. Nevertheless, tell me—for the gods know all things—which of the immortals it is who binds me here and has kept me from my way, and tell me concerning my return how I might make my way over the rich deep.’

“So I spoke, and immediately the fair goddess answered, ‘Indeed, I will tell you everything now, stranger. The ancient one of the sea, whose words are always true, lives here. He is the deathless Egyptian Proteus, who knows the depths of every sea, and is the servant of Poseidon, and who, they say, is my father. If you can lay an ambush and catch him, he will surely declare to you the way and the length of your journey, and he will tell you about your returning, how you may pass over the rich ocean. Indeed, he will show you, beloved of Zeus, if you wish, what good and evil things have been done in your halls while you have been traveling this long and sorrowful way.’

“So she spoke, but I answered and said to her, ‘You yourself devise an ambush to catch this ancient deity, so he does not see me first or know of my coming and avoid me. For a god is hard for mortal man to subdue.’

“So I spoke, and immediately the lovely goddess answered, ‘Indeed, I will plainly tell you everything. Whenever the sun in his course stands high in midheaven, then out of the ocean comes the ancient one of the sea, whose words are true. He comes ahead of the breath of the West Wind, and the sea’s dark ripple covers him. And when he has come out, he lies down to sleep in the hollow of the caves. And the seals, the flock of the lovely daughter of the deep, sleep all together, having crept out from the grey sea-water, and the smell they breathe out is the bitter scent of the deeps of the salt sea. I will lead you there at the break of day and hide you all well; choose carefully

three of your companions, the best you have in your decked ships. And I will tell you all the magic arts of that old man. First, he will count the seals and look over them, but when he has counted and seen them all, he will lay himself down among them as a shepherd among the sheep of his flock. As soon as you see him lying down, then recall your might and strength and hold him tight, in spite of his desperation and struggle to get free. And he will attempt to take on all kinds of shapes of things that creep on the earth and of water too and of fierce fire burning. But you must grasp him firmly and more tightly. Then finally when he questions you in his proper shape, as he was when you first saw him lying down, then, hero, open your hands and let the ancient one go free and ask him which of the gods is so against you and how you can return home over the rich sea.’

“With that, she dived beneath the heaving sea, but I went to the ships where they stood in the sand, and my heart was gloomy and troubled as I went. But after I had come down to the ship and to the sea, and we had prepared our supper, and immortal night had come on, then we laid ourselves to rest on the sea-beach. As soon as early Dawn shone forth rosy-fingered, at that time I walked by the shore of the wide-wayed sea, praying urgently to the gods; I took with me three of my companions whom I trusted most for every endeavor.

“Meanwhile, she had plunged into the broad bosom of the sea and had brought from the deep the skins of four young seals, all newly flayed, for she was thinking of laying a snare for her father. She scooped hollows in the sand and sat, waiting for us, and we came up to her, and she made us all lie down in order and threw a skin over each man. There our ambush would have been most terrible, for the deadly stench of the sea-bred seals distressed us greatly; indeed, who would lay himself down by a beast of the sea? But she herself saved us and devised a great comfort. She took ambrosia of a very sweet aroma and put it under each man’s nostril and did away with the stench of the beast. So all morning we waited with stout hearts, and the seals came forth in troops from the salt water and lay themselves down in an orderly fashion by the sea-beach. And at midday the ancient one came up out of the sea and found his fat seals; indeed,

he went along their line and counted them, and first among the sea-beasts he counted us and did not guess that there was deception, and afterward he too laid himself down. Then we rushed upon him with a shout and seized him with our hands, but that ancient one did not forget his cunning. At first he turned into a bearded lion and after that into a snake and a leopard and a huge boar; then he took the shape of running water and of a tall and flowering tree. All the while we held him close with stout hearts. But when that ancient one of the magic arts was weary, then at last he questioned me and spoke to me, saying, ‘Which of the gods was it, son of Atreus, that helped you with his counsel, so that you might ambush and take me by force? What do you want?’

“So he spoke, but I answered him, saying, ‘Old man, you know all things; why do you question me with crooked words? Indeed, I have held for a long time in this island and can find no way of escape from it, and my heart fails within me. Nevertheless, you tell me—for the gods know all things—which of the immortals it is that binds me here and has hindered me from my way, and tell me about my returning home, how I may go over the rich sea.’

“So I spoke, and he immediately answered me, saying, ‘Indeed, surely you should have made a great sacrifice to Zeus and the other gods before your departure, so that most speedily you might reach your country, sailing over the wine-dark ocean. For it is not your fate to see your friends and come to your well-founded house and your own country, until you have traveled once more within the waters of Aegyptus, the sky-fed stream, and offered great and holy sacrifices to the immortal gods who keep the wide heaven. In this way the gods will grant to you the journey you desire.’

“So he spoke, and my spirit within me was broken, because he commanded me to go again to Aegyptus over the misty sea, a long and sorrowful way.

“Nevertheless, I answered him, saying, ‘Old man, I will do all this, just as you say. But tell me this and say it plainly: did all those Achaians return safe with their ships, all whom Nestor and I left when we left Troy, or did any perish by a shameful death aboard his

own ship or in the arms of his friends, after he had wound up the thread of war?’

“So I spoke, and soon he answered me, saying, ‘Son of Atreus, why do you question me closely about this? Indeed, it is not for your good to know or learn my thoughts, for I tell you that you will not be without tears for long, when you have heard it all clearly. For many of them were taken, and many were left, but only two of the leaders of the armor-clad Achaeans perished in returning; as for the battle, you yourself were there. And I think one is still alive and is held on the wide deep. Aias¹⁰ indeed was killed in the midst of his ships of the long oars. Poseidon at first brought him close to Gyrae, to the mighty rocks, and saved him from the sea. And so he would have avoided his doom, though hated by Athene, had he not let a proud word fall in the fatal darkening of his heart. He said that in spite of the gods he had escaped the great gulf of the sea, and Poseidon heard his loud boasting and soon caught up his trident into his strong hands and struck the rock Gyraean and split it in two. And one part stayed in place, but the other fell into the sea, the broken piece on which Aias sat when his heart was darkened. And the rock sank him down into the vast and heaving deep; so there he perished when he had swallowed the salt sea-water. But your brother escaped the fates and avoided them in his hollow ships, for queen Hera saved him. But when he was about to reach the steep mount of Maleia,¹¹ the storm wind snatched him away and carried him over the rich deep, making a great moan, to the border of the country in which old Thyestes lived, but now Aigisthos lived there, the son of Thyestes. But when there seemed a good prospect of safe returning, and the gods changed the wind to a favorable gale, and they had reached

10 This is Little Aias, son of Oileus (Great Aias, son of Telemon, had died just before the fall of Troy). Athene hated Aias Oileus because, during the sack of Troy when Cassandra, daughter of Priam, had taken refuge at the altar of Athene, he dragged her from the altar and raped her before sending her off with other captives.

11 Scholars are puzzled over this, because Cape Maleia is too far south of a logical route home to Mykenai, Agamemnon’s domain, from Troy. The Cape is at the southern tip of the Peloponnese, and many accounts have sailors, including Odysseus (see Book 9), blown out into the open Mediterranean there. Like many other geographical puzzles in the *Odyssey*, it could reference another story unknown to us. But it would be a mistake to try too hard to find absolute consistency in a story.

home, then Agamemnon set foot with joy upon his country's soil, and as he touched his own land he kissed it, and he let fall many hot tears, for he saw his own land and was glad. And it happened that a watchman spied him from his tower, the watchman whom crafty Aigisthos had chosen and posted there, promising him two talents of gold for a reward. So he kept watch for the space of a year, so that Agamemnon would not pass by him when he was not looking, remembering his fierce valor. So now the watchman went to the house to carry the news to the shepherd of the people. And immediately Aigisthos contrived a cunning treason. He chose twenty of the best men in the region and set an ambush, and on the further side of the hall he commanded that a feast be prepared. Then with a chariot and horses he went to invite Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, to the feast, but evil thoughts were in his heart. He brought him up to his house, unaware of his doom, and when he had feasted, he killed him as a man kills an ox in a stall. And none of the companions of the son of Atreus that were with him were left, nor any of the men of Aigisthos, but they were all killed in the halls.'

"So he spoke, and my spirit within me was broken, and I wept as I sat on the sand and did not want to live any longer or see the light of the sun. But when I had had enough of weeping and groveling on the ground, then the ancient one of the sea, whose words are true, spoke, 'No more of this long weeping without end, son of Atreus, for we shall find no help in it. Rather, hurry and make all efforts so that you may come to your own country. For either you will find Aigisthos still alive, or it may be that Orestes¹² was ahead of you and killed him; so you might come upon his funeral feast.'

"So he spoke, and my heart and noble soul again were comforted in spite of all my sorrow, and I raised my voice and spoke winged words to him, 'Their fate I now know, but tell me of the third: who is he that is still living and held on the wide sea or perhaps is dead? I want to hear it in spite of my sorrow.'

12 This is precisely what happened—Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, killed Aigisthos for murdering his father. The whole story is most famously told in the play *Agamemnon*, by the fifth-century BC playwright Aeschylus.

“So I spoke, and immediately he answered and said, ‘It is the son of Laertes, whose dwelling is in Ithaka, and I saw him on an island shedding big tears in the halls of the nymph Kalypso, who holds him there against his will so he may not return to his own country, for he has with him no ships with oars and no companions to help him on his way over the broad back of the sea. But you, Menelaos, son of Zeus, are not fated to die and meet your fate in Argos, the pasture-land of horses, but the immortal gods will carry you to the Elysian plain and the world’s end, where Rhadamanthys of the fair hair is, where life is easiest for men. There is no snow there, nor great storms, nor any rain, but always the ocean sends forth the breeze of the shrill West to blow cool on men; indeed, for you have Helen as your wife, and, therefore, they consider you the son of Zeus.’¹³

“So he spoke and plunged into the heaving sea, but I went to the ships with my noble company, and my heart was gloomy and troubled as I went. Now after I had come down to the ship and to the sea and prepared our supper, and immortal night had come on, then we lay down to rest upon the sea-beach. And as soon as early Dawn shone forth, rosy-fingered, we first dragged our ships down to the fair salt sea and placed the masts and the sails in the gallant ships, and then the crew too climbed on board and sat on the benches and lashed the grey sea-water with their oars. Then I went back to the waters of Aegyptus, the sky-fed stream, and there I moored the ships and offered the acceptable great sacrifice. So when I had appeased the anger of the everlasting gods, I piled up a funeral mound to Agamemnon, so that his fame would never be quenched. And having fulfilled everything, I set out for home, and the immortal gods gave me a fair wind and brought me swiftly to my own dear country.

13 This tantalizing additional prophecy of Menelaos’ bodily assumption into *elysion* alludes to a pre-Greek idea of a Paradise, seemingly Kretan because of the reference to Rhadamanthys, and so perhaps traceable to the Minoans, and perhaps further back to the Egyptians. In Homer, Elysion is distinct from the bleak, shadowy unpleasant Hades where even the great Achilleus, Agamemnon, and Aias reside. Menelaos will be taken to elysion body and spirit, without death, not for any merit of his but because Helen, who will accompany him, is his wife. This happens to very few people in early literature. In later Greek (e.g., Apollonios of Rhodes) and Latin (Vergil) literature, Elysion becomes the good part of Hades, opposite the bad part, Tartarus, and more people go there because of their own merits, but in Homer it is separate, more like the Isles of the Blessed, the Garden of the Hesperides, even Olympos. In his bodily assumption into Paradise, compare Menelaos to Enoch and Elijah in the Old Testament.

“So now, stay here in my halls till the eleventh or twelfth day from now. Then I will send you with all honor on your way and give you splendid gifts, three horses and a polished chariot; furthermore, I will give you a great chalice, from which you can pour forth libations to the deathless gods and remember me all the days of your life.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Son of Atreus, no, do not keep me here long. Surely I would be content to sit with you for a year, and no desire for home or parents would come upon me, for I take great pleasure in your tales and talk. But already my company is weary in noble Pylos,¹⁴ and yet you are keeping me for a long time. And whatever gift you wish to give me, let it be a thing to treasure, but I will take no horses to Ithaka but leave them here to grace your own house, for you are lord of a wide plain where there is lotus¹⁵ in great plenty, and spear-reed and wheat and rye, and white and spreading barley. In Ithaka there are no wide pastures nor meadow-land at all. It is a pasture-land of goats and more pleasant in my sight than one that pastures horses, for none of the islands that lie on the sea are fit for driving horses or rich in meadow-land, and least of all is Ithaka.”

So he spoke, and Menelaos of the loud war-cry smiled and caressed him with his hand and spoke out and addressed him, “You are of noble blood, dear child, so gentle are the words you speak. Therefore, I will exchange the presents as I can. Of the gifts that are treasures stored in my house, I will give you the noblest and greatest in price. I will give you a beautifully-worked mixing bowl; it is entirely of silver, and the rim is finished with gold, the work of Hephaistos, and the hero Phaidimos, the king of the Sidonians, gave it to me, when his house sheltered me on my coming there, and I wish to give it to you now.”

In this way they spoke to one another, while the guests came to the palace of the divine king. They drove their sheep and brought

14 The rest of Telemachos' shipboard companions have remained with Nestor in Pylos while Telemachos and Peisistratos have traveled overland by chariot to visit Menelaos in Sparta.

15 The Greek word here is indeed *lotos* but it is clearly not the same plant as in the famous Lotus-Eaters episode of Book 9.

wine that makes glad the heart of man, and their wives with fair clothing sent them wheat bread. In this way these men were preparing the feast in the halls.

The Suitors Plot Telemachos' Death and Penelope Hears of It

But the suitors in the meantime were in front of the palace of Odysseus, taking pleasure in throwing weights and spears, on a level place, as they had done before, in their arrogance. And Antinoös and god-like Eurymachos were seated there, the chief men of the suitors, who were by far the most excellent of all. And Noëmon, son of Phronios, came close to them and spoke to Antinoös and questioned him, saying, “Antinoös, do we know at all, or not, when Telemachos will return from sandy Pylos? He departed with a ship of mine, and I need it to cross over into spacious Elis, where I have twelve brood mares with hardy mules unbroken and unweaned; I wish to cut out one of them and break him in.”

So he spoke, and they were amazed, for they did not know that Telemachos had gone to Neleian Pylos, but thought that he was at home somewhere in the fields, among the flocks or with the swineherd.

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, spoke to him in turn, “Tell me the plain truth: when did he go, and what noble youths went with him? Were they chosen men of Ithaka or hired men and servants of his own? He was able to bring even that about. And tell me this truly, so that I may know for certain—did he take your black ship from you against your will? Or did you give it to him freely when he asked?”

Then Noëmon, son of Phronios, answered him, saying, “I gave it to him myself of my own free will. What can any man do, when someone, so beset with care, begs a favor? It would be a harsh thing to deny the gift. The youths who next to us are the noblest in the land have gone with him, and I noticed their leader on board ship,

Mentor, or a god who in all things resembled Mentor. But one matter I marvel at—I saw noble Mentor here yesterday toward Dawn, even though he had already set out for Pylos.”

He spoke and departed to his father’s house. And the proud spirits of these two were enraged, and they made the suitors sit down together and stop their games. And among them Antinoös, son of Eupheithes, spoke in displeasure, and his black heart was completely filled with rage, and his eyes were like flaming fire, “Curse him, Telemachos has accomplished a great deed, this journey, in his arrogance, and we thought that he could never bring it to pass! This youth has clean gone without any fanfare, in spite of us all; he had his ship hauled to the sea, and he has chosen the noblest in the township. He will become even more of a nuisance than before, but may Zeus destroy his might, not ours, before he reaches manhood! But now give me a swift ship and twenty men, so that I may lie in wait and watch for him on his way home, in the strait between Ithaka and rugged Samos, so that he may have a sorrowful end of his sailing in search of his father.”

So he spoke, and they all agreed to it and urged him on. And at that they rose and went to the house of Odysseus.

Now it was not long before Penelope heard of the plan that the suitors had devised in the depths of their heart. For the servant Medon told her about it, for he stood outside the court and heard their intentions, while they were weaving their plot inside. So he went on his way through the halls to bring the news to Penelope, and as he stepped down over the threshold, Penelope spoke to him:

“Servant, why have the noble suitors sent you out? Was it to tell the handmaids of divine Odysseus to stop their work and prepare a banquet for them? Indeed, after this much courting, may they never again come together, but dine here today for the last time, all you who assemble so often and waste so much of the wealth of wise Telemachos! Long ago when you were children, you did not pay attention to your fathers when they told you what kind of man Odysseus was among them, one who did no evil to any man nor spoke anything unrighteous in the city, as is the habit of divine kings. A

king is likely to hate one man and love another, but he never did act presumptuously to any man. No, it is clear what you are made of, and your unseemly deeds are clear to all, nor is there any gratitude left for kindness done.”

Then Medon, wise of heart, answered her, “O queen, if only this were the worst evil! But the suitors devise another far greater and more grievous one, which I pray the son of Kronos may never fulfill! They are set on slaying Telemachos with the edge of the sword on his way home, for he has gone to lovely Pylos and noble Lakedaimon to seek news of his father.”

So he spoke, but her knees went weak where she stood, and her heart melted within her, and for a long time she was speechless, and her eyes were filled with tears, and her voice was choked. But at last she answered him and said, “Servant, why has my son departed? There is no need for him to go abroad on swift ships that serve men as horses on the sea and that cross the great, wet waste. Is it so that even his own name may not be left on the earth?”

Then Medon, wise of heart, answered her, “I do not know whether some god urged him on or whether his own spirit stirred him to go to Pylos to seek news of his father’s return or to hear what final end he met.”

He spoke and departed through the house of Odysseus, and a cloud of consuming grief fell on her, so that she could not endure any longer to sit on a chair, of which there were many in the house, but she crouched there on the threshold of her well-built chamber, wailing piteously, and her handmaids around her gave low moans, all who were in the house with her, young and old. And Penelope spoke among them, pouring out her lamentation, “Hear me, my friends, for the Olympian father has given me pain far beyond all women who were born and bred in my day. Before this time I lost my noble lord of the lion heart, clothed with all perfection among the Danaans, my good lord, whose fame is sounded abroad from Hellas to mid Argos. And now again the storm-winds have snatched away my well-beloved son without news from our halls, and I never heard of his departure. O women, hard of heart, that none of you let the thought come into

your minds to rouse me from my bed when he went to the black hollow ship, though you knew all about it! For if I had heard that he was intending this journey, indeed he would have stayed here, however eager to be gone, or have left me dead in the halls. Nevertheless, someone hurry to call the ancient Dolios, my servant, whom my father gave me before I had come here, who keeps my orchard of trees. He must go immediately and sit by Laertes and tell him everything, in hopes that Laertes may weave some counsel in his heart and go out and make his complaint to the people, who are determined to destroy his offspring and the offspring of godlike Odysseus.”

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered her, “Dear lady, kill me if you wish with the pitiless sword or let me live on in the house, but I will not hide my words from you. I knew all this and gave him whatever he commanded, bread and sweet wine. And he made me take a great oath not to tell you until at least the twelfth day should come, or until you yourself should miss him and hear of his departure, so that you would not disfigure your lovely flesh with your tears. But now, wash in water and take clean garments and go up to your upper chamber with the women who are your handmaids and pray to Athena, daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis. For in this way she may save him from death. And do not heap troubles on an old man’s trouble, for the offspring of the son of Arkeisios is not, I think, utterly hated by the blessed gods, but someone will perhaps still remain to possess these lofty halls and the rich fields far away.”

So she spoke and ended her queen’s lamentations and made her eyes cease from weeping. So she washed her with water and took clean garments to her, and she went up to the upper chamber with the women who were her handmaids and placed the meal for sprinkling in a basket and prayed to Athena, “Hear me, child of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, unwearied maiden! If ever wise Odysseus in his halls burned fat slices of heifer or sheep for you, I pray you, remember those things now and save my dear son and keep him from the suitors in the evil of their pride.”

With this she raised a cry, and the goddess heard her prayer. But the suitors clamored through the shadowy halls, and some arrogant

young man would say, “Indeed, this queen with many suitors prepares for marriage and has no idea that death has been prepared for her son.”

In this way some of them would speak, but they did not know how things were truly ordained. And Antinoös spoke out vigorously among them, “Noble sirs, my friends, avoid all disdainful words, lest someone hear and report it in the house. But let us rise and in silence complete what we spoke of, for the counsel pleased all of us.”

With that he chose twenty of the best men, and they departed to the swift ship and the sea coast. First they drew the ship down to the deep water and placed the mast and sails in the black ship, and they fixed the oars in leather loops properly and spread out the white sails. And proud attendants with haughty hearts carried their weapons for them. And they moored her far out in the shore water, but they themselves disembarked, and there they ate and waited for evening to come.

But wise Penelope lay there in her upper chamber, fasting and tasting neither food nor drink, pondering whether her noble son could escape death or perhaps fall at the hands of the arrogant suitors. And as a lion broods in fear among the crush of men, when they draw in a ring around him, in the same way, she was brooding deeply when deep sleep came over her. And she sank back in sleep and her limbs went slack.

Now the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, turned to other thoughts. She made a phantom and fashioned it in the likeness of a woman, Iphthime, daughter of great-hearted Ikarios, whom Eumelus wedded, whose dwelling was in Pherai. And she sent it to the house of divine Odysseus to urge Penelope, in all her sorrow and lamenting, to stop her weeping and tearful mourning. So the phantom passed into the chamber beside the cord that holds the bolt and stood above her head and spoke to her, saying, “Are you sleeping, Penelope, broken-hearted? No, even the gods who live at ease do not wish you to wail or suffer, since your son is going to return, for he is no sinner in the eyes of the gods.”

Then wise Penelope made her answer, as she slumbered very softly at the gates of dreams, “Why have you come here, sister, when you never used to do so, since your dwelling is far away? Do you indeed urge me to cease from the many sorrows and pains that trouble my heart and soul? Before this time I lost my noble lord of the lion heart, clothed with all perfection among the Danaans, my true lord, whose reputation is spread abroad from Hellas to mid Argos. And now my well-beloved son has departed on his hollow ship, poor child, not skilled in labor or in the gatherings of men. I sorrow even more for him than for my lord, and I tremble and fear for him lest anything happen to him, whether perhaps among the people where he is gone or in the deep sea. For many enemies plot evil against him and go about to kill him before he ever returns to his own country.”

And the dim phantom answered her and said, “Take courage, and do not be so terribly afraid. For indeed the kind of friend goes to guide him that all men wish would stand by them, for she, Pallas Athene, has power. And she pities you in your sorrow and now has sent me here to speak these words to you.”

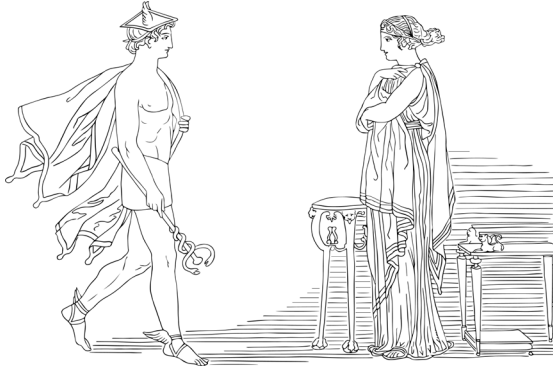
And wise Penelope answered her, saying, “If you are indeed a god and have heard the word of a god, then I beg you to tell me news about that ill-fated man, whether perhaps he is still alive and sees the light of the sun or has already died and is a dweller in the house of Hades.”

And the dim phantom answered her and said, “Concerning him, I will not tell you all the news, whether he is alive or dead; it is not good to speak words lightly as the breeze.”

With that the phantom slipped away through the bolt of the door and passed into the breath of the wind. And the daughter of Ikarios leaped up from sleep, and her heart was cheered, so clear was the vision that sped toward her in the dead of the night.

Meanwhile, the suitors had gone on board ship and were sailing over the wet ways, pondering outright death for Telemachos in their hearts. Now there is a rocky island in the middle of the sea, midway between Ithaka and rugged Samos, Asteris, a little island, and there is a harbor in it with a double entrance, where ships may anchor. There the Achaians remained, lying in wait for Telemachos.

Book V: Odysseus Leaves Kalypso



Hermes' Message to Kalypso

Hermes Commands Kalypso to Release Odysseus

Now Dawn arose from her bed, from the side of beautiful¹ Tithonus,² to bring light to the immortals and to mortal men. And the gods were gathering in council, and among them Zeus, who thunders on high, whose might is above all. And Athene told them the tale of the many sorrows of Odysseus, recalling them to mind—for he who then remained in the house of the nymph was dear to her heart: “Father Zeus, and all you other blessed and immortal gods, from this time on do not let any sceptred king be kind and gentle with all his heart nor inclined to act righteously, but let him always be a harsh man and work evil, for see, there is no one who remembers

1 The Greek word here, *agauon*, is often translated “noble,” “lordly,” etc., but those are imprecise; the original connotation was precisely great personal beauty, something the Greeks prized, and Tithonus is considered a model of that. I have kept the other translations elsewhere but here felt it necessary to be more exact.

2 Tithonus was son of Laomedon and, therefore, brother of King Priam. Eos, goddess of the Dawn, fell in love with him and made him her lover. The story of his unfortunate immortality, in which Eos asked Zeus to give eternal life to Tithonus but forgot to ask for eternal youth so that he aged continually without the blessed escape of death, does not appear in Homer but first shows in the later *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (not actually by Homer but probably composed a century later).

godlike Odysseus out of all the people over whom he was king, and he was gentle as a father. In spite of that, he remains on an island, suffering strong sorrows in the halls of the nymph Kalypso, who keeps him there against his will. So he can not reach his own country, for he has with him no ships with oars and no companions to help him on his way over the broad back of the sea. And now, yet again, they are set on slaying his beloved son on his homeward way, for he has gone to lovely Pylos and to great Lakedaimon to seek news of his father.”

And Zeus, Gatherer of the Clouds, answered and spoke to her, “My child, what word has escaped the door of your lips? Indeed, did you not plan this yourself, that Odysseus may surely take revenge on those men at his homecoming? As for Telemachos, guide him by your art as well as you can, so that he may come to his own country entirely unharmed, and the suitors may return in their ship with their labor in vain.”

With that he spoke to Hermes, his dear son, “Hermes, since in everything else you are our messenger, tell the nymph of the braided hair my certain plans, the return of patient Odysseus, how he is to come to his home with no more assistance of gods or of mortal men. He will sail on a well-bound raft, in great distress, and on the twentieth day arrive at fertile Scheria, the land of the Phaiakians who are near relation to the gods. And they will honor him greatly, as a god, and send him on his way in a ship to his own dear country with gifts of bronze and gold and garments in plenty, much treasure, such as Odysseus never would have won for himself out of Troy, even if he had returned unhurt with the share of the spoil that fell to him. In this manner he is destined to see his friends and come to his high-roofed home and to his own country.”

So he spoke, and the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, did not disobey him. Immediately he bound to his feet his lovely golden sandals, that never grow old, that carry him over the wet sea and over the limitless land equally, swift as the breath of the wind. And he took the wand with which he lulls the eyes of whoever he wishes, while others he wakes from out of sleep. With this rod in his hand,

the strong slayer of Argus flew. He passed above Pieria and leapt from the upper air into the deep. Then he sped along the wave like the cormorant that chases the fishes through the perilous gulfs of the unharvested sea and wets his thick plumage in the salt water. In this manner Hermes rode on the heaving of the waves. But when he had reached that far-off island, he went forth from the sea of violet blue to go up onto the land, till he came to a great cave in which the nymph of the braided tresses lived, and he found her inside. On the hearth there was a great fire burning, and from far off through the island the fragrance of split cedar blazing wafted and the scent of sandalwood. And in the cave the nymph was singing with a sweet voice as she worked back and forth on the loom, and she wove with a shuttle of gold. And all around the cave there was alder and poplar, and sweet-smelling cypress blossomed. And long-winged birds roosted there, owls and falcons and chattering sea-crows, which ply their trade over the water. And around the hollow cave a trailing garden vine grew, all rich with clusters. And four fountains beautifully set were running with clear water, close by one another, each rushing in its own course. And all around soft meadows bloomed with violets and parsley; indeed, even an immortal god who came there might wonder at the sight and be glad at heart. There the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, stood and marveled. Now when he had gazed with wonder at everything, soon he went into the wide cave, and Kalypso, that fair goddess, recognized him when she saw him face to face, for the immortal gods are familiar to each other, though each one has his habitation far away. But he did not find within the cave great-hearted Odysseus, who sat weeping on the shore as he always did, his soul straining with tears and groans and sorrows, and as he wept he looked wistfully over the bountiful deep. And Kalypso, that fair goddess, questioned Hermes, when she had made him sit on a bright shining seat, “Hermes of the golden wand, honored and welcome, please tell me why you have come here when you are not accustomed to visit me? Tell me your thoughts—my heart is set on fulfilling them, if I can—and if they have been fulfilled already in the

plans of fate. But now follow me further, so that I may set before you the hospitality due to strangers.”

With that the goddess spread a table with ambrosia and set it near him and mixed the ruddy nectar. So the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, ate and drank. But after he had dined and eased his soul with food, at last he answered and spoke to her in this way: “You question me about my coming, a goddess asking a god, and I will tell you this truly, at your request. It was Zeus that commanded me to come here, and not my own will. Indeed, who of his own free will would travel over such a huge expanse of salt sea, where there is no nearby city of mortals that sacrifice to the gods and offer great choice offerings? But surely it is in no way possible for another god to go beyond or to neglect the purpose of Zeus, Lord of the aegis. He says that you have with you a man who is most wretched beyond his fellow men, beyond those men that fought around the citadel of Priam for nine years and in the tenth year sacked the city and departed homeward. Yet on the way they sinned against Athene, and she raised against them an evil blast and long waves of the sea. Then all the rest of his good companions were lost, but it happened that the wind and waves carried him here. And now Zeus commands you to send him away from here with whatever haste you can, for it is not ordained that he die far away from his friends, but rather it is his fate to look upon them still and to come to his high-roofed home and his own country.”

So he spoke, and Kalypso, that lovely goddess, trembled and raised her voice and spoke winged words to him, “You gods are harsh and excessively jealous, who always begrudge goddesses to openly mate with men, if any makes a mortal her beloved bed-fellow. When rosy-fingered Dawn took Orion for her lover, you gods that live at ease were jealous of it, till chaste Artemis of the golden throne killed him in Ortygia with her gentle shafts. Likewise when lovely-haired Demeter yielded to her passion and lay with Iasion in the triple-plowed fallow-field, it was not long before Zeus had news of it and threw a white bolt at him and killed him. And now again you gods begrudge that a mortal man should live with me. I saved

him as he drifted all alone, straddling the keel of a ship, for Zeus had crushed and split his swift ship with a white bolt in the middle of the wine-dark deep. There all the rest of his good companions were lost, but it happened that the wind and the waves carried him and brought him here. And I have loved and cherished him, and I told him that I would make him never to know death and old age forever. Yet since it is in no way possible for another god to go beyond or neglect the purpose of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, let him go away over the rich seas, if the message and command are really from Zeus. But I can give him no help, for I have no ships with oars near me nor companions to help him on his way over the broad back of the sea. Yet will I be sure to put this into his mind and will hide nothing, so that he may come unharmed to his own country.”

Then the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, answered her, “Then speed him on his journey now and remember the anger of Zeus, lest he become angry and treat you harshly after this.”

Kalypso Helps Odysseus Prepare to Depart

With that the great slayer of Argus departed, but the lady nymph went on her way to the great-hearted Odysseus, when she had heard the message of Zeus. And there she found him sitting on the shore, and his eyes were never dry of tears, and his sweet life was ebbing away as he mourned for his return, for the nymph was no longer pleasing to him. However, by night he would sleep beside her, because he had to, in the hollow caves, an unwilling lover by a willing lady. But in the day-time he would sit on the rocks and on the beach, wracking his soul with tears and groans and griefs, and through his tears he would look wistfully over the bountiful ocean. So standing near him, that fair goddess spoke to him, “Unfortunate man, I beg you not to sorrow any more in this island nor let your good life waste away, for now will I send you away with a willing heart. Rise up, and cut long beams, and make a wide raft with the axe, and build a high

deck on it, so that it may carry you over the misty deep. And I will put bread and water in it, and red wine to your heart's desire, to keep hunger far away. And I will put new clothing on you and send a fair wind behind you, so that you may come completely unharmed to your own country, if it is in fact the will of the gods who hold the wide sky, who are stronger than I am both to will and to do."

So she spoke, and dauntless, noble Odysseus shuddered and, lifting his voice, spoke winged words to her, "In this, goddess, you clearly have some other plan and not my help, because you urge me to cross in a raft the great gulf of the sea so dreadful and difficult, which not even the swift, gallant ships pass over when they rejoice in the breezes of Zeus. I would not go aboard a raft unless you will swear a great oath not to plan any hidden tricks that will harm me."

So he spoke, and Kalypso, the fair goddess, smiled and stroked him with her hand, and she spoke and addressed him, "You are a scoundrel with a brave soul to have thought and spoken these words. Let earth now be witness to this, and the wide sky above, and that falling water of the Styx, the greatest oath and the most awesome to the blessed gods, that I will not plan any hidden deceit to hurt you. No, my thoughts and my counsel will be just as I would devise for myself, if ever a strong need came upon me. For I too have a just mind, and my heart within me is not of iron but full of pity, just as yours is."

With that, the lovely goddess led the way quickly, and he followed close in the steps of the goddess. And they reached the hollow cave, the goddess and the man, and he sat down upon the chair from which Hermes had arisen, and the nymph placed near him all kinds of food to eat and drink, such as is nourishing for men. As for her, she sat opposite divine Odysseus, and the handmaids placed ambrosia and nectar beside her. So they reached out their hands to the good things set before them. Then after they had taken their fill of food and drink, Kalypso, the fair goddess, spoke first and said, "Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, so it is indeed your wish to get home to your own dear country now? May good fortune go with you! Yet if only you knew in your heart

how much suffering you are destined to have before you reach your own country, you would stay here with me in this house and would never taste death, even though you long to see your wife day after day. Not that I think myself any less noble than she is in appearance or demeanor, for it could never be that mortal women should equal immortals in shape or beauty.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered, and spoke to her, “Do not be angry with me about this, goddess and queen. I myself know well how wise Penelope is less to look upon than you are, in beauty and stature. But she is mortal, and you know neither age nor death. Yet even so, I wish and long, day after day, to journey homeward and see the day of my return. Yes, and if some god wrecks me in the wine-dark deep, still I will endure with a heart within me patient in suffering. For already have I suffered greatly, and I have toiled much in dangers from waves and war; let this be added to the list of those.”

So he spoke, and the sun sank, and darkness came on. Then the two went into the chamber of the hollow rock, and took their delight in love beside each other.

As soon as early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, Odysseus put on mantle and tunic, and the nymph clothed herself in a great shining robe, lightly woven and beautiful, and threw a lovely, golden belt around her waist and also a veil on her head. Then she pondered on how to send off Odysseus, the great-hearted. She gave him a great axe, fitted to his grasp, an axe of bronze double-edged, and with a great handle of olive wood fastened tightly. Next she gave him a polished adze,³ and she led the way to the border of the island where tall trees grew, alder and poplar and pine that reached to the sky, dry and seasoned long before, which might lightly float for him. After she had shown him where the tall trees grew, Kalypso, the lovely goddess, departed for home. And he began cutting timber, and his work went swiftly. He felled twenty trees in all and then trimmed them with the bronze, and he expertly smoothed them and shaped

3 A tool like an axe but with the blade at right angles to the handle, for smoothing and shaping logs and other pieces of wood.

them straight. Meanwhile, Kalypso, the lovely goddess, brought augers to him, so he bored each piece and joined them together and then made everything tight with pegs and dowels. As wide as the floor of a broad ship of burden, which some man well skilled in carpentry can lay out, so wide did Odysseus fashion his broad boat. And he worked at it and set up the deckings, fitting them to the close-set uprights, and finished them off with long gunwales, and he set a mast and a yard-arm fitted to it, and finally he made him a rudder to guide the craft. And he fenced it with interwoven willow stems from stem to stern to be a bulwark against the waves and piled up wood to reinforce them. Meanwhile, Kalypso, the fair goddess, brought him woven cloth to make sails, and these too he fashioned very skillfully. And he made tight braces and ropes, and at last he pushed the vessel with levers down to the lovely, salt sea.⁴

It was the fourth day when he had finished everything. On the fifth, the lovely Kalypso sent him on his way from the island, when she had bathed him and clad him in fresh clothing. Furthermore, the goddess placed on board the ship two skins, one full of dark wine and another great one of water, and also grain in a bag, and she stored in it delicacies that would please his heart and sent out a warm and gentle wind to blow. And great Odysseus rejoiced as he set his sails to the breeze. So he sat and skillfully guided the vessel with the tiller, and sleep did not fall upon his eyelids as he viewed the Pleiades⁵ and Boötes,⁶ which sets late, and the Bear, which they also call the Wagon,⁷ which always turns in one place and keeps watch over

4 The word used several times in this paragraph is “raft” (*schediē*), but the vessel Odysseus builds here is clearly an actual boat: it has ribs, thwarts, decking, etc. and is joined very tightly in the manner of boat construction. The details are not entirely coherent, but Homer obviously is drawing on a tradition of boat-building knowledge.

5 This famous star cluster (containing as many as seven visible stars but over a thousand others) were said to be seven sisters, daughters of Atlas, and so were sisters of Kalypso too.

6 Boötes is not pronounced like “booties” but the two o’s are pronounced separately like the two o’s in cooperate. This constellation, containing the bright star Arcturus, represented to the Greeks the herdsman who guided the oxen pulling the Wagon (what we call the Big Dipper), but there were many other versions of who Boötes represents.

7 Ursa Major (what we call the Big Dipper). The ancient Greeks saw it as a great bear, but they (and medieval Europeans) also saw it as a wagon or wain (the “pot”), pulled by animals (the “handle”).

Orion⁸ and alone never dips into the Ocean. This star, Kalypso, the fair goddess, told him to keep always on the left as he traveled over the deep.⁹ For seventeen days he sailed, crossing the deep, and on the eighteenth day the shadowy hills of the land of the Phaiakians appeared, at the point where it lay nearest to him, and it showed like a shield in the misty deep.

Odysseus is Shipwrecked and Cast Ashore on Scheria

Now the Lord, the Shaker of the Earth, on his way from the Ethiopians noticed him from far off, from the mountains of the Solymoi¹⁰—even from there he saw Odysseus as he sailed over the deep, and he was terribly angry in spirit, and, shaking his head, he communed with his own heart, “The gods must have changed their minds about Odysseus while I was away among the Ethiopians! And now he is close to the Phaiakian land, where it is fated that he will escape the terrible sufferings which have come upon him. But I think that I can still drive him far enough down the path of sorrows.”

With that he gathered the clouds and stirred up the waters of the deep, grasping his trident in his hands, and he roused storms with all kinds of winds and shrouded the land and sea in clouds, and night sped down from the sky. The East Wind and the South Wind clashed and the stormy West and the North, born in the bright air and rolling a huge wave toward him. Then Odysseus’ knees went weak, and his heart melted, and groaning he spoke to his own great spirit, “Oh,

8 The constellation, appearing as a giant hunter, straddles the celestial equator and so has been well known to all cultures around the world since prehistoric times. He was said by the Greeks to be the son of Poseidon and was killed by a scorpion (represented by the constellation Scorpius on the opposite side of the celestial sphere) but was restored to life by Ophiuchus (the Serpent-Bearer, another constellation halfway between Orion and Scorpius).

9 This is the only place in Homer that describes celestial navigation, as normally the ancient Greeks stayed within sight of land and used landmarks for navigation. The information in this paragraph suggests that the season is late summer or early autumn, and Odysseus is heading east.

10 An ancient culture that Herodotus locates in Lykia, southwestern Asia Minor. Poseidon is looking a very long way indeed.

wretched man that I am! What will become of me now? I fear that indeed the goddess spoke everything truly, for she said that I would fill up the measure of sorrow on the sea, before I ever came to my own country, and look, all those things are being fulfilled. In this way Zeus crowns the wide sky with clouds and has troubled the deep, and the blasts of all the winds rush on; indeed, utter doom is certain. Three and four times blessed are those Danaans who perished long ago in wide Troy-land, serving the sons of Atreus! If only I too had died and met my fate on that day, when the mob of Trojans showered me with their bronze-clad spears as I fought for the body of the son of Peleus! In that way I could have gotten my due reward of burial, and the Achaians would have spread my fame, but now it is my fate to be overtaken by a pitiful death.”

Even as he spoke, the great wave crashed down upon him, piling on in a terrible manner, so that the boat reeled. And he fell far from it, and his hand lost hold of the helm, and the fierce blast of the jostling winds came and broke his mast in the middle, and the sail and yard-arm fell far into the sea. For a long time the water kept him under, and he could not quickly rise from beneath the rush of the mighty wave, for the garments lovely Kalypso had given him clung heavily. But finally he came up and spat out from his mouth the bitter salt-water, which ran down in streams from his head. Still he did not forget his vessel, in spite of his wretched position, but he leaped after it in the waves and clung to it, and he sat in the middle of it, averting death, and the great wave swept it here and there along the current. And just as the North Wind in harvest time sweeps the thistle-down along the plain, and the tufts cling to each other, in the same way, the winds carried the boat here and there across the sea. Now the South would toss it to the North to carry, and then again the East would yield it to the West to chase.

But the daughter of Kadmos noticed him, Ino of the lovely ankles, Leukothea, who in time past was a mortal maiden, but now in the depths of the salt sea she had gotten her share of worship from the gods. She took pity on Odysseus in his wandering and suffering, and she rose, like a sea-gull on the wing, from the depth of the water,

and sat on the strong-bound vessel and spoke, saying, “Unfortunate one, why was Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, so terribly angry with you, sowing the seeds of so many evils for you? Yet he will not make a complete end of you, in spite of all desire. But do as I tell you; I think you are clever. Take off those garments and leave the raft to drift before the winds, but you swim with your hands trying to gain solid ground on the coast of the Phaiakians, where it is fated that you should escape. Here, take this imperishable veil and wind it about your breast; there is no fear of you suffering anything or dying. But when you have laid hold of the mainland with your hands, take it off and throw it into the wine-dark sea far from land and turn away from it.”

With that the goddess gave him the veil, and she herself dived back into the billowing sea, like a sea-gull, and the dark wave closed over her. But the steadfast, noble Odysseus pondered and, groaning, he spoke to his own brave spirit, “Woe is me! Can it be that some one of the immortals is weaving a new snare for me, that she tells me to abandon my craft? No indeed, I will not yet obey, for I saw the shore a long way off, where she told me that I might escape. I am resolved about what I will do, and I think this is best. As long as the timbers hold with their pegs, I will endure steadfastly in this struggle, but when the wave tears my craft apart I will swim, for now there is no better plan.”

While he still pondered these things in his heart and soul, Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, roused up against him a great wave, terrible and frightening, and the crest fell upon him and struck him. Just as when a great, tempestuous wind tosses a heap of dry husks and scatters them this way and that, even so did the wave scatter the long beams of the raft. But Odysseus straddled a single beam, as one rides on a horse, and tore off the garments which lovely Kalypso gave him. And quickly he wound the veil around his chest and fell into the sea, stretching out his arms as one eager to swim. And the Lord, the Shaker of the Earth, saw him and shook his head and communed with his own soul, “In this way, after all your sufferings, keep wandering over the deep, till you will come to a people beloved of Zeus. Yet in spite of that, I do not think you will consider your sufferings

light.” With that, he lashed his horses with flowing manes and came to Aigai, his lordly home.

But Athene, daughter of Zeus, turned to new thoughts. She bound up the paths of the other winds and commanded them all to cease and be still, but she roused the swift North and broke the waves before him, so that Odysseus, seed of Zeus, might mingle with the Phaiakians, lovers of the oar, avoiding death and the fates.

So for two nights and two days he was wandering in the swell of the sea, and his heart often dreaded death. But when at last lovely-haired Dawn brought the full light of the third day, after that the breeze fell, and there was a breathless calm, and with a quick glance ahead, being lifted up on a great wave, he saw the land very near. And just as when the sight of a father’s returning life is most welcome to children, when he has lain in sickness and strong pains wasting away for a long time because some angry god has attacked him, and then to their delight the gods have freed him from his pains, even so the land and woods were a welcome sight to Odysseus, and he swam onward, eager to set foot on the beach. But when he was within earshot of the shore and heard the thunder of the sea against the reefs—for the great wave crashed against the dry land, thundering terribly, covered with sea foam, for there were no harbors or shelters for ships but jutting headlands and reefs and cliffs—then the knees of Odysseus went weak, and his heart melted, and, groaning heavily, he spoke to his own brave spirit, “Woe is me! Just when beyond all hope Zeus has given me sight of land, and I have struggled through this gulf, there is no place to land on from out of the grey water. For there are sharp crags on the outside, and around them the wave roars surging, and the smooth rock rises sheer, and the sea is deep near it, so that there is no way to find a firm foothold and escape my fate, for just as I might try to go ashore, the great wave will perhaps grab me and smash me on the jagged rock—and a wretched end that would be. But if I swim further along the coast to find sand bars that catch the waves and safe harbors from the sea, I fear lest the storm-winds catch me again and carry me away over the ocean, groaning sorrowfully, or else some god may even send forth against me a monster

from out of the water, and famous Amphitrite¹¹ pastures many such monsters. For I know how angry the great Shaker of the Earth has been against me.”

While he still pondered these things in his heart and mind, a great wave carried him to the rugged shore. There he would have been stripped of his skin and all his bones broken, except that the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, put a thought into his heart. He rushed in and with both his hands clutched the rock to which he clung till the great wave went by. So he escaped that peril, but it leaped upon him again with a backward wash and struck him and threw him back into the deep. Just as when the cuttlefish is dragged out of his chamber, the many pebbles clinging to his suckers, even so was the skin stripped from his strong hands against the rocks, and the great wave closed over him. There indeed unfortunate Odysseus would have perished beyond what was fated, had not grey-eyed Athene given him good counsel. He rose from the line of the breakers that beat upon the shore and swam outside, always looking landwards, to find, if he might, sand spits that take the waves crosswise and harbors from the sea. But when he came in his swimming over against the mouth of a fair-flowing river, where the place seemed best in his eyes, smooth of rocks, and also there was a shelter from the wind, Odysseus felt the river running and prayed to him in his heart, “Hear me, O king, whoever you are; I have come to you as to one to whom prayer is made, while I flee the revenges of Poseidon from the deep. Indeed, honored even to the immortal gods is that man who comes as a wanderer, just as I now have come to your stream and to your knees after much toil. Pity me, O king, for I proclaim myself your suppliant.”

So he spoke, and the god immediately held back his stream and withheld his waves and made the water smooth before him and brought him safely to the mouth of the river. And his knees buckled, and his stout hands dropped, for his heart was broken by the salt sea. And his flesh was all swollen, and a great stream of sea-water gushed up through his mouth and nostrils. So he lay without breath

11 Wife of Poseidon. She raised and bred sea monsters and was responsible for the huge waves that break on coastlines.

or speech, in a faint, such terrible weariness came upon him. But when his breath returned, and his spirit came to him again, he took off the veil of the goddess and let it fall into the salt flowing river. And the great wave carried it back down the stream, and lightly Ino caught it in her hands. Then Odysseus turned from the river and fell back in the reeds and kissed the earth, the grain-giver, and groaning he spoke to his own brave spirit, “Ah, woe is me! What is to become of me? What will finally happen to me? If I watch the river bed all through the careful night, I fear that the bitter frost and fresh dew may overcome me, as I breathe out my life with faintness, for the river breeze often blows cold in the morning. But if I climb the hill-side up to the shady wood and there take rest in the thickets, though perhaps the cold and weariness may leave me and sweet sleep may come over me, I fear lest I become the prey of wild beasts.”

As he thought about this, it seemed to him the better way. He went up to the wood and found it close to the water in a place with a wide view. So he crept beneath two bushes that grew from one stem, olive trees, one of them wild olive. Through these the force of the wet winds blew never, nor did the bright sun shine into it with his rays, nor could the rain pierce through, they were entwined so closely to each other. And under this Odysseus crawled and heaped together with his hands a wide bed, for there were plenty of fallen leaves, enough to cover two or three men in winter time, however hard the weather. And steadfast, great Odysseus saw it and rejoiced, and he lay down in the middle of it and pulled over himself the fallen leaves. Just as when a man has hidden away a burning log in the black embers at an upland farm, one that has no neighbors near, and so saves the seed of fire, so that he may not have to seek a light elsewhere, even so Odysseus covered himself with the leaves. And Athene shed sleep upon his eyes, overshadowing his eyelids, so that it might quickly release him from his weary struggles.

Book VI: Nausikaa Finds Odysseus



Nausikaa Throwing the Ball

Nausikaa Goes to the Seashore

So there he lay asleep, steadfast, great Odysseus, worn out with toil and drowsiness. Meanwhile, Athene went to the land and the city of the Phaiakians, who long ago lived in spacious Hypereia, near the Kyklopes, arrogant men who harassed them continually, being more powerful. Godlike Nausithoös¹ made them leave from there, and he led them away and settled them in Scheria, far off from men that live by bread. And he planned a wall around the town and built houses and made temples for the gods and distributed the fields. Nevertheless, he had been struck down by fate and had gone down to the house of Hades, and now Alkinoös was reigning, with wisdom given by the gods. The goddess, grey-eyed Athene, went to his house, devising a return for great-hearted Odysseus. She went to the richly-crafted dwelling, where Nausikaa, daughter of high-hearted Alkinoös, was sleeping, a maiden like the gods in form and beauty. Beside her, on

1 Son of Poseidon, father of Alkinoös, the current king of the Phaiakians.

either side of the pillars of the door, were two handmaids, gifted with beauty from the Graces, and the shining doors were shut.

But the goddess, swift as the breath of the wind, swept towards the bed of the girl and stood over her head and spoke to her in the likeness of the daughter of a famous seafarer, Dymas, a girl of the same age with Nausikaa, who was pleased with her. In her shape the grey-eyed Athene spoke to the princess, saying, “Nausikaa, why does your mother have such a heedless girl for her daughter? Look, you have lovely garments lying around uncared for, and your marriage day will come soon, when you will need to be beautifully dressed and have garments to give to those who lead you to your bridegroom’s house. These are the things from which a good reputation spreads among the people, in which a father and noble mother take delight. But let us rise up and begin washing at the break of day, and I will follow you to be your helper in the labor, so that without delay you may get yourself ready, since indeed you are not going to be a maiden for long. They are already courting you, the noblest youths of all the Phaiakians, the people from which you yourself spring. So this morning ask your noble father to supply you with mules and a wagon to carry the men’s garments and the robes and the shining bedspreads. It is far better for you to travel that way than on foot, for the places where we must wash are far away from the town.”

So spoke grey-eyed Athene and departed to Olympos, which is, they say, the seat of the gods which stands firmly for ever. It is not shaken by winds, nor ever wet with rain, nor does the snow cover it, but clear air spreads cloudlessly around it, and white light floats over it. There the blessed gods are happy all their days, and there Athene went when she had told everything to the maiden.

Soon the enthroned Dawn came and woke Nausikaa of the fair robes, who immediately marveled at her dream and went through the halls to tell her beloved father and mother. And she found them in the palace, her mother sitting by the hearth with the women who were her handmaids, spinning yarn of sea-purple dye, but she met her father as he was going out to the famous kings in their council, to which the noble Phaiakians had called him. Standing close by

her dear father, she spoke, saying, “Dear Father, could you not lend me a high wagon with strong wheels so that I might take the bright garments to the river to wash, whatever is soiled and lying about? Indeed, it would be proper for you yourself to have clean garments to wear when you are with the princes in council. Also, you have five beloved sons in the palace, two married and three unmarried, and they are always eager for freshly-washed garments for the dances; I have been pondering all these things.”

She said all this because she was ashamed to speak of marriage to her father, but he understood everything and answered, saying, “I would withhold neither the mules nor anything else from you, my child. Go on your way, and the servant will prepare for you a high wagon with good wheels, fitted with an upper frame.”

With that he called to his men, and they obeyed, and outside the palace they made ready the smooth-running mule-wagon and led the mules beneath the yoke and harnessed them to the chariot, while the maiden brought out from her rooms the lovely garments. She stored them in the polished chariot, and her mother filled a basket with all kinds of food that their hearts might desire, and she put delicacies in it too, and she poured wine into a goat-skin bottle, while Nausikaa climbed into the wagon. And her mother gave her soft olive oil also in a golden jar, so that she and her maidens could anoint themselves after their bath. Then Nausikaa took the whip and the shining reins and touched the mules to start them going; then there was a clatter of hoofs, and they surged onward without delay with their load of the garments and the girl. She did not go alone, for her attendants went with her.

When they had come to the beautiful stream of the river, where the wash tanks were always full, and bright water welled up freely from beneath and flowed past, enough to wash the foulest garments clean, there the girls unharnessed the mules from the chariot, and, turning them loose, they drove them along the banks of the pooling river to graze on the honey-sweet clover. Then they took the garments from the wagon in their hands and carried them to the black water and briskly trampled them down in the tanks in rapid rivalry.

Now when they had washed and cleansed all the stains, they spread everything out in order along the shore of the sea, where it washed the pebbles clean as it pounded on the beach. Then having bathed and anointed themselves with olive oil, they took their midday meal on the river's banks, waiting till the clothes were dry in the brightness of the sun. Soon, when they were satisfied with food, the attendants and the princess, they began to play ball, throwing aside their scarves, and among them Nausikaa of the white arms began the song. And just as Artemis, the archer, moves down the mountain, either along the ridges of lofty Taÿgetos or Erymanthos,² enjoying her sport of chasing boars and swift deer, and with her the wild wood-nymphs play too, the daughters of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, and Leto is glad at heart, while high over all she lifts her head and brows and may easily be known, though all are lovely; in the same way, the unwed girl outshone her maiden companions.

Odysseus Appeals to Nausikaa

But when she was preparing to go home, after yoking the mules and folding up the lovely garments, then grey-eyed Athene turned to other plans, so that Odysseus would wake and see the lovely maiden, who would be his guide to the city of the Phaiakian men. So when the princess threw the ball at one of her company, she missed the girl and threw the ball into the deep, swirling current, at which they all cried out sharply. Then great Odysseus woke and sat up, pondering in his heart and spirit, “Woe is me! To what men's land have I come now? Are they aggressive and wild and unjust, or are they hospitable and reverent toward the gods? How shrill a cry of maidens rings round me, like the nymphs that hold the steep hill-tops and the river-springs and the grassy water meadows! I think I must be near men of human speech. I will go out and see.”

2 Taÿgetos and Erymanthos are mountain ranges in the Peloponnese: Taÿgetos in the south, Erymanthos in the north, both of them rising well over 7,000 feet.

With that great Odysseus crept out from under the brush, having broken with his strong hand a leafy branch from the thick wood to hold over his body to hide his nakedness. And out he came like a mountain-born lion, trusting in his strength, who goes out in wind and rain with flaming eyes; amongst the cattle or sheep he goes or on the track of the wild deer; his hunger urges him to go right up to the homestead to make an attempt on the flocks. In the same way, Odysseus wished to come close to the lovely-haired maidens, though he was naked, such need had come upon him. But he was fearsome in their eyes, being covered with the salt-sea scum, and they fled, cowering here and there around the jutting spits of the shore. But the daughter of Alkinoös alone stood firm, for Athene gave her courage in her heart and took away all trembling from her limbs. So she stopped and stood opposite him, and Odysseus considered whether he should clasp the knees of the lovely maiden and so make his petition or should stand as he was, a little away, and beseech her with smooth words, if perhaps she might show him the town and give him clothing. And as he thought within himself, it seemed better to stand a little away and beseech her with smooth words, lest the maiden be angry with him if he touched her knees; so immediately he spoke a sweet and cunning word, “I beseech you, O queen, whether you are a goddess or a mortal! If indeed you are a goddess, of those who keep the wide sky, then I consider you to be like Artemis, the daughter of great Zeus, in beauty and stature and shapeliness. But if you are one of the daughters of men who live on the earth, three times blessed are your father and mother, and three times blessed your brothers. Surely their souls always glow with gladness because of you, every time they see you entering the dance, so lovely a flower of maidens. But he who wins you with courting gifts and leads you to his home is most blessed in heart beyond all others. Never have my eyes seen one like you among mortals, neither man nor woman; great awe comes upon me as I look on you. Yet in Delos once I saw as beautiful a thing: a young sapling of a palm tree growing up by the altar of Apollo. For I went there, and many people with me, on that journey in which I had such terrible troubles. When I saw it, I mar-

veled in spirit for a long time—for there never has grown so lovely a shoot from the ground—in the same way, I marvel at you, lady, and am astonished and greatly fear to touch your knees, though terrible sorrow is upon me. Yesterday, on the twentieth day, I escaped from the wine-dark sea, but all that time the waves continually carried me, and the violent winds drove me from the island of Ogygia. And now some god has cast me up on this shore so that here too, I think, some evil may befall me, for I do not believe that trouble will cease; before that the gods will still bring many things to pass. But, queen, have pity on me, for after many sorrowful trials, I have come to you first of all, and of the other people who live in this city and land, I know no one. Show me the town, give me an old garment to wrap around me, if you brought any wrap for the linen when you came here. And may the gods grant you all your heart's desire; may they give you a husband and a home and a mind at one with his—a good gift, for there is nothing mightier and nobler than when man and wife are of one heart and mind in a house, a grief to their enemies, and great joy to their friends, but their own hearts know it best.”

Then Nausikaa of the white arms answered him and said, “Stranger, you do not seem to be an evil or foolish man. It is Olympian Zeus himself who gives fortune to men, to the good and to the evil, to each one as he wishes, and your lot is no doubt from him, and so you must in any case endure it. But now, since you have come to our city and our land, you will not go without garments or anything else that is due to an unfortunate suppliant when he has met those who can befriend him. And I will show you the town and tell you the name of the people. The Phaiakians hold this city and land, and I am the daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös, on whom all the might and force of the Phaiakians depend.”

So she spoke and called to her lovely-haired maidens, “Stop, my maidens, why do you flee at the sight of a man?³ Surely you do not think he is an enemy. That mortal does not breathe and never will be born who will bring war to the land of the Phaiakians, for they are

3 This paragraph makes it clear that the other maidens had not fled out of shocked modesty but because they were afraid he was a pirate or brigand—not an unreasonable fear in that age.

very dear to the gods. We live far away in the wash of the waves, the furthestmost of men, and no other mortals have contact with us. No, this man is some helpless one who has come here in his wanderings, whom we must treat kindly, for all strangers and beggars are from Zeus, and even a small gift is precious. So, my maidens, give the stranger food and drink and bathe him in the river, where there is also shelter from the winds.”

So she spoke, but they had stopped and called to each other, and they brought Odysseus to a sheltered place and made him sit down, as Nausikaa, daughter of high-hearted Alkinoös, had commanded them. Beside him they laid a mantle and a tunic for clothing and gave him soft olive oil in the golden jar and urged him to bathe in the stream of the river. But great Odysseus spoke among the maidens, saying, “I beg you to stand a little away while I wash the salt from my shoulders and anoint myself with olive oil, for oil is long a stranger to my skin. But I will not bathe in your sight, for I am ashamed to become naked in the company of lovely-haired maidens.”

Then they went away and told it all to their lady. But with the river water great Odysseus washed from his skin the salt that covered his back and broad shoulders, and from his head he wiped the crusted brine of the barren sea. And when he had washed his whole body and anointed himself with olive oil and had clothed himself in the garment that the unwedded maiden gave him, then Athene, the daughter of Zeus, made him greater and more mighty in appearance and from his head caused deep, curling locks to flow like the hyacinth flower. And just as when some skillful man overlays gold upon silver—one that Hephaistos and Pallas Athene have taught all kinds of craft, and his work is full of grace—in the same way, Athene shed grace on his head and shoulders.

Then Odysseus went to the shore of the sea and sat down, glowing in beauty and grace, and the princess marveled at him and spoke among her lovely-haired maidens, saying, “Listen, my white-armed maidens, to something I have to say. This man has not come among the godlike Phaiakians without the will of all the gods who hold Olympos. Before, he seemed to me unpleasant, but now he is like the

gods that hold the wide sky. If only such a man might be called my husband, living here, and that it might please him to stay here! But come, my maidens, give the stranger food and drink.”

So she spoke, and they listened readily and obeyed, and set beside Odysseus food and drink, and steadfast, great Odysseus ate and drank eagerly, for it was long since he had tasted food.

Nausikaa Brings Odysseus to the City

Now Nausikaa of the white arms had another thought. She folded the garments and stored them in the great wagon, and she yoked the strong-hooved mules and climbed into the chariot. Then she called to Odysseus and spoke and addressed him, “Come up now, stranger, and prepare yourself to go to the city, so that I may take you to the house of my wise father, where, I promise you, you will gain knowledge from all the noblest of the Phaiakians. But do as I tell you—you seem to be a discreet man. As long as we are passing the fields and farms of men, travel quickly with the maidens behind the mules and the chariot, and I will lead the way. But when we set foot within the city—there is a high wall with towers and a fair harbor on either side of the town with a narrow entrance, and curved ships are drawn up on either hand of the breakwater, because all the people have berths for their vessels, every man has his own. And the place of assembly is there near the great temple of Poseidon, furnished with heavy stones, embedded deep in the earth. There men look after the gear of the black ships, hawsers and sails, and there they shape down the oars. For the Phaiakians do not care about bows or quivers, but masts and oars of ships and gallant vessels, in which they cross the grey sea with joy. I would like to avoid their malicious speech, lest later someone rebukes me, and there are too many insolent folk among the people. And some one of the cruder sort might meet me and say, ‘Who is this that goes around with Nausikaa, this tall and handsome stranger? Where did she find him? He will be her

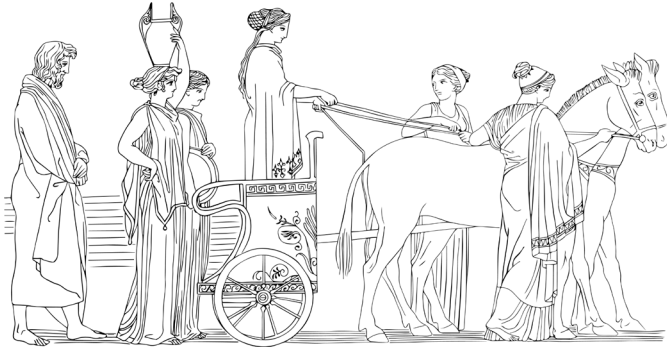
husband, her very own. Either she has taken in some shipwrecked wanderer from among strange men—for no men dwell near us—or some god has come in answer to her urgent prayer; he has come from heaven and will have her as his wife always. It would be better if she had gone abroad and found a lord from a strange land, since she despises the Phaiakians here in this country, the many noble men who are her suitors.’ This is how they will talk, and this would be a reproach to me. I myself would blame another young woman who did such things regardless of her friends, her father and mother being still alive, and was consorting with men before the actual day of marriage. But, stranger, listen well to what I say, so that as soon as possible you may gain from my father an escort and safe return home. You will find a lovely grove of Athene, a poplar grove near the road, and a brimming spring there and a meadow lying all around. That is my father’s domain and his fruitful garden, within the sound of a man’s shout from the city. Sit down there and wait until I have had time to enter the city and reach the house of my father. Then when you think we have gotten to the palace, go into the city of the Phaiakians, and ask for the house of my father, high-hearted Alkinoös. It is well known, and a young child could be your guide, for the houses of the other Phaiakians are not built anything like it, so great is the palace of the hero Alkinoös. When you are within the shadow of the halls and the court, pass quickly through the great chamber till you come to my mother, who sits at the hearth in the light of the fire, weaving yarn of sea-purple dye, wonderful to behold. Her chair is leaned against a pillar, and her maidens sit behind her. And there my father’s throne leans close to hers, in which he sits and drinks his wine, in appearance like a god. Pass by him and throw your arms around my mother’s knees, so that you may quickly and joyfully see the day of your homecoming, even if you are from a very far country. If her heart is kindly disposed toward you, then is there hope that you will see your friends and come to your well-built house and to your own country.”

She spoke and struck the mules with the shining whip, and quickly they left behind them the streams of the river. They trotted well and paced smoothly, and she took care to drive them in such a

manner that the maidens and Odysseus could follow on foot, and skillfully she applied the lash. Then the sun set, and they came to the famous grove, the sacred place of Athene; there great Odysseus sat down. Immediately he prayed to the daughter of mighty Zeus, “Hear me, child of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, unwearied maiden; hear me now, since before you did not hear me when I was overwhelmed on the sea, when the famous Earth-Shaker struck me. Grant me to come to the Phaiakians as one honored and worthy of pity.”

So he spoke in prayer, and Pallas Athene heard him, but she did not yet appear to him face to face, for she considered her father’s brother, who furiously raged against godlike Odysseus until he should come to his own country.

Book VII: Odysseus Comes to the Phaiakians



Odysseus Following the Car of Nausikaa

Odysseus Enters the City

So he prayed there, steadfast, great Odysseus, while the two strong mules carried the princess to the town. When she had come to the famous palace of her father, she halted at the gateway, and her brothers gathered around her, men like the immortals, and they unhitched the mules from the chariot and carried the garments inside. But the girl went to her chamber, and an elderly dame from Apeire kindled the fire for her—Eurymedousa, the attendant of the chamber, whom the curved ships once had brought from Apeire, and men chose her as a prize for Alkinoös, since he ruled over all the Phaiakians, and the people listened to him as to a god. She waited on white-armed Nausikaa in the palace halls; she kindled the fire and prepared the supper in the inner chamber.

At that same hour Odysseus roused himself to go to the city, and Athene shed a deep mist about Odysseus because she favored him, lest any of the arrogant Phaiakians should meet him and mock him with sharp speech and ask him who he was. But when he was about to enter the pleasant city, then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, met him, in the likeness of a young maiden carrying a pitcher, and

she stood opposite him, and great Odysseus inquired of her, “My child, could you not lead me to the palace of the lord Alkinoös, who rules among this people? I have come here, a travel-worn stranger from far off, from a distant land; therefore, I do not know any of the people who possess this city and country.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him, saying, “Yes surely, father and stranger, I will show you the house that you ask me about, for it lies near the palace of my own noble father; be silent as you go, and I will lead the way. And do not look at anyone, nor question them. For these men do not easily put up with strangers, nor do they treat well those who come from a strange land. They trust in the speed of their swift ships, with which they cross the great deep, for the Earth-Shaker has given them this power. Their ships are swift as the flight of a bird, or as a thought.”

With that, Pallas Athene led the way swiftly, and he followed close in the footsteps of the goddess. And it happened that the Phaiakians, famous mariners, did not notice him as he went through the city in their midst, for the lovely-haired Athene did not permit it—that awesome goddess, who put a marvelous mist around him, because of the favor she had for him in her heart. And Odysseus wondered at the harbors and the gallant ships and the assembly places of the heroes and the long high walls crowned with palisades, a marvel to behold. But when they had come to the famous palace of the king, the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke first and said, “Here, father and stranger, is the house that you wished me to show to you; you will find kings at the feast, the beloved of Zeus; enter then and have no fear in your heart, for the courageous man is the best in every adventure, even though he comes from a strange land. You will find the queen first in the halls; Arete is the name by which men call her, and she came from those that fathered king Alkinoös. First, Nausithoös was son of Poseidon, the Earth-Shaker, and of Periboia, the loveliest of women, youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedon, who once was king among the haughty Giants. Nevertheless, he destroyed his foolish people and was himself destroyed, but Poseidon lay with Periboia and fathered a son, proud Nausithoös, who

at one time was prince among the Phaiakians, and Nausithoös begat Rhexenor and Alkinoös. While Rhexenor still had no son, Apollo of the silver bow struck him, a groom newly-wed, leaving in his halls only one child, Arete, and Alkinoös took her as his wife and honored her as no other woman in the world is honored of all women that now keep house under the hand of their lords. So she has always been revered profoundly by her dear children and her lord Alkinoös and all the people, who look on her as a goddess and greet her with reverent speech when she goes through the town. She too has no lack of understanding. To whomever she shows favor, if they are men, she ends their feuds, and for the women she favors, she ends the feuds of their lords too. If her heart is kindly disposed toward you, then is there good hope that you may see your friends and come to your high-roofed home and your own country.”

The Magical Garden

With that, grey-eyed Athene departed over the rich ocean and left pleasant Scheria and came to Marathon and wide-wayed Athens and entered the great house of Erechtheus. Meanwhile, Odysseus went to the famous palace of Alkinoös, and his heart was full of many thoughts as he stood there before he ever reached the threshold of bronze. For there was a gleam as if from the sun or moon through the high-roofed hall of great-hearted Alkinoös. The walls which ran this way and that from the threshold to the inmost chamber were of bronze, and around them was a frieze¹ of blue, and the doors that closed in the great house were golden. The door-posts that were set on the bronze threshold were silver, as was the lintel on it, and the hook of the door was of gold. And on either side stood gold and silver hounds, which Hephaistos had wrought by his cunning, to guard the palace of great-hearted Alkinoös, being deathless and ageless for-

1 A long decorative band, engraved or painted, running along the top of a wall near the ceiling or roof.

ever. And inside were seats arranged against the wall on this side and that, from the threshold right to the inmost chamber, and on them were spread finely-woven, light coverings, the handiwork of skilled women. There the Phaiakian chieftains were accustomed to sit, eating and drinking, for they had unlimited supplies. And there were youths fashioned in gold, standing on firmly-set bases, with flaming torches in their hands, giving light throughout the night to the feasters in the palace. And there were fifty handmaids in the house, and some grind the yellow grain on the millstone, and others weave webs and turn the yarn as they sit, as restless as the leaves of the tall poplar tree, and the soft olive oil drops off that linen, it is so closely woven. For just as the Phaiakian men are skilled beyond all others in driving a swift ship upon the deep, even so are the women the most skillful at the loom, for Athene has given them remarkable wisdom in all lovely handicrafts and cunning wit.

And outside the courtyard, close by the door, is a great four-acre garden, and a hedge runs around it on every side. And there tall trees blossom—pear trees and pomegranates and apple trees with bright fruit and sweet figs and olives in their bloom. The fruit of these trees never perishes or fails, winter or summer, enduring throughout the year. The blowing of the West Wind always brings some fruits to birth and ripens others. Pears grow old as new ones appear, and apples too, and cluster ripens upon cluster of grapes, and fig upon fig. There too he has a fruitful vineyard planted, of which one part is being dried by the heat, a sunny plot on level ground, while men gather other grapes, and yet others they are treading in the wine-press. In the foremost row are unripe grapes throwing off their blossoms, and others are growing dark to harvest. There too, skirting the outer edge, are all kinds of garden beds, planted neatly, that are perpetually fresh, and in them are two fountains of water, one of which spreads his streams all around the garden, and the other runs beneath the threshold of the courtyard and wells up by the lofty house, and from there the townspeople draw water. These were the splendid gifts of the gods in the palace of Alkinoös.

Odysseus is Welcomed by Arete and Alkinoös

There steadfast, great Odysseus stood and gazed. But when he had gazed at everything in wonder, he passed quickly over the threshold into the house. And he found the captains and the counselors of the Phaiakians pouring wine to the keen-sighted god, the slayer of Argus, for they poured the last cup to him when they desired to rest. Now steadfast, great Odysseus went through the hall, covered in a thick mist which Athene put around him, till he came to Arete and king Alkinoös. Odysseus threw his arms around the knees of Arete, and then the wondrous mist melted away from him, and a silence fell on all who were in the hall at the sight of him, and they marveled as they looked at him.

Then Odysseus began his petition: “Arete, daughter of god-like Rhexenor, after many trials I have come to your husband and to your knees and to these guests, and may the gods grant them all a happy life, and may each one leave to his children after him his wealth in his halls and whatever reward of honor the people have rendered to him. But I pray you, hasten my departure, that I may come quickly to my own country, for I suffer sorrows far from my friends for too long already.”

With that he sat down by the hearth in the ashes at the fire, and a dead silence fell on everyone. At last the old lord Echeneos spoke among them, an elder of the Phaiakians, excellent in speech and skilled in much wisdom of old time. With good intention he addressed them and spoke, “Alkinoös, this is not seemly or fitting, that the stranger should sit on the ground in the ashes by the hearth, while these men hold back, waiting your word. Bid the stranger rise and set him on a chair inlaid with silver and command the attendants to mix the wine, so that we may pour it out before Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder and who cares for honored suppliants. And let the housekeeper give supper to the stranger out of whatever supplies are in the palace.”

When mighty king Alkinoös heard these words, he took Odysseus, the wise and crafty, by the hand and raised him from the hearth and set him on a shining chair, from which he commanded his son to

give place, valiant Laodamas, who sat next to him and was his dearest. And a maidservant carried water for his hands in a great, golden pitcher and poured it out over a silver basin to wash and put next to him a polished table. And a grave maidservant carried wheat bread and set it beside him and laid on the table many delicacies, giving freely of whatever she had near her. And steadfast, great Odysseus ate and drank. Then mighty Alkinoös spoke to the servant, “Pontonoös, mix the bowl and serve out the wine to all in the hall, so that we may pour it out before Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, who cares for honored suppliants.”

So he spoke, and Pontonoös mixed the honey-sweet wine and served it out to all, when he had poured some for an offering into each cup in turn. But when they had poured out the offering and had drunk to their heart’s content, Alkinoös addressed them and spoke, “Hear me, you captains and counselors of the Phaiakians, for I will speak as my spirit urges me. Now that the feast is over, go home and lie down to rest, and in the morning we will call still more elders together and entertain the stranger in the halls and make the proper sacrifices to the gods, and after that we will consider a convoy, that so without pain or grief this stranger may by our help reach his own country speedily and with joy, even though he may be from very far away. So he will suffer no harm on the voyage, before he sets foot on his own land, but after that he shall endure whatever things Fate and the stern spinning women² pulled off the spindles for him at his birth when his mother bore him. But if he is some deathless god who has come down from the sky, then the gods are imagining some new plot against us. For always before this, the gods appeared clearly among us, whenever we offered glorious great sacrifices, and they feasted by our side, sitting at the same table; yes, and even if a wanderer going all alone meets with them, they use no disguise, since we are near of kin to them, just as the Kyklopes and the wild tribes of the Giants are.”

2 In Greek mythology generally, the Fates are three female deities who spin the thread of life, measure out its length, and cut it off. Their ancestry and relation to other deities, however, varies from author to author.

Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Alkinoös, put that thought far from you! I bear no likeness either in form or fashion to the deathless gods, who keep the wide sky, but to men that die. Whoever of mankind you know who has the heaviest burden of sorrow, to them I might compare myself in my griefs. Yes, and I might tell of still other sorrows, the long tale of toil that I have endured by the will of the gods. But as for me, allow me to eat now, afflicted as I am, for there is nothing more shameless than an exceeding hungry belly, which forces a man against his will to pay attention to it, even though he is worn out and sorrowful in spirit, even as I have sorrow of heart; yet always it commands me to eat and drink, makes me completely forget all my sufferings, and makes me take my fill. But stir yourself up at the break of day, so that you may set me, unfortunate as I am, upon my own country’s soil, though after much suffering. Ah, and may life leave me when I have caught sight of my own possessions, my servants, and my dwelling that is great and high!”

So he spoke, and they all agreed and commanded that the stranger be sent on his way, for he had spoken rightly. Now when they had poured out the wine and had drunk to their hearts’ content, each one went to his own house to lie down to rest. But great Odysseus was left behind in the hall, and Arete and godlike Alkinoös sat by him, and the maids cleared away the furniture of the feast, and white-armed Arete first spoke among them. For she knew the mantle and the doublet, when she saw the noble garment that she herself had made with the women who were her handmaids. So she lifted her voice and spoke winged words to him, “Sir, I am bold to ask you this first. Who are you of the sons of men, and from where do you come? Who gave you these garments? Did you not say that you came here wandering over the deep?”

Odysseus Narrates His Shipwreck

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her and said, “It is hard, O queen, to tell my sorrows from end to end, for the gods of heaven have given me many griefs. But I will declare this to you, about which you ask. There is an island, Ogygia, that lies far off in the sea; there the daughter of Atlas lives, crafty Kalypso of the braided tresses, a fearful goddess, and no one either of gods or mortals has contact with her. Nevertheless, some god brought me to her hearth all alone, wretched man that I am, for Zeus with his white bolt crushed my swift ship and smashed it in the middle of the wine-dark deep. There all the rest of my good companions were lost, but I clung with a tight embrace to the keel of the curved ship, and so was I carried for nine whole days.

“And on the tenth dark night the gods brought me near the island of Ogygia, where Kalypso of the braided tresses lives, a fearful goddess. She took me in, and with all care she cherished me and gave me food and said that she would make me to never know death or age for all my days, but she never won my heart within me. There I remained continually for seven years and watered with my tears the imperishable garment that Kalypso gave me. But when the eighth year came around in its course, then at last she urged and commanded me to be gone because of a message from Zeus, or it may be that her own mind had changed. So she sent me off on a well-bound craft and gave me plenty of bread and sweet wine, and she clothed me in imperishable garments and sent out a warm and gentle wind to blow. For seventeen days I sailed, crossing the deep, and on the eighteenth day the shadowy hills of your land showed in sight, and my heart was glad—wretched as I was—for I was certainly still to be the companion of much sorrow. For Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, roused up the winds against me and hindered my way and made a huge sea to swell, nor did the wave allow me to be carried on my craft, as I groaned ceaselessly. The storm winds shattered the raft, but as for me I forced my way through the sea, till the wind and the water carried me near your coast.

“Then as I struggled to land upon the shore, the wave would have overwhelmed me, dashing me against the great rocks and a desolate place, but I gave way and swam back, till I came to the river where the place seemed best in mine eyes, with smooth rocks, and also there was a shelter from the wind. And as I came out I sank down, collecting myself, and immortal night came on. Then I went up and away from the sky-fed river and laid myself to sleep in the bushes and covered myself with leaves, and the god shed deep sleep over me. There among the leaves I slept, heart-sore, all night long, till the morning and midday. And the sun sank when sweet sleep finally let go of me. And I became aware of the companions of your daughter playing on the sand, and she was there in the midst of them like the goddesses. I made supplication to her, and she showed no lack of a good understanding, behaving in a manner that you could never hope for in happening upon one so young, for the younger folk always lack wisdom. She gave me bread and red wine and let me wash in the river and gave me these garments. In all this, though in great distress, I have told you all the truth.”

And Alkinoös answered again and spoke, saying, “Sir, surely my daughter did not think rightly, because she did not bring you to our house with her handmaidens, even though you first appealed to her mercy.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered and said to him, “My lord, I beg you not to rebuke this blameless girl. For indeed she urged me to follow her with her companions, but I refused out of fear and shame, lest perhaps your heart might be clouded at the sight, for we, the nations of men, are a jealous race upon the earth.”

And Alkinoös answered yet again, and spoke, saying, “Sir, my heart within me is not of such a temper as to have been angry without a cause; restraint in all things is best. Oh, by Father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, if only so great a man as you are, and like-minded with me, would marry my daughter and be called my son, living here, I would give you house and wealth, if you would stay of your own free will, but none of the Phaiakians will keep you against your will; may this never be pleasing in the eyes of Father Zeus!

“And now I decree an escort for you on a certain day—tomorrow—so that you may be confident. Then you will lie down overcome by sleep, and they in the meantime will lash the calm waters, until you come to your country and house and whatever place is dear to you, even if it is much farther than Euboia,³ which some of our men say is the farthest of lands, those who saw it when they carried Rhadamanthys⁴ of the fair hair to visit Tityos, son of Gaia. They went there and completed the journey on the same day and came home again and were not weary. And now you will know for yourself how far my ships are the best and how my young men excel at tossing the salt-water with the oar-blade.”

So he spoke, and steadfast, great Odysseus rejoiced, and then he uttered a word in prayer and called aloud to Zeus: “Father Zeus, grant that Alkinoös may fulfill all that he has said, and may his fame never be quenched upon the earth, the grain-giver, and may I come to my own land!”

So they spoke to one another. And white-armed Arete commanded her handmaids to set out bedsteads beneath the gallery and throw lovely, purple blankets over them and bedspreads on top and on them to lay thick mantles to be a covering over it all. So they went from the hall with torches in hand. But when they had busied themselves and spread the good bedstead, they stood by Odysseus and called to him, saying, “Come now, stranger, and get to sleep; your bed is made.”

So they spoke, and it seemed to him that rest was wonderfully good. So he slept there, steadfast, great Odysseus, on the jointed bedstead, beneath the echoing gallery. But Alkinoös lay down in the innermost chamber of the high house, and by him the lady his wife shared his bed.

3 The large island off the east coast of Greece. This is an odd marker of distance for the Phaiakians, as they surely would have known the story of Troy, which is much farther away.

4 Son of Zeus and Europa, who with his brother Minos became one of the judges in the Underworld because of their righteousness.

Book VIII: Odysseus is Hosted by the Phaiakians



Odysseus Weeps at the Song of Demodocus

Alkinoös Arranges a Convoy for Odysseus

When early Dawn the rosy-fingered shone out, then mighty king Alkinoös got up from his bed, and Odysseus, seed of Zeus, sacker of cities, also rose. And mighty king Alkinoös led the way to the assembly place of the Phaiakians, which they had established close by the ships. So when they had come there and sat down on the polished stones near each other, Pallas Athene went on her way through the town in the likeness of the herald of wise Alkinoös, plotting a return for great-hearted Odysseus. Then, standing by each man, she spoke, saying, “Go to the assembly now, you captains and counselors of the Phaiakians, so that you might learn about the stranger who has recently come to the palace of wise Alkinoös in his wanderings over the deep, and his appearance is like the immortal gods.”

With this she aroused the spirit and desire of each one, and the meeting-places and seats were quickly filled with men that came to the gathering. Many marveled at the sight of the wise son of Laertes, for the grace Athene poured upon his head and shoulders was glorious, and she made him greater and more mighty to behold, so that

he might win love and reverence and honor among all the Phaiakians and that he might accomplish many feats in which the Phaiakians tested Odysseus.

Now when they had gathered and come together, Alkinoös addressed and spoke among them: “Listen, you captains and counselors of the Phaiakians, and I will say what my spirit within me urges me to utter. This stranger—I do not know who he is—has come to my house in his wandering, whether from the men of the dawning or of the west, and he asks for a convoy and begs that it be assured to him. So let us, as in times past, hurry to provide the convoy. For never, no never, does any man who comes to my house in sorrow stay here long without help on his way. Let us drag a black ship down to the lovely salt sea for her first voyage and let them choose fifty-two noble, young men from throughout the town who have been proven to be the best. And when you have made fast the oars upon the benches, let all come ashore and come to our house and begin feasting, and I will provide well for everyone. To the noble youths I give this commandment, but you others, sceptred kings, come to my fair dwelling so that we may entertain the stranger in the halls, and let no one give an excuse. Furthermore, bring here the divine singer, Demodokos, for the god has given song to him as to no other one, to make men glad in whatever way his spirit stirs him to sing.”

He spoke and led the way, and the sceptred kings accompanied him while the attendants went for the divine singer. And fifty-two chosen youths departed at his command to the shore of the rich sea. But after they had gone down to the ship and to the sea, they drew the ship down to the deep water and placed the mast and sails in the black ship and fixed the oars in leather loops, all in orderly fashion, and spread out the white sails. And they moored her high out in the shore water, and after that they went on their way to the great palace of wise Alkinoös. Now the galleries and the courts and the rooms were thronged with men that came to the gathering, for there were many, young and old. Then Alkinoös sacrificed twelve sheep among them and eight boars with flashing tusks and two oxen with trailing feet. They flayed these and prepared and set out a great feast.

Then the attendant drew near, leading with him the beloved singer whom the Muse loved dearly, and she gave him both good and evil; she took away his sight but granted him sweet song. Then Pontoönōs, the attendant, set for him a chair inlaid with silver in the middle of the guests, setting it against a tall pillar, and he hung the loud lyre on a pin, close above his head, and showed him how to reach it with his hands. And next to him he placed a basket and a lovely table and a goblet of wine by his side to drink whenever his spirit urged him. Then they all reached out their hands to the good things spread before them. But after they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, the Muse stirred the singer to sing the songs of famous men, especially that one which had spread everywhere, even to heaven, namely, the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, son of Peleus, how once they had contended in fierce words at a rich festival of the gods, but Agamemnon, king of men, was glad in his heart when the noblest of the Achaians fell into dispute. For Phoibos Apollo had told him in his prophesying that it must be this way, when he crossed the threshold of stone in Pytho,¹ to seek the oracle. For in those days the first wave of sorrow was rolling on Trojans and Danaans through the counsel of great Zeus.

This was the song that the famous singer sang, but Odysseus took his great, purple cloak with his stout hands and pulled it over his head and hid his handsome face, for he was ashamed to shed tears in the presence of the Phaiakians. And often, as the divine singer paused in his song, Odysseus would wipe away the tears and take the cloak from off his head and take the two-handled goblet and pour out wine to the gods. But whenever he began again, and the leaders of the Phaiakians stirred him up to sing again in their delight at the song, Odysseus would cover up his head again and moan. Now none of the people noticed him weeping, but Alkinoös alone noticed and was aware of it as he sat near him and heard him groaning heavily. And soon he spoke among the Phaiakians, masters of the oar, “Listen, you captains and counselors of the Phaiakians, now

1 The ancient name of Delphi. A great serpent, the python, had guarded the site where Apollo wanted to build his sanctuary, so he killed it and the oracle of Apollo was established there.

our souls have been satisfied with the good feast and with the lyre, which accompanies the rich banquet. Let us go out and have contests in various games, so that the stranger may tell his friends, when he returns home, how much we excel all men in boxing and wrestling and leaping and speed of foot.”

Odysseus Excels in Contests

He spoke and led the way, and they went with him. And the attendants hung the loud lyre on the pin and took the hand of Demodokos and let him out from the hall and guided him on the same path by which those others, the chiefs of the Phaiakians, had gone to watch the games. So they went on their way to the place of assembly, and with them a great and uncountable company and many noble youths stood up to compete. There Akronteos stood up and Okyalos and Elatreus and Nauteus and Prymneus and Anchialos and Eretmeus and Penteus and Proreus; Thoön and Anabesineos and Amphialos, son of Polyneus, son of Tekton, and also Euryalos, the son of Naubolos and the equal of murderous Ares, who in face and form was handsomest of all the Phaiakians next to noble Laodamas. And the three sons of noble Alkinoös—Laodamas, Halios, and god-like Klytoneos—all stood up. These all first competed in the foot race. From the very start, they strained at their utmost speed, and all together they flew forward swiftly, raising the dust along the plain. And noble Klytoneos was far the swiftest of them all in running, and by the length of a furrow that mules cleave in a fallow field, so far did he shoot to the front and came back to the crowd, while those others were left behind. Then they tested themselves in strong wrestling, and here in his turn Euryalos excelled all the rest. And in leaping Amphialos was by far the best, and Elatreus in weight-throwing, and in boxing Laodamas, the good son of Alkinoös.

When they had all taken pleasure in the games, Laodamas, son of Alkinoös, spoke among them, “My friends, let us ask the stranger

whether he is skilled or practiced in any sport. He is not badly built in his thighs and sinewy legs and hands and his strong neck and mighty strength, and he doesn't lack a young man's vigor, but he is crushed by many troubles. For I tell you there is nothing else worse than the sea to weaken a man, no matter how sturdy he may be."

And Euryalos in turn answered and said, "Laodamas, truly you have spoken well. Go now yourself and challenge him and repeat your words."

Now when the good son of Alkinoös heard this, he went and stood in the midst and spoke to Odysseus: "Father and stranger, you too try your skill in the sports, if you are skilled in any, and you are likely to have some knowledge of games, for there is no greater glory for a man while he lives than that which he achieves by hand and foot. Come then, attempt it, and throw off care from your soul; your journey will not be long delayed, and your ship is being dragged down to the sea even as we speak, and your companions are ready."

Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, "Laodamas, why do you mock me, requiring this of me? Sorrow is much closer to my heart than sports, for I have endured much and struggled terribly, and now I sit in your gathering, longing for my return and making my petition to the king and all the people."

And Euryalos answered and rebuked him to his face, "Truly, stranger, I do not think you are at all like someone who is skilled in games, of which there are many among men; rather, you are the kind that comes and goes in a benched ship, a master of merchant sailors, with a memory for his freight, or who is in charge of a cargo for home and of greedily gotten gains; you do not seem to be a man who uses his hands."

Then Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at him and said, "Stranger, you have not spoken well. You are a presumptuous man. It is certainly true that the gods do not give every gracious gift to all, neither shapeliness nor wisdom nor skilled speech. For one man is feebler than another in presence, yet the god crowns his words with beauty, and men look at him and rejoice, and his speech runs surely on its way with a sweet modesty, and he shines forth

among the gathering of his people, and as he passes through the town men gaze on him as a god. Another man is like the immortal gods for beauty, but his words have no crown of grace about them; even as you excel in looks nor could a god himself make you more handsome, but in wit you are a weakling. You have stirred the spirit in my breast by speaking badly this way. I am not all unskilled in sports, as you have said, but I think I was among the foremost when I still trusted in my youth and my hand, but now I am in the grip of misery and sorrow, for I have suffered much in passing through the wars of men and the terrible waves of the sea. Still, for all my affliction, I will try the games, for your word has cut to the quick, and you have roused me with your saying.”

He spoke, and though he was clothed in his mantle he leaped to his feet and picked up a weight larger than the rest, a huge weight far heavier than those which the Phaiakians were using in the throwing contest. With one whirl he shot it from his stout hand, and the stone flew hurtling, and the Phaiakians of the long oars, those famous mariners, crouched to earth beneath the rushing of the stone. It flew beyond all the marks, so lightly it sped from his hand, and Athene in appearance as a man marked the place and spoke and addressed him, “Even a blind man, stranger, could identify that token if he groped for it, for it is not lost among the throng of the others, but is by far the first. For this round then take heart; not one of the Phaiakians will equal or surpass it.”

So she spoke, and steadfast, great Odysseus rejoiced and was glad because he saw a true friend in the lists. Then with a lighter heart he spoke among the Phaiakians, “Now match this throw, young men, if you can, and soon, I think, I will throw another after it, as far or even farther. And whoever of the rest of you is stirred up in his heart and spirit to do it, let him come here and compete with me, in boxing or in wrestling or even in the foot race, I do not care which, for you have greatly angered me; let any of the Phaiakians come except Laodamas, for he is my host. Who would compete with one that has treated him kindly? Witless and worthless is the man who challenges his host who welcomes him in a strange land; he only harms himself. But as for

the rest of you, I will refuse none and slight none, but I would like to know and test them face to face. For I am no weakling in all sports, in the feats of men. I know well how to handle the polished bow, and I would always be the first to shoot and strike my man in the attack of the enemy, even though many of my companions stood by and were aiming at the enemy. Only Philoktetes in the Trojan land surpassed me with the bow in our Achaean archery. But I consider myself far more excellent than everyone else of the mortals that are now upon the earth and live by bread. With the men of ancient times I would not contend, not with Herakles nor with Eurytos of Oichalia, who even contended with the immortal gods for the prize of archery. For this reason the great Eurytos perished all too soon, nor did old age come on him in his halls, for Apollo slew him in his anger, since he challenged him to a shooting match. And with the spear I can throw further than any other man can shoot an arrow. Only I think that in the foot race some of the Phaiakians may outrun me, for I have been shamefully broken in many waters, since there was no supply of food on board, and, therefore, my knees are weakened.”

So he spoke, and everyone kept quiet, but only Alkinoös answered him, saying, “Stranger, since your words are not badly taken in our gathering, but you willingly show the valor which accompanies you, being angry at that man who stood by you in the competition and taunted you, in such a way as no mortal who knew sound words would speak lightly of your excellence, now mark my words, so you will have something to tell another hero, when you dine with your wife and children in your halls and recall our prowess, what deeds Zeus bestows upon us from our fathers’ days even until now. For we are not perfect boxers nor wrestlers but speedy runners and the best of seamen, and the feast is always dear to us, and the harp and the dance and changes of fine clothing and the warm bath and love and sleep. Now rise up, you Phaiakian dancers, the best in the land, and dance your best, so that the stranger may tell his friends, when he returns home, how far we surpass all other men in seamanship and speed of foot and in the dance and song. And let someone go quickly and fetch for Demodokos the loud lyre which is lying somewhere in our halls.”

Demodokos Sings About Ares and Aphrodite

So spoke godlike Alkinoös, and the attendant rose to carry the hollow lyre from the king's palace. Then nine chosen men stood up, the judges of the people, who were accustomed to arrange all things in the celebrations rightly. So they leveled the dancing floor and made a ring, smooth and wide. And the attendant came close, carrying the lyre to Demodokos, who went into the middle, and boys in the freshness of youth, skilled in dancing, stood around him, and they pounded the smooth floor with their feet. And Odysseus gazed at the flashing of their feet and marveled in his spirit.

Now as the singer touched the lyre, he lifted up his voice in sweet song, and he sang of the love of Ares and Aphrodite with the lovely garland, how they lay together in the house of Hephaistos secretly, and Ares gave her many gifts and dishonored the marriage bed of the lord Hephaistos.² And soon Helios came to him to report it, for he had seen them lying together in love. When Hephaistos heard the bitter news, he went to the forge, plotting revenge in the depth of his heart, and set the great anvil on its block and forged chains that no one could break or loosen, so that the lovers might be trapped immovably. Now when he had forged the crafty net in his anger against Ares, he went to the chamber where his marriage bed was placed and placed his snares all around the posts of the bed, and many were also hung high up from the main beam, subtle as spiders' webs, so that no one could see them, even the blessed gods, so cunningly were they forged. Now after he had done winding the snares around the bed, he pretended to go to Lemnos, that well-founded citadel, and this was by far the most beloved of all lands in his sight.³ But Ares of the

2 The scholars assert that this is probably a traditional story, not Homer's own invention, because he has Hephaistos married to Charis in Book 18 of the *Iliad*. Furthermore, although most mythology reference books will mention Hephaistos and Aphrodite being married, this is probably only because Homer tells this story; oddly enough, there are almost no mentions of this marriage apart from him, so it's difficult to ascertain the source of this story and this marriage.

3 Lemnos was Hephaistos' home and perhaps the island where he landed when he was thrown from Mt. Olympos by his mother Hera.

golden rein did not keep a blind watch, when he saw Hephaistos, the famed craftsman, go far away, so he went to the house of famous Hephaistos, eager for the love of garlanded Kytherea.⁴ Now she had just come from her father, the mighty son of Kronos,⁵ and had just sat down. Ares entered the house and clasped her hand and spoke and addressed her, “Come, my beloved, let us go to bed and take our pleasure of love, for Hephaistos is no longer among his own people; I think he has already gone to Lemnos, to the Sintians, men of savage speech.”

So he spoke, and it seemed delightful to her to lie with him. So they went to the bed and lay down together, and the cunning bonds of skilled Hephaistos clung around them so that they could not move or raise a limb. Then at last they realized that there was no way to escape. Now the famous god of the strong arms came close to them, for he had turned back before he reached the land of Lemnos, because Helios had kept watch and told him everything. So heavy at heart he went to his house and stood at the entrance of the gate, and wild rage took hold of him, and he shouted furiously to all the gods, “Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, come here to see an amusing and cruel thing, for Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, always dishonors me because of my lameness and sets her heart on Ares the destroyer, because he is handsome with straight limbs, but I was born feeble. However, there is no one to blame but my father and mother—if only they had never begotten me! But now you will see where these two have gone into my bed and sleep together in love, and I am disturbed at the sight. Still, I think, they will not care to lie like this even for a little while longer, despite their great love. Soon will they have no desire to sleep together, but the snare and the bonds shall hold them, until her father gives back to me all

4 A name for Aphrodite that comes from another legend saying she was born on Kythera, an island between Krete and the Peloponnesus.

5 Zeus is son of Kronos. Kronos was said, in ancient Greek religion and in Homer, to be the son of Uranos (sky) and Gaia (earth), though Plato says he was son of Okeanos (ocean) and Tethys (daughter of Uranos and Gaia and mother of ocean and river gods). Kronos overthrew his father Uranos, and he was in turn overthrown by Zeus.

of the courting gifts which I gave him for the hand of his shameless daughter; his daughter is beautiful, but without discretion.”

So he spoke, and the gods gathered together to the house with the bronze floor. Poseidon came, the Encircler of the Earth; Hermes came, the bringer of luck; and prince Apollo came, the Archer. But all of the lady goddesses stayed in their houses for shame. So the gods, the givers of good things, stood in the porch, and unquenchable laughter arose among the blessed gods as they saw the trick of cunning Hephaistos. And each would speak in this way to his neighbor, “Bad deeds don’t succeed; the slow catches the swift! Look how Hephaistos, as slow as he is, has captured Ares, though he is the swiftest of the gods that hold Olympos; by his craft he has caught him in spite of his lameness. Therefore, Ares surely owes the penalty of the adulterer.” So they spoke to each other. But Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke to Hermes, “Hermes, son of Zeus, messenger and giver of good things, would you be eager to lie with golden Aphrodite on her bed if you were ensnared by such strong bonds?”

Then the Messenger, the slayer of Argus, answered him, “I wish that this could be, Apollo, my prince of archery! Even if three times as many countless bonds wrapped me, and all you gods and goddesses were watching, I would still lie with golden Aphrodite.”

So he spoke, and laughter rose among the immortal gods. However, Poseidon did not laugh but strongly urged Hephaistos, the famous craftsman, to loosen the bonds of Ares, and he spoke out winged words to him, “Free him, I beg you, and I promise, as you ask, that he will himself pay all proper penalties in the presence of the immortal gods.”

Then the famous god of the strong arms answered him, “Do not require me to do this, Poseidon, Encircler of the Earth. Evil folk’s pledges are evil to hold. How could I keep you accountable if Ares were to leave, avoiding the debt and the bonds?”

Then Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, answered him, “Hephaistos, even if Ares avoids the debt and flees, I myself will pay you all that is due.”

Then the famous god of the strong arms answered him, “It would not be right or proper for me to refuse you.”

With that mighty Hephaistos loosened the bonds, and the two, when they were freed from them, jumped up immediately and fled; Ares went to Thrace, but laughter-loving Aphrodite went to Paphos of Cyprus, where her own region and fragrant altar are. There the Graces bathed and anointed her with imperishable oil, the kind that is a comfort to the immortal gods. And they clothed her in lovely garments, marvelous to see.

This was the song the famous bard sang, and Odysseus listened and was glad at heart, and so did the Phaiakians of the long oars, those famous mariners.

Then Alkinoös urged Halios and Laodamas to dance, for no one ever equaled them. When they had taken in their hands the great ball of purple hue that skilled Polybos had crafted for them, one would bend backwards and throw it towards the shadowy clouds, and the other would leap up from the earth and catch it lightly in turn, before his feet touched the ground. Now after they had tested themselves, throwing the ball straight up, the two began to dance upon the rich earth, tossing the ball from hand to hand, and the other youths stood by and beat time, and a great noise filled the air.

Then great Odysseus spoke to Alkinoös, “My lord Alkinoös, most remarkable among all the people, you boasted that your dancers were the best in the world, and your words are fulfilled; I wonder as I watch them.”

So he spoke, and mighty king Alkinoös rejoiced and spoke at once among the Phaiakians, masters of the oar, “Listen, you captains and counselors of the Phaiakians, this stranger seems to me a very wise man. Let us give him the gift due a stranger as is right. There are twelve glorious princes who rule among this people and hold power, and I am the thirteenth. Now each man among you bring a fresh robe and a coat and a talent of fine gold, and let us swiftly bring all these gifts together, so that the stranger may take them in his hands and go to supper with a glad heart. As for Euryalos, let him make amends to

the man himself, with gracious speech and with a gift, for his words were harsh.”

So he spake, and they all agreed and assented to his proposal. And each one sent out his attendant to fetch his gift, and Euryalos answered the king and spoke, saying, “My lord Alkinoös, most remarkable among all the people, I will make atonement to your guest according to your word. I will give him a bronze sword, with a silver hilt on it, and a sheath of fresh-cut ivory, and may it be a precious thing to him.”

With that he put into his hands the sword decorated with silver and, lifting his voice, spoke winged words to him, “Greetings, stranger and father. If anything ill has been spoken, may the storm-winds soon snatch and carry it away. But may the gods grant you to see your wife and to come to your own country, for you have endured suffering far too long away from your friends.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “You too, my friend, I greet you, and may the gods grant you happiness, and may you never miss this sword which you have given me, you who with such gracious speech have made amends to me.”

He spoke and hung the silver-studded sword over his shoulders. And the sun sank, and the noble gifts were brought to him. Then the proud attendants carried them to the palace of Alkinoös, and the sons of noble Alkinoös took the lovely gifts and set them by their revered mother. And mighty King Alkinoös led the way, and they went in and sat down on the high seats. And mighty Alkinoös spoke to Arete, “Bring here to me, my lady, a fine chest, the best you have, and put into it a fresh robe and a tunic, and heat for our guest a cauldron over the fire, and warm water, so that after the bath the stranger may see all the gifts well-arranged, which the noble Phaiakians have brought here, and that he may rejoice in the feast and in hearing the song of the bard. I will also give him a beautiful golden chalice of my own, so that he may remember me all his life when he pours the drink offering to Zeus and to the other gods.”

So he spoke, and Arete bade her handmaids to set a great cauldron on the fire as quickly as possible. And they set the cauldron

for the bath on the blazing fire and poured water into it and took wood and lit it beneath the cauldron. So the fire began to curl around the belly of the cauldron, and the water grew hot. Meanwhile, Arete brought out for her guest the beautiful chest from the treasure chamber and put lovely gifts into it, garments and gold, which the Phaiakians gave him. And with her own hands she placed into it a robe and great coat and, lifting her voice, spoke winged words to him, “Take care now to swiftly tie the knot on the lid, so that no man robs you of your goods on the way when you fall asleep traveling in your black ship.”

When steadfast, great Odysseus heard these words, immediately he attached the lid and swiftly tied the curious knot which the lady Kirke had once taught him. Then immediately the housekeeper urged him to go to the bath and bathe himself, and he saw the warm water and was glad, for he was not used to being so well cared for, from the day that he left the house of lovely-haired Kalypso, though all that time he had been cared for like a god.

Now after the maids had bathed him and anointed him with olive oil and had put a lovely robe and tunic on him, he stepped out of the bath and went to be with the princes as they drank their wine. And Nausikaa, made beautiful by the gods, stood by the pillar of the well-built roof and marveled at Odysseus, watching him, and she lifted her voice and spoke winged words to him, “Farewell, stranger. When you are in your own country think of me sometimes, for I am the first to whom you owe your life.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Nausikaa, daughter of great-hearted Alkinoös, yes, may Zeus, the Thunderer, the Lord of Hera, grant me to reach my home and see the day of my returning; even there I would honor you as a god all my days, for you, lady, gave me my life.”

Domodokos Sings of the Trojan War

He spoke and sat in the high seat by king Alkinoös. And now they served the portions and mixed the wine. Then the attendants came close, leading the sweet singer Demodokos, who was held in honor by the people. He set him in the middle of the feasters and helped him lean against a tall column. Then Odysseus of many counsels spoke to the attendant, for he had cut off a portion of the backstrap of a white-toothed boar, on which much more was left, with rich fat on either side, “Attendant, take this meat and hand it to Demodokos, so that he may eat, and I will bid him good health, in spite of my sorrow. For singers out of all men on earth receive their due of honor and reverence, for the Muse teaches them the paths of song and loves the tribe of bards.”

So he spoke, and the attendant took the meat and set it upon the knees of the lord Demodokos, and he took it and was glad at heart. Then they reached out their hands to the good things set before them. Now after they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, then Odysseus of many counsels spoke to Demodokos, saying, “Demodokos, I praise you far above all mortal men, whether it be the Muse, the daughter of Zeus, that taught you, or even Apollo, for you chant the deeds of the Achaians very well, everything that they did and suffered and all their trials, as if, it seems to me, you yourself had been there or heard the tale from one who had. But now, change your tune and sing of the making of the wooden horse, which Epeius made with Athene’s aid, the deceptive thing that great Odysseus led up to the city, when he had filled it with the men who sacked Ilios. If you will sing this to me well, I will be your witness among all men, how the god in his grace has given to you the gift of wondrous song.”

So he spoke, and the singer, moved by the god, began and showed his gift of singing. He picked up the tale where it tells how some of the Argives set fire to their shelters and went aboard their decked ships and sailed away, while the others, the companions of renowned Odysseus, were now seated in the assembly ground of

the Trojans, hidden inside the horse, for the Trojans themselves had dragged it to the city. So the horse stood there, while seated all around him the people spoke many things in confusion, and there were three different counsels offered: either to destroy the hollow timber with the pitiless spear or to drag it to the brow of the hill and hurl it from the rock or to leave it as a mighty offering to appease the gods. And this last was chosen. For their doom was upon them to perish, when their city had taken in the great, wooden horse in which sat all the bravest of the Argives, bringing death and destiny to the Trojans. And he sang how the sons of the Achaians poured out of the horse and left the hollow hiding place and sacked the citadel. And he sang how and where each man sacked the town and of Odysseus, how he went like Ares to the house of Deïphobos with godlike Menelaos. It was there, he said, that Odysseus engaged in the most terrible battle and in the end prevailed, by the help of great-hearted Athene.

This was the song that the famous singer sang. But the heart of Odysseus melted, and the tears wet his cheeks beneath his eyelids. And as a woman throws herself wailing onto her dear lord, who has fallen in front of his city and the people, defending his town and his children from the day without pity, and she sees him dying and drawing labored breaths and, embracing his body, wails aloud, while the enemy behind strike her with spears on her back and shoulders and lead her into slavery to suffer labor and trouble, and with the most pitiful grief her cheeks are streaked; in the same way, the tears fell pitifully beneath the brows of Odysseus.

Now none of the people noticed him weeping, but Alkinoös alone noticed and was aware of it, as he sat near him and heard him groaning heavily. And soon he spoke among the Phaiakians, masters of the oar, “Listen, you captains and counselors of the Phaiakians; now let Demodokos withhold his hand from the loud lyre, for this song of his is not pleasing to everyone. From the time that we began to eat and the divine singer was moved to sing, ever since then this stranger has not ceased to mourn; terrible grief, I think, has gripped his heart. No, let the singer cease, that all of us may rejoice, hosts and guest alike, since it is far better that way. For all these things are ready

for the sake of the honorable stranger—the convoy and the loving gifts which we give him out of our love.

“The stranger and the suppliant are like a brother to him whose mind is even a little bit open, so do not conceal craftily what I ask you about; it is better for you to speak it out. Tell us, what is the name they call you at home, your father and mother, and your townsmen and people near you? For no one of all mankind is without a name, neither the commoner or the noble, from the first hour of his birth, but parents give a name to every man as soon as he is born. Tell me too of your country, your town, and your city, that our ships may know the right way to take you there. The Phaiakians have no pilots nor any rudders like other ships do, but their vessels themselves understand the thoughts and intents of men; they know the cities and rich fields of every people, and most swiftly they travel over the gulf of the salt sea, covered in mist and cloud, and they never go in fear of wreck or destruction. However, I heard once this word spoken by my father Nausithoös, who used to say that Poseidon was jealous of us, because we give safe escort to all men. He said that the god would some day strike a well-crafted ship of the Phaiakians as she came home from a convoy over the misty deep and would cover our city with a great mountain. So that ancient one would speak, and so the god may bring it about or leave it undone, according to his pleasure.

“But now, plainly tell me all this: where were you carried in your wandering, and to what shores of men did you come? Tell me of the people and of their beautiful cities, of those who are harsh and wild and unjust, and also of those who are hospitable and of a god-fearing mind. Say, too, why you weep and mourn in your spirit at the tale of the deeds of the Argive Danaans and the song of Ilios. All this the gods have ordained and have woven the fabric of death for men, that there might be a song in the ears even of the people of later times. Did you have a kinsman by marriage that fell at Ilios, a true man, a daughter’s husband or wife’s father, such as are nearest us after those of our own family and blood? Or else, perhaps, some loving friend, a good and true man, for a friend with an understanding heart is no less than a brother.”

Book IX: The Kikones, Lotus-Eaters, and Kyklops



Odysseus Giving Wine to Polyphemus

Odysseus' Story—The Kikones

Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “King Alkinoös, most remarkable of all the people, indeed it is a good thing to hear a singer such as this one, with a voice like the gods. As for me, I say that there is no more gracious or perfect delight than when all the people make merry, and the men sit in order at the feast in the halls and listen to the bard, and the tables by them are loaded with bread and meat, and a wine-bearer drawing the wine serves it around and pours it into the cups. This seems to me nearly the loveliest thing in the world. But now your heart is inclined to ask of my terrible woes, that I may mourn with even greater sorrow. What shall I tell of first, and what last? For the gods of heaven have given me sorrows in plenty. Now, first, I will tell you my name, that you too may know it, and that I, when I have escaped the day without pity, may be in turn your host, though my home is in a far country.

“I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, whom all men know for my craftiness, and my fame reaches to heaven. I live in shining Ithaka, in which there is a mountain, Neritos, with trembling forest leaves,

standing clearly in view, and many islands lying around, very near to one another, Doulichion and Same and wooded Zakynthos.¹ Now Ithaka lies low, furthest up the sea-line toward the darkness, but those others face the dawning and the sun: a rugged island, but a good home for noble youths, and for myself I can see nothing sweeter than a man's own country. Indeed, Kalypso, the lovely goddess, was eager to keep me with her in her hollow caves, longing to have me for her lord, and also cunning Kirke of Aiaia would have kept me in her halls, longing to have me for her lord. But they never prevailed on my heart within my breast. It is so certain that there is nothing sweeter than a man's own country and his parents, even though he lives far off in a rich home, in a strange land, away from those who begot him. But now let me tell you also of the troubles of my journeys, which Zeus laid on me as I came from Troy.

“The wind that carried me from Ilios brought me close to the Kikones,² to Ismaros, and I sacked their city and killed the people. And from out of the city we took their wives and much treasure and divided them among us, so that no one would lack a proper share because of me. After this, I commanded that we should flee swiftly, but my men in their great foolishness did not obey. There was much drinking of wine, and they kept slaughtering many flocks of sheep by the seashore and cattle with trailing feet and shambling gait. Meanwhile, the Kikones went and raised a cry to other Kikones, their neighbors dwelling inland, who were greater in number than they and also braver—they were skilled in fighting men from chariots and on foot if necessary. So they gathered in the early morning as thick as leaves and flowers that spring up in their season, and in that hour an evil doom from Zeus stood near us ill-fated men, so that we would be terribly oppressed. They arranged their battle line by the swift ships, and the armies threw their bronze-clad spears at one

1 The islands mentioned in the *Odyssey*—Ithaka, Doulichion, Same, and Zakynthos—are a group (including also Kephallonia) off the west coast of Greece, south of Corfu, and west of the western end of the Gulf of Corinth.

2 Why does Odysseus immediately attack these people? Because they had been allies of the Trojans during the War. They are mentioned in the list of Trojan allies in the Catalog of Ships in *Iliad* 2.846.

another. As long as it was morning and the sacred day grew stronger, we withstood their assault and kept them off, though they outnumbered us. But when the sun was moving to the time when oxen are unyoked, then at last the Kikones drove upon the Achaians and overcame them, and six of my strong-armored companions from each ship died, but the rest of us escaped death and destiny.

“From there we sailed onward, sick at heart yet glad to be saved from death, though we had lost our dear companions. My curved ships did not move onward until we had called three times on each of our unfortunate friends who died at the hands of the Kikones on the plain. Now Zeus, Gatherer of the Clouds, aroused the North Wind against our ships with a terrible tempest and covered both land and sea with clouds and sent night swiftly down from the sky. So our ships were driven headlong, and their sails were torn to shreds by the might of the wind. So we lowered the sails into the hold, in fear of death, but quickly rowed the ships toward land. There for two nights and two days we waited, eating out our hearts with weariness and sorrow. But when lovely-haired Dawn had at last brought the full light of the third day, we set up the masts and hoisted the white sails and sat down while the wind and the helmsman guided the ships. And now I would have come to my own country unharmed, but the wave and the current of the sea and the North Wind swept me off course as I was rounding Malea and drove me wandering past Kythera.³

Odysseus’ Story—The Lotus-Eaters

“From there for nine whole days I was driven by ruinous winds over the rich deep, but on the tenth day we set foot on the land of

3 Cape Malea is the southwestern tip of the Peloponnesus, dangerous because of the fierce winds and seas that sweep around the cape; Kythera is an island off its coast, between the mainland and Krete.

the Lotus-Eaters,⁴ who eat a flowery food. So we stepped ashore and drew water, and immediately my companions took their midday meal by the swift ships. When we had tasted food and drink, I sent out some of my company to go and search out what kind of men they were who lived there by bread upon the earth, and I chose out two of my companions and sent a third with them as herald. Then immediately they went and mingled with the men of the lotus-eaters, and it happened that the lotus-eaters did not devise death for our men, but gave them some of the lotus to eat. Now whoever of them ate the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus had no more desire to bring news or to come back, but he chose to stay there with the lotus-eating men, always eating the lotus and forgetting about his return home. So I led them back to the ships weeping and very much against their will and dragged them beneath the benches and tied them in the hollow holds. But I commanded the rest of my well-loved company to hurry and get on board the swift ships, lest perhaps any of them should eat the lotus and forget about returning. Immediately they came aboard and sat on the benches, and, sitting in order, they struck the grey sea-water with their oars.

Odysseus' Story—The *Kyklopes*

“From there we sailed onward, sick at heart. And we came to the land of the *Kyklôpes*, an arrogant and lawless people, who trust in the immortal gods and do not plant anything with their hands nor plough, but wheat, barley, and vines all spring up for them plentifully, unplanted and uncultivated, and bear great clusters of the juice of the grape, and the rain of Zeus makes them fruitful. These beings have neither assemblies for counsel nor lawmakers, but they live in hollow

4 Scholars don't like to identify either the land or the food of the Lotus-Eaters, referring both to the realm of the fantastic. But when pressed, those who like to find the geographical locations of the story will point to the coast of Africa, probably Libya or Tunisia.

caves on the crests of the high hills, and each one makes the law for his children and his wives, and they do not consider each other.

“There is a wide, deserted island outside the harbor of the land of the Kyklôpes, neither close by nor far off, a wooded island, where there are countless wild goats, for no activity of men scares them, nor do hunters go there, who live roughly as they range the mountain crests. Furthermore, there are no flocks or plowed lands there, but the soil lies forever unsown and untilled, empty of men, and it feeds the bleating goats. For the Kyklôpes have no ships with prows painted vermilion, nor are there ship-builders in the island who might construct decked vessels which could give them all they want, voyaging to the towns of men (as men often cross the sea to one another in ships) who might have made a great and prosperous settlement out of their island. It is by no means a poor land but produces everything in its season, for in it there are soft water meadows by the shores of the grey salt sea, and there the vines never decay, and the land is level for plowing; from it they might reap an exceedingly rich crop in due season, for indeed the soil is rich. Also there is a beautiful harbor, where no moorings are needed, either to cast anchor or to fasten ropes, but men may run the ship on the beach and linger until the time the sailors think of leaving and favorable breezes blow.

“Now at the head of the harbor is a well of bright water flowing from a cave, and around it poplars grow. We sailed there, and some god guided us through the night, for it was dark and there was no light to see, with a mist lying deep about the ships, nor did the moon show her light from heaven but was shut in with clouds. No man then could see that island, nor did we see the long waves rolling to the beach, till we had run our decked ships ashore. And when our ships were beached, we took down all their sails, and we stepped out onto the beach of the sea, and there we fell into sound sleep and waited for the bright Dawn.

“As soon as early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, in wonder at the island we roamed over the length of it, and the Nymphs, the daughters of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, scared up the wild goats of the hills so that my company might have something to eat. Soon we

took our curved bows and long spears from the ships, and, arranged in three groups, we began shooting at the goats, and the god soon gave us plenty of game. I had twelve ships with me, and to each ship nine goats fell for their portion, but for me alone they set apart ten.

“So we sat there all day long until the sun was going down, feasting on abundant meat and sweet wine. For the red wine from the ships was not yet used up, but there was some left, for we each had taken a large supply of it in jars when we captured the sacred citadel of the Kikones. And we looked across to the land of the Kyklôpes who live nearby, and to the smoke, and to the voice of the men and of the sheep and of the goats. And when the sun had sunk, and darkness had come on, then we lay down to rest on the sea-beach. And as soon as early, rosy-fingered Dawn shone out, then I called an assembly of my men and spoke among them all, ‘All of you remain here, my dear companions, but I will go with my own ship and my ship’s company and test these men to see what kind of people they are, whether arrogant and wild and unjust, or hospitable and of god-fearing mind.’

“So I spoke, and I climbed the ship’s side and commanded my companions also to mount and to loosen the ropes. So they quickly boarded and sat on the benches and, sitting in order, struck the grey sea-water with their oars. Now when we had come to the land that lies close by, we saw a cave on the edge near the sea, high and roofed over with laurels, and there many flocks of sheep and goats were accustomed to rest. And around it a high outer court was built with stones, deep set, and with tall pines and oaks with their high crown of leaves. And a man was accustomed to sleep inside it, a man of monstrous size, who shepherded his flocks alone and far and wide and did not mingle with the others but lived alone in the lawlessness of his mind. Yes, he was a monstrous thing and built strangely, nor was he like any other man that lives by bread but like a wooded peak of the towering hills, which stands out apart and alone from the others.

“Then I commanded the rest of my beloved companions to remain there by the ship and to guard it, but I chose twelve men, the best of my company, and set out. Now I had with me a goat-skin

of the dark, sweet wine which Maron, son of Euanthes, had given me, the priest of Apollo, the god that watched over Ismaros.⁵ And he gave it to me because we had reverently protected him with his wife and child, for he lived in a thick grove belonging to Phoibos Apollo. And he gave me splendid gifts; he gave me seven talents of gold well-crafted and a mixing bowl of pure silver and wine which he drew off in twelve jars in all, sweet, unmixed wine,⁶ a divine drink, and none of his servants or handmaids in the house knew about it, but only he himself and his dear wife and one old housekeeper. And as often as they drank that honey-sweet, red wine, he would fill one cup and pour it into twenty measures of water, and a wonderfully sweet smell would go up from the mixing bowl; then indeed it was no pleasure to hold back.

“I filled a great skin with this wine and carried it away with me, and I also put grain in a bag, for my noble spirit immediately had a foreboding that a man would come to me, a strange man with mighty strength, one who did not know judgment and justice.

“Soon we came to the cave, but we did not find him inside; he was shepherding his fat flocks in the pastures. So we went into the cave and gazed on all that was in it. The baskets were loaded with cheeses, and the folds were thronged with lambs and kids; each kind was penned by itself, the youngest kept separate, and the summer lambs apart from the youngest of the flock. All the vessels overflowed with whey—the milk-pails and the bowls, all the well-crafted vessels into which he milked. My companions then spoke up and begged me to take some of the cheeses and to return and afterwards to hurry and drive off the kids and lambs to the swift ships out of the pens and to sail over the salt sea-water. However, I did not listen—and it would have been far better—but waited to see the giant

5 The city of the Kikones that Odysseus and his men attacked immediately after leaving Troy (see the beginning of this book).

6 Throughout Homer's epics, wine is normally drunk mixed with water—see the next sentence. The usual ratio was something like two parts water to one part wine, but this Kikonian wine seems to have been stronger, so the amount of water was increased; though in the next sentence, a “cup” (*depos*) and a “measure” (*metron*) are not the same thing, a “cup” often being a “very large vessel,” so “one cup of wine to twenty measures of water” does not necessarily mean a 1:20 ratio.

himself and whether he would give me gifts as is due to a stranger. Yet his coming was not to be a joy to my companions.

“We kindled a fire and made burnt offerings and ate from the cheeses and sat, waiting for him to come back from shepherding his flocks. And he carried a huge quantity of dry wood for supper time. This log he cast down with a crash inside the cave, and we fled in fear to the hidden places in the rock. As for him, he drove his fat flocks into the wide cavern, all that he was accustomed to milk, but the males, both of the sheep and of the goats, he left outside in the wide yard. Then he lifted a huge and heavy stone and set it in the mouth of the cave, so big that twenty or more good four-wheeled wagons could not lift it from the ground, so mighty a sheer rock he set against the doorway. Then he sat down and milked the ewes and bleating goats, all in order, and beneath each ewe he placed her young. And after a while he curdled one half of the white milk and pressed it together and stored it in wicker-baskets, and the other half he let stand in pails, so that he might have it to drink at supper time. Now when he had done all his work busily, then he kindled a fresh fire, and then saw us and asked, ‘Strangers, who are you? From where do you sail over the wet ways? On some trading enterprise, or do you wander adventuring, like sea-robbers over the ocean, for at the risk of their own lives they wander, bringing evil to foreign men.’

“So he spoke, but as for us our hearts within us were shattered from terror of the deep voice and his monstrous shape; yet in spite of that I answered and spoke to him, saying, ‘We are Achaians, driven wandering from Troy by all kinds of winds over the great gulf of the sea. We travel seeking our homes, but we have come by another path, by other ways; they were, I think, the will and counsel of Zeus. And we declare ourselves to be the men of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, whose fame is mightiest under heaven, because he sacked so great a city and destroyed many people, but as for us we have landed here and come to your knees, if perhaps you will give us a guest gift or make any present, as is due to strangers. Indeed, lord, give honor to the gods, for we are your suppliants, and Zeus is the avenger of sup-

plants and wanderers, Zeus, the god of the stranger, who travels in the company of sacred strangers.’

“So I spoke, and soon he answered out of his pitiless heart, ‘You are out of your mind, my stranger, or you have come from very far, you who urge me either to fear or to shun the gods. For the Kyklôpes pay no attention to Zeus, Lord of the aegis, nor to the blessed gods, for indeed we are better men than they are. I would not, to avoid the anger of Zeus, spare either you or your company, unless my spirit urged me. But tell me where you kept your well-built ship when you came? Was it perhaps at the far end of the island or close by, so that I may know?’

“So he spoke, tempting me, but he did not trick me, for I knew too much, and I answered him back with deceptive words, ‘As for my ship, Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, broke it to pieces, for he threw it on the rocks at the border of your country and brought it near the headland, and a wind carried it there from the sea. But with my men here I escaped from utter destruction.’

“So I spoke, and out of his pitiless heart he did not answer me a word but leaped up and put his hands on my friends and, clutching two together, dashed them on the ground as though they were puppies, and the brains flowed out on the ground, and the earth was wet. Then he cut them up in pieces and prepared his supper. He ate like a mountain-bred lion and did not stop, devouring entrails and flesh and bones with their marrow. And we wept and raised our hands to Zeus, seeing the cruel deeds, and we were at our wits’ end. And after the Kyklops had filled his huge mouth with human flesh and the milk he drank afterward, he lay down inside the cave, stretched out among his sheep.⁷

“So I plotted in my great heart whether I should move close and draw my sharp sword from my thigh and stab him in the breast where the midriff holds the liver, feeling for the place with my hand.

7 Remember that this is not the first time the Kyklops killing and eating men shows up in the *Odyssey*; in the assembly called by Telemachos at the beginning of Book 2, Aegyptos says that “his dear son, the warrior Antiphos, had gone in the hollows ships to Ilios of the noble horses, but the savage Kyklops slew him in his hollow cave and made a meal of him.”

But my second thought stopped me, for we also would have perished there with complete destruction. For we could not have rolled away from the lofty door with our hands the heavy stone which he set there. So for the time being we moaned, waiting for the bright Dawn.

“When early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, again he kindled the fire and milked his great flocks in order and beneath each ewe set her lamb. Soon when he had done all his work busily, again he seized two more men and prepared his midday meal. And after the meal, he easily moved away the great door-stone and drove his fat flocks out from the cave, and afterwards he set it in its place again, as one might set the lid on a quiver. Then with a loud whoop, the Kyklops turned his fat flocks towards the hills, but I was left devising evil in the deep of my heart, if in any way I might take vengeance, and Athene grant me fame.

“And this was the plan that seemed best in my sight. Near a sheepfold lay a great club belonging to the Kyklops, a club of olive wood, yet green, which he had cut to carry with him when it was seasoned. When we saw it, we thought it was in size like the mast of a black ship of twenty oars, a wide merchant vessel that travels over the great sea gulf, so huge was the club in bulk and length. I stood near it and cut off from it a portion about a fathom⁸ long and set it near my companions and told them to shave it down, and they made it even while I stood near and sharpened it to a point, and immediately I took it and hardened it in the bright fire. Then I laid it away and hid it beneath the dung which was scattered in great heaps in the depths of the cave. And I urged my companions to cast lots among themselves, to see which of them should risk the attempt with me and lift the beam and twist it around in his eye when sweet sleep came on him. And the lot fell on those four whom I myself would have wanted to choose, and I appointed myself to be the fifth among them. In the evening he came shepherding his flocks of great fleece, and soon he drove each of his fat flocks into the cave and left none outside in the deep court-yard, whether through some forebod-

8 About six feet.

ing, or perhaps the god urged him to do it. Then he lifted the huge door-stone and set it in the mouth of the cave, and, sitting down, he milked the ewes and bleating goats, all in order, and beneath each ewe he placed her young. Now when he had done all his work busily, again he seized two more men and prepared his supper. Then I stood near the Kyklops and spoke to him, holding in my hands an ivy bowl of the dark wine, ‘Kyklops, drink some wine after your feast of man’s flesh, so that you may know what kind of drink our ship held. For I was bringing it to you as a drink offering, if perhaps you would take pity and send me on my way home, but your mad rage is beyond bearing. Hard of heart, how will another of the many men that there are ever come to you again, seeing that your deeds have been wicked?’

“So I spoke, and he took the cup and drank it down and found great delight in drinking the sweet drink and asked me for it a second time, ‘Give it to me again and tell me your name immediately, that I may give you a stranger’s gift in which you may be glad. For the earth, the grain-giver, bears for the Kyklôpes the mighty clusters of the juice of the grape, and the rain of Zeus makes them produce greatly, but this is a stream of nectar and ambrosia.’

The Trick of “Noman”

“So he spoke, and again I handed him the dark wine. Three times I poured and gave it to him, and three times in his folly he drank it to the bottom. Now when the wine had addled the wits of the Kyklops, then I spoke to him with soft words, ‘Kyklops, you ask me my renowned name, and I will declare it to you; grant me a stranger’s gift, as you promised. Noman is my name, and Noman they call me, my father and my mother and all my friends.’

“So I spoke, and immediately he answered me out of his pitiless heart, ‘Noman I will eat last and the others before him; that will be your gift.’

“With that he sank backwards and fell with his face turned upward, and there he lay with his great neck bent around, and sleep that conquers all men overcame him. And the wine and the fragments of men’s flesh dribbled out of his mouth, and he vomited, being heavy with wine. Then I thrust that stake into the deep coals, until it should grow hot, and I spoke to my companions comforting words so that none would hang back in fear. But when that bar of olive wood was just about to catch fire in the flame, green though it was, and began to glow terribly, then I came close and drew it from the coals, and my friends gathered around me, and some god breathed great courage into us. They seized the pole of olive wood that was sharpened at the point and thrust it into his eye, while I from my place above spun it around, as when a man bores a ship’s beam with a drill while his companions below spin it with a strap which they hold at either end, and the auger runs around constantly. In the same way, we seized the fiery-pointed log and whirled it around in his eye, and the blood flowed around the heated bar. And the breath of the flame singed his eyelids and brows all around as his eyeball burned away, and the roots of his eye crackled in the flame. And just as when a smith dips an axe or adze in cold water with a great hissing when he wants to temper it—for from this comes the strength of iron—in the same way, his eye hissed around the stake of olive wood. And he raised a great and terrible cry, so that the rock echoed all around, and we fled away in fear while he plucked out of his eye the log spattered with much blood. Then, maddened with pain, he threw it away from him with his hands and called with a loud voice to the *Kyklôpes* who lived around him in the caves along the windy heights. And they heard the cry and flocked together from every side, and, gathering around the cave, they asked him what ailed him, ‘What has so distressed you, Polyphemos, that you cry aloud like this through the immortal night and keep us from sleep? Surely no mortal is driving your flocks away against your will; surely no one is slaying you by force or trickery?’

“And strong Polyphemos spoke to them again from out of the cave, ‘My friends, Noman is slaying me by trickery, not by force.’

“And they answered and spoke winged words, ‘Then if no man is violently attacking you in your solitude, there is no way you can escape the sickness sent by mighty Zeus. Pray to your father, the Lord Poseidon.’

“In this way they spoke and departed, and my heart within me laughed to see how my name and cunning plan had tricked them. But the Kyklops, groaning and struggling in pain, groped with his hands and lifted away the stone from the door of the cave and sat in the entryway with arms outstretched to catch, if he could, anyone who might go out with his sheep; so witless he was, I think, in his hopes to find me. But I thought about how everything might be for the best if perhaps I might find a way of escape from death for my companions and myself, and I wove all kinds of plots and plans, as a man will do to save his life, seeing that great evil threatened. And this was the plan that seemed best in my sight. The rams of the flock were well-nurtured and had thick fleeces, great and beautiful, with wool dark as violet. Quietly I lashed them together with twisted willows, on which the Kyklops slept, that lawless monster. I bound three together; the middle one of the three would each carry a man, but the other two went on either side, saving my friends. So every three sheep carried a man. But as for me, I took hold of the back of a young ram who was by far the best and the greatest of all the flock, and curled beneath his shaggy belly I lay and so clung face upward, grasping the glorious fleece with a stout heart. So for the time, moaning, we waited for bright Dawn.

“As soon as early Dawn shone forth rosy-fingered, then the rams of the flock hurried out to pasture, but the un milked ewes bleated around the pens, for their udders were swollen to bursting. Then their lord, terribly stricken with pain, felt along the backs of all the sheep as they stood up in front of him and did not guess in his folly that my men were bound beneath the breasts of his thick-fleeced flocks. Last of all the sheep the ram came out, burdened with his wool and the weight of me and my cunning. And strong Polyphemos laid his hands on him and spoke to him, saying, ‘Dear ram, why are you the last of all the flocks to go out from the cave, you who never

before lagged behind the sheep but were always the first to pluck the tender blossoms of the pasture, going with long strides, and were still the first to come to the streams of the rivers and the first to desire to return to the homestead in the evening? But now you are the very last. Surely you are sorrowing for the eye of your lord, which an evil man and his accursed friends blinded, when he had subdued my wits with wine, this Noman, whom I say has not yet escaped destruction. Ah, if you could feel as I do and be gifted with speech to tell me where he hides from my anger, then he would be struck and his brains dashed against the floor here and there around the cave, and my heart would be lightened from the sorrows which Noman, worth nothing, has brought me!

“With that he sent the ram out from him, and when we had gone just a little way from the cave and from the yard, I untied myself from under the ram and then I set my friends free. And swiftly we drove those stiff-legged sheep, so rich in fat, and often we turned to look around, till we came to the ship. And we who had fled from death were a glad sight to our friends, but the others they would have bemoaned with tears; I did not allow it but with frowning brows forbade each man to weep. Rather I commanded them to put on board the many sheep with great fleeces and to sail over the salt sea-water. So they embarked immediately and sat on the benches and, sitting in order, struck the grey sea-water with their oars. But when I had not gone very far, just to where a man’s shout could still be heard, then I called to the Kyklops, taunting him, ‘Kyklops, it was not the company of a weakling that you planned to eat by your might in your hollow cave! Your evil deeds were sure to catch up to you, you cruel man, for you had no shame to eat your guests inside your own gates, and, therefore, Zeus and the other gods have repaid you.’

“So I spoke, and he was terribly angry in his heart, and he broke off the peak of a great hill and threw it at us, and it fell in front of the dark-prowed ship. And the sea heaved beneath the fall of the rock, and the backward flow of the wave carried the ship quickly back to the dry land with the wash from the deep sea and drove it onto the shore. Then I caught up a long pole in my hands and thrust the ship

from off the land and roused my company and with a motion of my head urged them to dash with their oars, so that we might escape our terrible danger. So they bent to their oars and rowed on. But when we had made twice the distance over the water, I was eager to speak to the Kyklops, but my companions restrained me on every side with soft words, saying, ‘You are foolhardy; why would you stir up a wild man to fury, who just now threw so huge an object towards the deep and brought our ship back to land, and we thought that we would perish there? If he had heard any of us utter a sound or speech he would have crushed our heads and our ship timbers with one throw of a rugged stone, so mightily he hurls.’

“So they spoke, but they did not prevail on my proud spirit, and I answered him again from an angry heart, ‘Kyklops, if any one of mortal men asks you about the ugly blinding of your eye, say that it was Odysseus who blinded it, the waster of cities, son of Laertes, whose dwelling is in Ithaka.’

“So I spoke, and with a moan he answered me, saying, ‘Now indeed the ancient prophecies have come upon me. A seer lived here, a noble and mighty man, Telemos, son of Eurymos, who surpassed all men in soothsaying, and he grew old as a prophet among the Kyklôpes. He told me that all these things would happen in the future, that I would lose my eyesight at the hand of Odysseus. But I always looked for some tall and great man to come here, in great might, but one that is a dwarf, a worthless and weak man, has blinded my eye after subduing me with wine. Come here, Odysseus, so that I may set for you the welcome due to a stranger and speed your departure from here, so that the Earth-Shaker may grant it to you, for I am his son, and he claims to be my father. And he himself will heal me, if it is his will, and no one else of the blessed gods or of mortal men.’

“In this way he spoke, but I answered him and said, ‘If only I were as sure that I would rob you of soul and life and send you to the house of Hades, as I am that not even the Earth-Shaker will heal your eye!’

“So I spoke, and then he prayed to the Lord Poseidon, stretching forth his hands to the starry sky, ‘Hear me, Poseidon, Encircler

of the Earth, god of the dark hair, if indeed I am your son, and you declare yourself to be my father—grant that Odysseus, waster of cities, the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaka, may never come to his home; yet if he is ordained to see his friends and come to his well-built house and his own country, may he come late in terrible condition, with the loss of all his companions, in the ship of strangers, and find sorrows in his house.’

“So he spoke in prayer, and the god of the dark hair heard him. And once again he lifted a stone, far greater than the first, and with one swing he hurled it, and he exerted massive strength and threw it just a little behind the dark-prowed ship and almost struck the end of the rudder. And the sea heaved beneath the fall of the rock, but the wave carried the ship forward and drove it to the further shore.

“When we had reached that island, where all our other decked ships remained together, and our companions were gathered sorrowing, never expecting us again, on our arrival we ran our ship ashore on the sand, and we ourselves stepped out onto the sea beach. Next we took out the sheep of the Kyklops from the hollow ship and divided them, so that no one through me might go lacking his proper share. But my strong-armored companions chose out the ram for me alone, in the dividing up of the sheep, and on the shore I offered him up to Zeus, the son of Kronos, who lives in the dark clouds and is lord of all, and I burned the slices of the thighs. But he paid no attention to the sacrifice but was plotting how my decked ships and my dear companions might be utterly destroyed. So we sat the whole day until the sinking of the sun, feasting on abundant meat and sweet wine. And when the sun had sunk and darkness had come on, then we lay down to rest on the beach.

“As soon as early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, I called to my companions and commanded them to climb the ship and loosen the ropes. So they quickly embarked and sat on the benches and, sitting in order, struck the grey sea-water with their oars. From there we sailed onward, sick at heart yet glad to have been saved from death, though we had lost our dear companions.”

Book X: The Bag of Winds, the Laistrygones, and Kirke



Odysseus at the Table of Kirke

Odysseus' Story—The Bag of Winds

Then we came to the island of Aiolia, where Aiolos lived, son of Hippotas, dear to the immortal gods, on a floating island, and all around it is a wall of unbroken bronze, and the cliff runs up sheer from the sea. His twelve children also live there in his halls, six daughters and six vigorous sons, and he gave his daughters to his sons as wives. And they always feast by their dear father and their kind mother, and countless delicacies lie ready at hand. And the house is full of the aroma of feasting, and the noise of it rings around in the courtyard by day, and in the night each one sleeps by his modest wife under coverlets and on jointed bedsteads. So we came to their city and their noble dwelling, and the king hosted me kindly for a whole month and asked about everything—Ilios and the ships of the Argives and the return of the Achaians. So I told him the whole story in proper order. When I in turn asked about my journey and urged him to send me on my way, he did not deny me but furnished an escort. He gave me a bag, made of the hide of a nine-year-old ox which had been flayed, and in it he bound up the blowings of all the noisy winds, for the son of Kronos had made him keeper of

the winds, either to still or to rouse whatever blasts he wished. And he tied it tightly in the hold of the ship with a shining silver cord, so that not the faintest breath might escape. Then he sent the blast of the West Wind to blow for me, to carry our ships and ourselves on our way, but he was never able to fulfill this, for we were undone through our own foolishness.

“For nine whole days we sailed continually by night and day, and on the tenth day my native land came in sight, and we came so close that we saw the people tending the beacon fires. Then sweet sleep came over me in my weariness, for the whole time I held the sheet and did not give it to any of my companions, so that we might come more quickly to our own country. Meanwhile, my companions talked among themselves and said that I was bringing home for myself gold and silver, gifts from high-hearted Aiolos, son of Hippotas. And each man spoke to his neighbor in this way: ‘Look how beloved he is and highly regarded among all men of whatever city and land he visits. Many are the great treasures he takes with him out of the spoil from Troy, while we who have done the same journeying with him return home bringing with us only empty hands. And now Aiolos has freely given him these things also out of his regard. Let us quickly see what they are, what wealth of gold and silver is in the bag.’

“So they spoke, and the evil counsel of my companions prevailed. They loosened the bag, and all the winds broke out. And the violent blast seized my men and carried them towards the high seas, weeping, away from their own country, but as for me, I awoke and pondered in my great heart, whether I should throw myself from the ship and die in the deep or bear up in silence and remain among the living. So I hardened my heart to endure, and, covering my head, I lay still in the ship. But the vessels were driven by the evil storm-wind back to the island of Aiolia, and my companions grieved.

“There we stepped ashore and drew water, and my companions took their midday meal by the swift ships. Now when we had eaten bread and wine, I took with me a herald and one of my companions and went to the famous dwelling of Aiolos, and I found him feasting with his wife and children. So we went in and sat by the pillars of

the door on the threshold, and they all marveled and asked us, ‘How have you come here, Odysseus? What evil god attacked you? We sent you on your way with great effort, so that you could get to your own country and your home and wherever you wished.’

“So they said, but I spoke among them with a heavy heart, ‘My evil companions have been my curse, and inexorable sleep also. My friends, set things right, for you have the power.’

“So I spoke, begging them in soft words, but they remained quiet. And the father answered, saying, ‘Leave the island immediately, you who are the most evil of living men. Far be it from me to help that man whom the blessed gods reject! Get out, for your coming here again shows you to be hated by the immortal gods.’

Odysseus’ Story—The Laistrygones

“With that he sent me from the house, and I moaned heavily. From there we sailed onward, sick at heart. And the spirit of the men was broken by the terrible rowing due to our foolishness, for there was no longer any sign of a following wind. So for the space of six days we continually sailed by night and day, and on the seventh we came to the steep stronghold of Lamos, Telepylos of the Laistrygones, where herdsmen greet each other as they drive in their flocks, and they answer each other. There a sleepless man might have earned a double wage, one as oxherd and the other shepherding flocks, so close are the endings of the night and of the day. When we had come to the lovely harbor, where one steep, unbroken cliff rims both sides, and jutting headlands opposite each other stretch out at the mouth of the harbor, and the entrance is narrow, all the others steered their curved ships into it. Now the vessels were packed against each other inside the hollow harbor, for no wave ever swelled within it, great or small, but there was a bright calm all around. But I alone moored my dark ship outside the harbor at the outermost point and tied the rope tightly to a rock. And I went up a craggy hill, to a lookout, and

stood on it; from there, there was no sign of men or oxen working, but we saw smoke curling upward from the land. Then I sent forth some of my companions to go and find out what kind of men they were who lived there upon the earth by bread, choosing out two of my companions and sending a third with them as herald. Now when they had gone ashore, they went along a level road which wagons used to bring down wood from the high hills to the town. And outside the town they met a girl drawing water, the noble daughter of Laistrygonian Antiphates. She had come down to the clear-flowing spring Artakie, for it was the practice to draw water from there for the town. So they stood by her and spoke to her and asked who was king of that land and who they were that he ruled over. Then at once she showed them the high-roofed hall of her father. When they had entered the renowned house, they found his wife inside; she was huge in size like a mountain peak and appeared loathsome to them. Immediately she called renowned Antiphates, her lord, from the assembly ground, and he contrived a pitiful destruction for my men. Immediately, he grabbed one of my company and prepared his midday meal, but the other two sprang up and fled to the ships. Then he raised the war-cry throughout the town, and at the sound the great Laistrygones flocked together from every side, an innumerable crowd, not like men but like the Giants. They threw huge rocks at us from the cliffs, each of them a man's weight, and soon there rose from the fleet a horrible din of men dying and ships shattered. And like people spearing fishes they carried home their hideous meal. While they were still slaughtering my friends inside the deep harbor, I drew my sharp sword from my thigh and with it cut the ropes of my dark-prowed ship. Quickly then I called to my companions, and commanded them to dash the water with the oars so that we might escape this terrible danger. And with one accord they thrashed the sea-water with their oar-blades, in dread of death, and to my delight my vessel flew to the high seas away from the jutting rocks, but those other ships were lost there, all of them.

Odysseus' Story—Kirke

“From there we sailed onward sick at heart, but glad to be saved from death, though we had lost our dear companions. And we came to the island of Aiaia, where Kirke of the braided hair lives, a dreadful goddess of mortal speech, sister to the wizard Aietes. Both were children of Helios, who gives light to all men, and their mother was Perse, daughter of Okeanos. There on the shore we put in with our ship to the sheltering harbor silently, and some god was our guide. Then we stepped ashore and for two days and two nights lay there, eating our hearts out from weariness and grief. But when the lovely-haired Dawn had brought the full light of the third day, then I seized my spear and my sharp sword, and, quickly leaving the ship, I went up to a place with a wide view to look for any sign of the work of men and to hear the sound of their speech. So I went up a craggy hill to a lookout place, and I saw the smoke rising from the earth in the halls of Kirke, through the thick groves and woodland. Then I debated in my mind and heart whether I should go and find out more because I had seen the smoke and flame. And as I thought about this, it seemed to me the better plan to go first to the swift ship and to the sea beach and give my companions their midday meal and then send them to search. But as I came close to the curved ship, some god took pity on me in my loneliness and sent a tall, antlered stag across my path. He was coming down from his pasture in the forests to the river to drink, for the strength of the sun was terrible on him. And as he came up from out of the stream, I struck him on the spine in the middle of the back, and the bronze shaft went clean through him, and with a moan he fell in the dust, and his life passed from him. Then I set my foot on him and pulled out the bronze shaft from the wound and laid it nearby on the ground and let it lie. Next I broke willow branches and twigs and wove me a rope a fathom¹ in length, twisted tightly from end to end, and bound together the feet of the huge beast and went to the black ship, carrying him across my neck

1 Six feet.

and leaning on a spear, for it was not possible to carry him on my shoulder with one hand, for he was a huge beast. And I threw him down in front of the ship and roused my company with soft words, standing by each man in turn, ‘Friends, in spite of all our sorrows we will not yet go down to the house of Hades, before the coming of the day of destiny; come, while there is food and drink in the swift ship, let us think about that and not die of hunger.’

“So I spoke, and they listened readily to my words. They uncovered their heads, and there on the shore of the rich sea they stared at the stag, for he was a huge beast. But after they had delighted their eyes with the sight of him, they washed their hands and prepared the glorious feast. So we sat all day long till the going down of the sun, feasting on abundant meat and sweet wine. But when the sun sank, and darkness had come on, then we lay down to rest on the sea beach. As soon as early Dawn shone forth rosy-fingered, I called an assembly of my men and spoke in the hearing of all of them, ‘Hear my words, my friends, in spite of your terrible situation. My friends, now we do not know where the place of darkness is or the Dawn, nor where the Sun, that gives light to men, goes under the earth or where he rises. Therefore, let us consider quickly if there is any good plan remaining; as for me, I can think of none. For I went up a craggy hill to a lookout place and saw the island surrounded with the endless sea, the island itself lying low, and in the middle of it I saw smoke through the thick groves and woods.’

“So I spoke, but their spirits in them were broken as they remembered the deeds of Antiphates the Laistrygonian, and all the evil violence of the arrogant Kyklops, the man-eater. And they wept aloud, shedding big tears, though this did them no good.

“Then I divided my strong-armored companions into two bands and appointed a leader for each, and I myself took command of one and godlike Eurylochos of the other. Then we shook the lots in a bronze helmet, and out leaped the lot of proud Eurylochos. So he went on his way, and with him went twenty-two of my friends all weeping, and we were left behind grieving. In the forest glades they found the halls of Kirke, built of polished stone in a place with a

wide view. And all around the palace mountain-bred wolves and lions roamed, whom she herself had bewitched with evil drugs that she gave them. Yet the beasts did not attack my men, but they rambled around them and fawned on them, wagging their long tails. And just as when dogs fawn around their lord when he comes from the feast, for he always brings them the fragments that soothe their mood, in the same way, the strong-clawed wolves and the lions fawned around them, but they were frightened when they saw the strange and terrible creatures. So they stood at the outer gate of the lovely-haired goddess, and inside they heard Kirke, singing in a sweet voice as she went to and fro in front of the great immortal web; such is the handiwork of goddesses, fine in its weaving and full of grace and beauty. Then Polites, a leader of men, the dearest to me and most trustworthy of all my company, spoke to them: ‘Friends, since there is someone inside who goes to and fro in front of a mighty web, singing a sweet song, so that the whole hall echoes, she is either a goddess or a woman; quickly, call out to her.’

“He spoke the word, and they called aloud to her. And immediately she came out and opened the shining doors and bid them come in, and they all went with her in their recklessness. But Eurylochos lingered behind, for he guessed that there was some treachery. She led them in and set them on chairs and high seats and made them a dish of cheese and barley-meal and yellow honey with Pramneian wine, but she mixed harmful drugs with the food to make them utterly forget their own country. When she had given them the cup, and they had drunk it down, she struck them with a wand and penned them in the sties of the pigs, for they had the head and voice, the bristles and the shape of pigs, but their mind remained as before. So they were penned there weeping, and Kirke tossed them acorns and other nuts and fruit of the cornel tree to eat, upon which wallowing pigs always fatten.

“Now Eurylochos came back to the swift black ship to bring news of his companions and of their terrible fate. He could not utter a word, much as he wanted to, he was so deeply wracked to the heart with grief, and his eyes were filled with tears, and his soul yearned

for lamentation. But when we all had pressed him with our questions in amazement, then he told the fate of the remnant of our company: ‘We went, as you commanded, through the woods, noble Odysseus; we found within the forest glades the lovely halls, built of polished stone, in a place with a wide view. And someone was there who went back and forth at a great web and sang a clear song, a goddess or a woman, and the men called out to her. Immediately she came out and opened the shining doors and urged them to come in, and they all went with her in their recklessness. But I lingered behind, for I guessed that there was some treachery. Then they disappeared, every one of them, nor did any of them appear again, though I sat for a long time watching.’

“So he spoke, upon which I threw around my shoulder my silver-studded sword, a great blade of bronze, and slung my bow around me and told him to lead me again the way that he had come. But he caught me with both hands, and by my knees he begged me, and wailing he spoke winged words to me, ‘Do not lead me there against my will, beloved of Zeus, but leave me here! For I know well that you yourself will never come back again, nor bring any one of our companions; no, let us flee swiftly with those who are left, for we might still escape the evil.’

“In this way he spoke, but I answered him, saying, ‘Eurylochos, you stay here in this place, eating and drinking by the black hollow ship, but I will go out, for a strong necessity is laid on me.’²

“With that I went up from the ship and the sea-shore. But as I went through the sacred woods, I drew near to the great hall of the enchantress Kirke, and then Hermes of the golden wand met me as I approached the house, in the likeness of a young man with the first down on his lip, the time when youth is most beautiful. So he

2 For a thought-provoking comparison of this phrase in later literature, consult Plato’s *Apology*, section 21e, and 1 Corinthians 9:16. The same word for necessity, *anagke*, is used in all three passages. Remember how fundamentally important Homer was in all later Greek culture, with which Plato and Paul were both intimately familiar, and how Plato was second only to Homer in importance in Paul’s time. Even if Plato is not directly quoting Homer, or Paul quoting both (though that is a strong possibility), the phrasing alone would cause both passages to spring to his literate audience’s mind, and give a depth of meaning to what he is saying that is lost if we don’t know our Homer and Plato.

clasped my hand and spoke and greeted me, ‘Oh unfortunate man, where are you going, all alone through the hills, you who do not know this country? And your companions yonder in the hall of Kirke are penned in the likeness of pigs, remaining deep in their sties. Have you come here in hope of freeing them? No, I think you yourself will never return but will remain there with the others. I will deliver you from your distress and give you aid. Take this powerful herb and go to the house of Kirke, so that it will keep the evil from you. And I will tell you all about the magic deceits of Kirke. She will mix for you a potion and throw drugs into it, but even then she will not be able to enchant you, for this charmed herb is that helpful, and I will tell you more. When Kirke strikes you with her long wand, then draw your sharp sword from your thigh and leap on her, as though eager to kill her. And she will shrink away and urge you to lie with her. Do not reject the bed of the goddess, so that she may deliver your companions and treat you hospitably. But command her to swear a mighty oath by the blessed gods, that she will plan no other evil to hurt you, lest she do evil to you, lest she make you weak and unmanned when she has you naked.’

“With that, the slayer of Argus gave me the plant that he had plucked from the ground, and he showed me how it grew. It was black at the root, but the flower was like milk. The gods call it ‘moly,’ but it is hard for mortal men to dig, but with the gods all things are possible.³

“Then Hermes departed toward high Olympos, up through the wooded island, but as for me I kept on my way to the house of Kirke, and my heart was darkly troubled as I went. So I stopped in the gate-

3 Here again, there is no reason to suppose that Matthew, in reporting Jesus’ words, is consciously quoting Homer, but all later readers of the gospel passage, until relatively recent times, would have been familiar with Homer and recognized the echo. This may seem trivial unless we remember that for most of late antiquity and all through the medieval period, these echoes and resonances powerfully informed the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures. See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: The Making of Monastic Culture* (Fordham University Press, 1982); also R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (Yale University Press, 1953). This is another instance of the vast gulf between modern culture and the Old Western Culture (C. S. Lewis’ coinage in his essay “De Descriptione Temporum”) of the whole period from ancient Greece until the “Enlightenment,” a gulf we do not even recognize.

way of the lovely-haired goddess; there I stood and called aloud, and the goddess heard my voice and soon came out and opened the shining doors and bid me come in, and I went with her heavy at heart. So she led me in and set me on a chair with studs of silver, a great carved seat, with a footstool for my feet. And she made me a potion in a golden cup for me to drink, and she also put a charm into it, in the evil counsel of her heart.

“Now when she had given it to me, and I had drunk it down but was not bewitched, she struck me with her wand and spoke and addressed me, ‘Be on your way now to the sty and lie there with the rest of your companions.’

“So she spoke, but I drew my sharp sword from my thigh and leaped at Kirke, as though eager to kill her. But with a great cry she slipped under my sword and clasped my knees and wailing she spoke winged words to me, ‘Who are you of the sons of men and from where? Where is your city? Where are they who begot you? I am amazed to see how you have drunk of this charm but were not at all subdued. No one else lives who can resist this charm, whoever has drunk of it and it has passed his lips. But I think you have a mind within you that may not be enchanted. Truly you are Odysseus, always prepared, whom he of the golden wand, the slayer of Argus, often told me was to come here, on his way from Troy with his swift black ship. Come, put your sword into the sheath, and let us go to my bed, that meeting in love and sleep we may trust each other.’

“So she spoke, but I answered her, saying, ‘No, Kirke, how can you urge me to be gentle with you, when you have turned my companions into swine inside your halls, and, holding me here with a treacherous heart, you ask me to go into your chamber and to your bed, that so you can weaken and unman me when you have me naked? No, I will not consent to go into your bed, unless you consent, goddess, to swear a mighty oath that you will plan no other evil to hurt me.’

“So I spoke, and she immediately swore an oath not to harm me, as I commanded her. Then when she had sworn that oath, at last I went up into the beautiful bed of Kirke.

“Now all this time her handmaids busied themselves in the halls, four maidens that are her serving women in the house. They are born of the wells and of the woods and of the holy rivers that flow into the salt sea. Of these one threw over the chairs great coverlets of purple on top and spread a linen cloth underneath. And another pulled silver tables up to the chairs and set on them golden baskets for them. And a third mixed honey-sweet wine in a silver bowl and set out cups of gold. And a fourth carried water and kindled a great fire beneath the mighty cauldron. The water grew warm, but when it boiled in the bright, bronze vessel, she set me in a bath and bathed me with water from a great cauldron, pouring it over my head and shoulders, when she had mixed it to a pleasant warmth, till from my limbs she took away the consuming weariness. Now after she had bathed me and anointed me well with olive oil and threw around me a lovely mantle and a tunic, she led me into the halls and set me on a chair with studs of silver, a great carved chair, and beneath was a footstool for my feet. And a handmaid carried water for my hands in a noble golden pitcher and poured it out over a silver basin to wash, and to my side she pulled up a polished table, and a grave housekeeper carried wheat bread and set it near me, and she placed on the table many delicacies, giving freely of what things she had near her. And she urged me to eat, but my soul found no pleasure in it. I sat with other thoughts, and my heart was full of foreboding.

“Now when Kirke saw that I sat this way, and that I did not put my hands to the food, and that I was suffering greatly, she came near me and spoke winged words to me, ‘Odysseus, why do you sit there like a speechless man, eating out your heart, and do not touch food or drink? Do you think there is further treachery? No, you have no cause to fear, for already I have sworn to you a strong oath not to harm you.’

“So she spoke, but I answered her, saying, ‘Oh, Kirke, what good man would have the heart to taste food and drink before he had saved his companions and seen them face to face? But if in good faith you urge me to eat and drink, then let them go free, so that my eyes may see my beloved companions.’

“So I spoke, and Kirke went out through the hall with the wand in her hand and opened the doors of the sty and brought them out in the shape of nine-year-old pigs. There they stood before her, and she went among them and anointed each one of them with another charm. And the bristles, with which the poison lady Kirke had covered them, dropped away from their limbs. And they became men again, younger than they were before and more handsome by far in appearance and taller. And they all knew me again and each one took my hands, and the lament that sank into their souls was wistful, and the roof echoed wondrously. And even the goddess herself was moved with compassion.

“Then standing near me, the lovely goddess spoke to me: ‘Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many plans, go now to your swift ship and the sea beaches. And first of all pull your ship ashore and stow the goods and gear in the caves. Then come back again and bring with you your beloved companions.’

“So she spoke, and my noble spirit agreed. So I went on my way to the swift ship and the sea beaches, and there I found my beloved companions on the swift ship, lamenting sorrowfully, shedding big tears. Just as when calves of the homestead gather around the herds of cattle that have returned to the yard when they have had their fill of pasture, and all together frisk around them, and the folds cannot contain them, but with a steady lowing they skip around their mothers, in the same way, they all swarmed around me, weeping when they saw me. To their spirits it was as though they had come to their own beloved country and the very city of rugged Ithaka where they were born and raised.

“Then lamenting loudly, they spoke winged words to me, ‘Beloved of Zeus, we were just as glad at your return as if we had come to Ithaka, our own country. Tell us of the destruction of our other companions.’

“So they spoke, but I answered them with gentle words, ‘Let us first of all pull the ship up onto the shore and stow our goods and gear in the caves. And get ready, all of you, to go with me, so that you may see your friends in the sacred dwelling of Kirke, eating and drinking, for they have an inexhaustible supply.’

“So I spoke, and they obeyed my words immediately, but Eurylochos alone would have stopped all my companions, and, lifting his voice, he spoke winged words to them, ‘Wretched men that we are! Where are we going? Why are your hearts so set on sorrow that you would go down to the hall of Kirke, who will certainly change us all into pigs or wolves or lions to guard her great house against our will, like the things that the Kyklops did when some of our companions went to his hidden house, and Odysseus went with them, always so bold, for through the blindness of his heart they too perished.’

“So he spoke, and I pondered in my heart whether to draw my long sword from my stout thigh and with it cut off his head and drop it in the dust, even though he was very near of kin to me, but the men of my company stopped me on all sides with soothing words, ‘Prince of the seed of Zeus, as for this man, we will let him stay here by the side, if you wish it, and guard the ship, but as for us, be our guide to the sacred house of Kirke.’

“So they spoke and came up from the ship and the sea. And Eurylochos was not left by the hollow ship, but he went with us, for he feared my terrible rebuke.

“Meanwhile, Kirke bathed the rest of my companions in her halls with the greatest care and anointed them well with olive oil and threw thick mantles and tunics around about them. And we found them all feasting nobly in the halls. And when they saw and recognized each other’s faces, they wept and mourned, and the house echoed all around. Then she stood near me, that lovely goddess and spoke, saying, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, do not stir up this great weeping any more; I myself know of all the sorrows you endured on the rich sea and the great wickedness done to you by cruel men on the land. No, come, eat food and drink wine, till your spirit returns to you again, as it was when you first left your own country of rugged Ithaka, for now you are wasted away and your hearts are low, always thinking about your sorrowful wanderings, and your hearts have not been merry, for your struggles have been terrible.’

“So she spoke, and our noble spirits agreed. So there we sat day after day for the full circle of a year,⁴ feasting on abundant meat and sweet wine. But when a year had gone, and the seasons returned as the months passed, and the long days came around in their course, then my dear companions called me and said, ‘It is high time now for you to think of our native land, if it is ordained that you will be saved and come to your high house and your own country.’

“So they spoke, and my noble spirit agreed. So we sat all day long till the going down of the sun, feasting on abundant meat and sweet wine. But when the sun sank and darkness came on, they lay down to rest throughout the shadowy halls.

“But when I had gone up to Kirke’s lovely bed, I begged her by her knees, and the goddess heard my words, and, lifting my voice, I spoke winged words to her: ‘Kirke, fulfill for me now the promise you made me to send me on my homeward way. My spirit is eager to be gone, and the spirit of all my companions who wear away my heart as they mourn around me, when you are not near us.’

Kirke Tells Odysseus He Must Visit Hades

“So I spoke, and the lovely goddess soon answered me, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many counsels, you must linger in my house against your will no longer, but first you must make another journey and reach the dwelling of Hades and of fearful Persephone to seek the spirit of Theban Teiresias, the blind prophet, whose wits remain steadfast within him. Persephone has granted to him judgment, even in death, so that he alone should have understanding, but the other souls sweep around like shadows.’

4 The idea in this paragraph is not that a full calendar year passed, but that the old year passed and a new year came on with the new sailing season. Until modern times, mariners avoided sailing during the winter because of the terrible storms. So Odysseus and his men were with Kirke from the end of the previous sailing season (fall) till the beginning of the new sailing season (the next spring).

“She spoke in this way, but as for me, my heart was broken, and I wept as I sat on the bed, and my soul cared no longer to live and see the sunlight. But when I had had enough of weeping and groveling, then at last I answered and spoke to her, saying, ‘And who, Kirke, will guide us on this journey? For no man ever yet sailed to Hades in a black ship.’

“So I spoke, and the lovely goddess answered me, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, do not trouble yourself for lack of a guide for your ship but set up the mast and spread the white sails and sit down, and the breeze of the North Wind will carry your vessel on her way. But when you have sailed in your ship across the river Okeanos⁵ where there is a deserted shore and the groves of Persephone—tall poplar trees and willows that shed their fruit before the season—beach your ship there by deep eddying Okeanos, but you go to the dark house of Hades. Near it Pyriphlegethon flows into Acheron and Kokytos, a branch of the water of the Styx,⁶ and there is a rock and the meeting place of the two roaring waters. So, hero, draw close to it, as I command you, and dig a trench about a cubit⁷ in length and width and around it pour a drink offering to all the dead, first with mead and then with sweet wine and for the third time with water and sprinkle white grain on it and petition with many prayers the strengthless heads of the dead and promise that, on your return to Ithaka, you will offer in your halls a barren heifer, the best you have, and will fill the pyre with treasure and will sacrifice separately, to Teiresias alone, a black ram without spot, the best in your flock. But when you have made your supplications to the noble races of the dead with prayers, then offer a ram and a black ewe, bending their heads towards Erebus, and you yourself turn your back, with your face set toward the shore of the river. Then many spirits of the departed dead will come to you. After that, call to your

5 The Greeks in Homer's day seem to have envisioned the world as a flat disk with the River Ocean encircling it (remember the description of the world on the Shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad*).

6 These are all rivers in Hades.

7 Roughly a foot and a half.

companions and command them to flay the sheep which lie slain by the pitiless sword and to burn them with fire and to make prayer to the gods, to mighty Hades and to dread Persephone. And you yourself draw the sharp sword from your thigh and sit there, not allowing the strengthless heads of the dead to come close to the blood before you have word of Teiresias. Then the seer will come to you quickly, O leader of the people; he will declare to you with certainty the way and the length of your journey and, regarding your return home, how you may go over the rich sea.’

“So she spoke, and soon golden-throned Dawn came. Then she put on me a mantle and a tunic for garments, and the nymph clothed herself in a great shining robe, lightly woven and lovely, and she put a lovely, golden belt around her waist and put a veil upon her head. But I went through the halls and roused my men with smooth words, standing by each one in turn: ‘Now sleep no more, but let us go on our way, for the lady Kirke has shown me everything.’

“So I spoke, and their noble souls agreed to it. Yet I could not lead my companions away safely even then. There was one, Elpenor, the youngest of us all, not very courageous in war nor steadfast in mind. He was lying apart from the rest of my men on the housetop of Kirke’s sacred dwelling, eager for the cool air, being heavy with wine. Now when he heard the noise of the voices and of the feet of my fellows as they moved to and fro, he leaped up suddenly and forgot to descend again by the tall ladder but fell right down from the roof, and his neck was broken from the bones of the spine, and his spirit went down to the house of Hades.

“Then I spoke among my men as they went on their way, saying, ‘You think now, I see, that you are going to your own beloved country, but Kirke has showed us another way, to the dwelling of Hades and of dreadful Persephone, to seek the spirit of Theban Teiresias.’

“So I spoke, but their hearts within them were broken, and they sat down right where they were and lamented and tore their hair. However, their weeping did no good.

“But as we were now making our way sorrowfully to the swift ship and the sea beach, shedding big tears, Kirke, meanwhile, had

gone her own way and tied a ram and a black ewe by the dark ship,
secretly passing us by; who can see a god against his will, going to
and fro?”

Book XI: Odysseus Visits Hades



Odysseus Terrified by the Ghosts

Odysseus' Story—Hades and Teiresias

Now when we had gone down to the ship and the sea, we dragged the ship to the lovely salt-water and placed the mast and sails in the black ship and took those sheep and put them into it, and we ourselves climbed aboard, sorrowing and shedding big tears. And in the wake of our dark-prowed ship, she, Kirke of the braided hair, fearsome goddess of human speech, sent a favorable wind that filled the sails, a kindly escort. And we set in order all the gear throughout the ship and sat down, and the wind and the helmsman guided our vessel. And all day long her sails were stretched out as she went, and the sun sank and all the ways were darkened.

“She came to the limits of the world, to the deep-flowing Okeanos.¹ There is the land and the city of the Kimmerians, shrouded in mist and cloud; the sun never looks down on them with his rays, nei-

1 Since the river Okeanos circles the rim of the disk of the earth, Odysseus has sailed west out of the Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar between modern Spain and Morocco and into the Atlantic. Of course, this is to apply the geographical descriptions in Homer far too literally—but it's still pleasant to make the attempt to map his journeys. See also footnote 1 of Book 12 of the *Odyssey*.

ther when he climbs up the starry heavens, nor when he turns earthward from the height of the sky, but deadly night spreads out over miserable mortals. We came there and ran the ship ashore and took out the sheep, but we held our way along the stream of Okeanos till we came to the place about which Kirke had told us.

“There Perimedes and Eurylochos held the victims, but I drew my sharp sword from my thigh and dug a pit, about a cubit in length and width, and poured a drink offering around it to all the dead, first with mead and then with sweet wine and for the third time with water. And I sprinkled white grain on it and with many prayers appealed to the strengthless heads of the dead and promised that on my return to Ithaka I would offer in my halls a barren heifer, the best I had, and fill the sacrificial pyre with treasure and sacrifice separately to Teiresias a black ram without spot, the best out of my flock. But when I had appealed to the tribes of the dead with vows and prayers, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the trench, and the dark blood flowed out, and the spirits of the dead gathered from out of Erebos²—brides and unwed youths and old men of many terrible years and young girls with fresh griefs at heart—and there were many wounded with bronze-covered spears, men killed in battle with their bloody armor around them. And these countless ghosts flocked together from every side around the trench with a great cry, and pale fear took hold of me. Then I spoke to my companions and commanded them to skin the sheep that lay slain by the pitiless sword and to burn them with fire and to pray to the gods, to mighty Hades and to dreadful Persephone, and I myself drew the sharp sword from my thigh and sat there, not allowing the strengthless heads of the dead to draw close to the blood before I had heard Teiresias speak.

“First came the soul of Elpenor, my companion, who had not yet been buried beneath the broad earth, for we left his corpse behind us in the hall of Kirke, without having grieved for him or buried him, since another task was urgently upon us. At the sight of him I wept and had compassion on him, and, lifting my voice, I spoke

2 In Greek mythology, Erebos was Darkness, one of the primordial beings (see *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, by H. J. Rose), but closely associated with Hades.

winged words to him: ‘Elpenor, how have you come beneath the darkness and the shadow? You have come faster on foot than I have in my black ship.’

“So I spoke, and with a moan he answered me, saying, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, an evil doom of some god was my curse and too much wine too. When I lay down on the house-top of Kirke, I did not remember to go down again by way of the tall ladder but fell right down from the roof, and my neck was broken off from the bones of the spine, and my spirit went down to the house of Hades. And now I beg you in the name of those whom we left who are no more with us, your wife, your father who cherished you when were still a little one, and Telemachos whom you left alone in your halls, since I know that on your way from here, from the house of Hades, you will stop at the island of Aiaia, my lord, I beg you to think of me. Do not leave me unwept and unburied as you go from here, nor turn your back upon me, lest perhaps I bring the anger of the gods on you. No, burn me there with my armor, all that is mine, and pile a funeral mound for me on the shore of the grey sea, the grave of a luckless man, that men not yet born may hear my story. Fulfill this for me and plant on the mound my oar with which I rowed when I was alive while I was still among my friends.’

“He spoke in this way, and I answered him, saying, ‘All this, unfortunate man, I will do for you.’

“In this way we two were sitting, holding our sad conversation, I on one side, stretching out my sword over the blood, while on the other side the ghost of my friend told his tale.

“Soon the soul of my dead mother came up—Antikleia, the daughter of Autolykos the great-hearted, she whom I left alive when I departed for sacred Ilios. At the sight of her I wept and was moved with compassion, yet even so, in spite of all my terrible grief, I did not allow her to come close to the blood, before I heard Teiresias speak.

“Soon the soul of Theban Teiresias came, with a golden scepter in his hand, and he knew me and spoke to me, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, what do you seek now, miserable man; why have you left the sunlight and come here to see the

dead and a land desolate of joy? Stand back from the ditch and pull back your sharp sword, so that I may drink the blood and tell you true things.’

“So he spoke, and I put my silver-studded sword into the sheath, and when he had drunk the dark blood, then the great prophet spoke to me, saying, ‘You are asking about your sweet return home, great Odysseus, but the god will make that hard for you, for I do not think you will journey on unnoticed by the Shaker of the Earth, who has stored up anger in his heart against you at the blinding of his dear son. Yet even so, through many troubles, you may come home, if you will control your spirit and the spirit of your men as soon as you bring your well-built ship close to the island of Thrinakia, escaping the violet blue sea, when you find the herds and great flocks of Helios grazing, Helios who oversees and overhears all things. If you do not harm the animals, keeping in mind your return home, you may yet reach Ithaka, though in bad condition. But if you harm them, I foresee ruin for your ship and your men, and even though you yourself will escape, you will return home after a long time, in bad condition, with the loss of all your companions, on board the ship of strangers, and you will find sorrows in your house, arrogant men who consume your goods while they court your godlike wife and offer her courtship gifts. But I tell you, when you arrive you will avenge their violence. And when you have slain the suitors in your halls, whether by deception or openly with the edge of the sword, then you must go away, taking a shaped oar with you, till you come to men who do not know the sea or eat meat savored with salt nor have knowledge of ships with painted prows nor shaped oars which serve as wings for ships. And I will give you a sure sign, which you cannot miss. On the day when another traveler meets you and says that you have a winnowing fan on your sturdy shoulder, then plant your shaped oar in the earth and make a great sacrifice to the Lord Poseidon, a ram and a bull and a boar, the mate of pigs, and then depart for home and offer holy sacrifices to the immortal gods that hold the wide sky, to each one what is due. And your own death will come far from the

sea,³ the gentlest death possible, which will bring your life to an end in a mild old age with the people living happily around you. All that I say is true.’

“So he spoke, and I answered him, saying, ‘Teiresias, I think that the gods themselves have spun all these threads. But now tell me everything plainly. I see here the spirit of my mother dead; look, she sits in silence near the blood and will not look her son in the face or speak to him! Tell me, master, how might she know again that I am her son?’

“So I spoke, and soon he answered me and said, ‘I will tell you this simply and put it into your heart. Whoever of the dead that you allow to come close to the blood, he will speak to you truly, but if you begrudge it to any of them, that one will return to his own place again.’ With that, the spirit of the great Teiresias went back into the house of Hades, when he had spoken all his prophecies.

Odysseus’ Story—Hades and Famous Women

“But I remained there patiently, till my mother came near and drank the dark blood, and at once she knew me, and wailing she spoke winged words to me: ‘Dear child, how did you come beneath the darkness and the shadow, you who are a living man? The sight of these things is terrible to the living, for between us and you are great rivers and dreadful streams, and first of all Okeanos, which can not be crossed on foot but only with a well built ship. Have you only just now come here with your ship and companions in your long wanderings from Troy? And have you not yet reached Ithaka or seen your wife in your halls?’

3 The Greek simply says, “from the sea,” which could be taken to mean “out of the sea,” but given Teiresias’ next words, “away from the sea” seems far more appropriate. See also Odysseus repeating this prophecy to Penelope in Book 23. But one variation of the Odysseus story which depends on the first meaning has Telegonus, Odysseus’ son by Kirke, coming to Ithaka to look for his father but thinking he was on another island and plundering the cattle out of hunger. Odysseus defends his land and is killed by Telegonus who realizes too late the identity of his victim. Dante also, in *Inferno* XXVI, has Odysseus dying a violent death, which depends likewise on the first meaning.

“So she spoke, and I answered her and said, ‘O my mother, necessity forced me to come down to the house of Hades to seek the spirit of Theban Teiresias. For I have not yet come near the Achaian shore, nor have I set foot in my own country but have been wandering constantly in suffering from the day that I went with great Agamemnon to Ilios of the noble horses to do battle with the Trojans. But tell me this plainly. What fateful death overcame you, that lays men low? Was it a slow disease, or did Artemis the archer slay you with her gentle shafts? And tell me about my father and my son whom I left behind me; do they still retain my honor, or has someone else already taken it, saying that I will never come home? And tell me about my wife, of her plans and her purpose; does she remain with her son and keep everything secure, or has she already married the best of the Achaians?’

“So I spoke, and soon the lady my mother answered me, ‘Yes indeed, she remains steadfast in her spirit in your halls, but for her the nights always pass wearily and the days in tears. But no man has stolen your great honor yet; Telemachos sits peacefully in his domain and feasts at well-ordered banquets, where it is proper for a ruler to partake, for all men invite him to their houses. And your father remains there in the field and does not go down to the town or lie on a bed or find blankets, but all winter he sleeps where the house servants sleep, in the ashes by the fire, and is clothed in shabby garments. But when summer and the rich harvest time comes, he makes his poor bed in piles of fallen leaves all around the hilltop of his vineyard. There he lies sorrowing and nurses his terrible grief, longing for your return, and old age comes heavy upon him. I myself met my doom and died in the same way. It was not the archer goddess with the sharp sight who slew me in my halls with her gentle shafts nor did any sickness come upon me, the kind that slowly and sadly draws the spirit from the body; no, it was my terrible longing for you and for your counsels, great Odysseus, and for your love and kindness, that robbed me of sweet life.’

“So she spoke, and with longing in my heart I wanted to embrace the spirit of my dead mother. Three times I reached for her

and tried to embrace her; three times she drifted from my arms like a shadow or a dream, and terrible grief filled my heart. And, lifting my voice, I spoke winged words to her: ‘My mother, why do you not remain still for me who longs to embrace you, so that even in Hades we two might throw our arms around each other and have our fill of lamentation? Is this just a phantom that the high goddess Persephone has sent me, to make me groan with even greater sorrow?’

“So I spoke, and the lady my mother answered me soon: ‘Ah me, my child, most unfortunate of all men, Persephone, the daughter of Zeus, is not deceiving you, but this is the way it is with mortals when they die. For the sinews no longer bind together the flesh and the bones, but the great power of the burning fire destroys them, as soon as the life has left the white bones, and the spirit like a dream flies out and hovers near. But hurry with all your heart toward the sunlight and remember all this, that in later days you can tell it to your wife.’

“So we two talked this way together; then the women came, for the high goddess Persephone sent them, all those who had been the wives and daughters of great men. And they gathered around the black blood, and I thought about how I might question each of them. And this was the plan that seemed best to me. I drew my long sword from my stout thigh and did not allow them to drink the dark blood at the same time. So they came close one by one, and each one stated her ancestry, and I questioned them all.

“I first saw Tyro, begotten by a noble father, who said that she was the child of noble Salmoneus and declared herself the wife of Kretheus, son of Aiolos. She loved a river, the divine Enipeus, by far the fairest of the streams that run over the earth, and she frequently went to the lovely streams of Enipeus. And it happened that the Encircler of the Earth, the Earth-Shaker, put on the shape of the river god and lay with the lady at the mouth of the whirling stream. Then the dark wave stood around them like a hollow hill-side and hid the god and the mortal woman. And he untied her maiden girdle and shed a slumber over her. When the god had done the work of love, he clasped her hand and spoke and addressed her, ‘Woman, be glad about our love, and when a year comes around you will give birth to

glorious children—for the embraces of the gods are not weak—and you must keep and cherish them. Now go home and be quiet and tell no one—I am Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth.’ With that he plunged beneath the heaving water. And she conceived and bore Pelias and Neleus, who both grew to be mighty men, servants of Zeus. Pelias lived in wide Iolkos and was rich in flocks, and the other lived in sandy Pylos. And the queen of women bore still other sons to Kretheus—Aison and Pheres and Amythaon, who took delight in chariots.

“And after her I saw Antiope, daughter of Asopos, and her boast was that she had slept in the arms of Zeus, and she bore two sons, Amphion and Zethos, who first founded seven-gated Thebes, and they made it a fenced city, for they were unwilling to live in spacious Thebes unprotected in spite of all their courage.

“Next I saw Alkmene, wife of Amphitryon, who lay in the arms of mighty Zeus and bore lion-hearted Herakles, steadfast in fighting. And I saw Megara, daughter of arrogant Kreion, whom the strong and tireless son of Amphitryon married.

“And I saw the mother of Oedipus, lovely Epikaste,⁴ who did something terrible unknowingly, marrying her own son; he who had killed his own father married her, and immediately the gods revealed these things to men. But he remained in pain in pleasant Thebes, ruling the Kadmeians, because of the deadly counsels of the gods. But she went down to the house of Hades, the mighty guardian—she tied a noose from the high ceiling beam, being gripped by grief—while she left many sorrows behind for him, all that the Furies of a mother bring about.⁵

“And I saw lovely Chloris, whom Neleus wedded for her beauty and brought countless courtship gifts. She was the youngest daughter of Amphion, son of Iasos, who once ruled powerfully in Minyan Orchomenos. And she was queen of Pylos and bore to her lord glorious children—Nestor and Chromios and princely Periklymenos and

4 In later authors she is called Jokaste.

5 The story of Oedipus is referred to by most of the great Greek poets and playwrights—Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, etc., but the greatest dramatic telling is Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* (Greek: *Oedipus Tyrannos*; Roman: *Oedipus Rex*).

stately Pero too, who bedazzled all men. All who lived nearby were her suitors, but Neleus would not give her to anyone except the one who would drive the oxen of mighty Iphikles away from Phylake, oxen with shambling gait and broad brows, hard cattle to drive. And no one but the noble seer Melampous took it upon himself to drive them, but a terrible fate from the gods bound him—tight bonds and the herdsmen of the wild. But when finally the months and days were fulfilled, as the year turned in its course, and the seasons came around, then mighty Iphikles set him free, when he had spoken all the oracles, and Zeus’ plan was accomplished.

“And I saw Leda, the famous bed-mate of Tyndareos, who bore to Tyndareos two stout-hearted sons—Kastor, tamer of horses, and Polydeukes the boxer. These two are still alive, but the life-giving earth is over them, and even in the underworld they have honor from Zeus; they possess their life in turn, living one day and dying the next, and are worshiped like the gods.⁶

“And after her I saw Iphimedeia, bed-mate of Aloeus, who said that she had lain with Poseidon, and she bore two children, but they did not live long—godlike Otos and far-famed Ephialtes. Now these were the tallest men that grain-giving earth ever reared and by far the greatest after famous Orion. At nine years old they were nine cubits wide and nine fathoms in height.⁷ They were the ones who threatened to bring the thunder of stormy war against even the immortals on Olympos. They strove to pile Ossa on Olympos, and on Ossa Pelion with the trembling forest leaves to make a pathway to the sky. They would have accomplished it if they had reached the full measure of manhood. But the son of Zeus, whom Leto of the lovely

6 Kastor and Polydeukes (called Pollux in Latin) were brothers of Helen. Like Helen, Polydeukes was generally said to be the child of Zeus and so immortal (though Homer doesn’t seem to follow this). The brothers seized two girls who were already betrothed to their cousins, and the cousins attacked and killed Kastor. Polydeukes asked Zeus to allow him to share his immortality with Kastor, to which Zeus agreed, and the brothers alternate between one day in Hades and one on Olympos (according to some versions) or one day dead and one day alive (according to others, including Homer here).

7 A cubit is about a foot and a half and a fathom is about six feet. The Latin-derived word *cubit* means the same thing as the Greek word behind it—that is, *forearm*. The Anglo-Saxon-derived word *fathom* means the same thing as the Greek word behind it—that is, “outstretched arms.”

hair bore, destroyed the two before the down had bloomed beneath their temples and darkened their chins with the blossom of youth.

“And I saw Phaidra and Prokris and beautiful Ariadne, the daughter of the sorcerer Minos, whom Theseus once brought from Krete to the hill of sacred Athens, yet never enjoyed her, because Artemis killed her before that in sea-encircled Dia, because of the indictment of Dionysos.⁸

“And I saw Maira and Klymene and hateful Eriphyle, who accepted fine gold for the price of her dear lord’s life. But I cannot tell or name all the wives and daughters of the heroes that I saw; before I could do that, the immortal night would wane. It is now time to sleep, whether I go to the swift ship to my companions or remain here, and I leave my passage home to you and the gods.”

Interlude—The Phaiakians Praise Odysseus’ Story-Telling

So Odysseus spoke, and dead silence fell on them all, and they were spell-bound throughout the shadowy halls. Then Arete of the white arms first spoke among them, “Phaiakians, what do you think of this man for appearance and stature, and for wisdom of heart within? He is my guest, though every one of you shares in this honor. Therefore, do not delay to send him on his way and do not be stingy with your gifts for someone who needs them so much, for you have much treasure stored in your halls by the grace of the gods.”

Then the old man, lord Echeneos, who was an elder among the Phaiakians, spoke among them also: “Friends, the words of our wise queen are not wide of the mark nor far from our approval, so pay attention to them. But both command and action depend on Alkinoös here.”

8 This strange passage fits none of the existing myths. Later versions have Dionysos falling in love with Ariadne after Theseus abandoned, or lost, her on the way from Krete to Athens. The version Homer alludes to here must have been a much earlier story whose outlines are unknown.

Then Alkinoös answered and spoke to him, “Yes, the word that she has spoken will hold, as I live and rule the Phaiakians, masters of the oar. However, in spite of his longing to return, let the stranger bear up and wait until tomorrow, until I can fill up the full measure of the gifts, and our men will attend to his convoy, and I will lead, since I am lord of the land.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “My lord Alkinoös, most notable of all the people, if you urged me to linger here even for a year and would hasten my convoy and give me splendid gifts, I would choose that; it would be better for me to come with a fuller hand to my own dear country, for I would receive more love and honor in the eyes of all men, whoever would see me after I returned to Ithaka.”

And Alkinoös answered him, saying, “Odysseus, we who see you do not consider you in any way to be one of the cheats and deceivers that the dark earth produces so much, inventing lies out of which no one can find his way. But beauty adorns your words, and there is wisdom in you, and like a bard singing you have told with skill your story of the weary woes of all the Argives and of your own self. But tell me this plainly. Did you see any of your godlike companions who went with you to Ilios at the same time and met their doom there? Look, the night is endlessly long, and it is not yet time for sleep in the halls; so tell me about those amazing deeds. I could stay till the bright Dawn, as long as you could keep telling me these sorrows of yours in the hall.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “My lord Alkinoös, most notable of all the people, there is a time for many words and there is a time for sleep. But if you are eager to keep listening, I would not for my part grudge to tell you of other things even more sorrowful, the sufferings of my companions, those who died afterward, for they had escaped with their lives from the terrible war-cry of the Trojans but perished in their homecoming by the will of an evil woman.

Odysseus' Story—Hades and Famous Men

“When holy Persephone had scattered the spirits of the women this way and that, then the soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, came sorrowing, and around him others were gathered, the ghosts of those who had died with him in the house of Aigisthos and met their doom. And he immediately knew me when he had drunk the dark blood, and he wept aloud and shed great tears as he stretched forth his hands in his longing to reach me. But it could not be, for now he had no strength or power of moving at all, as he did before in his supple limbs.

“At the sight of him I wept and was moved with compassion, and, lifting my voice, I spoke winged words to him: ‘Most famous son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, tell me what doom overcame you, of death that lays men out at their length? Did Poseidon strike you in your ships, raising the mournful blast of contrary winds, or did hostile men harm you on land, while you were seizing their oxen and fair flocks of sheep or fighting to win a city and its women?’

“So I spoke, and immediately he answered and said to me, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, it was not Poseidon that struck me in my ships and raised the mournful blast of contrary winds, nor did hostile men harm me on land, but it was Aigisthos who caused my death and doom and killed me, with the aid of my accursed wife, as one slays an ox at the stall, after he had invited me to his house and entertained me at a feast. In this way I died a most pitiful death, and around me my companions also were slaughtered without ceasing, like swine with glittering tusks which are slaughtered in the house of a rich and mighty man at a wedding banquet or a joint-feast or a rich clan-drinking. In times past you have been at the slaying of many men, killed in single combat or in fierce battle, yet you would have sorrowed the most at this sight, how we lay in the hall around the mixing-bowl and the heavily laden boards, and the floor all ran with blood. And the most pitiful voice of all that I heard was that of the daughter of Priam, Kassandra, whom crafty Klytaimnestra slaughtered beside me. Then I tried to raise my

hands as I was dying upon the sword, but they fell to earth. And that shameless one turned her back on me and did not even have the heart to close my eyelids with her fingers or to close my mouth. So surely there is nothing more terrible and shameless than a woman who imagines such evil in her heart, just as she too planned a foul deed, crafting death for her wedded lord. I thought I would come home most welcome to my children and my servants, but she, out of the depth of her evil mind, has cast perpetual shame on herself and on all womankind, even on the innocent.'

"So he spoke, but I answered him, saying, 'Very truly now Zeus of the far-sounding voice has brought terrible evil on the offspring of Atreus through the counsels of women from of old. So many of us died for Helen's sake, and now Klytaimnestra has practiced treason against you, while you were still far away.'

"So I spoke, and soon he answered me, saying, 'Therefore, you too from now on never be too tender to your wife; do not reveal all of the knowledge you have, but tell her part and keep part hidden. You, Odysseus, will not find death at the hands of your wife, for she is very discreet and prudent in all her ways, wise Penelope, daughter of Ikarios. Indeed, we left her a bride newly-married when we went to the war, and a child was at her breast who now, I think, sits in the ranks of men, happy in his fortune, for his beloved father will see him at his return, and he will embrace his father as is right. But as for my wife, she did not even allow me to have my fill of looking at my son before she killed me, her lord. And I will tell you another thing, and you ponder it in your heart. Land your ship in secret, not openly, on the shore of your dear country, for there is no longer any faithfulness in women. But tell me plainly if perhaps you have heard whether my son is still living, perhaps in Orchomenos or in sandy Pylos, or perhaps with Menelaos in wide Sparta, for noble Orestes has not yet perished on the earth.'

"So he spoke, but I answered him, saying, 'Son of Atreus, why do you question me so closely about these things? I do not know at all whether he is alive or dead; it is foolish to speak words as light as wind.'

“So the two of us stood sorrowing, holding our sad conversation, while the big tears fell, and then the soul of Achilles, son of Peleus, came to us, and the souls of Patroklos and of noble Antilochos and of Aias, who in face and form was noblest of all the Danaans after the noble son of Peleus. And the spirit of the swift-footed son of Aiakos⁹ recognized me again and, lamenting, spoke winged words to me: ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, you exceedingly bold man, what new and harder deed than this will you devise in your heart? How do you dare to come down to the house of Hades, where the senseless dead live, the phantoms of worn out men?’

“So he spoke, but I answered him, ‘Achilleus, son of Peleus, mightiest far of the Achaians, I have come here to seek Teiresias, if he may give me any advice about how I may come home to rugged Ithaka. For I have not yet come near that Achaian land, nor set foot on my own soil, but am still in a terrible situation; while as for you, Achilleus, before this time no one but you was the most blessed of men, and no one ever will be. For in time past, during the days of your life, we Argives gave you the same honor as to the gods, and now you are a great prince here among the dead. So do not let your death be a grief to you, Achilleus.’

“So I spoke, and immediately he answered me and said, ‘No, do not speak words of comfort to me about death, O great Odysseus. I would rather be alive on the earth as the slave to another man, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than rule among all the departed dead. But tell me news of that noble son of mine—did he follow me to the war to be a leader or not? And tell me about great Peleus, if you have heard anything—is he still honored among the Myrmidons, or do they dishonor him from Hellas to Phthia because old age binds him hand and foot? For I am no longer his defender under the sun, as mighty a man as I once was, when in wide Troy I killed the best of the enemy and helped the Argives. Oh, if only I

9 Achilles’ father Peleus was the son of Aiakos, king of the island of Aegina, off the east coast of Greece. Homer sometimes calls Achilles “Peleides” (son of Peleus) and sometimes “Aiakides” (son of Aiakos), though Aiakos was really his grandfather.

could go for just one hour to my father's house as I was then, I would make my strength and hands invincible, to be hateful to many of those who despise him and hold back honor from him.'

"So he spoke, but I answered him, saying, 'As for noble Peleus, truly I have heard nothing of him, but regarding your dear son Neoptolemos, I will tell you the whole truth, as you ask. It was I that led him from Skyros in my good hollow ship, in the wake of the strong-armored Achaians. Often as we took counsel around Troy, he was the first to speak, and no word missed the mark; godlike Nestor and I alone surpassed him. But whenever we Achaians did battle on the plain of Troy, he never lingered behind in the throng and crush of men but ran out far in front of all of us, yielding to no one in that might of his. And he killed many men in terrible battle, but I could not tell of them all or name their names, all the enemy he killed in aiding the Argives. But, ah, how he struck with the sword that son of Telephos, the hero Eurypylos, and many Keteians of his company were slain around him, because of a woman bribed.¹⁰ He truly was the most beautiful man I ever saw, next to noble Memnon. And again when we, the best of the Argives, were about to get into the horse which Epeios built, and the responsibility for everything was given to me, both to open and shut the door of our ambush, then the other princes and counselors of the Danaans wiped away tears, and the limbs of each one trembled beneath him, but never once did I see your son's fair face grow pale, nor did he wipe tears from his cheeks, but he begged me often to let him go out of the horse and kept feeling his sword-hilt and his heavy bronze-shod spear, and he was eager for violence against the Trojans. But after we had sacked the steep city of Priam, he embarked unscathed with his share of the spoil and with a great prize; he was not struck with a sharp spear and was not wounded in close combat, and there are many chances for such wounding in war, because Ares rages everywhere.'

10 This is the first mention in Greek literature of this episode and Homer gives no explanation of the "woman bribed." Later scholars differed in their stories, but the gist was that Eurypylos' mother Astyoche was the sister of King Priam of Troy. Her husband Telephos, king of Mysia near Troy, had been wounded and then healed by Achilles, so he promised his people would not fight as allies of Troy. But Priam bribed Astyoche, and she sent her son to fight for Troy.

“So I spoke, and the spirit of the swift-footed son of Aiakos moved away with great strides along the meadow of asphodel, rejoicing in what I had told him about his son’s fame.

“Other spirits of the dead stood sorrowing, and each one asked about those that were dear to them. But the soul of Aias, son of Telamon, stood off by himself, still angry for my victory over him in the contest by the ships regarding the armor of Achilles which his lady mother had set for a prize, and the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athene awarded it. If only I had never prevailed and won such a prize; it was so noble a head the earth has closed over for the sake of that armor. Aias was above all the other Danaans in appearance and in feats of battle, next to the noble son of Peleus. I spoke softly to him, saying, ‘Aias, son of noble Telamon, even in death will you not forget your anger against me because of that accursed armor which the gods made to be the curse of the Argives? What a tower of strength fell when you fell, and we Achaians do not cease to sorrow for you just as we did for the life of Achilles, son of Peleus! No, there is no one to blame but Zeus, who has shown terrible hatred to the army of the Danaan spearsmen and laid this doom on you. Come here, so that you may hear my words; master your anger and your proud spirit.’

“So I spoke, but he did not answer a word and passed on to Erebos after the other spirits of the dead. Even then, in spite of his anger, he might have spoken to me or I to him, but my heart within me desired to see the spirits of those others that were departed.

“Then I saw Minos, the glorious son of Zeus, wielding a golden scepter, passing sentence from his throne to all the dead, while they sat or stood around the prince, asking his judgments through the wide-gated house of Hades.

“And after him I saw mighty Orion driving the wild beasts together over the meadow of asphodel, the beasts he himself had slain on the lonely hills with a mighty bronze club in his hands that never breaks.

“And I saw Tityos, son of renowned Gaia,¹¹ lying on a level plain, and he covered two acres¹² as he lay, and two vultures attacked him, one on each side, and gnawed at his liver, piercing to the depths, but he could not drive them away with his hands, because he had forced himself violently upon Leto, the famous bedmate of Zeus, as she went up to Pytho through the fair lawns of Panopeus.

“Also I saw Tantalos in terrible torment, standing in a lake, and the water came right up to his chin. And he stooped, straining from thirst, but he could not reach the water to drink. For as soon as that old man stooped down in his eagerness to drink, the water drained away and vanished, and the black earth still showed at his feet, for some god dried it continually. And tall, flowering trees hung with fruit overhead, pears and pomegranates and apple trees with bright fruit, and sweet figs and olives in their bloom, but when that old man reached out his hands to clutch them, the wind would toss them to the shadowy clouds.

“I saw Sisyphos in strong torment, grasping a monstrous stone with both his hands. He was pushing it with his hands and feet, trying to roll the stone upward toward the top of the hill. But as soon as he was about to push it over the top, the weight would drive him back, so once again the stone rolled down to the plain, the shameless thing. And once more he kept heaving and straining, and, meanwhile, the sweat was pouring down his limbs, and the dust rose upwards from his head.

“And after him I saw mighty Herakles, or his phantom, I should say, but as for he himself, he delights in the banquet among the immortal gods and has as his wife Hebe of the fair ankles, child of great Zeus and of Hera of the golden sandals. And all about him there was a clamor of the dead, like birds flying every direction in fear, and he was like black Night, with his bow uncased and an arrow on the string, fiercely glancing around, like someone about to shoot. And

11 Earth.

12 Or possibly 900 feet—the Greek *pelethra* could be either a measure of length (100 feet) or area (a quarter of an acre). He covers nine *pelethra*.

around his chest was a great golden sword belt on which marvelous things were depicted—bears and wild boars and lions with flashing eyes, and strife and battles and slaughters and murders of men. Now that he has made it, may he who had the ability to make that belt never make another like it! Soon he recognized me when he saw me, and sorrowing he spoke winged words to me: ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, wretched one! Do you too lead such a life of evil doom as I endured beneath the rays of the sun? I was the son of Zeus Kronion,¹³ yet I had trouble beyond measure, for I was forced to submit to a man far worse than I. And he loaded on me difficult tasks; yes, once he sent me here to bring back the hound of hell, and he gave me no harder task. I lifted the hound and brought him out of the house of Hades, and Hermes and grey-eyed Athene sped me on my way.’

“With that he departed again into the house of Hades, but I remained there if perhaps some others of the heroes who had died long ago might come. And I would have seen the men of old whom I was eager to look at—Theseus and Peirithoös, renowned children of the gods—but before that could happen, the numberless tribes of the dead thronged up together with a great clamor, and pale fear took hold of me, lest the high goddess Persephone should send me the head of the Gorgon, that dread monster, from out of Hades.

“Immediately I went to the ship and ordered my men to board the vessel and free the ropes. So they quickly went on board and sat on the benches. And the wave of the ocean carried the vessel down the stream of Okeanos, we rowing first, and afterwards the fair wind carrying us along.”

13 “Kronion”—son of Kronos.

Book XII:
The Sirens, Skylla and Charybdis, and the
Oxen of Helios



Skylla

Odysseus' Story—Kirke's Warnings

After the ship had left the stream of the river Okeanos and had come to the wave of the wide sea and the island of Aiaia,¹ the home of early Dawn and her dancing grounds and the land of sunrising, when we came there we beached the ship in the sand and stepped ashore on the sea beach. There we fell sound asleep and waited the bright Dawn.

“As soon as early, rosy-fingered Dawn shone forth, I sent forth my men to the house of Kirke to fetch the body of dead Elpenor. And quickly we cut cords of wood, and sadly we buried him, shedding big tears, where the furthest headland runs out into the sea. But when the dead man was burned with his armor, we piled a barrow and dragged a pillar up onto it, and on the very top of the mound we set the carved oar.

1 Just as in footnote 1 of Book 11, the movement described in this passage—from Okeanos (the river ocean around the rim of the earth) to the “wide sea” (the Mediterranean)—indicates that the Land of the Dead in Book 11 was outside the Mediterranean, in what we would call the Atlantic Ocean.

“We finished all of that task, and our coming from out of Hades was not unknown to Kirke, but she prepared herself and quickly came near, and her handmaids who were with her carried plenty of meat and bread and dark red wine. And the lovely goddess stood among us and spoke in our ears, saying, ‘You are exceedingly bold men, who have gone alive into the house of Hades, to know death twice, while all other men die only once for good. Come, eat meat and drink wine here all day long, and with the dawning of the day you will set sail, and I myself will describe for you the journey and tell you everything, so that you may not suffer pain or harm through any terrible evils by sea or on the land.’

“So she spoke, and our noble souls agreed. So we sat there the whole day, until the going down of the sun, feasting on abundant meat and on sweet wine. Now when the sun sank, and darkness came on, my company lay down to rest by the ropes of the ship. Then she took me by the hand and led me apart from my beloved companions and made me sit down and laid herself at my feet and asked my whole story. And I told her everything in due order. Then at last the lady Kirke spoke to me, saying, ‘Still, all these things will have an end; so listen as I tell you, and the god himself will bring it back to your mind. First you will come to the Sirens who bewitch all men, whoever comes to them. Whoever goes near them unknowingly and hears the sound of the Sirens’ voices, he never sees wife or children stand by him on his return, nor do they delight in his coming, for the Sirens enchant him with their clear song, sitting in the meadow, and all around them is a great heap of bones of men, rotten in death, and around the bones the skin is wasting. But drive your ship past; knead honey-sweet wax and fill the ears of your companions with it, lest any of them hear the song, but if you yourself want to hear, let them bind you in the swift ship hand and foot, upright against the mast, and from the mast let rope-ends be tied, so that with delight you may hear the voice of the Sirens. And if you beg your companions to free you, then let them bind you with still more bonds.

“But when your friends have driven your ship past these, I will not tell you fully which path after that is yours, but you yourself

consider it, and I will tell you about either way. On one side there are towering rocks, and against them the great wave of dark-eyed Amphitrite roars. These, you must know, are what the blessed gods call the Wandering Rocks.² By this way even winged things may never pass, not even the timid doves that carry ambrosia to Father Zeus, but the sheer rock always takes away one of these, and the Father sends in another to make up the number. By this way no ship of men ever escapes that comes there, but the planks of ships and the bodies of men are tossed confusedly by the waves of the sea and the storms of ruinous fire. Only one ship of all that travel by sea has passed that way—Argo, known to all men, on her voyage from Aietes. And the wave would have lightly cast even her upon the mighty rocks, but Hera sent her past them out of her love for Jason.

“On the other side are two rocks, of which one reaches with a sharp peak to the wide sky, and a dark cloud encompasses it; this never streams away, and there is no clear air around the peak either in summer or in harvest time. No mortal man may scale it or set foot on it, not even if he had twenty hands and feet. For the rock is smooth and sheer, as if it were polished. And in the middle of the cliff there is a dim cave turned toward Erebos, toward the place of darkness, by which you must steer your hollow ship, noble Odysseus. Not even with an arrow from a bow could a strong man reach from his hollow ship into that deep cave. And in it lives Skylla, yelping terribly. Her voice is no louder than the voice of a new-born pup, but she is a dreadful monster, and no one would willingly look at her, not if it were a god who met her. She has twelve feet, all dangling down, and six necks exceedingly long, and on each one a hideous head and in it three rows of teeth, set thick and close, full of black death. She is sunk far down in the hollow cave up to her middle, but she holds her heads out over the dreadful gulf, and there she fishes, swooping around the rock for dolphins or sea-dogs or whatever greater beast she may catch anywhere, where deep-voiced Amphitrite feeds countless flocks. No sailors boast that they have ever fled by there with

2 This sounds like the Symplagades, the Clashing Rocks that Jason and the Argonauts face in the Bosphorus, but nothing is known of what Homer is referring to here.

their ship without harm, for with each head she carries off a man, whom she has snatched from out of the dark-prowed ship.

“But you must observe that other cliff, Odysseus, lying lower, close by the first; you could send an arrow across. And on it is a great fig-tree growing, in full leaf, and beneath it mighty Charybdis³ sucks down black water, for three times a day she spouts it forth, and three times a day she sucks it down in a terrifying manner. You must never be there when she sucks down the water, for no one could save you then from your doom, not even the Earth-Shaker! But pay attention and, swiftly drawing close to Skylla’s rock, drive the ship past, since truly it is far better to mourn six of your company in the ship than all at the same time.’

“So she spoke, but I answered and said to her, ‘I beg you, goddess, tell me truly, if there is any way by which I might escape from deadly Charybdis and avenge myself on that other, when she would prey upon my companions.’

“So I spoke, and that lovely goddess answered me, ‘Exceedingly bold man, again the actions of war and its works are in your mind. Will you not yield even to the immortal gods? As for her, she is no mortal, but an immortal plague, dread, terrible, and fierce, and not to be fought with, and against her there is no defense; flight is the bravest way. For if you linger to put on your armor by the cliff, I fear that once again she will come out and grab at you with so many heads and seize as many men as before. So drive past with all your force, and call on Krataiis, mother of Skylla, who bore her to be a curse to mortals. And she will then prevent her from darting out afterward.

“Then you will come to the island Thrinakia; there the many oxen of Helios and his glorious flocks are feeding, seven herds of oxen and as many great flocks of sheep and fifty in each flock. They neither give birth nor die, and there are goddesses to shepherd them, nymphs with lovely hair, Phaethousa and Lampetia, whom bright

3 Most people locate Charybdis (and Skylla) in the Strait of Messina, between the toe of the boot of Italy (Calabria) and the nearest point of the island of Sicily, where the channel is less than two miles wide. See *Odyssey* Map 1. There actually is a regularly forming whirlpool because of the narrowness of the strait, which may have given rise to the story of Charybdis, though it’s not much of a danger to shipping.

Neaira bore to Helios Hyperion. When the lady their mother had borne and nursed them, she carried them to the island Thrinakia to live far off, so that they would guard their father's flocks and his oxen with the shambling gait. If you do no harm to these, being mindful of your return home, truly you may even yet reach Ithaka, though in bad condition. But if you harm them, I predict ruin for your ship and for your men, and even though you yourself might escape, you will return home long delayed in terrible condition with the loss of all your companions.'

"So she spoke, and soon golden-throned Dawn came. Then the fair goddess made her way up the island. But I departed to my ship and roused my men to board the vessel and loose the ropes. And speedily they went aboard and sat on the benches and, sitting in order, struck the grey sea-water with their oars. And in the wake of our dark-prowed ship Kirke of the braided hair, a dread goddess of human speech, sent a favoring wind that filled the sails, a kindly escort. And immediately we set in order the gear throughout the ship and sat down, and the wind and the helmsman guided our vessel.

Odysseus' Story—The Sirens

"Then I spoke among my companions with a heavy heart, 'Friends, since it is not well that only one or two should know of the oracles that Kirke, the fair goddess, spoke to me, I will declare them, so that with foreknowledge we may die or perhaps escape, avoiding death and destiny. First she told us to avoid the sound of the voice of the wondrous Sirens and their field of flowers, and she commanded me alone to listen to their voices. So tie me in a tight bond, so that I may remain unmoved, upright against the mast, and from the mast let rope-ends be tied, and if I beg and command you to set me free, then tie me tighter with more bonds.'

"So I went over all these things, and declared them to my companions. Meanwhile, our good ship quickly came to the island of

the two Sirens, for a gentle breeze sped her on her way. Then immediately the wind stopped, and there was a windless calm, and some god lulled the waves. Then my companions rose up and took in the ship's sails and stowed them in the hold of the ship while they sat at the oars and whitened the water with their polished pine blades. But I cut a great circle of wax in pieces with my sharp sword and kneaded it with my strong hands. And soon the wax grew warm, because my great might forced it, along with the rays of the lord Helios, son of Hyperion. And with it I plugged the ears of all my men in order, and in the ship they bound me hand and foot upright against the mast, and from the mast they fastened rope-ends and then sat down and struck the grey sea-water with their oars. But when the ship was within the sound of a man's shout from the land, we rushing swiftly on our way, the Sirens saw the swift ship speeding toward them, and they raised their clear-toned song, 'Come here, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaians, stop your vessel here, so that you may listen to the voice of us two. For no one has ever gone this way in his black ship until he has heard from our lips the voice sweet as the honeycomb and has had delight in it and gone on his way wiser. For we know all things, all the labors that the Argives and Trojans bore in wide Troy-land by the gods' designs; yes, and we know all that will happen in the future upon the fruitful earth.'

"So they spoke with a sweet voice, and my heart was eager to listen, and I commanded my companions to untie me, nodding at them with a frown, but they bent to their oars and rowed on. Then Perimedes and Eurylochos rose up and bound me with more cords and bound me still more. Now when we had driven past them and no longer heard the sound of the Sirens or their song, immediately my dear companions took away the wax with which I had plugged their ears, and they freed me from my bonds.

Odysseus' Story—Skylla and Charybdis

“But as soon as we left that island, after that I saw mist and a great wave and heard the sea roaring. Then from sheer terror the oars flew from their hands, all splashed in the water, and the ship was held there, for my companions no longer plied the tapering oars with their hands. But I walked through the ship and encouraged my men as I stood by each one and spoke smooth words: ‘Friends, since we are not inexperienced in sorrow, this is no greater woe that is upon us than when the Kyklops penned us in by sheer force in his hollow cave; yet even then we escaped by my courage, my counsel, and my wits, and some day I think that we will remember this adventure too. Come now, therefore, let us all pay attention to act according to my words. Strike the deep surf of the sea with your oars as you sit on the benches, if perhaps Zeus may grant us to escape from and avoid this death. And as for you, helmsman, I charge thee this, and ponder it in your heart seeing that you hold the helm of the hollow ship. Keep the ship well away from this mist and from the wave and hug the rocks, lest the ship, before you are aware of it, jump from her course to the other side, and you hurl us into ruin.’

“So I spoke, and they quickly obeyed my words. But I told them nothing more about Skylla, a curse no one could deal with, lest perhaps my companions should stop rowing from fear and hide themselves in the hold. At that same time I allowed myself to forget the strict warning of Kirke, in which she commanded me in no way to be armed, but I put on my glorious armor and caught up two long lances in my hands and went on the decking of the prow, for from there I thought that Skylla of the rock would first be seen, she who was to bring woe to my companions. Yet could I not see her anywhere, and my eyes grew weary from gazing all around toward the darkness of the rock.

“We began to sail up the narrow strait weeping. For on the one hand lay Skylla, and on the other mighty Charybdis sucked down the salt sea-water in a terrifying manner. As often as she belched it forth,

like a cauldron on a great fire, she would seethe up through all her troubled deeps, and overhead the spray fell on the tops of either cliff. But as often as she gulped down the salt sea-water, she could be seen clearly through her troubled deeps, and the rocks around her roared horribly, and below her the sandy bottom was clear to see, and pale fear took hold of my men. We looked in her direction, fearing destruction, but meanwhile Skylla caught from out of my hollow ship six of my companions, their hands the stoutest and the most powerful. And looking into the swift ship to find my men, I saw their feet and hands as they were lifted up high, and they cried aloud in their agony and called me by name for the last time ever. Just as when a fisher on some headland lets down with a long rod his baits for a snare to the little fishes below, casting into the deep the horn of an ox from the homestead, and as he catches each one he flings it writhing onto the shore, so they were carried writhing up the cliff. And there she devoured them shrieking in her entrance as they stretched forth their hands to me in the horrible death-struggle. And this was the most pitiful thing that my eyes have seen in all my sorrows as I searched out the paths of the sea.

Odysseus' Story—The Oxen of Helios

“When we had escaped the Rocks and dread Charybdis and Skylla, after that we came to the lovely island of the god where the great broad-browed cattle and the many noble flocks of Helios Hyperion were. Then while I was still in my black ship on the deep, I heard the lowing of the cattle being penned and the bleating of the sheep, and to my mind there came the saying of the blind seer, Theban Teiresias, and of Kirke of Aiaia, who commanded me urgently to avoid the island of Helios, who cheers the world. Then I spoke out among my companions in sorrow of heart, ‘Hear my words, my men, though we are in a terrible state, so that I may tell you the oracles of Teiresias and of Kirke of Aiaia, who urgently commanded me to avoid the

island of Helios, who cheers the world. For there she said the most terrible evil would happen to us. So drive the black ship beyond and past that island.’

“So I spoke, and their hearts were broken within them. And Eurylochos immediately answered me sadly, saying, ‘You are hardy, Odysseus, powerful beyond measure, and your limbs are never weary; indeed, you are made of iron, because you do not allow your friends, worn out with labor and drowsiness, to set foot on shore, where we might prepare us a good supper in this sea-washed island. But in our condition you command us to go blindly on through the sudden night, and away from the island to go wandering on the misty deep. And strong winds, the curse of ships, are born of the night. How could a man escape from utter doom, if there happened to come a sudden blast of the South Wind, or of the boisterous West, which wreck ships, even beyond the will of the gods, the lords of all? Nevertheless, for the present let us yield to the black night, and we will prepare our supper remaining by the swift ship, and in the morning we will climb on board, and put out into the broad deep.’

“So Eurylochos spoke, and the rest of my companions agreed with him. Then I realized that some god was devising evil, and I uttered my voice and spoke winged words to him: ‘Eurylochos, you force me, since I am just one among you all. But swear to me a great oath, all of you, that if we come upon a herd of cattle or a great flock of sheep, none of you in the evil folly of his heart will slay any sheep or ox; rather, in peace eat the food which immortal Kirke gave.’

“So I spoke, and immediately they swore to refrain as I commanded them. Now after they had sworn and completed that oath, we halted our well-built ship in the hollow harbor near a well of sweet water, and my companions went out from the ship and skilfully prepared supper. But when they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, afterward they began weeping as they thought about their dear companions whom Skylla had snatched from out of the hollow ship and devoured. Then deep sleep came upon them amid their weeping.

When it was the third watch of the night⁴ and the stars had passed to the other side of the sky, Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, roused against them an angry wind with a terrible storm and covered land and sea alike in clouds, and night sped down from heaven. Now when early Dawn shone forth, rosy-fingered, we beached the ship and dragged it up into a hollow cave, where the lovely dancing grounds and assembly places of the nymphs were. Then I ordered a gathering of my men and spoke in their midst, saying, ‘Friends, since there is still food and drink in the swift ship, let us keep our hands off those cattle, lest some evil thing happen to us. For these are the cattle and the great flocks of a dreadful god, Helios, who oversees and overhears all things.’ So I spoke, and their noble spirits obeyed.

“Then for a whole month the South Wind blew without ceasing, and no other wind arose except the East and the South. Now as long as my companions still had grain and red wine, they avoided the cattle, for they were eager to live. But when the grain from the ship was all used up, they went wandering with barbed hooks in search of game, out of necessity—fish and birds, whatever might come into their hands, for hunger gnawed at their belly. Then at last I left and went up the island to pray to the gods, if perhaps one of them might show me a way of returning. When I had avoided my companions on my way through the island, I washed my hands where there was a shelter from the wind, and prayed to all the gods that hold Olympus. But they shed sweet sleep upon my eyelids. And Eurylochos, meanwhile, laid out evil counsel to my companions: ‘Hear my words, my friends, though you are in a terrible condition. Truly every kind of death is hateful to wretched mortals, but to die of hunger and in that way meet doom is most pitiful of all. No, come, we will drive off the best of the cattle of Helios and will sacrifice to the immortal gods who keep wide heaven. And if we may yet reach Ithaka, our own country, immediately will we build a rich shrine to Helios Hyperion, and into it we will bring countless choice offerings. But if he is angry

4 The Greek says, “in the last third of the night,” so the period is roughly 2am–6am in an average twelve-hour night. In the next clause, “the other side of the sky” refers to the second half of the stars’ nightly journey across the sky from east to west, that is, their position from midnight to morning.

for his straight-horned cattle and desires to wreck our ship, and the other gods follow his desire, I would rather lose my life with one gulp of the waves than be slowly starved to death on a deserted island.’

“So spoke Eurylochos, and the rest of the company agreed with him. Immediately they drove off the best of the cattle of Helios that were close at hand, for the great cattle with shambling gait and broad brows were feeding close to the dark-prowed ship. Then they stood around the cattle and prayed to the gods, plucking fresh leaves from an oak with lofty boughs, for they had no white barley on board the decked ship. Now after they had prayed and cut the throats of the cattle and skinned them, they cut out slices of the thighs and wrapped them in the fat, making a double fold, and on that they laid raw flesh. Yet they had no pure wine to pour over the flaming sacrifices, but they made offerings with water and roasted the entrails over the fire. After the thighs were completely consumed, and they had tasted the inner parts, they cut the rest up into small pieces and roasted them on spits. At the same time deep sleep left my eyelids, and I went down to the swift ship and the sea shore. But on my way as I came close to the curved ship, the sweet smell of the fat surrounded me, and I groaned and spoke out before the immortal gods, ‘Father Zeus, and all you other blessed gods that live forever, indeed, you have lulled me with a pitiless sleep to my undoing, and my companions remaining behind have conceived a terrible deed.’

“Then Lampetia⁵ of the long robes came swiftly to Helios Hyperion with the news that we had slain his cattle. And immediately he spoke with an angry heart among the Immortals, ‘Father Zeus, and all you other blessed gods that live forever, I beg you to take vengeance on the companions of Odysseus, son of Laertes, who have insolently slain my cattle in which I rejoiced as I went toward the starry heaven, and when I turned earthward again from the firmament. And if they do not pay me full atonement for the cattle, I will go down to Hades and shine among the dead.’

5 This is one of the nymphs mentioned in line 132 who are guardians of the sacred cattle of the island. Her name means “shining” or “brilliant.”

“And Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, answered him, saying, ‘Helios, shine on amidst the immortal gods and amid mortal men upon the earth, the grain-giver. But for my part, I will soon strike their swift ship with my white bolt and break it in pieces in the midst of the wine-dark deep.’ This I heard from Kalypso of the fair hair, and she said that she herself had heard it from Hermes the Messenger.

“But when I had come down to the ship and to the sea, I went up to my companions and rebuked every one of them, but we could find no remedy—the cattle were dead and gone. And soon after that, the gods showed signs and wonders to my company: the skins were creeping, and the flesh bellowing upon the spits, both the roasted and raw, and there was a sound like the voice of cattle.

“Then for six days my beloved companions feasted on the best of the cattle of Helios which they had driven off. But when Zeus, son of Kronos, had brought on the seventh day, then the wind ceased to blow with a rushing storm, and at once we climbed the ship and launched into the broad sea, when we had set up the mast and hoisted the white sails.

“Now when we left that island, and no other land appeared, only sky and sea, then the son of Kronos stopped a dark cloud above the hollow ship, and beneath it the deep darkened. And the ship ran on her way no longer, for suddenly the shrilling West Wind came, with the rushing of a great tempest, and the blast of wind snapped the two forestays of the mast, and the mast fell backward, and all the gear dropped into the bilge. And on the rear part of the ship the mast struck the head of the pilot and broke all the bones of his skull, and like a diver he dropped down from the deck, and his brave spirit left his bones. At the same time Zeus thundered and cast his bolt upon the ship, and she reeled all over, struck by the bolt of Zeus, and was filled with sulfur, and my companions fell out of the vessel. They were carried around the black ship on the waves like sea-gulls, and the god robbed them of their returning.

“But I kept pacing through my ship, till the surge loosened the sides from the keel, and the wave swept her along, stripped of her rigging, and broke her mast clean off at the keel. Now the backstay

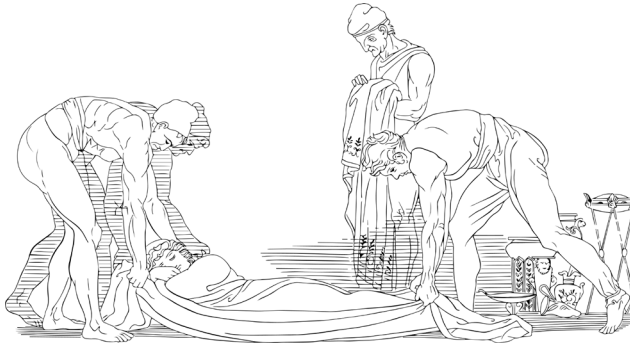
made of an oxhide had been flung onto it; with that I lashed together the keel and mast, and, sitting on that, I was carried by the ruinous winds.

“Then indeed the West Wind ceased to blow with a rushing storm, and the South Wind came swiftly, bringing sorrow to my soul, seeing that I might travel back that space of sea to deadly Charybdis. All the night I was carried, but with the rising of the sun I came to the rock of Skylla and to dread Charybdis. Now she had sucked down her salt sea-water when I was swung up high to a tall fig-tree to which I clung like a bat and could find no sure hold for my feet or place to stand, for the roots spread far below, and the branches hung high out of reach, long and large, and overshadowed Charybdis. Steadfastly I clung till she spewed up the mast and keel again, and I longed for them, but they came very late. At the hour when a man rises up from the assembly and goes to supper, one who judges the many quarrels of the young men that seek for justice, at that same hour those timbers came into view from out of Charybdis. And I let myself drop down, hands and feet, and plunged heavily into the midst of the waters beyond the long timbers, and, sitting on these, I rowed hard with my hands. But the Father of gods and of men kept me from seeing Skylla again or else I would never have escaped from utter destruction.

“From there for nine days I was carried, and on the tenth night the gods brought me close to the island of Ogygia where Kalypso of the braided tresses lives, an awesome goddess of mortal speech, who took me in and treated me kindly. But why repeat this entire tale? For just yesterday I told it to you and to your noble wife in your house, and I do not like to tell a story twice when it has already been clearly told.”⁶

6 This is obviously for rhetorical effect—one of the most important aspects of epic poetry is that audiences delighted in hearing the same stories many times.

Book XIII: Odysseus Lands in Ithaka



Odysseus is Laid Down on the Coast of Ithaka by the Phaiakians

The Phaiakians Convey Odysseus to Ithaka

So he spoke, and dead silence fell on them all, and they were spell-bound throughout the shadowy halls. At that, Alkinoös answered him and spoke, saying, “Odysseus, now that you have come to my high house with its bronze floor, I think that you will never be forced aside from your way before you return, although you have suffered terribly. And for each man among you that in these halls of mine always drinks the dark wine of the elders and listens to the singer, this is my word and command. Garments for the stranger are already laid up in a polished chest with cleverly-worked gold, and all other such gifts as the counselors of the Phaiakians brought here. Come now, let each of us give him a great tripod and a cauldron, and we in turn will gather goods among the people to make up for it, for it would be harsh if any man should give without repayment.”

So spoke Alkinoös, and the saying pleased them well. Then each went to his own house to lie down to rest, but as soon as early Dawn shone forth rosy-fingered, they hastened to the ship, carrying the bronze, the joy of men. And the mighty king Alkinoös himself went

through the ship and diligently stowed the gifts beneath the benches, so that they would not hinder any of the crew in their rowing when they labored at their oars. Then they went to the house of Alkinoös and began feasting. And the mighty king Alkinoös sacrificed before them an ox to Zeus, the son of Kronos, who dwells in the dark clouds, who is lord of all. And when they had burnt the thigh pieces, they shared the glorious feast and were joyful, and among them the divine singer Demodokos, whom the people honored, played on his harp. But Odysseus kept turning his head toward the splendor of the sun, as one eager to hasten its going down, for indeed he longed to return. And just as when a man longs for his supper, a man for whom all day long two dark oxen drag through the fallow field the jointed plow, and the sinking of the sun is welcome to such a man, because he can go to supper, for his knees have grown weak, in the same way, the sinking of the sunlight was welcome to Odysseus. Then immediately he spoke among the Phaiakians, masters of the oar, and most of all to Alkinoös he made known his word, saying, “My lord Alkinoös, most notable of all the people, pour out the drink offering and send me safe upon my way, and as for you, fare well. For now I have all that my heart desired, an escort and loving gifts. May the gods of heaven give me good fortune with them, and may I find my noble wife in my home with my friends unharmed, while you, for your part, remain here and make your wedded wives and children happy, and may the gods grant all kinds of good, and may no evil come near the people!”

So he spoke, and they all agreed to it and desired to send the stranger on his way, for he had spoken rightly. Then mighty Alkinoös spoke to the attendants, “Pontonoös, mix the bowl and serve out the wine to all in the hall that we may pray to Father Zeus and send the stranger on his way to his own country.”

So he spoke, and Pontonoös mixed the honey-hearted wine and served it to all in turn. And there as they sat they poured it out before the blessed gods that rule wide heaven. Then great Odysseus rose up and placed in Arete’s hand the two-handled cup and, lifting his voice, spoke winged words to her: “Fare well, O queen, all the days

of your life, till old age and death come, that visit all mankind. But I go homeward; may you in your house rejoice in your children and your people and Alkinoös the king.”

With that, great Odysseus stepped over the threshold. And with him mighty Alkinoös sent an attendant to guide him to the swift ship and the sea shore. And Arete sent some handmaidens of her household: one bearing a fresh robe and a tunic and another to carry the strong chest and still another carried bread and red wine. When they had come down to the ship and to the sea, immediately the good men of the escort took these things and stowed all the food and drink in the hollow ship. Then they laid out for Odysseus a rug and a sheet of linen on the decks of the hollow ship, in the rear part of it, so that he could sleep soundly. Then he too climbed aboard and lay down in silence, while they sat on the benches in order and untied the rope from the pierced stone. As soon as they leaned backwards and tossed the sea-water with the oar blade, a deep sleep fell upon his eyelids, a sound sleep, very sweet, like death. And just as on a plain a yoke of four stallions comes springing all together beneath the whip, leaping high and speedily covering the ground, in the same way leaped the stern of that ship, and the dark wave of the sounding sea rushed mightily in the wake, and she ran with constant certainty on her way, and even a circling hawk, the swiftest of winged things, could not keep pace with her. In this way she lightly sped and cut the waves of the sea, bearing a man whose counsel was like the counsel of the gods, one who had suffered great sorrow of heart in passing through the wars of men and the grievous waves, but now he slept in peace, forgetful of all that he had suffered.

So when the star¹ came up that is brightest of all and always heralds the light of early Dawn, then the seafaring ship drew near the island. There is in the land of Ithaka a certain harbor sacred to

1 The planet Venus, sometimes rising before the sun in the east as the morning star and sometimes setting behind the sun in the west as the evening star. It was called “Hesperus” by the Greeks and “Vesper” by the Romans. The Greeks thought of the planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), and even the sun and moon in some cases, as stars—the word *planet* means “wanderer,” a wandering star, constantly changing its position relative to the other stars, as opposed to the fixed stars of the constellations whose relationship to each other never alters.

Phorkys,² the ancient one of the sea, and near it are two capes made of sheer cliffs which slope to the sea on the harbor's side and break the mighty wave that storm winds roll outside, but inside the decked ships ride unmoored when once they have reached the anchorage. At the harbor's head is a long-leaved olive tree, and close by is a pleasant, shadowy cave, sacred to the nymphs called the Naiads.³ And in it are mixing bowls and jars of stone and beehives. And there are great looms of stone on which the nymphs weave garments of purple, a marvel to behold, and waters continually spring up. There are two gates to the cave, one facing toward the North Wind where men may go down, but the portals toward the South are for the gods, where men may not enter; it is the way of the immortals.⁴

There they ran their ship, having knowledge of that place, and the vessel ran ashore full speed, half her keel's length, so well was she driven onward by the hands of the oarsmen. Then they came out of the ship onto the land, and they lifted Odysseus out of the hollow ship, just as he was in the sheet of linen and the bright rug, and laid him, still heavy with slumber, on the sand. And they took out the goods which the lordly Phaiakians had given him on his homeward way by the grace of great-hearted Athene. They set these in a heap by the trunk of the olive tree, a little away from the road, lest some way-faring man, before Odysseus awakened, should come and steal them. Then they departed homeward again. But the Shaker of the Earth did not forget his threats against godlike Odysseus, and he inquired into the counsel of Zeus, saying, "Father Zeus, I will no longer be

2 An ancient sea-god who, according to some ancient authors, fathered Medusa, the Sirens, and Skylla.

3 The Naiads were nymphs of fresh, flowing water, like springs and rivers. Nymphs of trees were called Dryads, and nymphs of the mountains were called Oreads. In Greek mythology, nymphs were relatively benign female spirits inhabiting aspects of nature.

4 The Cave of the Nymphs and especially its two gates were interpreted allegorically by the Neo-Platonists, especially Porphyry in the late third century AD, who had an incalculable influence on later Roman, medieval, and Renaissance thought. Porphyry interpreted the gates according to the zodiac, saying the gate of men was the constellation of Cancer, where the sun was at the summer solstice in ancient times (though now the sun is in Taurus at the solstice). Souls coming to be incarnated in bodies came to earth through a hole in Cancer (there is a "thin" spot, actually the Beehive Cluster, in the middle of the constellation). Souls departing at death exited earth through the constellation Capricorn, which is directly opposite Cancer in the zodiacal circle.

worshiped among the immortal gods, when mortal men disregard me, the Phaiakians, who are of my own lineage. I said that after much suffering Odysseus would come home, for I did not intend to rob him utterly of his return, since you had promised it and given assent, but look, in his sleep they have carried him in a swift ship over the sea and set him down in Ithaka and given him measureless gifts, bronze and plenty of gold and woven garments, so much treasure, such as Odysseus never would have won for himself out of Troy if he had returned unhurt with the share of the spoil that came to him.”

And Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, answered him, saying, “Shaker of the Earth, of widest power, what a word you have spoken! The gods in no way dishonor you; it would be harsh to dishonor our eldest and our best. But if any man, giving place to his own stoutness and strength, does not hold you in reverence, you may always have your revenge for it, even in time to come. Do as you wish and as it seems good to you.”

Then Poseidon, the Shaker of the Earth, answered him: “I would immediately do just as you say, O god of the dark clouds, but I always remember your anger and restrain myself. Nevertheless, now I am eager to strike a great ship of the Phaiakians, as she comes home from a convoy on the misty deep, so that they will learn to restrain their hands and stop escorting men by sea, and I wish to overwhelm their city with a great mountain.”

And Zeus, the Gatherer of the Clouds, answered him, saying, “Friend, hear now what seems best in my sight. At that time when the people are all looking out from the city at the ship on her way, turn her into a stone close by the land, a stone in the likeness of a swift ship, so that all mankind may marvel, and overwhelm their city with a great mountain.”

Now when Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, heard this saying, he went on his way to Scheria where the Phaiakians dwell. There he remained awhile; the seafaring ship came near, lightly sped on her way. Then the Shaker of the Earth came, and he struck her and turned her into a stone and rooted her far below with the down-stroke of his hand, and he departed from there again.

Then the Phaiakians of the long oars, famous mariners, spoke winged words to one another and would speak in this way, each man looking to his neighbor, “Who is this that bound our swift ship on the deep sea as she drove homewards, just as she was in plain sight?”

So they would speak, but they knew nothing of how these things were ordained. And Alkinoös addressed and spoke among them, “Truly the ancient oracles of my father have come home to me. He used to say that Poseidon was jealous of us, for we give safe conduct to everyone. He said that the day would come when the god would strike a fair ship of the Phaiakians, as she came home from a convoy on the misty deep, and overshadow our city with a great mountain. So that ancient one would speak, and now all these things have come true. But let us all give ear and do according to my word. Stop conveying mortals, when any come to our town, and let us sacrifice to Poseidon twelve choice bulls, if perhaps he may take pity and not overwhelm our city with a great mountain.”

So he spoke, and they were dismayed and prepared the bulls. And so they prayed to the lord Poseidon, the princes and counselors of the land of the Phaiakians, as they stood around the altar.

Athene Appears to Odysseus

Now great Odysseus woke where he slept on his native land, but he did not know where he was, having been so long away, for the goddess, Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, had shed a mist around him, so that she might keep him from being discovered and could explain everything to him, and so his wife would not know him, or his townsmen and relatives, before the suitors had paid for all their transgressions. Therefore, everything looked strange to the lord of the land—the long paths and the sheltering harbors and the steep rocks and the trees in their bloom. So he leaped up and stood and looked around at his native land, and then he moaned and struck both his thighs with his hands, and lamenting he spoke, saying, “Woe

is me, to what mortals' land have I come? Are they evil and wild and unjust or hospitable and of a god-fearing mind? Where will I take all this treasure? Indeed, where will I myself go? If only the treasure had remained with the Phaiakians where it was, and I had come to some other of the mighty princes who would have treated me kindly and sent me on my way. But now I do not know where to store these things, but I do not wish to leave them behind, in case other men steal them. Ah then, they are not so wise or just, the princes and counselors of the Phaiakians, who carried me to a strange land. Indeed, they promised to bring me to shining Ithaka, but they did not do it. May Zeus, the god of suppliants, repay them, seeing that he watches over all men and punishes the transgressor! But I will count up these goods and take care of them, in case the men have gone and have taken anything away upon their hollow ship."

With that he began to count up the lovely tripods and the cauldrons and the gold and the nobly woven garments, and from all these nothing was missing, but he mourned for his own country, as he walked downcast by the shore of the sounding sea and lamented sorrowfully. Then Athene came near him in the appearance of a young man, the herdsman of a flock, a fine-looking young man like the son of a king. And she had a well-made mantle that fell in two folds around her shoulders, and beneath her smooth feet she had sandals bound, and a javelin was in her hands. Odysseus rejoiced as he saw her and came over opposite her, and, uttering his voice, he spoke winged words to her: "Friend, since you are the first that I have come upon in this land, greetings, and may you meet me with no ill will! Save me and my wealth too, for I beseech you as though to a god, and I come to your dear knees. Tell me truly so that I may know: what land, what people is this? What men live here? Surely, I think, it is some shining island, or a shore of the rich mainland that lies next to the sea."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him in return, "You are witless, stranger, or you have come from very far, if truly you ask about this land; it is not so very nameless but rather many men know it, both all those who live toward the dawning and the sun

and those who live over opposite the light toward the shadowy west. Indeed, it is rough and not fit for driving horses, yet it is not a poor island, though it is narrow. For there is grain beyond reckoning, and wine is found also, and the rain and fresh dew always fall on it. It is good for feeding goats and cattle; all kinds of wood are here and un-failing springs. Therefore, stranger, the name of Ithaka has reached even to Troy-land, which men say is far from this Achaian shore.”

So she spoke, and steadfast great Odysseus was happy and rejoiced in his own country, because of the word of Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis. And he uttered his voice and spoke winged words to her; yet he did not speak the truth but held back the word that was on his lips, for his wit within his breast was quick and crafty: “I have heard of Ithaka, even in broad Krete, far over the seas, and now have I come here myself with my treasure. And I left just as much to my children when I turned outlaw because of the slaying of the dear son of Idomeneus, swift-footed Orsilochos who in wide Krete was the swiftest of all men that live by bread. He would have robbed me of all that treasure of Troy, for which I had endured pain of heart in enduring the wars of men and the terrible waves of the sea, because I would not do a favor to his father and make myself his follower in the land of the Trojans but commanded other men of my own. So I struck him with a bronze-shod spear as he came home from the field, lying in ambush for him by the road with one of my companions. And dark midnight held the heavens, and no man noticed us, and secretly I took his life. After I had slain him with the sharp spear, immediately I went to a ship and begged the noble Phoenicians and gave them treasure to their hearts’ desire. I beseeched them to take me on board and land me at Pylos or at goodly Elis where the Epeians rule. Nevertheless, the power of the wind drove them out of their course against their will, nor did they deliberately treat me falsely. From there we were driven wandering and came here by night. And with much labor we rowed into harbor, not even thinking of supper, though we need it badly, but just as we were we stepped ashore and lay down. Then over me there came sweet slumber in my weariness, but they took my goods out of the

hollow ship and set them beside me where I lay upon the sands. Then they went on board and departed for the fair-lying land of Sidon, while as for me I was left stricken at heart.”

So he spoke, and the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, smiled and caressed him with her hand, and immediately she changed into the appearance of a woman, lovely and tall and skilled in splendid handiwork. And uttering her voice, she spoke winged words to him, “Anyone who would outdo you in all kinds of deception must be very clever and tricky, even if it were a god who encountered you. Hardy man, subtle of wit, never having enough of trickery, so you could not cease from your deceptions and treacherous words which you love from the bottom of your heart, even in your own country!⁵ But let us not talk about these things anymore, since both of us are skilled in deceit, for you of all men are far the best in counsel and in conversation, and I in the company of all the gods win fame for my wit and cleverness. Yet you did not know that I was Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, who am always with you and guard you in all adventures. Yes, and I caused you to be beloved by all the Phaiakians. And now I have come here to contrive a plot with you and to hide the treasure, which by my counsel and design the noble Phaiakians gave you on your homeward way. And I wish to tell you how great a measure of trouble you are ordained to suffer in your well-built house. But harden your heart, for it must be this way, and tell no one, either man nor woman of all the people, that you have indeed returned from wandering but in silence endure much sorrow, submitting yourself to the spitefulness of men.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “It is hard, goddess, for a mortal man who meets you to recognize you, however wise he might be, for you take upon yourself every shape. But I know this well, that you were always kind to me, so long as we sons of the Achaians made war in Troy. But as soon as we had sacked the steep city of Priam and had gone on board our ships, and the god had scattered the Achaians, I have not seen you, daughter of Zeus,

5 Notice that Athene is not rebuking Odysseus but proud of him!

nor seen you coming on board my ship, to fend off sorrow from me, but I wandered always with a stricken heart, until the gods delivered me from my evil situation, the day when, within the rich land of the men of Phaiakia, you comforted me with your words and led me to their city yourself. And now I beg you in your father's name to tell me, for I do not think I have come to shining Ithaka, but I roam over some other land, and I think that you speak this way to mock me and deceive my mind. Tell me whether in truth I have come to my own beloved country."

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him. "Thoughts like this are always in your breast. Therefore, I will not leave you in your grief, so courteous you are, so ready of wit and so prudent. Any other man on his return from wandering would very gladly have hurried to see his children and his wife in his halls, but you have no wish to learn or to hear anything, till you have further tested your wife, who sits as always in her halls, and the nights and days pass wearily for her as she sheds her tears. But I never doubted this but always knew it in my heart that you would come home with the loss of all your company. Yet I tell you, I had no desire to be at odds with Poseidon, my own father's brother, who stored up anger in his heart against you, being angry at the blinding of his dear son. But come, and I will show you the land of Ithaka that you may be convinced. Look, here is the harbor of Phorkys, the ancient one of the sea, and here at the harbor's head is the olive tree with spreading leaves, and close by it is the pleasant, shadowy cave, sacred to the nymphs who are called the Naiads. And look, over there is the roofed cavern, where you offered many acceptable great sacrifices to the nymphs, and look, this hill is Neritos, all covered in forest."

With that the goddess scattered the mist, and the land appeared. Then steadfast, great Odysseus was rejoiced in his own land, and he kissed the earth, the grain-giver. And then he prayed to the nymphs and lifted up his hands, saying, "You Naiad nymphs, daughters of Zeus, I never thought I would look upon you again, but now I greet you in my loving prayers. Yes, and I will give gifts as I did before, if

the daughter of Zeus, driver of the spoil, allows by her grace that I may live and bring my dear son to manhood.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke to him again, “Take courage and do not let your heart be anxious about these things. But come, let us immediately set your treasure in the secret place of the wondrous cave, so that they may remain safe for you. And let us take counsel about how everything can be done for the best.”

With that the goddess plunged into the shadowy cave, searching out the chambers of the cavern. Meanwhile, Odysseus brought up his treasure, the gold and the unyielding bronze and lovely woven garments, which the Phaiakians gave him. And he carefully set all these things inside, and Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, set a stone against the door of the cave. Then the two sat down by the trunk of the sacred olive tree and devised death for the evil suitors. And the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, spoke first, saying, “Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, consider how you might lay your hands on the shameless suitors, who for three years have lorded it through your halls as they woo your godlike wife and offer the gifts of courting. And she, always mourning for your return, gives hope to all of them and makes promises to every man and sends them messages, but her mind is set on other things.”

Athene Transforms Odysseus

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Truly I would have perished in my halls like the evil fate of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, if you had not told me everything accurately. So then, weave some counsel by which I may take revenge on them, and you yourself stand by me and put great boldness of spirit into me, just as in the day when we loosened the shining crown of Troy. If only you will stand by me with such eagerness, grey-eyed goddess, I would do battle even with three hundred men, with you my lady and goddess, if you by your grace helped me all the while.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him, “Indeed, I will be near you nor will I forget you whenever we come to this toil, and I think that some of the suitors who consume your livelihood will spatter the boundless earth with blood and brains. But now I will make you so that no man will know you. I will wither your fair skin on your supple limbs and thin the yellow hair from off your head and wrap you in a foul garment, the kind that anyone would shudder to see a man wearing. And I will dim your eyes, before so bright, so that you will seem very ill-fitting in the sight of all the suitors and of your wife and son whom you left in your halls. And you yourself go first to the swineherd who tends your swine, loyal and like-minded with you, who loves your son and faithful Penelope. You will find him sitting near the swine as they are feeding near the rock of Corax and the spring Arethousa, and there they eat abundantly of acorns and drink the black water, things that make pigs grow fat and appealing. Remain there and sit by the pigs and find out everything till I have gone to Sparta, the land of fair women, to summon Telemachos, your beloved son, Odysseus, who has gone to spacious Lakedaimon, to the house of Menelaos, to seek news about you, whether you are still alive.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Why did you not tell him, since you know everything? Was it, perhaps, that he too may wander in sorrow over the rich seas, and that others may consume his livelihood?”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, answered him, “No, do not let him be heavy on your heart. I myself was his guide, so that by going there he might win a good reputation. He is not suffering, but he sits in peace in the palace of the son of Atreus and has boundless wealth around him. Truly the suitors with their black ship lie in wait and are eager to slay him before he comes to his own country. But this, I think, will never happen. Sooner will the earth close over some of the suitors who consume your livelihood.”

With that, Athene touched him with her wand. She withered his smooth flesh on his supple limbs and thinned his yellow hair from off his head, and over his limbs she made the skin of an old man, and

she dimmed his two eyes, before that so clear. And she changed his garments to a foul cloak and tunic, torn and filthy garments stained with foul smoke. And over it all she clothed him with the great bald hide of a swift stag, and she gave him a staff and a poor tattered bag and a cord to hang it with.

And after the two had made this plan together, they parted, and she went to noble Lakedaimon to summon the son of Odysseus.

Book XIV: Odysseus is Hosted by Eumaios



Odysseus Conversing with Eumaios

Eumaios Welcomes Odysseus

But Odysseus went out from the harbor by the rough track, up through the wooded country and through the heights, where Athene had shown him that he would find the noble swineherd who cared for Odysseus' goods, best of all his servants.

He found him sitting in the forecourt of the house, where his courtyard was built high, in a place with a wide view; it was a great and lovely court, with a wide space all around it. The swineherd had built this by himself for the swine of his master who was far away and his mistress, and the old man Laertes did not know about it. He had built it with stones from the quarry and surrounded it with a fence of white thorn, and he had split an oak to the dark core, and outside it he had driven stakes the whole length of it on either side, set thick and close, and inside the courtyard he made twelve sties close by one another to be beds for the swine, and in each sty fifty swine that sleep on the ground were penned, brood swine, but the boars slept outside. Now these were far fewer in number, the godlike suitors diminishing them at their feasts, for the swineherd always sent

in the best of all the fatted hogs. And their number was three hundred and sixty. And four dogs always slept near them, fierce as wild beasts, dogs which the swineherd, a master of men, had bred. Now he was fitting sandals to his feet, cutting a good brown oxhide, while the rest of his companions, three in all, were out in various places with the herds of swine, while the fourth he had sent to the city to take a boar to the proud suitors, being forced to, so that they might sacrifice it and satisfy their soul with meat.

Suddenly the baying dogs saw Odysseus, and they ran at him yelping, but Odysseus warily sat down and let the staff fall from his hand. There by his own homestead he would have been injured badly, but the swineherd with quick feet hurried after them and sped through the outer door and let the leather fall from his hand. He shouted at the hounds and drove them this way and that with a shower of stones, and he spoke to his master, saying, “Old man, indeed the dogs were about to be the death of you all of a sudden, which would have brought shame on me. The gods have given me enough other pains and griefs. Here I sit, mourning and sorrowing for my godlike master, and raise the fat swine for others to eat, while he, longing for food perhaps, wanders over some land and city of men of a strange speech, if he still lives and sees the sunlight. But come with me, let us go to the house, old man, so that when your heart is satisfied with bread and wine, you too may tell your tale and declare from where you come and how many sorrows you have endured.”

With that the noble swineherd led him to the house and took him in and set him down, and he strewed beneath him thick brushwood and spread on it the hide of a shaggy wild goat, wide and soft, which served for a mattress. And Odysseus rejoiced that he had been given such a welcome and spoke and addressed him, “O stranger, may Zeus and all the other immortal gods grant to you your dearest wish, since you have received me heartily!”

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you answered him, saying, “My guest, it would be an impious thing for me to dishonor a stranger, even a poorer man than you, for all strangers and beggars are from Zeus, and a little gift from someone like us is precious for this is the

way with servants, who are always in fear when young masters like ours rule over them. For surely the gods have delayed the returning of my master, who would have loved me greatly and given me something of my own, a house and a parcel of ground and a beautiful wife, such as a kind master gives to his man who has worked hard for him and the work of whose hands a god has increased, just as he increases this work of mine where I live. So my master would have rewarded me greatly, had he grown old at home. But he has perished, as I wish all the lineage of Helen had perished completely, since she has caused the loosening of many a man's knees. For he too departed to Ilios of the noble horses, to regain honor for Agamemnon by warring with the Trojans."

With that he quickly bound up his tunic with his belt and went on his way to the sties where the herds of swine were penned. From there he brought out two and slaughtered them both, and he singed them and cut them into small pieces and spitted them. And when he had roasted them, he brought it and set it by Odysseus, all hot as it was upon the spits, and he sprinkled on it white barley-meal. Then in a bowl of ivy wood he mixed the honey-sweet wine and sat opposite him and urged him on: "Eat now, stranger, such food as servants have, the flesh of suckling pigs, but the fatted hogs the suitors devour, for they do not regard the wrath of the gods or any pity. Indeed, the blessed gods do not love presumptuous deeds, but they honor justice and the righteous acts of men. Yet strong fear of the wrath of the gods fall even on the hearts of enemies and unfriendly men that land on a strange coast, and Zeus grants them spoil, and they load their ships and depart for home. But these men know a little something, for they have heard an oracle of a god, the news of our master's evil end, since they are not inclined to court rightly nor to go back to their own homes, but at leisure they devour our wealth with insolence, and now there is no stopping it. For every day and every night that comes from Zeus, they sacrifice not just one or two victims only, and they draw and taste wine riotously. For certainly his livelihood was great beyond reckoning; no lord in the dark mainland had so much, nor any in Ithaka itself; no, not twenty men together

have wealth so great, and I will tell you the sum of it. He has twelve herds of cattle on the mainland, just as many flocks of sheep, and as many droves of swine, as many ranging herds of goats that his own shepherds and strangers pasture. And ranging herds of goats, eleven in all, graze here by the edges of the island with trusty men to watch them. And day after day each of these men drives one of the flock to the suitors, whichever seems the best of the fatted goats. But as for me I guard and keep these swine, and I choose out for them as well as I can, the best of the swine and send it from here.”

So he spoke, but Odysseus did keep eagerly eating meat and drinking wine in silence, all the while sowing seeds of destruction for the suitors. Now when he had eaten well and comforted his heart with food, then the herdsman filled for him the bowl out of which he was accustomed himself to drink, and he gave it to him, brimming with wine, and he took it and rejoiced in his heart and, uttering his voice, spoke winged words to him, “My friend, who bought you with his wealth, a man so exceedingly rich and mighty as you say? You said that he perished to regain honor for Agamemnon; tell me, if perhaps I may know him, since he is such a man as you say. For I think Zeus and the other immortal gods know whether I may bring news of having seen him, for I have wandered far.”

Then the swineherd, a master of men, answered him, “Old man, no wanderer who may come here and bring news of him can convince the ear of his wife and his dear son, but vagrants easily lie when they need entertainment and do not care about telling the truth. Whoever comes straying to the land of Ithaka, goes to my mistress and speaks words of deceit. And she receives him kindly and lovingly and inquires about everything, and the tears fall from her eyelids as she weeps, as is proper for a woman when her husband has died far away. And soon enough wouldst you too, old man, invent a story if anyone would only give you a mantle and a tunic for clothing. But as for him, dogs and swift birds are already likely to have torn his skin from the bones, and his spirit has left him. Or the fishes have eaten him in the deep, and his bones lie there swathed in sand-drift on the shore. So he has perished far away, but for his friends nothing is fated but

care, for all of them, but mostly for me. For never again will I find a master so gentle, however far I may go, not even if I return again to the house of my father and my mother where at first I was born, and they nourished me themselves and with their own hands they reared me. From now on it is not for them that I sorrow so much, though I long to see them with my eyes in my own country, but longing overwhelms me for Odysseus who is far away. It shames me to speak his name, stranger, even though he is not here, for he loved me greatly and cared for me at heart; indeed, I call him ‘honored master,’ though he is far from here.”

Then steadfast, great Odysseus spoke to him again, “My friend, since you deny it completely and say that he will never come again, and your heart is always slow to believe; therefore, I will tell you, not lightly, but with an oath, that Odysseus will return. And let me have the reward of good news as soon as he comes here to his home. Then clothe me in a mantle and a tunic, noble garments. But before that, although I am terribly in need, I will not take anything, for that man who under the pressure of poverty speaks words of deceit is as hateful to me as the gates of hell. Let Zeus be my witness above all gods, and the hospitable board and the hearth of noble Odysseus where I have come, that all these things will certainly be fulfilled just as I tell you. In this same year Odysseus shall come here; as the old moon wanes and the new is born, he will return to his home and will take vengeance on all who dishonor his wife and noble son.”

Then thou answered, swineherd Eumaios, “Old man, I will not ever pay you this reward of good news, for Odysseus will never come to his home. No, drink in peace, and let us turn our thoughts to other matters, and do not bring these to my mind, for surely my heart within me is sorrowful whenever any man reminds me of my true master. But as for your oath, we will let it go, but, oh that Odysseus would come according to my desire and the desire of Penelope and of that old man Laertes and godlike Telemachos! But now I make a comfortless lament for Telemachos, the boy begotten of Odysseus. When the gods had reared him like a young sapling, and I thought that he would be no worse man among men than his dear father,

glorious in form and face, some god or some man marred his good wits within him, and he went to fair Pylos after news of his father. And now the lordly suitors lie in wait for him on his way home, so that the race of godlike Arkeisios may perish nameless out of Ithaka. Nevertheless, no more about him now, whether he will be captured or whether he shall escape and the son of Kronos stretch out his hand to defend him. But tell me, old man, about your own troubles. And tell me truly, that I may surely know. Who are you of the sons of men, and from where do you come? Where is your city, and where are they who begot you? Tell me on what kind of ship you came, and how did sailors bring you to Ithaka, and who did they claim to be? For in no way do I think that you came here by land.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “I will tell you everything very clearly. If we had food and sweet wine enough to last, while we remain in your hut to feast in quiet while others go to their work, then I could easily talk for a whole year and still not tell the whole story of all the troubles of my spirit, all the sufferings I have had by the will of the gods.

Odysseus Invents a Story

“My lineage is from wide Krete, and I am the son of a wealthy man. And he had many other sons born and bred in the halls, lawfully born of a wedded wife, but the mother who bore me was a concubine bought with a price. Yet Kastor, son of Hylakos, of whose blood I claim to be, gave me no less honor than his lawful sons. At that time he was revered like a god by the Kretans in the land for his wealth and riches and famous sons. Nevertheless, the fates of death carried him away to the house of Hades, and his haughty sons divided his property among them and cast lots for it. But they gave to me a very small gift and allotted me a house, and I took a wife, the daughter of men who had wide lands, because of my bravery, for I was no weakling nor a coward, but now all my might has failed me, yet I think that

you might guess from seeing the stubble what the grain has been, for I have had plenty of trouble. Ares and Athene gave me boldness and courage to hurl through the crush of men, whenever I chose the best warriors for an ambush, sowing the seeds of evil for my enemies; no fear of death was ever in my noble heart, but I would be the first to leap out and slay with the spear whoever of my foes was less swift of foot than I. Such a man I was in war, but I never loved the labor of the field nor keeping the house where children are raised, but galleys with their oars were dear to me, and wars and polished shafts and arrows—cursed things at which others always shudder. But that which the god put in my heart was dear to me, for different men take delight in different deeds. For before ever the sons of the Achaians had ever set foot on the land of Troy, I had nine times been a leader of men and of swift-sailing ships against strange people, and wealth always fell into my hands. I would choose from the spoils all that I wanted, and I won much by lot. So my wealth increased rapidly, and so I grew to be feared and honored among the Kretans. But when Zeus of the far-carrying voice at last crafted that hateful plan which loosened the knees of many a man in death, then the people called on me and on renowned Idomeneus to lead the ships to Ilios, and there was no way to refuse, for the people's voice weighed heavily on us. There we sons of the Achaians warred for nine whole years, and then in the tenth year we sacked the city of Priam and departed homeward with our ships, and a god scattered the Achaians. But Zeus, the Counselor, devised mischief against me, wretched man that I was! For only one month I remained home and rejoiced in my children and my wedded wife and all that I had, but after that my spirit urged me to fit out ships in the best manner and sail to Egypt with my godlike company. I fitted out nine ships and the men were gathered quickly, and then for six days my dear companions feasted, and I gave them many victims for them to sacrifice to the gods and prepare a feast for themselves. But on the seventh day we set sail from wide Krete, with a North Wind fresh and fair, and lightly we ran as though down stream, and no harm came to any ship of mine, but we were safe and sound while the wind and the pilots guided the crafts. And

on the fifth day we came to fair-flowing Aigypptos, and in the river Aigypptos I halted my curved ships. Then I told my dear companions to remain there by the ships and to guard them, and I sent out scouts to find lookout points. But my men did not restrain themselves and gave in to their strength and soon began destroying the beautiful fields of the Egyptians and captured their wives and infant children and killed the men. And the outcry came quickly to the city, and the people, hearing the uproar, came out at daybreak, and the whole plain was filled with foot soldiers and chariots and with the gleam of bronze. And Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, sent an evil panic upon my companions, and none dared to stand and face the enemy, for danger surrounded us on every side. There they killed many of us with the edge of the sword, and others they led away with them alive to work for them against their will. But Zeus put a thought into my heart; if only I had died and met my fate there in Egypt, for sorrow still held me in its house. Immediately I took my well-crafted helmet from my head and the shield from off my shoulders, and I tossed away my spear from my hand, and I went over to the chariots of the king and clasped and kissed his knees, and he saved me and delivered me and, setting me on his own chariot, took me weeping to his home. Truly many lunged at me with their ashen spears, eager to slay me, for indeed they were terribly angry. But the king kept them away and respected the wrath of Zeus, the god of strangers, who most of all the gods is displeased at evil deeds. So for seven whole years I remained with their king and gathered much wealth among the Egyptians, for they all gave me gifts. But when the eighth year came around in due time, there arrived a Phoenician skilled in deceit, a greedy scoundrel, who had already done much mischief among men. He persuaded me with his cunning and took me with him to Phoenicia, where his house and his treasures were. There I remained with him for the space of a full year. But when the months and days were fulfilled, as the year came round and the seasons returned, he set me aboard a seafaring ship for Libya, pretending that I was to convey a cargo there with him, but his intention was to sell me in Libya and get a good price. So I went with him on board, against my will, sus-

pecting evil. And the ship ran before a North Wind fresh and fair, through the middle of the sea toward Krete, and Zeus contrived the destruction of the crew. But when we left Krete, and no land showed in sight but sky and sea only, then the son of Kronos put a dark cloud over the hollow ship, and the sea grew dark beneath it. And in the same moment Zeus thundered and struck his bolt into the ship, and she reeled over, being struck by the bolt of Zeus, and was filled with fire and brimstone,¹ and all the crew fell overboard. And they were carried here and there on the waves like sea-gulls around the black ship, and the god destroyed their return. But at this moment in my suffering, Zeus put into my hands the huge mast of the dark-prowed ship so that I might escape from harm. So I clung to the mast and was carried by the ruinous winds. For nine days I was carried, and on the tenth black night the great rolling wave brought me close to the land of the Thesprotians. There the king of the Thesprotians, the lord Pheidon, took me in warmly, for his dear son found me and raised me by the hand and led me to his house, worn out with toil and the keen air, till he came to his father's palace. And he clothed me in a mantle and a tunic for garments.

"There I heard news of Odysseus, for the king told me that he had hosted him and treated him kindly on his way to his own country, and he showed me all the wealth that Odysseus had gathered, bronze and gold and well-wrought iron; indeed, it would be enough for his children after him even to the tenth generation, so great were the treasures he had stored in the chambers of the king. He had gone, he said, to Dodona² to hear the counsel of Zeus, from

1 Brimstone, meaning "burning stone," is an old word for sulfur. But in certain contexts like this one, the hellish connotations of "brimstone" are more appropriate for the fiery destruction of lightning. At the end of Book 22 and beginning of Book 23, the same word is used but I have rendered it with the more accurate "sulfur" there because of the context. See the footnote about "sulfur" at the end of Book 22.

2 The most ancient Greek oracle, dedicated to Zeus, dating from the second millennium BC, and later second only to the oracle of Apollo at Delphi in importance, it is located in Epirus, in north-western Greece, far from most cities. The prophetesses are said to have discerned the will of Zeus from the whispering of the leaves of the sacred oaks in the grove as the wind moved through. Pilgrims continued to visit until the Christian emperor Theodosius had the last oak cut down in AD 392. According to the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes in the third century BC, Jason's ship, the *Argo*, had the gift of prophecy because one of its timbers came from the grove of Dodona.

the high leafy oak tree of the god, about how he should return to the rich land of Ithaka after a long absence, whether openly or by stealth. Furthermore, he swore in my presence, as he poured the drink offering in his house, that the ship was drawn down to the sea and his companions were ready, who were to convey him to his own beloved country. But before that, he sent me away, for it happened that a ship of the Thesprotians was starting for Doulichion, a land rich in grain. He told them to bring me there with all haste to the king Akastos. But evil counsel concerning me pleased them, so that I still would find greater sorrow. When the seafaring ship had sailed a great way from the land, soon they looked for a way to entrap me in slavery. They stripped me of my garments, my mantle and tunic, and gave me a vile wrap and tunic, tattered garments, those you see now before you, and in the evening they reached the fields of shining Ithaka. There in the decked ship they bound me tightly with a twisted rope, and they went ashore and hurried to take their supper by the sea shore. Meanwhile, the gods themselves easily untied my bands, and, muffling my head with the wrap, I slid down the smooth loading-plank and set my breast to the sea and swam hard with both hands, and very soon I was out of the water and beyond their reach. Then I went up where there was a thicket, a wood in full leaf, and lay there hiding. And they went here and there making a great moan, but when it seemed to them useless to go further in their search, they went aboard their hollow ship again. And the gods themselves hid me easily and brought me near to the homestead of a wise man, for still, I think, I am destined to live on.”

Then you answered him, swineherd Eumaios, “Ah! wretched guest, indeed, you have stirred my heart with the story of all these things, of your sufferings and wanderings. Yet I think you have not spoken everything rightly, and you will never persuade me with your story about Odysseus; why should one in your situation lie for no reason? I myself know well, concerning my master’s return, that he was utterly hated by all the gods, because they did not kill him among the Trojans nor in the arms of his friends, when he had wound up the thread of war. The whole Achaian host would have built him a

barrow, and he would have won great glory for his son for later times, but now the spirits of the storm have shamefully snatched him away. But as for me I live alone by the swine and do not go to the city unless wise Penelope summons me there when news of my master is brought from I know not where. Then all the people sit close around and urgently question the news-bearer, both those who grieve for their long-gone master and those who rejoice in devouring his living without repayment. But I do not care to ask or to inquire, since the day that an Aitolian cheated me with his story, one who had killed a man and wandered over wide lands and came to my homestead, and I treated him kindly. He said that he had seen my master among the Kretans at the house of Idomeneus, mending his ships which the storms had damaged. And he said that he would come home either by the summer or the harvest-time, bringing much wealth with the godlike men of his company. And you too, old man of many sorrows, since some god has brought you to me, do not seek my favor with lies nor give me any such comfort; it is not for this that I honor you and hold you dear, but only for the fear of Zeus, the god of strangers, and for pity for you.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Indeed, your heart within you is slow to believe, seeing that even with an oath I have not persuaded you or found credence with you. But let us make a covenant, and we will have the gods above, who rule Olympos, for witnesses. If your lord returns to his house, put on me a mantle and tunic for garments and send me on my way to Doulichion where I desired to go. But if your master does not return as I have said, have your servants seize me and throw me down from a high rock, so that another beggar in his turn may beware of deceiving.”

And the noble swineherd answered him, saying, “Indeed, stranger, in that way I would get great honor and good fortune among men both now and forever after, if after bringing you to my hut and giving you a stranger’s welcome, I should turn against and kill you and take away your precious life. I would be eager indeed to pray to Zeus, the son of Kronos, after doing that! But now it is supper-time, and I

hope that my friends will quickly return here, so that we may prepare a tasty supper in the house.”

So they spoke to one another. Then the swine and the swineherds came near. And they enclosed the pigs to sleep in their pens, and a mighty din arose as the swine were being stalled. Then the noble swineherd called to his friends, saying, “Bring the best of the swine, so that I may sacrifice it for a guest of mine from a far land, and we too will enjoy it, for we have suffered long and labored hard because of the white-tusked swine, while others devour the fruit of our labor without repayment.”

With that he split logs with the pitiless axe, and the others brought in a well-fattened boar five years of age, and they stood him by the hearth, and the swineherd did not forget the immortal gods, for he had an understanding heart. To begin the sacrifice he threw bristles from the head of the white-tusked boar onto the fire and prayed to all the gods that wise Odysseus might return to his own house. Then he stood up and struck the boar with a piece of oak from his splitting, and the boar gave up his life. Then they cut the throat and singed the carcass and quickly cut it up, and the swineherd took the first portion from all the limbs and laid the raw flesh on the rich fat. Some pieces he threw into the fire after sprinkling them with crushed barley-meal, and they cut the rest up into small pieces and pierced it and spitted and roasted it carefully, then they took it off the spits and heaped it all on platters. Then the swineherd stood up to carve it, for he knew well what was fair, and he cut it all up and divided it into seven portions. When he had prayed, he set one portion aside for the nymphs and for Hermes, son of Maia, and the rest he distributed to each man. He gave Odysseus the portion of honor, the long back of the white-tusked boar, and the soul of his master rejoiced at this honor, and Odysseus of many counsels addressed him, saying, “Eumaios,³ may you be as dear to Father Zeus as you are to me, seeing that you honor a man like me with such a good portion!”

3 It is often pointed out that in the story so far Eumaios has not actually told Odysseus his name. Therefore, it may be that Homer slipped up, or that Odysseus did, or that he is testing Eumaios, who seems either not to notice or is very discreet.

Then you answered, swineherd Eumaios, “Eat, unfortunate stranger, and enjoy what fare as there is here. The god gives one thing then he takes another thing away, just as he pleases, for with him all things are possible.”

So he spoke and made a burnt offering of the sacred parts to the everlasting gods and poured the dark wine for a drink offering and set the cup in the hands of Odysseus, waster of cities, and sat down by his own food. And Mesaulios brought wheat bread to them—a servant that the swineherd had gotten by himself while his master was away, without the knowledge of his mistress and old Laertes; he had bought him from the Taphians with his own resources. So they reached out their hand to the good things spread before them. But after they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, Mesaulios cleared away the bread, and now that they had eaten enough of bread and meat wished to go to their rest.

Odysseus’ Story Wins a Cloak

Now the night came on foul with a dark moon,⁴ and Zeus rained the whole night through, and the great rainy West Wind blew. Then Odysseus spoke among them in order to test the swineherd and see whether he would take off his own mantle and give it to him or tell one of his companions to do it, since he cared for him so greatly, “Listen, Eumaios, and all of you his companions, and I will speak somewhat boastfully; the witless wine moves me, wine which drives even the wisest to sing and to laugh softly and rouses him to dance and makes him to speak out a word which would be better unspoken. Still, now that I have broken into speech, I will not hide anything. If only I were young and my might were steadfast, as in the day when

4 This does not refer to the clouds covering the moon, though they were, but to the phase of the moon. The English phrase “dark of the moon,” referring to the period of the lunar cycle between the full and new moons (the last two quarters) reflects the Greek. Early in this book Homer has Odysseus saying: “In this same year Odysseus shall come here; as the old moon wanes and the new is born, he will return to his home.”

we arranged our ambush and led it beneath Troy! And Odysseus and Menelaos, son of Atreus, were leaders and with them I was a third in command, for they chose me for it. When we had come to the city and the steep wall, we lay near the citadel in the thick brushwood, crouching under our armor among the reeds and the marsh land, and the night came on foul, with frost, as the North Wind went down, while the snow fell from above and crusted us over, bitter cold, and the ice became thick on our shields. Now the others all had mantles and tunics and slept in peace with their shields buckled close around their shoulders, but as I went out I had left my mantle behind with my men, in my folly, thinking that even without it I would not be cold, so I came with only my shield and bright leather tunic. But when it was the third watch of the night and the stars had passed to the other side of the sky, in that hour I spoke to Odysseus, who was near me, and nudged him with my elbow, and he listened immediately, ‘Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, indeed, I shall cease from among living men, for this wintry cold is killing me since that I have no mantle. Some god beguiled me to wear a tunic only, and now there is no way of escape.’

“So I spoke, and he conceived a thought in his heart, such a man as he was in counsel and in fight. He whispered and spoke to me, saying, ‘Be silent now, lest some other Achaians hear you.’ With that, he raised his head upon his elbow and spoke, saying, ‘Listen, friends, a vision from a god came to me in my sleep. We have come very far from the ships; I wish someone would tell Agamemnon, son of Atreus, shepherd of the host, in hopes that he would send to us a greater company from the ships.’

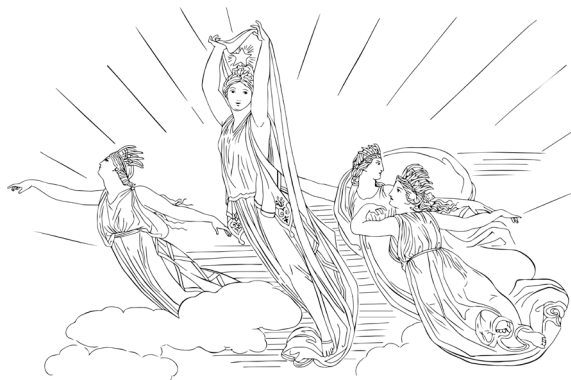
“So he spoke, and Thoas, son of Andraimon, rose up quickly and threw off his purple mantle. And he started to run to the ships, but I lay happily in his garment, and the golden-throned Dawn showed her light. Oh, that I were young as I was then and that my might were still steadfast! Then some of the swineherds in the home-
stead would give me a mantle, both out of love and for pity of a good warrior. But now they scorn me because of the foul garments I wear on my body.”

Then you answered, O swineherd Eumaios: “Old man, the tale that you have told praising him is very good, and so far you have not said anything wrong, nor uttered a word unprofitably. Therefore, tonight you will lack neither garments nor anything else that is due to an unfortunate suppliant when he has met those who can treat him as a friend. But in the morning you will go shuffling in your own rags, for there are not many mantles here or changes of tunic, for each man has only one coat. But when the dear son of Odysseus comes, he himself will give you a mantle and tunic for garments and send you wherever your heart and spirit wish.”

With that he sprang up and made a bed for Odysseus near the fire, and on it he threw skins of sheep and goats. There Odysseus lay down, and Eumaios threw a great, thick mantle over him, which he always had near him for a covering when any terrible storm should arise.

So there Odysseus slept, and the young men slept beside him. But the swineherd was not inclined to lie there in a bed away from the boars. So he prepared himself to go out, and Odysseus was glad, because he took great care for his master’s property while he was far away. First he put his sharp sword around his strong shoulders, then he covered himself in a very thick mantle to keep the wind away; then he took up the fleece of a great and well-fed goat and seized his sharp javelin, to defend himself against dogs and men. Then he went to lie down where the white-tusked boars were sleeping beneath the hollow of the rock in a place of shelter from the North Wind.

Book XV: Telemachos Returns to Ithaka



Rosy-Fingered Dawn

Telemachos Leaves Sparta

Now Pallas Athene went to the wide land of Lakedaimon to remind the noble son of great-hearted Odysseus of his return and to make him hasten his coming. She found Telemachos and the glorious son of Nestor resting in the forecourt of the house of glorious Menelaos. The son of Nestor was overcome with soft sleep, but sweet sleep did not take hold of Telemachos, but through the divine night anxious thoughts about his father kept him wakeful. And grey-eyed Athene stood near him and spoke to him, saying, "Telemachos, it is no longer right for you to wander far from your home, leaving your substance behind you with such wanton men in your house, lest they divide and utterly consume all your wealth, and you will have gone on a useless journey. But hastily rouse Menelaos of the loud war-cry to send you on your way so that you may still find your noble mother in her home. For even now her father and her brethren urge her to marry Eurymachos, for he outdoes all the suitors with his presents and has been greatly increasing his courting gifts. Do not allow her to take any treasure from your house against your will. You

know what the heart of a woman is within her; all her desire is to increase the house of the man who takes her to wife, but of her former children and of her own dear master she has no more memory once he is dead, and she does not ask about him anymore. Go then and place all your goods in the care of the handmaid who seems to you the best, till the day when the gods show to you a glorious bride. Now another word I will tell, and you must keep it in your heart. The noblest of the suitors lie in wait for you, in the strait between Ithaka and rugged Samos, eager to kill you before you come to your own country. But this, I think, will never happen; sooner will the earth close over some of the suitors that consume your livelihood. No, keep your well-crafted ship far from those islands and sail by night as well as day, and he of the immortals who has you in his keeping and protection will send you a fair breeze in your wake. But when you have touched the nearest shore of Ithaka, send your ship and all your companions ahead of you to the city, but you seek first the swineherd who keeps your swine, loyal and at one with you. There rest for the night and tell him to go to the city to bring news of your coming to the wise Penelope, how she has gotten you safely back, and you have come back from Pylos.”

With that, she departed to high Olympos. But Telemachos woke the son of Nestor out of sweet sleep, touching him with his heel and spoke to him, saying, “Wake up, Peisistratos, son of Nestor, bring your solid-hooved horses and yoke them beneath the chariot, that we may move forward on our journey.”

Then Peisistratos, son of Nestor, answered him, saying, “Telemachos, we cannot drive through the dark night, however eager we are to be gone; it will soon be Dawn. Wait till the hero, the son of Atreus, spear-famed Menelaos, brings gifts and sets them on the chariot and speaks to you kindly and sends you on your way. For a guest will remember all the day of his life the host that shows him kindness.”

So he spoke, and soon the golden-throned Dawn came. And Menelaos of the loud war-cry came to them, just risen from his bed by fair-haired Helen. Now when the dear son of Odysseus saw him, he hastened to put his shining tunic on himself, and the hero threw

a great mantle over his mighty shoulders and went out the door, and Telemachos, dear son of divine Odysseus, came up and spoke to Menelaos, saying, “Menelaos, son of Atreus, beloved of Zeus, leader of the people, hasten me away from here to my own dear country, for my heart is eager to go home again.”

Then Menelaos of the loud war-cry answered him, “Telemachos, I will not hold you here a long time when you are eager to return; I would think any host shameful who loves too much or hates too much. Measure is best in all things. He does equal wrong who sends away a guest that would like to remain and who keeps one who is in haste to be gone. Men should treat kindly the present guest and speed the parting. But wait till I bring lovely gifts and set them on the chariot and your own eyes see them, and I bid the women to prepare the midday meal in the halls, out of the good supply they have in the palace. It is honor and glory for us and good for you too that you should have eaten well before you go on your way over vast and limitless lands. What if you are inclined to go through Hellas and mid Argos? I will go with you and yoke horses for you and lead you to the towns of men, and no one will send us away empty-handed, but everyone will give us something to take with us, either a tripod of lovely bronze or a cauldron or two mules or a golden chalice.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Menelaos, son of Atreus, beloved of Zeus, leader of the people, I would rather return to my own land, for I left no one behind to watch over my goods when I departed. I do not wish that I should die on the search for my godlike father, nor that any of the noble inheritance should be lost from my halls.”

When Menelaos of the loud war-cry heard this saying, immediately he urged his wife and maids to prepare the midday meal in the halls, out of the great supply they had nearby. Then Eteoneus, son of Boethoös, came near him, having just risen from his bed, for he had stayed near him. Menelaos of the loud war-cry urged him to kindle the fire and roast the meat, and he listened and obeyed. Then the prince went down into the fragrant treasure chamber, not alone, for Helen went with him, and Megapenthes. Now, when they came to the

place where the treasures were stored, then the son of Atreus took a two-handled cup and bid his son Megapenthes to bring a mixing bowl of silver. And Helen stood by the chests in which lay her robes of skillful needlework which she herself had crafted. Then Helen, the fair lady, lifted one and brought it out, the widest and most beautifully-embroidered of all, and it shone like a star and lay far beneath the rest.

Then they went out through the house till they came to Telemachos, and Menelaos of the fair hair spoke to him, saying, “Telemachos, may Zeus, the Thunderer and the Lord of Hera, bring about your return as your heart desires. And I will give you the noblest and greatest in price of the gifts, the treasures stored in my house. I will give you a mixing bowl beautifully worked; it is all of silver and the rims are finished in gold, the work of Hephaistos; the hero Phaidimos, the king of the Sidonians, gave it to me when his house sheltered me on my coming here. I wish to give you this cup.”

With that, the hero, the son of Atreus, set the two-handled cup in his hands. And strong Megapenthes brought the shining silver bowl and set it before him. Then beautiful Helen came up with the robe in her hands and spoke and addressed him, “Look, I also give you this gift, dear child, a reminder from the hands of Helen, for the day you long for, that of your marriage, for your bride to wear. But meanwhile, let it lie near your beloved mother in her chamber. And may joy go with you to your well-built house and your own country.”

With that she put it into his hands, and he took it and was glad. And the hero Peisistratos took the gifts and laid them in the chest of the chariot and gazed on all of it and was amazed. Then Menelaos of the fair hair led them to the house. The two sat down on chairs and high seats, and a handmaid brought water for their hands in a lovely, golden pitcher and poured it out over a silver basin to wash in and pulled close to their side a polished table. And a solemn woman brought wheat bread and set it by them and laid on the board many delicacies, giving freely of whatever she had nearby. And the son of Boethoös carved the meat and divided the portions, and the son of glorious Menelaos poured out the wine. So they stretched out their

hands to the good things set before them. Now when they satisfied the desire for food and drink, then Telemachos and the glorious son of Nestor yoked the horses and climbed into the inlaid chariot. And they drove out from the gateway and the echoing gallery. After them, Menelaos of the fair hair, the son of Atreus, went out carrying in his right hand a golden cup of honey-hearted wine, so that they could pour a drink offering before they departed. And he stood before the horses and spoke his pledge, “Fare well, noble youths, and greet in my name Nestor, the shepherd of the people, for truly he was gentle to me as a father, while we sons of the Achaians warred in the land of Troy.”

And wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Indeed, beloved of Zeus, we will tell him everything on our arrival even as you say. If only I would find Odysseus in his home when I return to Ithaka and tell him everything, as surely as I go on my way now, having met with all kindness at your hands and take with me many great treasures!” And even as he spoke a bird flew off to his right, an eagle that carried in his claws a great white goose, a tame fowl from the yard, and men and women followed shouting. But the bird drew near them and flew off to the right, across the horses, and those who saw it were glad, and their hearts were all comforted within them. And Peisistratos, son of Nestor, first spoke among them, “Consider, Menelaos, beloved of Zeus, leader of the people, whether god has shown this sign for us two, or for you.”

So he spoke, and the warrior Menelaos pondered on it, how he should answer and interpret it rightly. And long-robed Helen spoke a word, saying, “Hear me, and I will prophesy as the immortals put it into my heart, and as I think it will be accomplished. Even as that eagle came down from the hill, the place of his birth and family, and snatched away the goose that was raised in the house, in the same way shall Odysseus return home after much suffering and long wanderings and take vengeance; even now he may be at home and sowing the seeds of evil for all the suitors.” Then wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “Now may Zeus ordain it so, Zeus the Thunderer and the Lord of Hera. Then I would honor you as a god, even in my home

far away.” He spoke and touched the horses with the lash, and they sped quickly towards the plain, in their eager way through the city. So all day long they pulled the yoke they bore upon their necks. And the sun sank, and all the ways were darkened. And they came to Pherai, to the house of Diokles, son of Ortilochos, the child sired by Alpheios. There they rested for the night, and he gave them the hospitality due to strangers.

Now as soon as early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, they yoked the horses and mounted the inlaid chariot. And they drove out from the gateway and the echoing gallery. And he touched the horses with the whip to start them, and the pair flew onward eagerly. And soon after they reached the steep fortress of Pylos. Then Telemachos spoke to the son of Nestor, saying, “Son of Nestor, in what way might you make me a promise and fulfill my desire? For we claim to be friends because of our fathers’ long friendship. Furthermore, we are equals in age, and this journey will add to our greater affection. Do not take me past my ship, beloved of Zeus, but leave me there, lest the old man keep me in his house against my will, out of his eager kindness, for I must go home quickly.”

So he spoke, and the son of Nestor meditated in his heart how he might both make and fulfill this promise. So as he thought, this seemed best to him. He turned his horses back toward the swift ship and the sea shore and took out the lovely gifts and set them in the back part of the ship, the garments and the gold which Menelaos gave him. Then he called to Telemachos and spoke winged words to him, “Now board the ship quickly and bid all your companions to do the same, before I reach home and bring the old man word. For I know well in my mind and heart that being so wilful of heart he will not let you go, but he himself will come here to summon you to his house, and I do not think that he will go back without you; he will be very angry in spite of your excuses.”

So he spoke and drove the horses with the flowing manes back to the town of the Pylans and came quickly to the halls. And Telemachos called to his companions and commanded them, saying, “Set

the gear in order, my friends, in the black ship, and let us board that we may hasten our journey.”

So he spoke, and they listened and obeyed. Then immediately they boarded and sat down on the benches.

So he was busy with this and praying and making burnt offering to Athene, by the stern of the ship, when there came close to him someone from a far country who had killed a man and was fleeing from Argos. He was a soothsayer, and by his lineage he came of Melampous, who formerly lived in Pylos, mother of flocks, a rich man and one who had a very great house among the Pylans, but afterward he had come to the land of strangers, fleeing from his country and from Neleus, the great-hearted, the proudest of living men, who kept all his goods for a full year against his will. All that time Melampous lay bound in the halls of Phylakos, suffering pain for the sake of the daughter of Neleus and for the terrible blindness of soul which the hard-striking goddess, the Erinys, had laid on him. However, he escaped his fate and drove off the bellowing cattle from Phylake to Pylos and took revenge against godlike Neleus for the foul deed and brought the girl home to his own brother for a wife. He himself went to a country of other men, to Argos, the pasture-land of horses, for it was ordained that he should live there, ruling over many of the Argives. There he married a wife and built himself a huge house and fathered Antiphates and Mantios, two mighty sons. Now Antiphates fathered Oïkles the great-hearted, and Oïkles fathered Amphiaraios, the summoner of armies, whom Zeus, Lord of the aegis, and Apollo loved with a great love. Yet he did not reach old age but died in Thebes because of a woman's gifts. And the sons born to him were Alkmaion and Amphilochos. But Mantios fathered Polyphoides and Kleitos, but it happened that the golden-throned Dawn snatched away Kleitos because of his great beauty, so that he might live with the immortal gods. And Apollo made the great-souled Polyphoides a seer, far the best out of all humans, since Amphiaraios was now dead. He moved his home to Hyperesia, being angry with his father, and here he lived and prophesied to all men.

It was this man's son, Theoklymenos, that now came close and stood by Telemachos. And he found him pouring a drink offering and praying by the swift black ship, and, lifting his voice, he spoke winged words to him: "Friend, since I find you making burnt offerings in this place, I pray you, by your offerings and by the god and then by your own head, and in the name of the men of your company, answer my question truly and do not hide it. Who are you of the sons of men and from where? Where is your city, and where are those who begot you?"

And wise Telemachos answered him, saying, "Stranger, I will tell you everything plainly. I come from Ithaka, and my father is Odysseus, if there ever was such a man, but now he has perished under an evil fate. Therefore, I have taken my companions and a black ship and have gone out to hear news of my father who has been far off for so long."

Then godlike Theoklymenos spoke to him again, "I too have fled from my country, for the killing of one of my own relatives. And many brothers and relatives of the slain man are in Argos, the pastureland of horses, and rule powerfully over the Achaians. Therefore, now I am an exile in order to avoid death and black fate at their hands, for it is my doom to wander among men. Now take me on board ship, since I appeal to you as a fugitive, lest they slay me, for I think they follow hard after me."

And wise Telemachos answered him, saying, "Certainly I will not drive you away from our good ship, if you are willing to come. Join us then, and in Ithaka you will be welcome to whatever we have."

With that, he took from him his spear of bronze and laid it along the deck of the curved ship and boarded the seafaring ship. Then he sat down in the stern and made Theoklymenos sit beside him, and his company untied the ropes. Then Telemachos called to his companions and commanded them to lay hands on the rigging, and speedily they obeyed his call. So they raised the pine mast and set it in the hole of the cross plank and secured it firmly with forestays and hauled up the white sails with twisted ropes of ox-hide. And grey-eyed Athene sent them a favorable breeze, rushing vio-

lently through the clear sky so that the ship might speedily finish her journey over the salt water of the sea. So they passed by Krounoi and Chalkis, a land of fair streams.¹

And the sun set, and all the ways were darkened. And the vessel came close to Pheai, blown before the breeze of Zeus, and then passed noble Elis where the Epeians rule. From there he sailed on further to the Pointed Isles, wondering whether he would escape death or be captured.

Eumaios Tells His Story

Now Odysseus and the noble swineherd were eating in the house, and the other men sat eating with them. When they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, Odysseus spoke among them, to test the swineherd, whether he would still entertain him diligently and urge him to remain there at the house or send him on to the city: “Listen now, Eumaios, and all you others of the company. In the morning I wish to go to the town to beg, so that I do not ruin you and your friends. Now advise me well and lend me a good guide for the road to lead me there, and I will wander through the city alone as I must, if perhaps someone may give me a cup of water and a morsel of bread. Furthermore, I wish to go to the house of divine Odysseus and bring news to wise Penelope and talk with the wanton suitors, if perhaps they might grant me a meal out of the boundless store that they have near them. I might easily do good service among them, anything they wish. I will tell you so pay attention and listen. By the favor of Hermes, the Messenger, who gives grace and glory to all men’s work, no mortal can compete with me in the business of a servant, in building a good fire, in splitting wood, and in carving and

1 This sentence is an example of an interesting phenomenon—lines that show up in no currently existing manuscripts but that are quoted by ancient authors (in this case Strabo, who lived around the time of Christ), which tells us that the lines were indeed part of the Homeric tradition.

roasting meat and in pouring wine, those duties in which common men can serve their betters.”

Then you spoke to him with a heavy heart, swineherd Eumaios, “Stranger, why has such a thought arisen in your heart? Surely you are set on perishing utterly there, if you intend to go into the throng of the suitors, whose outrage and violence reaches even to the iron sky! Their servants are not like you; they are young and brightly dressed in mantles and tunics, and their heads are anointed with oil, and they are fine-looking, and the polished tables are loaded with bread and meat and wine. No, stay here, for no one is annoyed by your presence, neither I nor any of my friends that are with me. But when the dear son of Odysseus comes, he himself will give you a mantle and a tunic for clothing and will send you wherever your heart and spirit urge you to go.”

Then steadfast, great Odysseus answered him, “May you be as dear to Zeus as you are to me, for you brought a stop to my wandering and terrible sorrow! For there is nothing worse for men than roaming, but because of the cursed need of the belly men endure great distress, and wandering and tribulation and pain come upon them. But now, since you keep me here and urge me to wait for his coming, tell me about the mother of divine Odysseus, of his father whom at his departure he left behind on the threshold of old age; are they still alive beneath the sunlight, or already dead and within the house of Hades?”

Then the swineherd, a master of men, spoke to him, “Indeed, stranger, I will plainly tell you about it all. Laertes still lives and constantly prays to Zeus that his life may waste away from his limbs within his halls. For he has terrible sorrow for his son who is far away and for the wise lady, his wife, whose death afflicted him most of all and brought him to old age before his time. She died of grief for her famous son renowned, an evil death, and may no man perish in that way who lives here and is a friend to me in word and deed! So long as she was on the earth, though in much sorrow, I was glad to ask and enquire about her, for she herself had raised me along with long-robed Ktimene, her noble daughter, the youngest of her

children. With her I was reared, and she honored me no less than her own child. But when we both came to the time when desire grows, the flower of age, at that time they sent her to Same and got a great bride-price for her, but my lady clothed me in a mantle and a tunic, lovely garments, and gave me sandals for my feet and sent me out to the field, and she held me dear to her heart. But now I am lacking those things; yet the blessed gods bless the work of my own hands, by which I live. Out of my own substance I have eaten and drunk and given to honored strangers. But from my lady I will hear nothing pleasant, either word or deed, for evil has fallen on her house, a plague of wicked men. Yet servants have a great desire to speak before their mistress and hear news, to eat and drink, and to carry off something with them to the field, such things as always comfort the heart of a servant.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Ah, Eumaios, how far then you wandered from your own country and your parents while you were still a child! But come, tell me this and plainly tell it all. Was a wide-wayed town of men taken and sacked, in which your father and lady mother lived, or did unfriendly men find you alone, tending sheep or cattle, and shipped you here and sold you into the house of your master here, who paid a great price for you?”

Then the swineherd, a master of men, spoke to him, “Stranger, since you ask and question me about it, listen in silence and rejoice and remain here drinking wine. Look, the nights now are very long; there is time to sleep and time to listen and be cheerful. You need not go to bed before the proper time; even too much sleep can vex the spirit. But as for the rest, let anyone whose heart and mind urge him, go out to sleep, and at Dawn let him break his fast and follow our master’s swine. But let us two drink and feast within the house, and each of us take delight in recalling his neighbor’s sorrows, for even the memory of griefs is a joy to a man who has been tested severely and wandered far. Therefore, I will tell you that of which you ask and question me.

“There is a certain island called Syria, if perhaps you have heard of it, over above Ortygia,² and there are the turning-places of the sun. It is not very great in size, though a noble island, rich in herds, rich in flocks, with plenty of grain and wine. Scarcity never enters the land, and no hateful sickness falls on wretched mortals. But when the tribes of men grow old in that city, then Apollo of the silver bow comes, with Artemis, and takes their life with the visitation of his gentle shafts. In that island are two cities, and the whole land is divided between them, and my father was king over the two, Ktesios son of Ormenos, a man like the immortals.

“The Phoenicians came there, the famous mariners and greedy merchant men, with countless trinkets in a black ship. Now in my father’s house there was a Phoenician woman, tall and fair and skilled in bright handiwork; the Phoenicians with their tricks deceived this woman. First, as she was washing clothes, one of them lay with her in love by the hollow ship, for love deceives the minds of women, even the upright. Then he asked her who she was and where she came from, and immediately she showed him the great palace of my father, saying, ‘I came from Sidon, a land rich in bronze, and I am the daughter of Arybas, the wealthy. But Taphians, who were sea-robbers, captured me and carried me away as I came in from the fields and brought me here and sold me into the house of my master, who paid for me a great price.’

“Then the man who had lain with her secretly answered, ‘Do you wish to return home with us, so that you may see once again the great palace house of your father and mother and see their faces? For indeed they still live and are famed for their wealth.’

“Then the woman answered him and spoke, saying, ‘This could be done if you sailors will promise me to bring me home safely.’

“So she spoke, and they all swore to it as she asked. Now when they had sworn that oath, again the woman spoke among them, saying, ‘Be quiet now, and let none of your companions speak to me and

2 There is a great deal of scholarly controversy over the identification of these places. Some (for example, the ancient geographer Strabo) say that Ortygia was another name for the island of Delos in the central Aegean and that “Syros” was an island to the north or east of it. Others say the country of Syria itself may be meant.

greet me if they meet me in the street or even at the well, lest someone go and tell it to the old man at home, and he suspect something and tie me tightly and plot death for all of you. But keep the matter in mind and hurry the purchase of your homeward freight. And when your ship is loaded with goods, let a message come quickly to me at the house, for I will also bring gold, all that I can lay my hands on. And there is another thing that I would gladly give for my fare. I am nurse to the child of my master in the halls, a most clever little boy, who runs about with me. I would bring him on board ship, and he should fetch you a great price, wherever you take him for sale among men with strange speech.'

"With that, she went her way to the lovely halls. But they remained among us a whole year and got together great wealth in their hollow ship. And when their hollow ship was now loaded to depart, they sent a messenger to tell the news to the woman. A man skilled in deceit came to my father's house, with a golden chain strung here and there with amber beads. Now the maidens in the hall and my lady mother were handling the chain and gazing at it and offering him their price, but he had signed silently to the woman and went away to the hollow ship. Then she took me by the hand and led me out of the house. And at the forecourt of the house she found the cups and the tables of the guests that had been feasting, attendants of my father. They had gone out to the assembly place of the people. And she immediately hid three goblets in her bosom and carried them away, and I followed in my innocence. Then the sun sank, and all the ways were darkened, and we went quickly and came to the good harbor, where the swift ship of the Phoenicians was. So they climbed on board and took us with them and sailed over the wet ways, and Zeus sent us a favoring wind. For six days we sailed by day and night continually, but when Zeus, son of Kronos, added the seventh day, then Artemis, the Archer, struck the woman so that she fell, as a sea-swallow falls, with a plunge into the hold. And they threw her out to be the prey of seals and fishes, but I was left stricken at heart. And wind and water carried them and brought them to Ithaka, where Laertes bought me with his wealth. And so it happened that my eyes saw this land."

Then Odysseus, seed of Zeus, answered him, saying, “Eumaios, truly you have stirred my heart within me with the tale of all these things, of all the sorrow of heart you have endured. Yet surely Zeus has given you good as well as evil, since after all these adventures you have come to the house of a kind man, who cares enough to give you food and drink, and you live very well. But I have come here still wandering through the many towns of men.”

Telemachos Comes to Ithaka

They spoke in this way to one another for a while. Then they lay down to sleep but not for long, for throned Dawn came soon. But on the shore the companions of Telemachos were taking down their sails and lowered the mast quickly and rowed the ship to where they could anchor. And they cast their anchors and tied the ropes tightly, and then they stepped out onto the shore of the sea and prepared the midday meal and mixed the dark wine. Now when they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, wise Telemachos first spoke among them, “You drive the black ship toward the city, while I will go to the fields and to the herdsmen, and at evening I will return to the city when I have seen my lands. And in the morning I will give you the wages of the voyage, a good feast of meat and sweet wine.”

Then godlike Theoklymenos answered him, “And where shall I go, dear child? To what man’s house shall I take myself, of these lords in rocky Ithaka? Shall I go straight to your mother and your home?”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “In other cases I would urge you to go to our own house, for there is no lack of good things for strangers, but now it would be worse for you, since I shall be away, and my mother would not see you. For she does not often show herself to the suitors in the house but remains away from them in her upper chamber and weaves at her loom. Yet there is one whom I will tell you about, to whom you may go, Eurymachos the glorious son of wise Polybos, whom now the men of Ithaka look

upon as though he were a god. For he is by far the best man of them all and is most eager to marry my mother and to claim the rulership of Odysseus. Nevertheless, Olympian Zeus, who dwells in the clear sky, knows whether or not he will bring on an evil day before their marriage.”

Now even as he spoke, a bird flew out on the right, a hawk, the swift messenger of Apollo. In his talons he held a dove and tore at her, and the feathers fell to the earth, midway between the ship and Telemachos himself. Then Theoklymenos called him away from his friends and clasped his hand and spoke and addressed him, “Telemachos, surely not without the god’s will the bird has flown out on the right, for I knew when I saw him that he was a bird of omen. There is no other house more kingly than yours in the land of Ithaka; you will always have the sovereignty.”

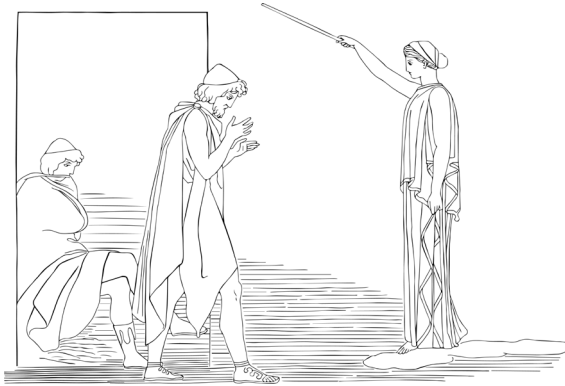
And wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Ah, stranger, if only this word would be accomplished! Soon you would know my kindness with many gifts from my hands, so that whoever met with you would call you blessed.”

Then he spoke to Peiraios, his faithful companion, “Peiraios, son of Klytios, you who at all times listens to me more than all my companions who went with me to Pylos, now, I ask you, lead this stranger home with you and be careful to treat him kindly and with honor in your house till I come.”

Then Peiraios, the renowned spearman, answered him, saying, “Telemachos, even if you were to remain here a long time, I will host this man, and he will have no lack of a stranger’s welcome.”

With that, he went on board and urged his men to board and untie the ropes. And quickly they boarded and sat on the benches. Telemachos bound his fair sandals beneath his feet and seized a mighty spear, covered with sharp bronze, from the deck of the ship, and his men untied the ropes. So they cast off and sailed to the city as Telemachos had commanded them, the dear son of divine Odysseus. But swiftly his feet carried him on his way till he came to the courtyard where his numberless swine were, and among them the good swineherd slept, a man loyal to his masters.

Book XVI: Odysseus and Telemachos are Reunited



Athena Restoring Odysseus to his Own Shape

Eumaios Welcomes Telemachos

Now these two, Odysseus and the noble swineherd, had kindled a fire in the hut and were preparing breakfast at Dawn and had sent the herdsman out with the droves of swine. Now the hounds that love to bark, fawned around Telemachos and did not bark as he drew close. And great Odysseus noticed the fawning of the dogs, and the noise of footsteps came to his ears. Then immediately he spoke winged words to Eumaios, “Eumaios, indeed, some friend or some other familiar person will soon be here, for the dogs do not bark but fawn around, and I catch the sound of footsteps.”

While the word was still on his lips, his own dear son stood at the entrance of the gate. Then the swineherd sprang up in amazement, and the vessels with which he was mingling the dark wine fell out of his hands. And he came over to his master and kissed his head and both his beautiful eyes and both his hands, and he let a great tear fall. And just as a loving father welcomes his son who has come in the tenth year from a far country, his only and well-beloved son,

for whose sake he has had great sorrow and suffering, in the same way, the noble swineherd fell on the neck of godlike Telemachos and kissed him all over as one who had escaped from death, and he wept aloud and spoke winged words to him, “You have come, Telemachos, a sweet light in the dark; I thought I would never see you again, after you had gone in your ship to Pylos. Enter, dear child, that my heart may be glad at the sight of you in my house, you who have newly come from far away. For you do not often visit the field and the herdsmen but remain in the town; it seems that it has pleased you to look upon the ruinous throng of the suitors.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Let it be as you say, father, and for your sake I have come here to see you with my eyes and to hear from your lips whether my mother still remains in the halls or another has already married her, and the couch of Odysseus, perhaps, lies lacking bedding and deep in foul spider-webs.”

Then the swineherd, a master of men, answered him, “Indeed, she remains with patient spirit in your halls, and the nights and days always pass wearily for her as she sheds tears.”

So he spoke and took from him the spear of bronze. Then Telemachos came inside and crossed the threshold of stone. As he came near, his father Odysseus arose from his seat to give him a place, but Telemachos, for his part, made him remain and spoke, saying, “Be seated, stranger, and we will find a seat somewhere else in our house, and there is a man here to set it for us.”

So he spoke, and Odysseus went back and sat down again. And the swineherd put down green brushwood below and a fleece on top for Telemachos, and there the beloved son of Odysseus sat down. Next the swineherd set by them platters of roast meat, the fragments that were left from the meal of yesterday. And he briskly heaped up baskets of wheat bread and mixed the honey-sweet wine in a goblet of ivy wood, and he himself sat down opposite divine Odysseus. So they stretched forth their hands to the good things set before them. When they had satisfied the desire of food and drink, Telemachos spoke to the noble swineherd, saying, “Father, from where did this stranger come to you? How did sailors bring him to Ithaka? And who

did they claim to be? For I think there is no way that he came here by land.”

Then you answered, swineherd Eumaios: “Indeed, my son, I will tell you everything truly. He claims to be descended from those of wide Krete, and he says that he has wandered around many cities of mortals, for this is how some god has spun for him the thread of fate. But now, as a runaway from a ship of the Thesprotians, he has come to my homestead, and I will give him to you. Do with him as you wish; he says he is your suppliant.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Eumaios, indeed this is a bitter word that you speak. How can I receive this guest in my house? I am young and do not yet trust to the strength of my hands to defend myself against the man who does violence without a cause. And my mother is divided in her heart, whether to remain here with me and keep the house, respecting the bed of her husband and the voice of the people or to go immediately with whichever of the Achaians that court her in the halls is the best man and gives the most bridal gifts. But as for this guest of yours, now that he has come to your house, I will clothe him in a mantle and a tunic, noble garments, and I will give him a two-edged sword and shoes for his feet and send him on his way, wherever his heart and his spirit urge him to go. Or, if you wish, keep him here in the homestead and take care of him, and I will send garments here and all kinds of food to eat, so that he is not ruinous to you and to your friends. But I would not allow him to go there into the company of the suitors, for they are full of foolish insolence, lest they mock at him, and that would be a terrible grief to me. And it is hard for one man, however valiant he may be, to achieve anything among a multitude, for truly they are far stronger.”

Then steadfast, great Odysseus answered him, “My friend, since it is indeed my right to answer you, truly my heart is torn as I hear your words, such foolish deeds you say the suitors are devising in the halls, in spite of you, a man so noble. Do you willingly submit to oppression, or do the people throughout the township hate you, obedient to the voice of a god? Or do you have reason to blame your

brothers, in whom a man should put trust in battle, if a great feud arises? If only I had the youth, as now I have the spirit, and were either the son of noble Odysseus or Odysseus himself, then immediately a stranger might cut my head off my neck, if I did not go to the halls of Odysseus, son of Laertes, and make myself the curse of every man among them! But if they should overcome me by numbers, being but one man against so many, I would far rather die slain in my own halls, than constantly witness these improper deeds, strangers shamefully treated, and men dragging the handmaidens foully through the great house, and wine drawn wastefully, and the suitors devouring food all recklessly without hindrance, with no end in sight.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Stranger, I will plainly tell you everything. There is no grudge and hatred borne against me by the whole people, nor do I have any cause to blame my kinsmen, in whom a man trusts in battle if a great feud arises. For as you see, the son of Kronos has given the house only one heir. Arkeisios had only one son, Laertes, and only one son, Odysseus, was begotten by his father, and Odysseus left me as his only child in these halls and had no chance to rejoice in me, and, therefore, now there are innumerable enemies in the house. For all the noblest men that are princes in the islands, in Doulichion and Same and wooded Zakynthos, and as many as are lords in rocky Ithaka, all these court my mother and consume my house. But as for her, she neither refuses the hated wedding nor has the heart to end it all, so they devour my house, and before long they will make havoc of me too. However, these things surely lie on the knees of the gods. Father, go with haste and tell faithful Penelope that she has me safely back and that I have come back from Pylos. As for me, I will remain here, and you return here when you have told the news to her alone, but let none of the other Achaians hear about it, for there are many that plot evil against me.”

Then you answered, swineherd Eumaios, “I note it well; you speak all this to one who understands. But come, tell me this plainly, whether or not I should take the same road with news for Laertes, that unfortunate man, who till lately, in spite of his great sorrow be-

cause of Odysseus, still oversaw the fieldwork and ate and drank with the servants in his house, as often as his heart within him urged him. But now, from the day that you went in your ship to Pylos, till this hour, they say, he has never taken food or drink or given thought to the work of the field, but with groaning and laments he sits sorrowing, and the flesh wastes away on his bones.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “It is all the more sorrowful! Yet we will let him be, though we grieve at it. For if men might have everything they wish, before anything else we would choose the day of my father’s returning. But when you have told the news come straight back and do not go wandering through the fields after Laertes. But speak to my mother so that she might quickly send out the housekeeper, her handmaid, secretly for she could take news to the old man.”

Odysseus and Telemachos Reunite and Plot Against the Suitors

With that he roused the swineherd, who took his sandals in his hands and bound them beneath his feet and departed for the city. Now Athene saw Eumaios the swineherd pass from the homestead, and she came close in the appearance of a woman lovely and tall and skilled in splendid handiwork. And she stood visible to Odysseus in the doorway of the hut, but so that Telemachos did not see her for the gods certainly do not appear visibly to all. But Odysseus was aware of her, and the dogs also, for they did not bark but with a low whine shrank cowering to the far side of the steading. Then she nodded at him with bent brows, and great Odysseus noticed it and came out of the room, past the great wall of the yard, and stood before her, and Athene spoke to him, saying, “Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, now is the time to speak a word to your son, and do not hide it, so that you two, having planned death and doom

for the suitors, may journey to the glorious town. And I will not be away from you for long, for I am very eager for battle.”

With that, Athene touched him with her golden wand. First, she threw around him a fresh linen robe and a tunic, and she increased his size and youth. His coloring grew dark again and his cheeks filled out, and the black beard spread thick around his chin.

Now when she had done this, she withdrew again, but Odysseus went into the hut, and his beloved son marveled at him and looked away for fear that it was a god, and he lifted his voice and spoke winged words to him, “Stranger, you are different in my sight than you were a moment ago, and you have different garments, and the color of your skin is no longer the same. Surely you are one of those gods who rule the wide heaven. Be gracious, that we may offer to you well-pleasing sacrifices and golden gifts, beautifully-crafted, and spare us, I pray.”

Then steadfast, great Odysseus answered him, saying, “I am not a god. Why do you compare me to the immortals? No—I am your father, for whose sake you suffered much and lamented long, and submitted to the spite of men.”

At that he kissed his son, and from his cheeks let a tear fall to earth: before, he had kept back the tears. But Telemachos, who did not yet believe that it was his father, answered in turn and spoke, saying, “You are not Odysseus my father, but some god is deceiving me to make me groan for greater sorrow. For it is not possible for a mortal man to contrive this by the aid of his own wit, unless a god were himself to visit him, and easily of his own will to make him young or old. For truly, only a moment ago, you were old and foully dressed, but now you are like the gods who rule the wide heaven.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Telemachos, it is not proper for you to be so amazed and suspicious that your father has come home. You will find no other Odysseus coming here, but see, I, as I am, after sufferings and much wandering have come in the twentieth year to my own country. This is the work of Athene, summoner of the people, who makes me look however she wishes—for with her it is possible—now like a beggar and now again

like a young man and one dressed about in rich garments. It is easy for the gods who rule the wide heaven to glorify or to disfigure a mortal man.”

With this word then he sat down again, but Telemachos, flinging himself upon his noble father’s neck, mourned and shed tears, and in both their hearts arose the longing to lament. And they wailed aloud, more ceaselessly than birds, sea-eagles or vultures of crooked claws, whose young ones the country folk have taken from the nest before they can fly. Like this, the tears fell pitifully beneath their brows. And now the sun would have set on their weeping, had not Telemachos spoken to his father suddenly, “In what kind of ship, dear father, did sailors at last bring you here to Ithaka? And who did they claim to be? For in no way could you have come here by land.”

And steadfast, great Odysseus answered him, “Indeed, my child, I will tell you all of it truly. The Phaiakians brought me here, those famous mariners who speed other men too upon their way, whoever comes to them. As I slept in the swift ship, they brought me over the seas and set me down in Ithaka and gave me splendid gifts, bronze and gold in plenty and woven garments. And these treasures are lying in the cave, by the grace of the gods. But now I have come here by the promptings of Athene, so that we may take counsel for the slaughter of the enemy. But tell me all about the suitors and their number, so that I may know how many and what kind of men they are, and so that I may meditate in my heart and advise myself, whether we two alone shall be able to succeed against them without help, or whether we should seek help from others.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Father, I have always heard of your great fame as a tough warrior and prudent in counsel. But this saying of yours is hard; awe comes over me for two men can not do battle with many strong men. For there are not merely ten or twenty of the suitors but many times more, and quickly you will learn the story of them before we part. From Doulichion there are fifty-two chosen princes, and six serving men are with them; out of Same twenty-four men; and from Zakynthos there are twenty lords of the Achaians; and from Ithaka itself fully twelve

of the best men, and with them is Medon the attendant and the divine singer and two servants skilled in carving meat. If we encounter all of them within the halls, you must plan it so that the vengeance you take on their evil when you come is bitter and a great curse. But if you can think of some champion, consider any who might help us whole-heartedly.”

Then steadfast, great Odysseus answered him, saying, “I will tell you, and you must take note and listen to me and consider whether Athene with Father Zeus will be enough for us two, or whether I should think of some other champion.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “These two whom you name are great helpers indeed; their seat is high in the clouds, and they rule among all men and among the immortal gods!”

Then steadfast, great Odysseus answered him, “The two will not stay away from the strong tumult of war, when the trial of the strength of Ares is held between us and the suitors in my halls. Go home at day break and mingle with the arrogant suitors. As for me, the swineherd will lead me to the town later in the day, in the appearance of a beggar, a wretched old man. And if they treat me evilly in the house, harden your heart to endure it while I am shamefully abused, even if they drag me by the feet through the house to the doors or throw things at me and strike me; you must bear the sight. Nevertheless, you must certainly bid them to cease from their foolishness, exhorting them with smooth words; yet they will not listen one bit, for the day of their doom is near. And I will tell you another thing which you must ponder in your heart. When Athene, she of deep counsel, puts it into my heart, I will nod to you with my head, and you take note of it and carry away all the weapons of war that lie in the halls and store all of them in the secret recesses of the lofty chamber. And when the suitors miss them and ask you about them, you must deceive them with soft words, saying, ‘I laid them away from the smoke, since they were no longer like those that Odysseus left behind him long ago when he went to Troy but they are ruined; the smoke of the fire has covered them so much. Furthermore, the son of Kronos has put into my heart this other and greater con-

cern, that perhaps, when you are heated with wine, you will quarrel between yourselves and wound one another and thereby shame the feast and the courting, for “iron draws a man to itself.” But for us two alone leave two swords and two spears and two shields of ox-hide to grasp, that we may rush upon the arms and seize them, and then Pallas Athene and Zeus the Counselor will confuse the suitors to their ruin. And I will tell you another thing, and ponder it in your heart. If in truth you are my son and of our blood, then let no man hear that Odysseus has come home; neither Laertes nor the swineherd nor any of the household nor even Penelope herself, but let me and you alone test the inclinations of the women. Furthermore, we will test some of the men among the servants and learn which of them honors us and reveres us heartily, and which has no regard for us at all and does not esteem you, as noble as you are.”

Then his renowned son answered him and said, “O my father, indeed you will learn, I think, what I am made of, for no foolishness possesses me. But I do not think that this plan of yours will help us two, so consider carefully. You would be a long time on the road with little to show for it, testing every man while visiting the farms, while in your own halls the suitors would devour your goods at ease in their insolence, and they have no restraint. However, I would have you consider the women—who those are who dishonor you and who are innocent. But I think we should not test the men at their houses, but we should do this later, if you know some sign from Zeus, Lord of the aegis.”

In this way they spoke to one another. Now the well-built ship was being brought to land at Ithaka, the ship that brought Telemachos from Pylos with all his companions. When they had come into the deep harbor, the men pulled the black ship up onto the shore while proud attendants carried their weapons and immediately took the glorious gifts to the house of Klytios. Soon they sent a herald to the palace of Odysseus to bring the news to prudent Penelope that Telemachos was home and had sent the ship to the city, lest the noble queen should be afraid and let the round tears fall. So these two met, the herald and the noble swineherd, both on the same errand to tell

everything to the lady. Now when they had come to the house of the divine king, the herald spoke out among all the handmaids, saying, “O queen, in truth your son has come back from Pylos.”

But the swineherd went up to Penelope and told her all that her dear son had told him to say. So, when he had declared all that had been commanded him, he went on his way to the swine and left the enclosure and the hall.

The Suitors Plot Against Telemachos

Now the suitors were troubled and downcast in spirit, and they went out from the hall past the great wall of the court, and there in front of the gates they held their session. And Eurymachos, son of Polybos, first spoke among them, saying, “Friends, Telemachos has arrogantly accomplished a great deed, this journey, while we said that he would never do it. So come, let us launch a black ship, the best there is, and let us get together oarsmen of the sea, who will immediately carry news to our friends to return home quickly.”

The word was still on his lips when Amphinomos turned in his place and saw the ship in the deep harbor, and the men lowering the sails and with the oars in their hands. Then he laughed lightly and spoke among his fellows, “No, let us send no message, for look, they have already come home. Either some god has told them or they themselves have seen the ship of Telemachos go by and have not been able to catch her.”

So he spoke, and they arose and went to the seashore. Swiftly the men drew up the black ship on the shore, and haughty-hearted attendants carried away their weapons. And the suitors all together went to the assembly-place and allowed no one else to sit with them, either of the young men or of the elders. Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them, “Look now how the gods have delivered this man from destruction! All day long scouts sat along the windy headlands, in quick succession, and at the going down of the

sun we never rested for a night on the shore, but, sailing with our swift ship on the high seas, we waited the bright Dawn, as we lay in wait for Telemachos, so that we could capture and kill the man, but meanwhile some god has brought him home. But even now let us devise an evil end for Telemachos, and let him not escape from our hands, for I think that while he lives we will never achieve this task of ours. For he himself has understanding in counsel and wisdom, and the people no longer show us favor in all things. No, come, before he assembles all the Achaians to the gathering, for I think that he will in no way be slack but will be exceedingly angry and will stand up and speak out among them all and tell how we plotted sheer destruction against him but did not capture him. Then they will not approve of us when they hear these evil deeds. Beware then, lest they do us harm and drive us out of our own country, and we come to the land of strangers. Rather let us get ahead of him and capture him in the fields far from the city or by the way, and let us keep his wealth and his possessions, dividing them fairly among us, but the house we will give to his mother to keep and to whomever marries her. But if these words do not please you, but you would rather that he lives and keeps his inheritance from his father, then let us no longer gather here eating all his abundance of goods, but let each one from his own hall court her with his bridal gifts and seek to win her; so she should marry the man that gives the most and as fate chooses.”

So he spoke, and they all remained silent. Then Amphinomos addressed and spoke out among them; he was the famous son of Nisos the prince, the son of Aretias, and he led the suitors that came from Doulichion, a land rich in wheat and in grass, and his words were more pleasing to Penelope than all the rest, for he had an understanding mind. And now with good intentions he addressed and spoke among them, “Friends, I for one would not choose to kill Telemachos; it is a fearful thing to slay one of the lineage of kings! No, first let us seek the advice of the gods, and if the oracles of great Zeus approve, I myself will kill him and urge all the rest of you to help. But if the gods are against it, then I urge you to refrain.”

So spoke Amphinomos, and his saying pleased them well. Then immediately they arose and went to the house of Odysseus and, entering in, sat down on the polished seats.

Then wise Penelope had a new thought, that is, to show herself to the suitors, so shameful in their insolence, for she had heard of the planned death of her son that was to happen in the halls since Medon the attendant had told her about it; he had heard their counsels. So she went on her way to the hall, with the women who were her handmaids. Now when that lovely lady had come to the suitors, she stood by the pillar of the well-built roof, holding up her glistening veil before her face and rebuked Antinoös and spoke and addressed him, “Antinoös, full of all insolence, deviser of evil! And yet they say that in the land of Ithaka you are the best among your peers in counsel and in speech. No, you do not show yourself to be such a man. You fool! Why do you plot death and destruction for Telemachos and have no regard for suppliants who have Zeus as their witness?¹ It is an unholy thing to contrive evil against one another. Do you not know about the day when your father fled to this house in fear of the people, for indeed they were exceedingly angry at him, because he had joined with Taphian pirates and harassed the Thesprotians, who were at peace with us? So they wished to destroy your father and take his life from him and to completely consume all of his great and abundant livelihood, but Odysseus stopped them, in spite of their wishes. And now you consume his house without making atonement, and you court his wife and would slay his son and greatly grieve me. But I tell you to stop and command the others to do the same.”

Then Eurymachos, son of Polybos, answered her, saying, “Daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, take courage and do not let your heart be anxious about these things. That man has never been born, or ever will be, that will stretch out his hands against Telemachos, your son, while I live and am on earth and see the light. For I will declare this to you, and it will surely come to pass. The black blood of such a man will quickly flow around my spear, for Odysseus, waster of cit-

1 In this and the following lines Penelope makes clear that the crime of Antinoös, and by extension all of the wicked suitors, is violation of *xenia*.

ies, truly many times set me too upon his knees and put roasted meat into my hand and held the red wine to my lips. Therefore, Telemachos is by far the dearest of all men to me, and I urge him to have no fear of death, not from the suitors' hands, though none may avoid it from the gods." So he spoke comforting her, but all the while he was himself planning death for her son.

Now she went up to her shining, upper chamber and mourned for Odysseus, her dear husband, till grey-eyed Athene put sweet sleep on her eyelids. And in the evening the noble swineherd came back to Odysseus and his son, and they prepared and served the supper when they had sacrificed a year-old swine. Then Athene came near to Odysseus, son of Laertes, and touched him with her wand and made him into an old man again. She clothed his body in foul garments, lest the swineherd should see him and recognize him and go tell faithful Penelope and not keep the matter in his heart.

Then Telemachos spoke first to the swineherd, saying, "You have come, noble Eumaios. What news is there in the town? Have the lordly suitors come back from their ambush, or are they still watching for me as before as I came home?"

Then you answered, swineherd Eumaios, "I was not inclined to go through the city asking about it; my heart urged me to get home again as quickly as I could, once I had told the news. And the swift messenger from your company joined me, the attendant, who was the first to tell the news to your mother. And I know this too, if you wish to hear, for I saw it with my own eyes. I had already come above the city in my journey to where the hill of Hermes is, when I noticed a swift ship entering our harbor, and there were many men in her, and she was loaded with shields and two-headed spears, and I thought they were the suitors, but I do not know at all." So he spoke, and the mighty prince Telemachos smiled and glanced at his father, while he avoided the eyes of the swineherd.

Now when they had ceased from the work and got supper ready, they began feasting, and their hearts lacked nothing in the equally-shared banquet. But when they had satisfied the desire for food and drink, their thoughts turned to rest and they took the blessing of sleep.

Book XVII: Odysseus Comes to His Palace



Odysseus is Recognized by his Dog, Argos

Telemachos Returns to the Palace

As soon as early Dawn, the rosy-fingered, shone out, then Telemachos, the dear son of divine Odysseus, bound beneath his feet his noble sandals and took up his mighty spear that fitted his grasp to make for the city, and he spoke to his swineherd, saying, "Father, I am bound for the city, so that my mother may see me, for I do not think she will cease from her sorrowful wailing and tearful lament until she sees my face. But I give you this command: lead this unfortunate stranger to the city, so that he may beg for food there, and whoever chooses will give him a bit of bread and a cup of water. As for me, I can not deal with every guest who comes to me, I am so troubled in spirit. If the stranger is angry at this it will be more grievous for him; nevertheless, I for one love to speak the truth."

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, "I too, my friend, have no great desire to be left behind here. It is better that a beggar should beg for his food in the town than in the fields, and whoever chooses will give it to me. For I am not now of an age to remain at the farmstead and to obey in all things the word of the

master. Go on, and this man whom you command will lead me, as soon as I am warmed by the fire, and the sun grows hot. For these garments of mine are very thin, and I am afraid that the frost of the Dawn may overcome me; furthermore, you say the city is far away.”

So he spoke, and Telemachos went out of the farmstead, moving at a quick pace and sowing the seeds of evil for the suitors. Now when he had come to the beautifully-situated palace house, he set his spear against the tall pillar and leaned it there, and he went in and crossed the stone threshold.

The nurse Eurykleia saw him long before the others, as she was laying skin coverlets on the carved chairs, and immediately she drew near him, weeping, and all the other maidservants of stout-hearted Odysseus gathered around him and kissed him lovingly on the head and shoulders. Then wise Penelope came out of her chamber, like Artemis or golden Aphrodite, and threw her arms around her dear son and began weeping and kissed his face and both his beautiful eyes, and she wept aloud and spoke winged words to him, “You have come, Telemachos, a sweet light in the darkness; I thought I would never see you again after you had gone in your ship to Pylos, secretly and without my will, to seek news of your dear father. Now tell me, what sight did you get of him?”

And wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “My mother, do not arouse wailing in my soul or stir the heart in my breast, since I have just now escaped utter destruction. Wash with water and put on fresh garments and go up to your upper room with your handmaids and vow to all the gods an acceptable great sacrifice, in hopes that Zeus may grant that deeds of vengeance be done. But I will go to the assembly-place to call a stranger to our house, one who accompanied me as I came here from Pylos. I sent him with my godlike company and commanded Peiraios to lead him home and to be careful to treat him kindly and with honor until I come.”

So he spoke, and her speech remained wingless. She washed in water and put on fresh garments and vowed to all the gods an acceptable great sacrifice, in hopes that Zeus might grant that deeds of vengeance would be done.

Now Telemachos went out through the hall with the spear in his hand, and two swift hounds accompanied him. Athene shed on him a wonderful grace, and all the people marveled at him as he came. And the lordly suitors gathered around him with pleasing words on their lips but brooding evil in the depths of their hearts. He avoided the great crowd of suitors, but he went and sat down where Mentor and Antiphos and Halitherses sat, all long-time friends of his household, and they asked him about all his adventures. Then Peiraios, the famed spearman, came close, leading the stranger to the assembly-place by way of the town, and Telemachos did not keep aloof from him for long but went up to him.

Then Peiraios spoke to him, saying, “Rouse the women immediately to go to my house, so that I may send to you the gifts that Menelaos gave you.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Peiraios, we do not know how these matters will end. If the noble suitors kill me by trickery in the halls and divide among them the wealth of my father, then I would wish you to keep and enjoy the gifts yourself, rather than any of these. But if I sow the seeds of death and fate for the suitors, then gladly bring to me here in the house the gifts that I will gladly receive.”

With that he led the travel-worn stranger to the house. Now when they came to the beautifully-situated palace, they laid aside their mantles on the chairs and high seats and went to the polished baths and bathed. When the maidens had bathed them and anointed them with olive oil and put thick mantles and tunics on them, they came out from the baths and sat down on the seats. Then a hand-maid brought in water for their hands in a noble, golden pitcher and poured it out over a silver basin for them to wash and pulled to their side a polished table. And the dignified woman brought wheat bread and set it by them and laid on the table many good things, giving generously of whatever she had near her. And the mother of Telemachos sat opposite him by the pillar of the hall, leaning against a chair and spinning the slender threads from the yarn. And they reached out their hands to the good things set before them. Now when they

had satisfied the desire for food and drink, then wise Penelope spoke among them, “Telemachos, I will go to my upper chamber and lie in my bed, the place of my groanings, that is always watered by my tears since the day that Odysseus departed with the sons of Atreus for Ilios. Yet you took no thought to tell me clearly, before the haughty suitors came to this house, about your father’s returning, if perhaps you have heard anything about it.”

And wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “Mother, I will tell you everything. We went to Pylos and to Nestor, the shepherd of the people, and he received me in his lofty house and was diligent to treat me lovingly, as a father might treat his son who had just newly come from strange lands after many years; that is how diligently he cared for me along with his famous sons. Yet he said that he had heard no word from any man on earth concerning stout-hearted Odysseus, whether alive or dead. But he sent me on my way with horses and a well-built chariot to Menelaos, son of Atreus, the famous spearman. There I saw Argive Helen, for whose sake the Argives and Trojans endured much suffering by the gods’ designs. Then immediately Menelaos of the loud war-cry asked me on what quest I had come to noble Lakedaimon. And I told him everything. Then he answered me and spoke, saying, ‘Curse them, for indeed they hoped to lie in the bed of a brave-hearted man, cowards as they are! Just as when a deer has nestled her newborn, unweaned fawns in a strong lion’s den and searches the mountain ridges and grassy hollows, seeking pasture, and afterward the lion comes back to his bed and brings terrible death upon the fawns, in the same way, Odysseus will bring terrible death upon the suitors. O Father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, if only with the same might when of old in strong-founded Lesbos he rose up in conflict and wrestled with Philomeleides¹ and threw him down mightily, and all the Achaians rejoiced: if only with that might Odysseus would deal with the suitors, then they should all swiftly meet their fate and a bitter marriage! But regarding that about which

1 Eustathius (twelfth-century AD bishop of Thessalonica and Homer scholar) says that Philomeleides was the king of Lesbos and challenged all strangers to a wrestling match. Nothing else is known about this episode.

you ask and question me, be sure I will not swerve from the truth in anything that I say, nor will I deceive you, but of all that the ancient one of the sea, whose speech is truth, declared to me, not a word will I hide or keep from you. He said that he saw Odysseus on an island, suffering terrible sorrow in the halls of the nymph Kalypso, who holds him there against his will, so that he may not come to his own country, for he has with him no ships with oars and no companions to send him on his way over the broad back of the sea.’ In this way Menelaos spoke, the son of Atreus, the famous spearman. Then having accomplished everything, I set out for home, and the immortal gods gave me a fair wind and brought me swiftly to my own dear country.”

So he spoke and stirred her heart within her breast. Next the godlike Theoklymenos spoke among them, “O honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, indeed he has no clear knowledge, but listen to my words, for I will prophesy to you most truly and hide nothing. Now let Zeus, head of all the gods, be my witness, and this hospitable table and this hearth of noble Odysseus, where I have come, that Odysseus is even now certainly in his own country, resting or traveling, learning of these evil deeds, and sowing the seeds of evil for all the suitors. So clear was the omen of the bird that I saw as I sat on the decked ship, and I proclaimed it to Telemachos.”

Then wise Penelope answered him, saying, “Ah, stranger, if only this word of yours would be accomplished! You would soon know kindness and many gifts from me, so that whoever met you would call you blessed.”

So they spoke to one another. But the suitors in the meantime were in front of the palace of Odysseus, enjoying throwing weights and spears on a level place, as always, in their insolence. But when it was the hour for supper, and the flocks came home from the fields all around, led by the men whose job it was, then Medon, who of all the attendants was most like-minded with them and was always with them at the feast, spoke to them, saying, “Noble young men, now that you have had sport to your hearts’ content, go into the house so

that we may prepare a feast, for it is a good thing to take food at the proper time.”

So he spoke, and they rose up and departed and obeyed his word. When they had come into the beautifully-situated palace, they laid aside their mantles on the chairs and high seats, and they sacrificed great sheep and stout goats and the fattest of the boars and a heifer from the herd and prepared the feast.

Now all this time Odysseus and the noble swineherd were preparing to go from the field to the city, and the swineherd, a leader of men, spoke first, saying, “Well, my friend, I see that you are eager to be going to the city today, as my master commanded, though I myself would rather you remained here to guard the farmstead, but I hold him in reverence and fear, lest he rebuke me afterwards, and the rebukes of masters are terrible. So let us go on our way, for the day is far spent, and soon you will find it colder toward evening.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “I hear and obey. You say all this to one who understands. But let us be going, and you be my guide to the end. And if you have a staff ready anywhere, give it me to lean on, for you said that the way is treacherous.”

Odysseus Encounters Melanthios and Argos

With that he threw about his shoulders a tattered bag and a cord on which to hang it, and Eumaios gave him a staff that he liked. So these two went on their way, and the dogs and the herdsmen stayed behind to guard the farmstead. And the swineherd led his master to the city in the disguise of a beggar, wretched and old, leaning on a staff, and the garment with which he was clothed was very poor. And as they traveled along the rugged path, they came near the town and came to the fair flowing spring with a wrought basin, from which the people of the city drew water. Ithakos and Neritos and Polyktor had built this spring. And around it was a thicket of alders that grew by the water all around, and the cold stream fell down from a high

rock, and above it was reared an altar to the Nymphs where all travelers sacrificed. In that place Melanthios, son of Dolios, met them, leading his goats for the suitors' feast, the best goats in all the herds, and two herdsmen kept him company. When he saw them he cursed them and spoke and addressed them in a terrible and evil manner and stirred the heart of Odysseus, saying, "Indeed, the vile is leading the vile, for the gods always bring similar things together! You, wretched swineherd, where are you leading this glutton, this plague of a beggar, this kill-joy of feasts? He'll stand around and rub his shoulders against many doorposts, begging for scraps of meat, not for swords or cauldrons. If you would give me the fellow to watch my homestead and sweep out the stalls and carry fresh fodder to the goats, then he might drink milk and develop strong legs. But since he only has experience in evil, he doesn't want the labor of a farm but rather chooses to go loafing through the land, begging alms to fill his always empty belly. But now I will speak, and my word will surely be accomplished. If he ever goes to the house of divine Odysseus, many a stool thrown by men's hands will fly at his head and break on his ribs, as they pelt him through the house."

With that, as he went past, he kicked Odysseus on the hip in his witlessness, yet he did not drive him off the path, but Odysseus stood steadfast. And Odysseus pondered whether he should rush at him and take his life with the staff or lift him in his grasp and smash his head to the earth. But he strengthened his heart to endure it and restrained himself. And the swineherd looked at the other man and rebuked him and, lifting up his hands, prayed aloud, "Nymphs of the well-water, daughters of Zeus, if ever Odysseus burned on your altars pieces of the thighs of rams or kids in their covering of rich fat, fulfill for me this wish: if only he himself would come home, with some god bringing him! Then he would scatter all your bravery,

which now you flaunt insolently, always wandering around the city while evil shepherds destroy the flock.”²

Then Melanthios, the goatherd, answered, “What a word this evil-witted dog has been saying! Some day I will take him in a black-decked ship far from Ithaka, so that he may bring me much money. If only Apollo of the silver bow would strike Telemachos today in the halls, or that he might fall before the suitors, as surely as the day of returning for Odysseus has passed in a far land!”

So he spoke and left them there as they walked slowly on. But Melanthios set out and came very quickly to the house of the prince, and immediately he went in and sat down among the suitors, opposite Eurymachos, who of them all showed him the most kindness. And the servants set near him a portion of meat, and the dignified housekeeper brought wheat bread and set it by him to eat. Now Odysseus and the noble swineherd drew near and stood close by, and the sound of the hollow lyre rang around them, for Phemios was lifting up his voice amidst the company in song, and Odysseus took the swineherd by the hand and spoke, saying, “Eumaios, indeed this is the great house of Odysseus, and it is easily known and set apart even among many. There is building beyond building, and the court of the house is cleverly built with a wall and battlements, and the folding doors are well-fenced; no man could despise it.³ And I see that many men revel within, for the aromas of the fat rises upward, and the voice of the lyre is heard there, which the gods have made to be the companion of the feast.”

Then you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “You know it easily, for you never lack understanding. But now let us take counsel, how things will happen here. Either you go first into the lovely halls and

2 There are of course many prayers to the gods in Homer, but this particular one closely echoes the structure of the prayer of Chryses, priest of Apollo, in *Iliad* Book 1, lines 36–42, where he appeals to Apollo for vengeance after being shamefully treated by Agamemnon for requesting the return of his daughter: “Hear me, God of the Silver Bow, who protects Chrysa and sacred Killa and powerfully rules Tenedos, O Smintheus! If ever I built a temple gracious in your eyes, or if ever I burnt for you the fat flesh of thighs of bulls or goats, fulfill for me my desire; let the Danaans pay for my tears with your arrows.” There is the invocation of the god, then the assertion of the suppliant’s faithfulness to the god which deserves a response, followed by the request for vengeance.

3 See the outline of a typical Mycenaean palace in the *Odyssey* Maps 2, 3, and 4.

join the company of the suitors, and I will remain here, or if you prefer, you remain here, and I will go first and will not linger long, lest anyone see you outside and throw something at you or strike you. Think well on this, I urge you.”

Then steadfast, noble Odysseus answered him, saying, “I consider and note well all this that you say to one with understanding. You go before me, and I will remain here, for I know well what it is to be struck and thrown at. My heart is stout, for I have suffered much evil in the perils of waves and war; let this be added to the number of those. But a hungry belly no one can conceal; it is a cursed thing that causes much evil for men. For this reason too we equip the benched ships which carry harm to enemies over the unharvested seas.”

So they spoke to one another. Then a hound raised up his head and pricked his ears even while he lay—Argos, the hound of stout-hearted Odysseus, which he himself had bred long ago but never benefitted, for before that, he went to sacred Ilios. Since then the young men used to lead the hound against wild goats and deer and hares, but now, despised he lay (his master being far away) in the deep dung of mules and cattle, of which a huge pile was outside the doors until the servants of Odysseus could carry it away to spread on his wide fields. There lay the dog Argos, full of vermin. Yet even now when he was aware of Odysseus standing nearby, he wagged his tail and dropped both his ears, but he had no strength to go move close to his master. But Odysseus looked away and wiped away a tear that he hid from Eumaios, and immediately he asked him, “Eumaios, this is a great marvel, this hound lying here in the dung. Truly he is great in size, but I do not know if he has speed to match his beauty, or if he is just well-formed, like men’s kitchen dogs that their lords keep merely to look at.”

Then you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “Indeed, this is the dog of a man that has died in a far land. If he were what he once was in body and in the feats of the chase, when Odysseus left him to go to Troy, soon you would marvel at the sight of his swiftness and his strength. There was no beast that could flee from him in the deep places of the wood when he was in pursuit, for even on a track he

was the keenest hound. But now he is in a terrible condition, and his lord has perished far from his own country, and the careless women take no care of him. Slaves are no longer inclined to honest service when their masters have lost their power, for Zeus of the far-carrying voice takes away half of a man's virtue when the day of slavery comes upon him."

With that he went into the beautifully-situated palace and went straight to the hall, to the company of the arrogant suitors. But the fate of black death fell upon Argos at the very moment that he saw Odysseus again, in the twentieth year.

Odysseus Tests the Suitors

Now godlike Telemachos was the first to notice the swineherd as he came into the hall, and immediately he beckoned and called him to his side. So Eumaios looked around and took a bench that was close by, where the carver used to sit dividing the meat among the suitors that were feasting in the house. He carried this seat and set it by the table of Telemachos opposite him and sat down. And the attendant took some food and served it to him with wheat bread out of the basket.

And close behind him Odysseus entered the house in the disguise of a beggar, a wretched old man, leaning on his staff and clothed with poor garments. And he sat down on the ash threshold inside the doorway, leaning against a pillar of cypress wood, which the carpenter had once deftly planed and made straight lines on it. And Telemachos called the swineherd to him and took a whole loaf out of the lovely basket and as much meat as his hands could hold in their grasp, saying, "Take this and give it to the stranger and urge him go around and beg from all the suitors by turns, for shame is a bad companion for a needy man."

So he spoke, and the swineherd went when he heard that saying and stood near and spoke winged words to him, "Stranger, Telema-

chos sends these to you and urges you to go around and beg from all the suitors by turns, for he says, ‘shame is a bad companion for a needy man.’”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him and said, “King Zeus, grant that Telemachos may be happy among men, and may he have all his heart’s desire!”

Therewith he took the gift in both hands and set it there before his feet on his ugly bag. Then he ate as long as the bard was singing in the halls. When he had finished his supper, and the divine singer was ending his song, then the suitors raised a clamor through the halls, but Athene stood by Odysseus, son of Laertes, and moved him to go gathering pieces of bread among the suitors and learn which were righteous and which were unjust. Yet even so she was not fated to redeem one man of them all from an evil doom. So he set out, beginning on the right, to beg from each man, stretching out his hand on every side, as though he had long been a beggar. And they in pity gave him something and were amazed at the man, asking one another who he was and from where he came.

Then Melanthios, the goatherd, spoke among them, “Listen, you suitors of the great queen, about this stranger, for indeed I have seen him before. The swineherd was his guide here, but I have no certain knowledge about him, or from where he claims to be born.”

So he spoke, but Antinoös rebuked the swineherd, saying, “You infamous swineherd, tell me why you brought this man to the city? Do we not have enough vagrants already, the plagues, the kill-joys of the feast? Do you consider it a small thing that they assemble here and devour the living of your master, that you have to call in this man too?”

Then you answered, O swineherd Eumaios: “Antinoös, these words of yours are not lovely, though you are noble. For who seeks out and calls to the feast a stranger from afar, unless he is a craftsman or a prophet or a healer or a shipbuilder or even a divine bard, who can delight everyone with his song? These are the kinds of men that are welcome over the whole wide earth. But no one would call a beggar to the banquet to waste his wealth. But you are always harsh,

more than all the other suitors, to the servants of Odysseus and most of all to me, but I do not care, so long as my mistress, faithful Penelope, lives in the halls, along with godlike Telemachos.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Be silent, I urge you not to answer him with many words, for Antinoös always likes to rebuke us shamefully with bitter words; yes, and he urges the others to do it too.”

With that, he spoke winged words to Antinoös: “Antinoös, indeed you care for me like a father for his son, you who tell me to drive our guest from the hall with a harsh command.⁴ May such a thing never be! Give him something; I don’t grudge him anything; I command you to do it. And do not speak of my mother or of any of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus. But you have no such thought in your heart, for you are far more eager to eat than to give to another man.”

Then Antinoös answered him and spoke, saying, “Telemachos, proud of speech and unrestrained in fury, what word have you spoken? If all the suitors would give him as much as I do, this house would keep him far away for three months.”

So he spoke and seized the footstool on which he rested his soft feet as he sat at the feast and brandished it from beneath the table where it lay. But all the others gave something and filled the bag with bread and meat. And now Odysseus, as he returned to the threshold, was about to go free after testing the Achaians, but he stopped by Antinoös and spoke to him, saying, “Friend, give me something, for I think you are not the lowest of the Achaians, but the best man of them all, for you are like a king. So you should give me a piece of bread and a better one than the others did; then I would make you famous over all the wide earth. For I too once had a house of my own among men, a rich man with a wealthy house, and many times I gave to a wanderer, no matter what kind of man he was and with whatever need he came. And I had countless servants and plenty of everything else by which people live well and are famous for wealth.

4 Sarcasm, obviously, for no father would ask his son to violate *xenia* and incur the wrath of the gods.

But Zeus, the son of Kronos, took everything from me—for surely it was his will—by sending me with wandering pirates to Egypt, a long journey, to my ruin. And in the river Aigýptos I halted my curved ships. Then I commanded my beloved companions to remain there by the ships and to guard them, and I sent out scouts to survey the vantage points. But they abandoned themselves to violence, being the victims of their own passion, and soon they began wasting the beautiful fields of the Egyptians and carried off their wives and infant children and killed the men. And the news came quickly to the city, and the people heard the uproar and came out at daybreak, and the whole plain was filled with soldiers and horsemen and with the glitter of bronze. And Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, sent an evil panic upon my companions, and none dared to stand and face the enemy for danger surrounded us on every side. There they slaughtered many of us with the edge of the sword, and others they led away to work for them against their will. But they gave me to a friend who met them, to take to Cyprus, to Dmetor son of Iasos, who ruled powerfully over Cyprus, and from there I have now come here in terrible distress.”⁵

Then Antinoös answered and spoke, saying, “What god has brought this plague here to disturb our feast? Move away from our midst, away from my table, lest you quickly come to a bitter Egypt and a sad Cyprus, for you are a bold and shameless beggar. You go to each in turn, and they give recklessly to you, for they do not restrain their hands or feel any guilt at giving so freely of others’ goods because each man has plenty near him.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels drew back and answered him: “Now I see that you do not have wisdom with your good looks! You would not give even so much as a grain of salt from your own house to a beggar, you who even now sit at someone else’s table, and can not find it in your heart to take some of the bread and give it to me, though there is plenty at hand.”

5 Notice that this story is essentially the same as the one told to Eumaíos in Book 14, lines 199–359, except for some deviation regarding his fate in and after Egypt. Since Eumaíos is present, Odysseus must keep his story somewhat consistent.

He spoke, and Antinoös was greatly angered in his heart and looked fiercely at him and spoke winged words: “From now on, I think, you will not leave this hall with honor, since you speak abusively to me.”

With that he picked up the footstool, and struck Odysseus at the base of the right shoulder by his back. But he stood firm as a rock and did not reel beneath the blow of Antinoös, but he shook his head in silence, brooding evil in the depths of his heart. Then he went back to the threshold and sat down there and laid down his well-filled bag and spoke to the suitors: “Listen, you suitors of the great queen, and I will say what my spirit within me bids me. Indeed, there is neither pain nor grief of heart when a man is struck in battle fighting for his own possessions, whether cattle or white sheep. But now Antinoös has struck me for the sake of my wretched belly, a cursed thing that works much evil for men. Ah, if indeed there are gods and avengers of beggars, may death come upon Antinoös before his wedding!”

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, answered him: “Sit and eat your meat quietly, stranger, or go elsewhere, lest the young men drag you by hand or foot through the house for your evil words and strip all the flesh from you.”

In this way he spoke, and they were all very angry at his words. And one of the noble young men would speak in this manner: “Antinoös, you did badly to strike the unfortunate wanderer, doomed man that you are—if indeed there is a god in heaven. The gods, in the likeness of strangers from far countries, put on all kinds of shapes and wander through the cities observing the righteousness and wickedness of men.”

So the suitors spoke, but he paid no attention to their words. Now Telemachos nursed in his heart a mighty grief at the striking of Odysseus, but he let no tear fall from his eyelids to the ground; he shook his head in silence, brooding evil in the depths of his heart.

Now when wise Penelope heard of the stranger being struck in the halls, she spoke among her maidens, saying, “Oh that Apollo, the famed archer, may strike you yourself in the same way, Antinoös!”

And the housekeeper, Eurynome, answered her, saying, “If only we might see the fulfillment of our prayers! Then not one of these men would see the fair-throned Dawn.”

And wise Penelope answered her: “Nurse, they are all enemies, for they all continually plot evil, but of them all Antinoös is the most like black fate. Some unfortunate stranger is roaming the house, begging alms of the men, as his need bids him, and all the others filled his bag and gave him something, but Antinoös struck him at the base of the right shoulder with a stool.”

So she spoke among her maidens, sitting in her chamber, while great Odysseus was eating. Then she called to her the noble swineherd and spoke, saying, “Noble Eumaios, go and ask the stranger to come here, that I may greet him and ask him if perhaps he has heard news of stout-hearted Odysseus or seen him with his own eyes, for he seems like one that has wandered far.”

Then you answered, O swineherd Eumaios, “Queen, if only the Achaians would be quiet! He would charm your heart, such things he says. For three nights and three days I had him at the farmstead, for he came to me first when he fled from the ship, yet he had still not told me all of his sufferings. Just as when a man gazes on a singer, whom the gods have taught to sing words of yearning joy to mortals, and they have a ceaseless desire to hear him as long as he will sing, in the same way, he charmed me, sitting beside me in the house. He says that he is a friend of Odysseus and of his house, one that dwells in Krete, where the race of Minos is. From there he has come here now, with sorrows along the way, forever wandering onward, and he asserts that he has heard news of Odysseus being close by and still alive in the rich land of the men of Thesprotia, and that he is bringing many treasures home.”

Then wise Penelope answered him, saying, “Go, call him here, so that he may speak to me face to face. But let these suitors keep sitting in the doorway since that is their pleasure, or even here in the house, since their heart is glad. For their own wealth lies unspoiled at home, bread and sweet wine, and their servants feed on it. But these men come to our house day by day and sacrifice oxen and sheep and

fat goats and feast and drink the dark wine recklessly, and our great wealth is wasted, for there is no man now alive, such as Odysseus was, to keep ruin from the house. Oh, if only Odysseus would come again to his own country; soon he and his son would avenge the violence of these men!”

In this way she spoke, and Telemachos sneezed loudly, and it echoed around the roof wondrously. And Penelope laughed and immediately spoke to Eumaios with winged words: “Go, call the stranger into my presence. Do you not see how my son has sneezed a blessing on all my words? Therefore, no half-fulfilled doom will come upon every one of the suitors, nor will any of them avoid death and the fates. Yet another thing I will say, and you must ponder it in your heart. If I find that he speaks nothing but the truth, I will clothe him with noble garments—a mantle and a tunic.”

So she spoke, and the swineherd departed when he heard those words and stood by the stranger and spoke winged words to him: “Father and stranger, wise Penelope, the mother of Telemachos, is calling for you, and her mind urges her to ask about her lord, even though she has sorrowed much already. And if she finds that you speak nothing but the truth, she will clothe you in a mantle and a tunic, of which you have most need. Furthermore, you will beg your bread through the land and will fill your belly, and whoever wishes will give to you.”

Then steadfast, noble Odysseus answered him, saying, “Eumaios, I will soon tell the whole truth to the daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, for I know his story well, and we have borne our sufferings together. But I tremble before the throng of the wicked suitors, whose outrage and violence reach to the iron sky. For even now, as I was going through the house, when this man struck and caused me great pain, and for nothing, neither Telemachos nor any other defended me from the blow. So now, urge Penelope to remain in her chambers, in spite of all her eagerness, until the sun goes down, and then she may ask me about her lord, concerning the day of his returning, and let her give me a seat closer to the fire, for I have poor garments, and you know it yourself, since I begged first from you.”

So he spoke, and the swineherd departed when he heard those words. And as he crossed the threshold, Penelope spoke to him: “You are not bringing him, Eumaios; what does the wanderer mean by this? Can it be that he fears someone greatly, or is he ashamed of even lingering in the house? A shamefaced man makes a bad beggar.”

Then you answered, O swineherd Eumaios: “He speaks well and just as anyone else would, for he avoids the violence of arrogant men. He would rather have you wait until the sun goes down. Yes, and it is far better for you yourself, O queen, to speak your words to the stranger alone and to listen to his speech.”

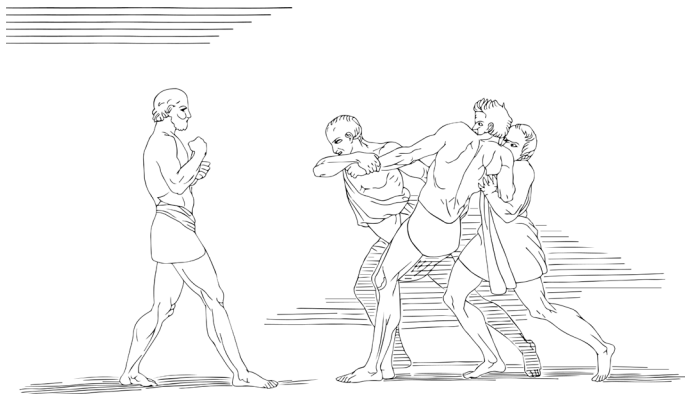
Then wise Penelope answered: “The stranger is not witless; just as he wishes it will be. For I think that there are no mortal men so unrestrained as these, and none who devise such foolish deeds.”

So she spoke, and the noble swineherd departed into the throng of the suitors, when he had delivered to her his message. And immediately he spoke winged words to Telemachos, holding his head close to him, so that the others would not hear: “Friend, I am leaving here to look after your swine and the things of the farm, your livelihood and mine, but you take charge of all that is going on here. But first watch out for yourself and be careful that no evil comes close to you, for many of the Achaians think evil of us, and may Zeus confound them before their wickedness falls on us!”

Wise Telemachos answered him and said, “It will be so, father; be on your way as soon as you have eaten. Come again in the morning and bring good animals to sacrifice. And all these matters will be my concern and the immortal gods’.”

So he spoke, and Eumaios sat down again on the polished bench, and when he had satisfied his heart with food and drink, he went on his way to the swine, leaving the courts and the hall full of feasters, and they were enjoying themselves with dancing and singing, for already it was close to evening.

Book XVIII: Odysseus Contends With the Suitors



Odysseus Preparing to Fight with Iros

Odysseus Beats the Beggar Iros

Then up came a common beggar, who was accustomed to begging through the town of Ithaka, one that was known among all men for ravenous greed, for his endless eating and drinking, yet he had no strength or might, though he was bulky enough to look at. Arnaeus was his name, for so his good mother had called him at his birth, but all the young men called him Iros, because he ran errands, whenever anyone bid him.¹ So now he came and wanted to drive Odysseus from his own house and began cursing him and spoke winged words: “Go away, old man, from the doorway, before you are dragged out by your feet. Do you not see that everyone is now winking at me, urging me to drag you out? Still I feel shame at the task. No, you get up, before our quarrel turns to blows.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at him and spoke, saying, “Sir, neither in deed nor word have I harmed you, nor

¹ The nickname “Iros” is a mocking play on the name of Iris, the messenger goddess, for obvious reasons.

do I begrudge that anyone else gives things to you, even if it were a large handful. But this threshold will hold us both, and you have no need to be jealous for the sake of other men's goods. You seem to me to be a wanderer, just as I am, and if we gain anything it is from the gods. Only do not provoke me too much to blows, lest you anger me, and old though I am I foul your chest and lips with blood. In that case I would have greater peace tomorrow, for I think you would never again come to the halls of Odysseus, son of Laertes.

Then the beggar Iros spoke to him in anger: "With what babble and like an old kitchen crone this glutton speaks, upon whom I will work my evil will and strike him right and left and knock all the teeth from his jaws to the ground, like the tusks of a swine that spoils the corn. Brace yourself now, so that all these men will know our courage in fighting. How would you ever do battle with a younger man than yourself?"

In this way they whetted each other's rage furiously in front of the lofty doors on the polished threshold. And the mighty prince Antinoös heard the two, and lightly he laughed out and spoke among the suitors: "Friends, never before has there been such a thing; such a great game has a god brought to this house. The stranger over there and Iros are tempting each other to blows. Quick, let us match them against one another."

At his words, they all leaped up laughing and gathered around the ragged beggars, and Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them, saying, "Hear me, you noble suitors, and I will say something. Here are goats' bellies lying by the fire, that we laid aside at supper-time and filled with fat and blood. Now whichever of the two wins and shows himself the better man let him step up and take his choice of these puddings. And furthermore, he shall always eat at our feasts, nor will we allow any other beggar to come among us and ask for handouts."

So spoke Antinoös, and the words pleased them. Then Odysseus of many counsels spoke among them craftily: "Friends, an old man and worn out with labors can in no way fight with a younger one. But my belly's call, that evil-worker, urges me on to be finally

beaten with blows. But now, all of you swear a strong oath, so that no one, to show favor to Iros, will strike me a foul blow with a heavy hand and subdue me by violence to my enemy.”

So he spoke, and they all swore not to strike him, as he urged them. When they had sworn that oath, the mighty prince Telemachos once more spoke among them: “Stranger, if your heart and lordly spirit urge you to rid yourself of this fellow, then do not fear any other of the Achaians, for whoever strikes you shall have to fight with many. I am your host, and the princes agree with me, Antinoös and Eurymachos, both of them wise men.”

So he spoke, and they all agreed. Then Odysseus gathered his rags around his thighs and let them be seen, thick and strong, and his broad shoulders and breast and mighty arms were obvious. And Athene came close and made the limbs of the shepherd of the people even stronger. Then the suitors were exceedingly amazed, and each would speak in this way, looking at his neighbor, “Very soon Iros, un-Irosed, will have a curse of his own making, such a thigh as that old man shows from beneath his rags!”

So they spoke, and Iros’ mind was troubled, but even so the servants tightened his garments on him and led him out reluctantly in great fear, his flesh trembling on his limbs. Then Antinoös rebuked him and spoke and addressed him, “You lubber, it would have been better for you if you had never been born, if you tremble before this man and are so terribly afraid; he is an old man too and worn out with the sufferings that have come upon him. But I will tell you plainly, and it will surely be accomplished. If this man prevails against you and proves to be your better, I will throw you into a black ship and send you to the mainland to Echetos the king, the maimer of all men, who will cut off your nose and ears with the pitiless steel and pull out your innard and give them raw to dogs to tear.”

So he spoke, and even greater trembling took hold of the limbs of Iros, and they led him into the ring, and the two put up their hands. Then steadfast, great Odysseus considered in himself whether he should strike him so hard that his life would leave his body right where he fell, or whether he should strike him lightly and merely

stretch him out on the earth. And as he thought about it, this seemed to him the better way—to strike lightly, so that the Achaians might not look too closely at who he was. Then the two put up their hands, and Iros struck at the right shoulder, but Odysseus struck him on his neck beneath the ear and crushed in the bones, and immediately the red blood gushed up through his mouth, and with a moan he fell in the dust and ground his teeth together as he kicked the ground. But the arrogant suitors threw up their hands and nearly died of laughter. Then Odysseus seized him by the foot and dragged him out through the doorway till he came to the courtyard and the gates of the gallery, then he set him down and rested him against the courtyard wall and put his staff in his hands and, lifting his voice, spoke winged words to him: “You sit there now and scare off swine and dogs and do not let such a one as yourself lord it over strangers and beggars, pitiful as you are, lest perhaps some worse thing happen to you.”

So he spoke and threw around his shoulders his tattered bag and the cord to hang it, and he went back to the threshold and sat down there again. Now the suitors went back inside, laughing lightly, and greeted him, saying, “Stranger, may Zeus and all the other immortal gods give you your dearest wish, all your heart’s desire, seeing that you have made that greedy one to cease from his begging in the land! Soon we will take him over to the mainland, to Echetos the king, the maimer of all men.”

So they spoke, and great Odysseus rejoiced in the omen of the words. And Antinoös set beside him the great pudding, stuffed with fat and blood, and Amphinomos took two loaves from the basket and set them beside him and toasted him with a golden cup and spoke, saying, “Father and stranger, hail! May happiness be yours in the time to come, though now you are gripped by many sorrows.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Amphinomos, truly you seem to me a sufficiently prudent man, for so too was the father from whom you have sprung, for I have heard his fame, how Nisos of Doulichion was a good and rich man, and they say you are his son, and you seem to be a man of understanding. So I will tell you, and you attend and listen to me. Earth nurtures nothing

feebler than man, of all the creatures that breathe and move upon its face. He thinks that he will never suffer evil in time to come, while the gods give him happiness, and his limbs move lightly. But when the blessed gods have brought sorrow for him, he must bear it with a steadfast heart. For the spirit of men upon the earth is like their life, which comes upon them from the father of gods and men. Yes, and I too once was prosperous among men, but I did many a foolish deed, trusting in my own strength and toughness, and trusting in my father and my brothers. Therefore, let no man be forever lawless anymore but keep quietly the gifts of the gods, whatever they may give. Such foolish deeds I see the suitors devising, as they waste the wealth and hold in contempt the wife of a man who, I think, will not be far from his friends and his own land for much longer; no, he is very near. But for you, may some god withdraw you from here to your own home, and may you not meet him on the day when he returns to his own dear country! For the suitors and Odysseus will not be parted without blood, I think, when once he comes beneath his own roof.”

So he spoke and poured out an offering and then drank of the honey-sweet wine and again set the cup in the hands of the leader of the people. But Amphinomos went back through the hall, sad at heart and bowing his head, for his soul foresaw evil. Even so he did not avoid his fate, for Athene had bound him also to be slain outright at the hands and by the spear of Telemachos. So he sat down again on the high seat from which he had arisen.

Penelope Charms the Suitors into Giving Her Gifts

Now the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, put it into the heart of the daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, to show herself to the suitors, that she might make their hearts all flutter with hope, and that she might win yet more honor from her lord and her son than before. She laughed a light laugh and spoke to the nurse and addressed her, saying, “Eurynome, my heart yearns, though before I had no such

desire, to show myself to the suitors, hateful as they are. I would also say a word to my son that will be for his welfare; that is, that he should not continually keep company with the arrogant suitors, who speak kindly with their lips but imagine evil at the end.”

Then the housewife, Eurynome, spoke to her, saying, “Yes, my child, all this you have spoken is good. Go then and declare your words to your son and do not hide them but first wash and anoint your face and do not go as you are, with your cheeks all stained with tears. Go, for it does little good to always sorrow without ceasing. And see, your son is now of an age to hear you, he whom you have above all things prayed to the gods that you might see with a beard on his chin.”

Then wise Penelope answered her, saying, “Eurynome, do not speak this way to comfort me, in spite of all your love, urging me to wash and be anointed with ointment. For the gods that keep Olympus destroyed my beauty, since the day that he departed in the hollow ships. But tell Autonoë and Hippodameia to come to me and to stand by my side in the halls. I will not go alone among men, for I am ashamed.”

So she spoke, and the old woman passed through the chamber to tell the maidens and to hasten their coming.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, had another thought. She shed a sweet slumber over the daughter of Ikarios, who sank back in sleep, and all her joints were loosened as she lay in the chair, and, meanwhile, the lovely goddess was giving her divine gifts, so that all the Achaians might marvel at her. First she covered her lovely face with imperishable beauty, like that with which the crowned goddess Kythereia² is anointed when she goes to the lovely dances of the Graces. And she made her taller and greater to behold and made her whiter than newly-sawn ivory. When she had done all this, that lovely goddess departed, and the white-armed handmaidens came out from the chamber and came close with a sound of voices. Then sweet sleep left Penelope, and she rubbed her cheeks with her hands,

2 One of Aphrodite's names, from the island Kythera, off the southern tip of the Peloponnese, where according to tradition she stepped ashore after being born in the sea foam.

and said, “Indeed, soft slumber wrapped me round in spite of my misery. If only pure Artemis would give me so soft a death right now that I might no longer waste my life in sorrow of heart, longing for the many virtues of my dear lord, for he was foremost of all the Achaians.”

With this word she went down from the shining, upper chamber, not alone, for two handmaidens also kept her company. And when the fair lady had come to the suitors, she stood by the pillar of the well-built roof, holding her shining garment before her face, and on either side of her stood a faithful handmaid. And immediately the knees of the suitors were loosened, and their hearts were enchanted with love, and each one uttered a prayer that he might be her bed-mate. But she spoke to Telemachos, her dear son, “Telemachos, your mind and your thoughts are no longer as stable as they used to be. While you were still a child, you had a quicker and more subtle wit, but now that you are grown and have come to the full measure of manhood, and a stranger looking at your stature and your beauty might say that you must be some rich man’s son, your mind and your thoughts are no longer as sound as they used to be. For what kind of deed has been done in these halls that thou have allowed your guest to be so shamefully treated? How would it be now if the stranger sitting in our house were to come to some harm all through this evil behavior? Shame and disgrace would be yours forever among men.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her: “My mother, in this matter I do not blame you for being angry. Yet I have some knowledge and understanding of each thing, of the good and of the evil, but previously I was a child. However, I cannot plan everything according to wisdom, for these men in their evil thoughts drive me from my wits, on this side and on that, and there is no one to help me. Nevertheless, this battle between Iros and the stranger did not go as the suitors thought it would, but the stranger proved the better man. Would to Father Zeus and Athene and Apollo that the suitors in our halls were even now defeated in the same way, their heads rolling, some in the court, and some in the house, and the limbs of each man loosened in the same way as Iros sits yonder now by the courtyard

gates, rolling his head like a drunken man, and cannot stand upright on his feet nor get home to his own place, since his limbs are loosened!”

So they spoke to one another. But Eurymachos spoke to Penelope, saying, “Daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, if all the Achaians in Iasian Argos could see you, an even greater crowd of suitors would feast in your halls by tomorrow’s Dawn, since you surpass all women in beauty and form and in wisdom of mind.”

Then wise Penelope answered him: “Eurymachos, truly the gods destroyed my excellences, both of face and form, the day when the Argives set out for Ilios, and with them went my lord Odysseus. If only he would come and watch over my life, my fame would be greater and more lovely! But now am I in sorrow, such a crowd of evils some god has sent against me. I remember well when he set off and left his own country, how he took me by the right hand at the wrist and spoke, saying, ‘Lady, I do not think that all the strong-armored Achaians will win a safe return from Troy, for the Trojans too, they say, are good men at arms, as spearsmen and bowmen and as drivers of swift horses, the kind that always most swiftly determine the course of equally drawn battle. Therefore, I do not know if the gods will allow me to return, or whether I shall be cut down there in Troy; so you must take care of all things here. Be attentive to my father and my mother in the halls, just as you now do, and even more than now, while I am far away. But when you see that your son is a bearded man, then marry whomever you wish and leave your own house.’

“He spoke in this way, and now all these things have come to pass. The night will come when a hateful marriage will come upon most unfortunate me, whose good fortune Zeus has taken away. But, furthermore, this new terrible trouble has come upon my heart and soul, for this was not the way suitors used to act. Whoever wished to court a good lady, the daughter of a rich man, and contest with others would bring with them oxen of their own great flocks and a banquet for the friends of the bride and give the lady splendid gifts but would not devour another’s livelihood without payment.”

So she spoke, and steadfast, great Odysseus rejoiced, because she got gifts from them and deceived their souls with soothing words, while her heart was set on other things.

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, answered her again: “Daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, take the gifts which any of the Achaians may choose to bring here, for it would be impolite to refuse a gift. But as for us, we will neither go to our lands nor elsewhere, before you marry the best man of the Achaians.”

So spoke Antinoös, and the words pleased them well, and each man sent an attendant to bring his gifts. For Antinoös his attendant brought an embroidered robe, large and lovely, in which there were golden brooches, twelve in all, fitted with well-formed clasps. And an attendant immediately brought for Eurymachos a golden chain of curious craftsmanship, strung with amber beads, shining like the sun. And attendants brought in for Eurydamas a pair of ear-rings, with three drops well made, and great beauty shone from them. And out of the house of Peisandros the prince, the son of Polyktor, an attendant brought a necklace, a very lovely jewel. And each of the other Achaians brought some other beautiful gift.

Then the lovely lady went to her upper chamber, and her attendant maidens carried for her the lovely gifts, while the suitors turned to dancing and the delights of song and took their pleasure in those and waited for evening. And dark evening came on them at their pastimes. Soon they set up three braziers in the halls to give them light, and on these they laid firewood all around, dry bundles seasoned long and split with an axe. And by the braziers they placed torches, and the maids of stout-hearted Odysseus held up the lights. Then prince Odysseus of many counsels himself spoke among them, saying, “Handmaids of Odysseus, that lord so long gone, you should go to the chambers where the honored queen sits and twist the yarn at her side and cheer her heart as you sit in the chamber or card the wool with your hands, but I will hold the lights for all these that are here. For even if they are inclined to wait for the throned Dawn, they will not outlast me, I am so long enduring.”

Odysseus Contends With Eurymachos

So he spoke, but they laughed and looked at one another. And beautiful Melantho rebuked him shamefully—Melantho, daughter of Dolios, but whom Penelope raised and treated her as tenderly as if she were her own child and gave her playthings to her heart's desire. Yet, in spite of all that, she was not moved by Penelope's sorrow, but she loved Eurymachos and was his bedmate. Now she rebuked Odysseus with railing words: "Wretched guest, surely you are some brain-addled man, seeing that you do not choose to go and sleep at a blacksmith shop or at some tavern, but you boldly rattle on here among many lords with no fear in your heart. Indeed, wine has befuddled your wits, or perhaps you are always this way, and so you babble idly. Are you beside yourself for joy, because you have beaten the beggar Iros? Be careful lest a better man than Iros soon rise up against you to beat your head with his mighty hands and cover you with blood and send you away out of the house."

Then Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at her and said, "Indeed, I will go immediately over to Telemachos and tell him of your words, you shameless thing, so that immediately he may cut you limb from limb."

So he spoke and with his words scared away the women who fled through the hall, and their knees were loosened for fear, for they considered that his words were true. But Odysseus took his stand by the burning braziers, tending the lights, and gazed on all the men, but he pondered very different matters in his heart, things that would be fulfilled.

Now Athene would not allow the haughty suitors to abstain from biting scorn, that the pain might sink deeper into the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes. So Eurymachos, son of Polybos, began to speak among them, mocking Odysseus, and made jokes for his friends: "Listen to me, suitors of the famous queen, that I may say what my spirit within me urges. Not without the gods' will has this man come to the house of Odysseus; I think that the torchlight reflects off of that head of his, for there are no hairs on it, even thin ones."

He spoke and addressed Odysseus, waster of cities: “Stranger, would you be my servant if I would hire you, at an upland farm with your wages assured you, where you would gather stones for walls and plant tall trees? There I would continually provide you with food and clothe you with garments and give you shoes for your feet. Nevertheless, since you are only experienced in evil, you would not care for the labors of the field but would rather go loafing through the land in order to have something with which to fill your hungry belly.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him and said, “Eurymachos, if only there would be a contest of labor between us two, in the season of spring when the long days begin! It would be in the deep grass, and I would have a crooked scythe, and you another like it, that we might test each other in the matter of labor, going without food till late evening, and there would be plenty of grass. Or if only there were oxen to drive, the best there are, large and tawny, well-fed, of equal age and power to bear the yoke with untiring strength! And it should be a four-acre field with the clod yielding to the plowshare. Then you would see whether or not I could cut a clean unbroken furrow before me. Or if only the son of Kronos would every day waken war wherever he pleased, and I had a shield and two spears and a helmet of bronze, close fitting on my temples! Then you would see me mingling in the forefront of the battle, nor would you rail and taunt me about my belly. No, you are exceedingly undisciplined, and your heart is hard, and you think yourself some great and mighty person, because you keep company with a few feeble men. If only Odysseus would return and come to his own country—very soon those doors, wide as they are, would prove all too narrow for you in your exit through the doorway!”

So he spoke, and Eurymachos grew still more angry at heart and, looking fiercely at him, spoke winged words: “Wretched man that you are, very soon I will have my vengeance on you, you prattle on so boldly among many princes, and you have no reverence in your heart. Wine has addled your wits, or perhaps you are always this way, and so you babble idly. Are you beside yourself for joy, because you have beaten the beggar Iros?”

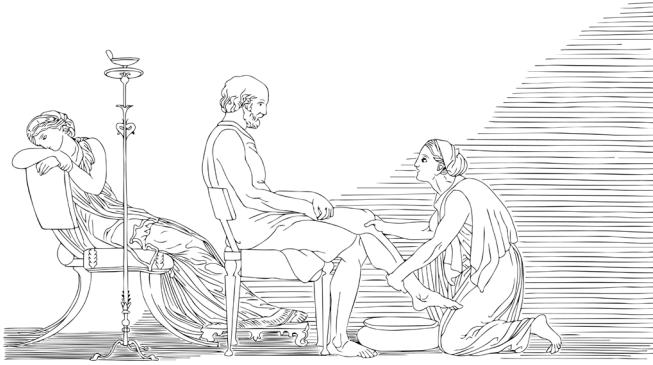
With that he picked up a footstool, but Odysseus sat down at the knees of Amphinomos of Doulichion, in fear of Eurymachos. And Eurymachos threw the stool and struck the cup-bearer on the right hand, and the ladle cup dropped to the ground with a clang, while the young man groaned and fell backwards in the dust. Then the suitors clamored through the shadowy halls, and one would speak in this way to his neighbor, “If only our wandering guest had perished elsewhere before he ever came here; then he never would have caused all this tumult in our midst! But now we are all fighting about beggars, and there will be no more joy at the good feast, for worse things have had their way.”

Then the mighty prince Telemachos spoke among them: “Sirs, you have lost your minds; your mood betrays that you have eaten and drunk; one of the gods is surely moving you. No, now that you have feasted well, go home and lay down to rest, since your spirit urges you, but as for me, I will drive no man out of here.”

So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachos, because he spoke boldly. Then Amphinomos, the famous son of Nisos the prince, son of Aretios, addressed them, “Friends, when a righteous word has been spoken, surely no one would rebuke another with hard speech and be angry. Do not abuse this stranger, not let any of the servants that are in the house of godlike Odysseus do so. But let the wine-bearer pour a libation into each cup in turn, so that after the drink offering we may go home to bed. But let us leave the stranger in the halls of Odysseus for Telemachos to have charge of, for it is his home to which he has come.”

So he spoke, and his word pleased them all. Then the prince Mulios, the companion of Amphinomos from Dulichion, mixed the wine bowl for them. And he stood and served it to each of them in turn, and they poured out before the blessed gods and drank the honey-sweet wine. When they had poured the libation and had drunk to their hearts’ content, they each departed to his own house to lie down.

Book XIX: Odysseus Talks With Penelope



Eurykleia Discovers Odysseus

Odysseus and Telemachos Hide the Weapons

Now great Odysseus was left behind in the hall, devising with Athene's aid the slaying of the suitors, and immediately he spoke winged words to Telemachos: "Telemachos, we must hide the weapons of war in the palace, all of them, and when the suitors miss them and ask you about them, deceive them with soft words, saying, 'I put them away out of the smoke, since they are no longer like they were when Odysseus left them behind him long ago when he went to Troy, but they are completely blackened with so much smoke from the fire. Furthermore, some god has put into my heart this other greater care, that perhaps when you are heated with wine, you begin a quarrel between you and wound each other and shame the feast and the courting, for iron draws a man to itself.'"

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his beloved father and called the nurse Eurykleia to him and spoke to her, saying, "Nurse, shut the women in their chambers until I have hidden in the armory the great weapons of my father, which the smoke in the hall dims, for they have not been cared for since my father went away, and I was

still only a child. Now I want to hide them where the smoke of the fire will not reach them.”

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered him, saying, “My child, if only you would always take such careful thought as this to guard the house and all this wealth! But who will bring the light and carry it, since you do not want the maidens, who might have held the lights, to go ahead of you?”

Then wise Telemachos answered her, “This stranger here, for I will keep no man idle who eats my bread, even if he has come from far away.”

So he spoke, and her speech remained wingless, and she closed the doors of the fairly-situated chambers. Then Odysseus and his renowned son arose and began to carry the helmets and the heavily bossed shields and the sharp-pointed spears inside, and before them Pallas Athene carried a golden lamp that cast a most lovely light. At that Telemachos spoke to his father suddenly: “Father, I see with my eyes a great wonder; it seems to me that the walls of the hall and the great main-beams of the roof and the cross-beams of pine and the pillars that lift high are bright as if with flaming fire. Truly some god of those that hold the wide sky is in here.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him and said, “Stay quiet and keep your thoughts in check and do not ask about this. This is the manner of the gods that hold Olympos. But go and lie down, and I will remain here that I may still further provoke the maids and your mother to question me, and she in her sorrow will ask me concerning each thing, one by one.”

So he spoke, and Telemachos went out through the hall to his chamber to lie down, by the light of the flaming torches, to the chamber where he had always taken his rest when sweet sleep came over him. There he lay down and awaited the bright Dawn. But great Odysseus was left behind in the hall, devising with Athene’s aid the slaying of the suitors.

Odysseus Tells False Stories to Penelope

Now out of her chamber came wise Penelope, like Artemis or golden Aphrodite, and they set a chair for her close by the fire, where she was accustomed to sit, a chair well-crafted and inlaid with ivory and silver, which the craftsman Ikmalios had once fashioned and had joined to it a footstool that was part of the chair, upon which a great fleece would be laid. Here wise Penelope sat down, and next came white-armed handmaids from the women's chamber and began to take away the many scraps of food and the tables and the cups from which the haughty princes had been drinking, and they raked out the fire from the braziers on to the floor and piled many fresh logs upon them to give light and warmth.

Then Melanthe began to revile Odysseus a second time, saying, "Stranger, will you continue to be a plague to us here, wandering around the house in the night and spying on the women? Get out of here, you wretched thing, and be thankful for your supper, or immediately you will be struck with a torch and driven out of doors."

Then Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at her and said, "Good woman, what possesses you to attack me this way out of an angry heart? Is it because I am dirty and am clothed in tattered garments and beg through the land, for necessity is laid on me?¹ This is how beggars and wandering men are. For I too once had a house of my own among men, a rich man with a wealthy house, and many times I gave to a wanderer, whatever kind of man he might be, and with whatever need he came. And I had countless servants and plenty of everything else by which people live well and have a name for riches. But Zeus, the son of Kronos, robbed me of it all, for that must have been his will. Therefore, woman, be careful lest some day you too lose all your fine show with which you now excel among the handmaids, as well may happen, if your mistress is provoked to anger with you, or if Odysseus comes home, for there is still hope of that. And even if he has perished, as you think, and will never return, by

1 See Book 10, footnote 2.

Apollo's grace he has a son like him, Telemachos, and none of the women does evil in his halls without his knowledge, for he is no longer of an age not to notice it."

So he spoke, and wise Penelope heard him and rebuked the handmaid and spoke and addressed her: "You reckless and shameless thing, be sure your great wickedness is not hidden from me, and your blood will be on your own head for it! For you knew very well, having heard it from my lips, that I wanted to ask the stranger in my halls for news of my lord, for I am terribly sorrowful."

With that she spoke also to the housekeeper Eurynome, saying, "Eurynome, bring a chair here with a fleece on it, so that the stranger may sit and speak with me and hear my words, for I wish to ask him his whole story."

So she spoke, and the nurse hurried and brought a polished chair and threw a fleece onto it, and then steadfast, great Odysseus sat down there, and wise Penelope spoke first, saying, "Stranger, I will ask you this first: who are you of the sons of men, and from where? Where is your city, and where are those who nurtured you?"

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her and said, "Lady, no mortal man in the wide world could find fault with you, for your fame goes up to the wide heaven, as does the fame of a blameless king, one who fears the gods and rules among many mighty men, upholding justice, and the black earth bears wheat and barley, and the trees are laden with fruit, and the sheep unfailingly bear offsprings, and the sea yields a wealth of fish, and all because of his good governing, and the people prosper under him. Therefore, ask me now, here in your house, anything else that you wish, but do not ask about my race and my own country, lest you fill my heart with more pain, for I am a man of many sorrows. Furthermore, it is not becoming for me to sit weeping and wailing in another's house, for it does little good to mourn always without ceasing, lest perhaps one of the maidens, or even you, become angry with me and say that I swim in tears, like one who is drunk with wine."

Then wise Penelope answered him and said, "Stranger, truly the gods destroyed my excellences, both of face and form, the day when

the Argives set out for Ilios, and with them went my lord Odysseus. If only he would come and watch over my life, my fame would be greater and more lovely! But now am I in sorrow, such a crowd of evils some god has sent against me. For all the noblest princes in the islands, in Doulichion and Same and wooded Zakynthos, and those who dwell around shining Ithaka are courting me against my will and devouring the household. Therefore, I pay no attention to strangers or suppliants, nor to heralds, the craftsmen of the people. But I eat my heart out longing for Odysseus; they hasten my marriage so I weave a web of deceit. Some god put it into my heart to set up a great web in the halls and at it to weave a fine and wide robe, and then I spoke among them, saying, ‘You princely youths, my suitors, now that great Odysseus is dead, remain patient, no matter how eager you are to rush this marriage of mine, until I finish the robe. I would not want the work to be all for nothing, this shroud for the hero Laertes, for the day when ruinous doom brings him low, the doom of death that lays men at their length. So none of the Achaian women in the land will blame me, as they might if he were to lie without a burial shroud, a man that had gained great possessions.’

“So I spoke, and their haughty hearts agreed. So then in the daytime I would weave the mighty web and in the night unravel it, when I had the torches placed beside me. So for three years I hid the thing by craft and deceived the minds of the Achaians. But when the fourth year came, and the seasons came around as the months waned, and many days were accomplished, then by the help of the shameless and reckless handmaids, the suitors came and trapped me and rebuked me loudly. So I finished the web against my will, for I had to. And now I can neither escape the marriage nor devise any further plan, and my parents are urgent for me to marry, and my son loses patience that these men devour his livelihood, as he observes everything, for by this time he has come to maturity and is fully able to care for a household, one to which Zeus grants honor. But tell me of your own ancestry, where you are from, for you are not sprung of oak or rock, as happens in old tales.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her and said, “O honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, will you never stop asking me about my own people? But I will tell you, though truly you will cause me sorrows more than those that grip me already, for it is always that way when a man has been far from his own country, as long as I have been, wandering in terrible suffering to many cities of men. Yet I will tell you what you ask. There is a land called Krete in the midst of the wine-dark sea, lovely and rich, surrounded by water, and in it are countless men and ninety cities. And they do not all have the same language, but there is a confusion of tongues—Achaians live there and also Kretans of Krete, proud-hearted, and Kydonians and Dorians with waving plumes and noble Pelasgians. And among these cities is the mighty city Knossos, where Minos began to rule when he was nine years old, he who conversed with great Zeus and was the father of my father, proud Deukalion. Deukalion fathered me and Idomeneus the prince. Idomeneus had gone in his beaked ships to Ilios with the sons of Atreus, but my renowned name is Aithon, the younger of the two; he was the first-born and the better man. There I saw Odysseus and gave him guest-gifts, for the power of the wind carried him to Krete too as he was heading for Troy and had driven him wandering past Cape Maleia. So he halted his ships in Amnisos, near the cave of Eileithyia, in harbors hard to get into, and he barely avoided the storm. Soon he came to the city and asked for Idomeneus, saying that he was his friend and was loved and honored by him. But it was already the tenth or the eleventh dawn since Idomeneus had gone in his beaked ships to Ilios. So I led him to the house and entertained him well with all kindness out of the plenty in my house, and for him and for the rest of his companions who were with him I gathered and gave barley meal and dark wine out of the public stores and oxen to sacrifice to his heart’s content. There the noble Achaians remained for twelve days, for the strong North Wind kept them there and did not allow them not to anchor off the coast, for some angry god had roused it. On the thirteenth day the wind fell, and then they lifted anchor.”

So he told many false tales in the likeness of truth, and her tears flowed as she listened, and her flesh melted. Just as the snow melts in the high places of the hills, the snow that the South-East wind has thawed when the West wind has scattered it over the earth, and as it melts the rivers run full, in the same way, her fair cheeks melted beneath her tears, as she wept for her own lord who at that moment was sitting next to her. Now Odysseus felt compassion in his heart for his wife in her grief, but his eyes stayed steadfast beneath his eyelids as though they were of horn or iron, and carefully he hid his tears. But when she had had her fill of tearful mourning, she answered him in turn and spoke, saying, “Friend as you are, I still wish to test you and learn whether in truth you entertained my lord there in your halls with his godlike company, as you say. Tell me what kind of garments in which his body was clothed, and what kind of man he was himself, and tell me about his companions that went with him.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Lady, it is hard for one so long parted from him to tell you all this, for it is now the twentieth year since he went there and left my country. But still I will tell you how I see him in spirit. Great Odysseus wore a thick purple mantle, doubled, which had a brooch fashioned in gold with two hollows for the pins, and on the face of it was a curious pattern—a hound held in his forepaws a dappled fawn and gazed at it as it writhed. And everyone marveled at the workmanship, how, crafted as it was in gold, the hound was gazing on the fawn and strangling it, and the fawn was writhing with his feet and struggling to flee. Furthermore, I noticed the shining doublet around his body, like the gleam of the skin of a dried onion, it was so smooth and glistening like the sun; indeed, many women looked at it and wondered. And I will tell you another thing; ponder it in your heart. I do not know if Odysseus was clothed this way at home, or if one of his companions gave him the garments as he went on board the swift ship, or it may be that some stranger did, seeing that Odysseus was dear to many men, for few of the Achaians were his peers. I, too, gave him a sword of bronze and a lovely purple mantle with a double fold and a tasseled tunic, and I sent him away with all honor on his decked ship.

Also, an attendant kept him company, somewhat older than he was, and I will tell you about him too, what kind of man he was. He was round-shouldered, black-skinned, and curly-headed, and his name was Eurybates; Odysseus honored him more than all his companions, because in everything he was like-minded with him.”

So he spoke, and in her heart he stirred still more the desire for weeping, as she knew the certain sign that Odysseus had told her. So when she had taken her fill of tearful mourning, then she answered him and spoke, saying, “Now truly, stranger, you, who even before this were pitied, will be beloved and honored in my halls, for it was I who gave him these garments you mentioned and folded them myself and brought them from the chamber and also added the shining brooch to be his jewel. But I shall never welcome him back home to his own dear country. It was with an evil fate that Odysseus went away in the hollow ship to see that cursed Ilios, which should never be named.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, do not befoul your lovely skin any more, nor eat out your heart with weeping for your lord—not that I blame you, for many a woman weeps who has lost her wedded lord, to whom she has borne children in her love, though a far lesser man than Odysseus, who, they say, is like the gods. No, cease from your weeping and lay up my word in your heart, for I will tell you surely without hiding anything how recently I heard rumors of the return of Odysseus, that he is close by and still alive in the fat land of the men of Thesprotia and is bringing with him many rich treasures as he begs through the land. But he has lost his beloved companions and his hollow ship on the wine-dark sea, making his way from the island of Thrinakia, for Zeus and Helios had a grudge against him, since his companions had slain the cattle of Helios. They all perished in the waves of the sea, but the wave cast him ashore on the keel of the ship on the land of the Phaiakians who are close kin to the gods, and they honored him heartily like a god and gave him many gifts and would eagerly have sent him home unharmed. Yet Odysseus would have been here long before, but he thought it more profitable

to gather wealth as he journeyed over wide lands. So truly is Odysseus skilled in the arts of acquiring wealth, more than all men upon earth; none are his equal. So Pheidon king of the Thesprotians told me. Furthermore, he swore, in my presence, as he poured the drink offering in his house, that the ship was drawn down to the sea and his companions who were to convey him to his own dear country were ready. But he sent me off first, for it happened that a ship of the Thesprotians was on her way to Doulichion, a land rich in grain. And he showed me all the wealth that Odysseus had gathered; it would be enough for his children after him for ten generations, so great were the treasures he had stored in the chambers of the king. As for Odysseus, the king said he had gone to Dodona to hear the counsel of Zeus from the high leafy oak tree of the god, about how he should return to his own dear country, having been so long away, whether openly or by stealth.

“So he is safe and will come home soon, and he is very near and will not be far from his friends and his own country much longer; I give you my oath on it. Let Zeus be my first witness, highest and best of all the gods, and then the hearth of noble Odysseus where I have come, that all these things shall surely be accomplished just as I have told you. In this same year Odysseus will come here, as the old moon wanes and the new one is born.”

Then wise Penelope answered him, “O stranger, if only your word would be accomplished. You would quickly know kindness and many gifts at my hands, so that whoever met with you would call you blessed. But my heart has a bad feeling about these things, and so it will be. Odysseus will not ever come home, nor will you have an escort away from here, since there are not now such masters in the house as Odysseus was among men—if ever there was such a man—to welcome honored guests and speed them on their way. But you, my handmaids, wash this man’s feet and make a bed for him, covers and mantles and shining blankets, so that he may come to the time of golden-throned Dawn well and warmly. And very early in the morning bathe him and anoint him, so that he may eat in the palace beside Telemachos, sitting quietly in the hall. And it will be so much

the worse for any violent man of the suitors who vexes the stranger, for he will not benefit in spite of all his terrible anger. For how will you learn about me, stranger, whether indeed I excel all women in wit and careful planning, if you sit all ragged and poorly clothed at supper in my halls? Man's life is short enough! And if anyone is a hard man and hard-hearted, all men curse him in time to come, while he still lives, and all men mock him when he is dead. But if anyone is blameless and pure in heart, his guests spread his good reputation over the whole earth, and many people call him great."

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her and said: "O honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, mantles and shining blankets are hateful to me since I left behind me the snowy hills of Krete, voyaging in the long-oared ship; no, I will lie as I used to rest in time past through the sleepless nights. Many nights I have lain on a poor bed and awaited the bright-throned Dawn. And baths for the feet are no longer my delight, nor shall any women of those who are serving maidens in your house touch my foot, unless there happens to be some old, pure-hearted dame, one who has known as much trouble as I have; I would not grudge her to touch my feet."

Eurykleia Recognizes Odysseus' Scar

Then wise Penelope answered him: "Dear stranger—for never yet has there come to my house, of all the strangers from afar, a dearer man or one so discreet as you, uttering so carefully the words of wisdom. I have an old woman with an understanding heart, who diligently nursed and tended that unfortunate man, my lord; she took him in her arms the very hour his mother bore him. She will wash your feet, though she is frail. Rise, wise Eurykleia, and bathe this man whose age is the same as your master's. Perhaps Odysseus' feet are like these now, and his hands too, for misery ages men quickly."

So she spoke, and the old woman covered her face with her hands and shed hot tears and spoke a word of lamentation, saying,

“Woe is me, child, for your sake, I am so helpless! Surely Zeus hated you more than all people, though you had a god-fearing spirit! For never yet did any mortal burn so many fat thigh pieces and so many choice sacrifices to Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, as you gave to him, praying that you might grow to a smooth, old age and raise your renowned son. But now from you alone Zeus has completely cut off the day of your returning. Perhaps the women of a far, strange land mock at you, whenever he comes to the famous palace of any lord, just as these shameless ones here all mock at you. It is to avoid their insults and taunts that you do not allow them to wash your feet, but the daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, has urged me, and I am very willing to do this task. Therefore, I will wash your feet, both for Penelope’s sake and for your own, because my heart within me is moved and troubled. But come, listen carefully to the word that I speak. Many travel-worn strangers have come here before now, but I tell you that I have never seen any so similar to another man, as you are similar to Odysseus, in form, voice, and feet.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Old woman, all men who have seen us two say just the same, that we look alike very much, just as you observe and say.”

At this the old woman took the shining cauldron, from which she began to wash his feet, and poured in cold water and then mingled warm with it. Odysseus sat away from the hearth and suddenly turned his face to the darkness, for he was troubled at heart, lest when she touched him she would know the scar, and everything would be revealed. Now she drew near her lord to wash him, and immediately she recognized the scar of the wound that the boar had given him with his white tusk long ago, when Odysseus went to Parnassos to see Autolykos and the sons of Autolykos, his mother’s noble father, who outdid all men in thievery and skill in swearing. This skill was the gift of the god Hermes himself, for he burned the pleasing sacrifice of the thighs of lambs and kids to Hermes; therefore, the god helped him gladly. Now Autolykos once had gone to the rich land of Ithaka and had seen his daughter’s new-born son, and when he was finishing supper, Eurykleia set the baby on his knees and spoke and addressed

him, “Autolykos, find a name now to give to your child’s son, for he is a child of many prayers.”

Then Autolykos answered and spoke, “My daughter and my daughter’s lord, give him the name I tell you. Because as I have come here in anger against many, both men and women, over the fruitful earth, therefore, let the child’s name be ‘man of anger,’ that is, ‘Odysseus.’ But when the child reaches maturity, and comes to the great palace of his mother’s kin at Parnassos, where all my possessions are, I will give him a gift out of these and send him on his way rejoicing.”

And so it was that Odysseus went to receive the splendid gifts. And Autolykos and his sons grasped his hands and greeted him with gentle words, and Amphithea, his mother’s mother, clasped him in her arms and kissed his face and both his fair eyes. Then Autolykos called to his great sons to prepare the meal, and they obeyed. They soon led in a five-year-old bull, which they skinned and busily prepared and cut up all the limbs and deftly chopped them small, and they pierced them with spits and roasted them cleverly, dividing the portions. So for that whole day they feasted till the going down of the sun, and their souls lacked nothing in the fairly distributed banquet. But when the sun sank, and darkness came on, they lay down to rest and received the blessing of sleep.

Now as soon as early Dawn shone out rosy-fingered, they all went out to the chase, the hounds and the sons of Autolykos, and with them went noble Odysseus. They climbed the steep hill of wooded Parnassos, and soon they came to the windy hollows. Now the sun was just beginning to strike the fields as it came up from the soft flowing stream of deep Okeanos. Then the beaters reached a glade of the woodland, and before them went the hounds tracking a scent, but behind came the sons of Autolykos, and among them great Odysseus followed close on the hounds, swinging a long spear. There in a thick lair lay a great boar, and through the woods the force of the wet winds never blew, nor did the bright sun light it with his rays, nor could the rain pierce through, it was so thick, and there was a great plenty of fallen leaves in it. Then the tramp of the men’s feet and of the dogs came upon the boar as they pressed on in the chase,

and he sprang out from his lair towards them with bristling crest and fire burning in his eyes, and he stood at bay in front of them all. Then Odysseus was the first to rush in, holding his spear high in his strong hand, eager to stab him, but the boar was too quick and cut a gash above his knee, ripping deep into the flesh with his tusk as he charged sideways, but he did not cut to the man's bone. Then Odysseus aimed well and struck him on his right shoulder, so that the point of the bright spear went clean through, and the boar fell in the dust with a cry, and his life passed from him. Then the beloved sons of Autolykos began to busy themselves with the carcass, and they skilfully bound up the wound of noble, godlike Odysseus and stopped the black blood with a song of healing and immediately returned to the house of their beloved father. Then Autolykos and his sons healed his wound completely and gave him splendid gifts and sent him with love back to Ithaka, rejoicing to help a grateful guest. There his father and mother were glad at his returning and asked him about all his adventures, and how he got his wound, and he told them all about it, how the boar gashed him with his white tusk in the chase, when he had gone to Parnassos with the sons of Autolykos.

Now the old woman took the scarred limb and passed her hands down it and knew it by the touch and let the foot drop suddenly, so that his knee fell into the bath, and the bronze vessel rang, having turned over on the other side, and the water spilled on the ground. Then joy and anguish came on her in one moment, and both her eyes filled up with tears, and her voice was choked back, and, touching the chin of Odysseus, she spoke to him, saying, "Truly you are Odysseus, my dear child, and I did not recognize you before, till I had handled the body of my master!"

With that she looked towards Penelope, thinking to make a sign that her husband was at last home. But Penelope could not meet her eyes or notice her, for Athene had turned her thoughts to other things. But Odysseus, feeling for the old woman's throat, gripped it with his right hand and with the other drew her closer to him and spoke, saying, "Woman, why do you want to destroy me? It was you that nursed me there at your own breast, and now after toil and much

pain I have come in the twentieth year to my own country. But since you recognize me, and the god has put this in your heart, be silent, lest someone else learns this in the halls. For I will say this, and it will surely be fulfilled: if the gods subdue the haughty suitors under me, I will not restrain my hand from you, though you are my nurse, when I slay the other handmaids in my halls.”

Then wise Eurykleia answered, saying, “My child, what word has escaped the door of your lips? You know how firm and unyielding my spirit is, and I will hold myself in check as stubborn stone or iron. And I will tell you another thing for you to ponder in your heart. If the gods subdue the haughty suitors under your hand, then I will tell you which of all the women in the palace dishonor you and which are innocent.”

Penelope’s Dream of the Eagle and Geese

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Nurse, why will you speak of these women? You need not, for I myself will observe them well and find out about each one. No, keep your saying to yourself and leave the rest to the gods.”

So he spoke, and the old woman went out of the hall to bring more water for his feet, for the first had spilled. So when she had washed him and anointed him well with olive oil, Odysseus again drew up his bench nearer to the fire to warm himself and covered up the scar with his rags. Then wise Penelope spoke first, saying, “Stranger, there is still a little thing I want to ask you, for soon it will be the hour for pleasant rest for anyone on whom sweet sleep falls, though he may be burdened with cares. But to me the god has given measureless sorrow, for all day long I have my fill of wailing and lamenting, as I see to my own house tasks and to the tasks of the housemaids. But when night comes and sleep takes hold of all, I lie on my couch, and harsh cares, thronging thick around my inmost heart, disquiet me in my sorrow. Just as when the daughter of Pan-

dareos, the nightingale of the greenery, sings sweetly in the beginning of spring from her place in the thick leaves of the trees, and with many lilts and trills she pours out her full-voiced music, wailing for her child, dear Itylus, son of Zethos the prince, whom she unknowingly slew once upon a time with the sword; just as her song warbles, so my troubled soul sways to and fro. Shall I remain with my son and keep safe everything I've gained, my servants and great high-roofed home, respecting the bed of my lord and the voice of the people? Or should I now follow the best of the Achaians that courts me in the palace and gives a bride-price beyond reckoning? As long as my son was a child and lighthearted, I was allowed not to marry and leave the house of my husband, but now that he has grown greatly and come to the full measure of manhood, he urges me to go back home from these walls, being vexed about his possessions that the Achaians devour before his eyes.

“But listen now to a dream of mine and tell me the interpretation of it. I have twenty geese in the house that eat wheat when they come out from the water, and I am pleased at the sight. Now a great eagle with a crooked beak swooped down from the mountain and broke all their necks and killed them, and they lay scattered in a heap in the palace, while he flew up high into the bright air. At this I wept and wailed, though it was a dream, and the lovely-haired Achaian women gathered around me as I mourned piteously that the eagle had slain my geese. But he came back and sat down on a jutting point of the roof-beam, and with the voice of a man he spoke and stilled my weeping: ‘Take heart, O daughter of renowned Ikarios; this is no dream but a true vision that will be fulfilled for you. The geese are the suitors, and I who before was the eagle am now your husband come home again, who will unleash gruesome death upon all the suitors.’ With that word sweet slumber let me go, and I looked around and saw the geese in the court, pecking their wheat at the trough, in their accustomed place.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her and said, “Lady, no one could interpret the dream in any other way, since Odysseus himself has shown you how he will fulfill it. For the suitors’ destruc-

tion is clearly fated, for each and every one; not a man shall avoid death and the fates.”

Then wise Penelope answered him: “Stranger, dreams are hard and hard to be understood, nor are all things in them fulfilled for men. There are two gates of shadowy dreams: one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Dreams that pass through the portals of sawn ivory are deceitful and bring news that goes unfulfilled. But the dreams that come out through the gates of polished horn bring a true outcome, whoever of mortals sees them. But I do not think my strange dream came from there, though truly that would be most welcome to me and to my son. But I will tell you another thing; ponder it in your heart. Even now the morning of an evil day comes close, one that is to sever me from the house of Odysseus, for I am about to proclaim for a contest those axes that Odysseus would set up in a row in his halls, like oak ribs, twelve in all, and he would stand far off and shoot his arrow through them all. I will offer this contest to the suitors—whoever will most easily string the bow in his hands and shoot through all twelve axes, I will go with him and forsake this house, this house of my marriage, so fair and filled with all liveliness, which I think I shall always remember, as in a dream.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her and said, “Honored wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, no longer delay this contest in your halls, for Odysseus of many counsels will be here before these men have strung the bow and shot an arrow through the iron, no matter how they handle it.”

Then wise Penelope answered him: “Stranger, if only you were willing to continue sitting beside me in the halls and delighting me, sleep would not be shed upon my eyelids. But men may in no way remain sleepless ever, for the immortals have made a time for all things for mortals on the grain-giving earth. Therefore, I will go to my upper chamber and lie on my bed, the place of my grieving which is always watered by my tears since the day Odysseus went to that evil Ilios, never to be named. There will I lie down, but you lie in this house; either make a bed on the floor or let them lay bedding there for you.”

With that she ascended to her shining, upper chamber but not alone, for her handmaids also went with her. So she went to her upper chamber with her handmaids, and there was mourning for Odysseus, her dear lord, till grey-eyed Athene scattered sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Book XX: Telemachos Contends With the Suitors



The Descent of Athena to Ithaka

Odysseus and Penelope Can't Sleep

But great Odysseus lay down to sleep in the forecourt of the palace. He spread an undressed bull's hide on the ground and above it many fleeces of the sheep that the Achaeans had slain in sacrifice, and Eurynome threw a mantle over him where he lay. There Odysseus lay wakeful with evil thoughts against the suitors in his heart. And the serving women came out from their chamber, who liked to lie with the suitors, laughing and teasing among themselves. Then the heart of Odysseus was stirred in his breast, and he pondered much in his mind and soul whether he should leap at them and deal death to each one or allow them to lie with the arrogant suitors for the last time. And his heart growled sullenly within him. Just as a dog stands over her tender pups, growling when she spies a man she does not know, and she is eager to attack him, so his heart growled within him in his anger at their evil deeds.¹ Then he struck himself on his

1 The reason Odysseus is angry at the serving women's deeds (sleeping with the suitors) is obviously that they are treasonous, just as the suitors are treasonous. They are Odysseus' servants, but are betraying him by their intimacy with those who are eating his food, courting his wife, and, most significantly, trying to take over his kingdom, even to the extent of threatening to kill him if he returns and trying to kill Telemachos, heir to the throne.

breast and rebuked his own heart, saying, “Bear up, my heart; you bore worse things that day when the *Kyklops*, unrestrained in fury, devoured the mighty men of my company. You endured till your cleverness found a way for you out of the cave where you thought you would die.”

So he spoke, chiding his own spirit within him, and his heart remained steadfast in obedience to his word. But *Odysseus* himself lay tossing this way and that. Just as when a man by a great fire takes a paunch full of fat and blood and turns it this way and that and longs to have it roasted quickly, so *Odysseus* tossed from side to side, musing how he might lay his hands on the shameless suitors, being but one man against so many. Then *Athene* came down from heaven and came close to him in the likeness of a woman. And she stood over his head and spoke to him, saying, “Why are you wakeful, most unfortunate of all living men? Is this not your house and is your wife not there inside and your child, such a son as all men wish to have for their own?”

Then *Odysseus* of many counsels answered her, saying, “Yes, goddess, all this you have spoken is true. But my heart within me ponders at length on this, how I may lay my hands on the shameless suitors, being but one man, while they always keep together in their companies within the house. Furthermore, I ponder in my heart this other and harder matter: even if I were to slay them by your will and the will of *Zeus*, where could I flee from the avengers? Consider this well, I beg you.”

Then the goddess, grey-eyed *Athene*, answered: “Untrusting man! There are many who trust even in a weaker friend than I am, one who is a mortal and does not know such craft as mine, but I am a god, who always helps you in all kinds of trouble. And now I will tell you plainly: even if fifty companies of mortal men surround us, eager to slay us in battle, you would drive off even their cattle and great flocks. But let sleep come over you; to wake and watch all night troubles the spirit. Soon shall you rise up from out of your troubles.”

So she spoke and poured slumber upon his eyelids, but the lovely goddess herself went back to *Olympos*.

While sleep laid hold of him, loosening the cares of his soul, sleep that loosens the limbs of men, his good wife woke and wept as she sat on her soft bed. But when she had had her fill of weeping, the fair lady prayed to Artemis: “Artemis, lady and goddess, daughter of Zeus, if only you even now drive your arrow into my breast and take my life away this very hour! Or else I wish that the storm-wind might snatch me up and carry me from here down the dusky ways and drop me where black-flowing Okeanos mingles with the sea, as when the storm-winds carried away the daughters of Pandareos. The gods had slain their father and their mother, and the maidens were left orphans in the halls, and fair Aphrodite nourished them with curds and sweet honey and delicious wine. And Hera gave them beauty and wisdom beyond all women, and holy Artemis endowed them with beauty, and Athene taught them skill in brilliant handcraft. While fair Aphrodite was going to high Olympos to pray that a joyful marriage might be accomplished for the maidens—she went to Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, for he knows all things, what the fates give and deny to mortal men—in the meantime the spirits of the storm snatched away these maidens and gave them to be handmaids to the dreadful Erinyes.² If only they who hold the mansions of Olympos would take me in the same way from the sight of men, or that lovely-haired Artemis would strike me so that with a vision of Odysseus before my eyes I go under the dreadful earth and never be the delight of a baser man! This is an evil that may be endured when a man weeps all day long in great sorrow of heart, but sleep takes him in the night, for sleep makes him forgetful of all things, of good and evil, when once it has overshadowed his eyelids. But for me, even the dreams that the gods send upon me are evil. For this very night someone in the likeness of my lord, as he was when we left with his companions, seemed to lie by my side, and then my heart rejoiced, because I thought it was not an empty dream but a clear vision at last.”

So she spoke, and soon golden-throned Dawn came. Now great Odysseus heard the voice of her weeping, and then he mused, and it

2 The Furies.

seemed to him that she recognized him and was standing by his head. So he picked up the mantle and the fleeces on which he was lying and set them on a high seat in the hall and carried the bull's hide outside and laid it there, and, lifting up his hands, he prayed to Zeus: "Father Zeus, if you gods out of your good will have led me over sea and land to my own country after you had plagued me terribly, I beg you to let someone of the people that are waking show me a good omen inside and let some sign outside also be revealed to me from Zeus."

So he spoke in prayer, and Zeus the Counselor heard him. Immediately he thundered from shining Olympos, from on high from the place of clouds, and great Odysseus was glad. Furthermore, a woman, grinding at the mill, uttered a word of omen from within the house close by where the mills of the shepherd of the people stood. At these handmills twelve women worked, making meal from barley and of wheat, the marrow of men. All the others were asleep, for they had ground out their portion of grain, but one was not yet resting, being the weakest of all. Now she stopped her mill and spoke a word, a sign to her master: "Father Zeus, who rules over gods and men, you have thundered loudly from the starry sky, but there is no cloud to be seen; surely this is a portent you are showing to some mortal. I beg you, fulfill now, even for wretched me, the word that I speak. May the suitors feast in the halls of Odysseus for the last time on this day! May those who weakened my knees with the cruel toil of grinding their barley meal eat their last meal!"

So she spoke, and great Odysseus was glad for the omen of her voice and the thunder of Zeus, for he believed that he would have his vengeance on the guilty.

The Household Prepares for the Day

Now the other maidens in the fair halls of Odysseus had gathered and were kindling on the hearth the restless fire. Telemachos, a godlike man, rose from his bed and put on his garments, and he

hung a sharp sword around his shoulders, and beneath his shining feet he bound his glorious sandals. And he took hold of his mighty spear clad with sharp bronze, and he went and stood by the threshold and spoke to Eurykleia: “Dear nurse, have you honored our guest in the house with food and a bed, or does he lie uncared for to fend for himself? For this is my mother’s way, wise as she is; blindly she honors a worse man, but the better one she sends away without honor.”

Then prudent Eurykleia answered: “No, my child, you should not blame her where no wrong has been done. For the stranger sat and drank wine, as much as he desired, and he said he was no longer eager for food when your mother asked him. Furthermore, when the hour came for thinking of rest and sleep, she commanded the maidens to prepare a bed for him. But like an utterly wretched and ill-fated man, he refused to lie on a couch under blankets but slept in the vestibule on an undressed hide and the fleeces of sheep, and we placed a mantle over him.”

So she spoke, and Telemachos went out through the hall with his spear in his hand, and two swift dogs kept him company. He went on his way to the assembly-place to join the strong-armored Achaians. But the good lady Eurykleia, daughter of Ops son of Peisenor, called aloud to the maidens: “Come here; some of you go and sweep the hall and sprinkle it and on the well-built seats throw purple coverlets, and others of you wipe all the tables clean with sponges and wash the mixing bowls and finely-crafted double beakers, and still others go for water to the well and quickly return with it. For the suitors will not be long away from the hall but will return very early, for it is a feast day for all the people.”

So she spoke, and they all listened and obeyed. Twenty of them went to the well of dark water, and the others were busy with skillful hands there in the hall.

Then in came the serving-men of the Achaians. They split the wood cleanly while the women came back from the well. Then the swineherd joined them, leading three fattened boars, the best in all the flock. These he left to feed in the lovely forecourts, but he spoke to Odysseus gently, saying, “Tell me, stranger, do the Achaians

look at you with more regard, or do they dishonor you in the halls, as before?”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Eumaios, if only the gods would avenge the scorn with which these men deal insolently and devise foolish deeds in another man’s house and have no place for shame!”

In this way they spoke to one another. And Melanthios the goatherd came near, leading the best goats in the whole herd to be a dinner for the suitors, and two shepherds came with him. So he tethered the goats beneath the echoing gallery and spoke to Odysseus and taunted him, saying, “Stranger, will you still be a plague to us here in the hall with your begging, and will you not leave? I do not think we two will part until we taste each other’s fists, for your begging is completely improper. And there are other feasts of the Achaians elsewhere.”

So he spoke, but Odysseus of many counsels did not answer a word, but in silence he shook his head, brooding evil in the depths of his heart.

Then a third man came up, Philoitios, a leader of men, leading a barren heifer and fattened goats for the suitors. Now, ferrymen had brought them over from the mainland, boatmen who transport people, whoever comes to them. He tethered the cattle carefully beneath the echoing gallery and came near the swineherd and began to question him: “Swineherd, who is this stranger who has recently come to the palace? From what men does he claim his birth? Where are his family and his native soil? He is unfortunate, yet in form he is like a royal lord, but the gods ruin the beauty of wandering men, when they have woven the web of trouble even for kings.”

So he spoke and came close to him, offering his right hand in welcome and, lifting his voice, spoke winged words to him: “Father and stranger, greetings! May you be happy in times to come, though now you are bound fast in many sorrows. Father Zeus, no other god is more ruinous than you; you have no compassion on men who you yourself have made, but you make them keep company with evil and

with bitter pains.³ The sweat broke out on me when I saw him, and my eyes are full of tears for the memory of Odysseus, for he too, I think, is clothed in foul garments like these and is wandering among men, if he is even still alive and sees the sunlight. But if he is already dead and in the house of Hades, then woe is me for noble Odysseus, who set me over his cattle while I was still just a boy in the land of the Kephallenians. And now they multiply greatly; no broad-browed cattle of any mortal ever increased like these, like ears of grain. But strangers keep commanding me to drive these off for them to devour, and they care nothing for the heir in the house, nor do they tremble at the vengeance of the gods, for they are eager to divide among themselves the possessions of our lord who has been long away. Now my heart within my breast often ponders this thing. Truly, it would be an evil deed, while a son of the master is still alive, to go away to the land of strangers, with cattle and all, to foreign men. But it is still more terrible to remain here in sorrows watching over the herds of other men. Long ago I would have fled and gone away to another of the proud kings, for things are now beyond endurance, but still I think of that unfortunate man, hoping that he might come from I know not where and scatter the suitors in the halls.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Herdsman, seeing that you do not seem to be an evil or foolish man, and I observe that you have an understanding heart, I will tell you something and swear a great oath to confirm it. Let Zeus be my witness now, above all gods, and the hospitable table and the hearth of noble Odysseus, to which I have come, that while you are still in this place, Odysseus will come home, and you will see with your own eyes the slaying of the suitors who swagger here.”

Then the herdsman answered, saying, “If only the son of Kronos would fulfill this word, stranger! Then you would see my might and how my hands obey.”

3 This closely echoes Achilles’ words in *Iliad* Book 24, lines 525–533 and the common sentiment that the gods are jealous of men’s happiness and ensure that they never have too much of it. See also the last sentence of the previous paragraph.

In the same way, Eumaios prayed to all the gods that wise Odysseus would return to his own home.

Telemachos Contends With the Suitors

In this way they spoke one to the other, but the suitors at that time were plotting death and doom for Telemachos. Just then a bird flew by them on their left, an eagle of lofty flight, with a cowering dove in his clutches. Then Amphinomos addressed them and spoke: “Friends, this counsel of ours, about the slaying of Telemachos, will not go well; instead, let us think about the feast.”

So spoke Amphinomos, and his saying pleased them well. They went into the halls of godlike Odysseus and laid their mantles on the chairs and high seats, and they sacrificed great sheep and sturdy goats and the fattest of the boars and the heifers of the herd; then they roasted the entrails and served them all around and mixed wine in the bowl, and the swineherd set a cup by each man. And Philoitios, a leader of men, handed them wheat bread in beautiful baskets, and Melanthios poured out the wine. So they stretched out their hands to the good things set near them.

Now Telemachos, with crafty purpose, made Odysseus sit down in the great hall by the stone threshold and placed for him a rough bench and a small table. He set by him a portion of the innards and poured wine into a golden cup and spoke to him, saying, “There, sit and drink your wine among the princes, and I will keep the taunts and buffets of all the suitors away from you, for this is no public inn but the house of Odysseus himself, and it was for me that he gained it. But you suitors, restrain your minds from rebukes and your hands from blows, so that no conflict and arguments may arise.”

So he spoke, and they all bit their lips and marveled at Telemachos, for he spoke boldly. Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them, saying, “Though it was harsh, let us accept the word of Telemachos, Achaians, even though he strongly threatens us in his

speech. For Zeus, the son of Kronos, has hindered us in our intentions, or else would we have silenced this shrill orator in the halls.”

So spoke Antinoös, but Telemachos paid no attention to his words. Now the attendants were leading through the town the great sacrifice for the gods, and the long-haired Achaians were gathered beneath the shady grove of Apollo, Prince of Archery.

Now when they had roasted the outer flesh and taken it off the spits, they divided the portions and shared the glorious feast. And the attendants set an equal share beside Odysseus, the same as that which they gave to themselves, for Telemachos, the beloved son of divine Odysseus, had commanded it.

Now Athene would not allow the haughty suitors to abstain from biting scorn so that pain might sink deeper into the heart of Odysseus, son of Laertes. There was among the suitors a man of a lawless heart, Ktesippos by name, and in Same was his home. Relying on his vast possessions, he was courting the wife of the long-gone king Odysseus. And now he spoke among the arrogant suitors: “Hear me, you proud suitors, and I will tell you something. The stranger has had his proper portion, as is right, an equal share, for it is not fair or just to rob the guests of Telemachos of their rights, whoever they may be who come to his house. I will give to him a stranger’s gift, that he in turn may give a present either to the bath-woman or to any other of the servants in the house of godlike Odysseus.”

With that he picked up an ox’s foot from the dish, where it lay, and threw it with a strong hand. But Odysseus easily avoided it with a turn of his head, smiling grimly in his heart, and the ox’s foot struck the well-built wall. Then Telemachos rebuked Ktesippos, saying, “Indeed, Ktesippos, it has turned out better for your heart’s intent that you did not strike the stranger, for he himself avoided what you threw at him; otherwise, I certainly would have struck you through the middle with a sharp spear, and in place of a wedding banquet your father would have had to busy himself about a funeral feast here. Let no one display improper behavior in my house, for I understand good and evil, though before I was just a child. But we must still endure to see these deeds, while sheep are slaughtered and

wine drunk and bread devoured, for it is hard for one man to restrain many. No longer do me harm from your evil hearts. But if you are set on slaying me with the sword, I would rather endure that, and it would be far better to die than to continually witness these unseemly deeds—strangers shamefully treated, and men disgracefully seizing the handmaidens throughout the great house.”

So he spoke, and they were all silenced. At last Agelaos, son of Damastor, spoke among them: “Friends, when a righteous word has been spoken, no one surely would rebuke another with hard and angry speech. Do not mistreat this stranger or any of the servants that are in the house of godlike Odysseus. But I wish to speak gently to Telemachos and to his mother, if perhaps it will be kindly received by those two. So long as your hearts within you had hope of the wise Odysseus returning to his own house, no one could be angry that you waited and restrained back the suitors in the halls, for that would have been better if Odysseus had returned and come back to his own home. But now it is plain that he will never return. Go then, sit by your mother and tell her that she must wed the best man who courts her and who gives the most gifts; in this way you will happily live on the inherited wealth of your father, eating and drinking, while she tends to another man’s house.”

Then wise Telemachos answered and said, “No, Agelaos, by Zeus and by the sorrows of my father, who I think has perished or wanders far away from Ithaka, by no means would I delay my mother’s marriage; no, I urge her to be married to whichever man she wishes, and also I will offer gifts without number. But I would be ashamed to drive her out of the hall against her will by a strong word; let that never be.”

Theoklymenos’ Ominous Vision

So spoke Telemachos, but among the suitors Pallas Athene roused unquenchable laughter and made their wits wander. And

now they were laughing with strange lips, and the meat they ate was blood-spattered, and their eyes were filled with tears, and their souls were eager to mourn. Then godlike Theoklymenos spoke among them: “Wretched men, what sorrow is this you suffer? Your heads and faces and knees are shrouded in night, and the voice of wailing is stirred, and your cheeks are wet with tears, and the walls and the great main-beams of the roof are sprinkled with blood. And the porch and forecourt are full of ghosts that hurry towards hell beneath the gloom, and the sun has perished out of heaven, and an evil mist has overspread the world.”

So he spoke, and they all laughed lightly at him. Then Eurymachos, son of Polybos, began to speak to them, saying, “The guest who has recently come from a strange land is out of his mind. Quick, you young men, take him out of doors, so that he may go to the assembly-place, since he finds it dark as night here.”

Then godlike Theoklymenos answered him: “Eurymachos, in no way do I seek guides from you to send me on my way. I have eyes and ears and both my feet and a sound mind in my breast that is well-formed. With these I will go out, for I see evil coming on you, which not one man of you suitors may avoid or shun, of all of you who in the house of divine Odysseus deal insolently with men and devise foolish deeds.”

With that he went out of the fairly-situated halls and came to Peiraios who was glad to receive him. Then all the suitors, looking at one another, provoked Telemachos to anger by laughing at his guests. And one of the haughty youths would speak this way: “Telemachos, no man is more unfortunate than you in his guests, seeing you keep such a filthy wanderer, whoever he is, always longing for bread and wine and skilled in no peaceful work or any deed of war but a mere burden on the earth. And this other fellow wants to play the seer! If you would listen to me it would be much better: let us throw these strangers on board a benched ship and send them to the Sicilians, from where they would fetch you a good price.” So spoke the suitors, but he paid no attention to their words. In silence he looked towards

his father, always awaiting the moment when he would lay his hands on the shameless suitors.

Now the daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, had set her lovely chair opposite them and heard the words of each one of the men in the halls. For in the midst of their laughter they had prepared the midday meal, tasty and abundant, for they had sacrificed many cattle. But there could never be a banquet less tasty than that supper, such a supper as the goddess and the great man were soon to spread for them, for they had been the first to act shamefully.

Book XXI: The Contest of the Bow



Penelope Carrying the Bow of Odysseus to the Suitors

Penelope Declares the Contest of the Bow

Now the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, put it into the heart of the daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, to set out the bow and the axes of grey iron for the suitors in the halls of Odysseus, to be the weapons of the contest and the beginning of death. So she descended the tall staircase of her chamber and took the well-wrought key in her strong hand—a great key of bronze, on which was a handle of ivory. And she went with her handmaidens to the treasure-chamber in the deepest part of the palace where her husband's treasures lay—bronze and gold and well-wrought iron. And there lay the back-curved bow and the quiver with many arrows in it, winged for death, gifts from a friend of Odysseus, one who had met with him in Lakedaimon, Iphitos son of Eurytos, a man like the gods. These two happened upon one another in Messene, in the house of wise Ortilochos. Odysseus had gone there to recover a debt that was owing to him from all the people, for the men of Messene had taken three hundred sheep from Ithaka in their benched ships, along with the shepherds of the flock. Odysseus had been sent by his father and

the elders in search of these sheep while he was still a young man. And Iphitos came there too in his search for twelve brood mares which he had lost, along with some unweaned sturdy mules. These brought him death and destiny in the end, when he came across the hardy-hearted son of Zeus, Herakles, who had known great adventures and who killed Iphitos though he was his guest in his house, in his perversity, and had no regard for the vengeance of the gods, nor for the table which he spread before him, for after the meal he slew him, although he was his guest, and then kept for himself in the halls the strong-hooved horses. Iphitos had been seeking them when he met with Odysseus, and he gave him the bow, which previously great Eurytos carried and had left at his death to his son in his lofty house. And Odysseus gave Iphitos a sharp sword and a mighty spear to seal the beginning of a loving friendship, but they never met one another at table; before that, the son of Zeus killed Iphitos son of Eurytos, a man like the gods, the man who gave Odysseus the bow. But great Odysseus would never take it with him on the black ships as he went to the wars, but the bow was stored at home in the halls as a remembrance of a dear guest, and he carried it on his own land.

Now when the lovely queen had come to the treasure-chamber and had stepped upon the threshold of oak, which the carpenter had planed cunningly and made the line straight over it—he had also fitted doorposts to it on which were set shining doors—she quickly loosened the strap from the handle of the door and thrust in the key and with a straight aim shot back the bolts. And just as a bull roars, one who is grazing in a meadow, in the same way, the great doors roared hugely as they were struck by the key, and quickly they flew open before her. Then she stepped onto the high floor, where the storage-chests stood in which the fragrant garments were stored. She reached out her hand and took the bow from off the pin, still in the bright case with which it was covered. She sat down and set the case upon her knees and cried aloud and wept and took out the bow of her husband. But when she had had enough of tearful grieving, she set out again to go to the hall, to the company of the haughty suitors, with the back-bent bow in her hands and the quiver for the arrows

and many shafts in it which were winged for death. And her maidens with her carried a chest in which lay a great store of iron and bronze, the gear of combat of their master.

Now when the lovely queen had come to the suitors, she stood by the pillar of the strongly-built roof, holding up her glistening veil before her face, and a faithful maiden stood on either side of her, and immediately she spoke out among the suitors and declared her word, saying, “Hear me, you lordly suitors who have vexed this house by eating and drinking here continually because the master is long gone, and the aim of your words was always that you wanted to wed me and make your wife. Now, you suitors, here is the prize put before you. I will set forth for you the great bow of godlike Odysseus, and whoever will most easily string the bow in his hands and shoot through all twelve axes, I will go with him and abandon this house of my marriage, so beautiful and filled with wealth, which I think I will always remember as in a dream.”

So she spoke and commanded Eumaios, the noble swineherd, to set out the bow for the suitors and the axes of grey iron. And Eumaios took them with tears and laid them down, and elsewhere the herdsman wept when he saw his master’s bow. Then Antinoös rebuked them and spoke and addressed them: “Foolish peasants, whose thoughts go no further than today, you wretched pair, why do you shed tears and stir the soul of the lady within her, when her heart already lies low in pain, because she has lost her dear lord? Sit and feast in silence or else get out of here and weep and leave the bow here to be an awesome contest for the suitors, for I think that this polished bow does not easily allow itself to be strung. For there is no man among all these present such as Odysseus was, and I myself saw him—indeed, I remember it well, though I was still only a child.”

So he spoke, but his heart within him hoped that he would string the bow and shoot through the iron. Yet truly he was to be the first that should taste the arrow at the hands of the noble Odysseus, whom so recently he was dishonoring as he sat in the halls and was stirring up all his companions to do likewise.

Then the mighty prince Telemachos spoke among them, saying, “It seems that the son of Kronos has robbed me of my wits! My dear mother, wise as she is, declares that she will go with a stranger and forsake this house, yet I laugh and in my silly heart I am glad. Come now, you suitors, seeing that this is the prize which is set before you: a lady the like of whom does not exist now in the Achaian land nor in sacred Pylos nor in Argos nor in Mykene nor yet in Ithaka nor in the dark mainland. But you know all this yourselves, so why should I praise my mother? Do not delay the issue with excuses nor hold back any longer from the drawing of the bow, in order that we may see what happens. I myself will try the bow. If I can string it and shoot through the iron, then I would not sorrow if my lady mother were to leave these halls and go with a stranger, since I would be left behind, well able now to handle my father’s great weapons.”

With that he threw the scarlet cloak off his neck and sprang to his full height and unslung the sword from his shoulders. First, he dug a good trench and set up the axes, one long trench for them all, and over it he made the line straight and stamped down the earth all around them. And amazement fell on everyone who watched, to see how orderly he set the axes, though he had never seen them before. Then he went and stood by the threshold and began to test the bow. Three times he made it to tremble in his great desire to draw it, and three times he rested from his effort, though he still hoped in his heart to string the bow and shoot through the iron. At last he might have strung it, straining powerfully at it for the fourth time, but Odysseus nodded, frowning, and stopped him, in spite of all his eagerness. Then the strong prince Telemachos spoke among them again: “Now, even to the end of my days, I shall be called a coward and a weakling, or maybe I am too young and have no trust in my hands yet to defend me from someone who does violence without cause. But now, you who are stronger men than I am, try the bow and let us end this contest.”

With that he rested the bow on the ground, leaning it against the smooth and well-constructed doors, and the swift arrow he propped

next to it against the lovely bow-tip, and then he sat down once more on the high seat from which he had risen.

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, spoke among them, saying, “Rise up in order, my friends, beginning from the left, from the place where the wine is poured.”

So spoke Antinoös, and his words pleased them. Leodes, son of Oinops, stood up first; he was their soothsayer and always sat by the lovely mixing bowl at the far end of the hall. He alone hated their foolish deeds and was angry at all the suitors. He now took the bow and the swift arrow, and he went and stood by the threshold and began to try to bend the bow, but he could not bend it; before that ever happened, his unworn, delicate hands grew weary with the strain. So he spoke among the suitors, saying, “Friends, truly I cannot bend it. Let someone else try it. Ah, this bow will rob many of our bravest of spirit and life, since it is far better for us to die than to live on and to fail in that for which we assemble daily in this place, expecting the prize. Even now there are many who hope and desire in their hearts to wed Penelope, the bedmate of Odysseus, but when he makes trial of the bow and sees the outcome, then let him court some other lovely-robed Achaian woman with his bridal gifts and seek to win her. May our queen marry the man that gives most gifts and comes as the one chosen by fate.”

So he spoke and leaned the bow against the smooth and well-built doors, and he propped the swift arrow against the lovely bow-tip, and then he sat down once more on the high seat from which he had risen.

But Antinoös rebuked him and spoke and addressed him: “Leodes, what harsh and grievous word has escaped the door of your lips? It angers me to hear it and to think that a bow such as this shall rob our bravest of spirit and of life, and all because you cannot draw it. I tell you that your lady mother did not bear you with the strength to draw a bow and shoot arrows, but there are others here among the proud suitors that will draw it soon.”

So he spoke, and commanded Melanthios, the goatherd, saying, “Get up now and light a fire in the halls, Melanthios, and place a great

bench by the fire and put a fleece on it and bring out a great ball of lard, that we young men may warm and anoint the bow with it and test it and finally end this contest.”

So he spoke, and Melanthios kindled the restless fire and drew up a bench and placed it nearby and put a fleece on it, and he brought forth a great ball of lard that was within. With this the young men warmed the bow and attempted to string the bow but could not do it, for they were greatly lacking in such strength. But Antinoös still held back from the task and godlike Eurymachos, chief men among the suitors, who were by far the most excellent of all.

Odysseus Reveals Himself to His Herdsmen

But those other two went forth both together from the house, the oxherd and the swineherd of godlike Odysseus, and Odysseus went out after them. But when they had gotten beyond the gates and the courtyard, he lifted his voice and spoke to them in gentle words: “Oxherd and swineherd, shall I say something or keep it to myself? No, my spirit urges me to declare it. What kind of men would you be to help Odysseus, if he should come suddenly, from I know not where, and some god were to bring him? Would you stand on the side of the suitors or of Odysseus? Tell me, just as your heart and spirit urge you.”

Then the herdsman answered him, saying, “Father Zeus, if only you would fulfill this wish! Oh, if only that man would come, some god leading him here! Then you would know what my strength is and how my hands also obey.”

In this way Eumaios prayed to all the gods that wise Odysseus might return to his own home.

Now when he knew for certain where their spirits leaned, once more he answered and spoke to them, saying, “Look—I myself have come home! After much sorrowful trouble I have come in the twentieth year to my own country. And I know how my coming is desired

by you alone of all my servants, for from no one else have I heard a prayer that I would return once more to my home. And now I will tell you all the truth, just as it will happen. If the god shall subdue the proud suitors under my hands, I will bring each of you a wife and will give you a heritage of your own and a house built near me, and you two will forever be in my eyes as the brothers and companions of Telemachos. But look, I will also show you a most certain sign, that you may know me and be satisfied at heart—the wound that the boar dealt me with his white tusk long ago, when I went to Parnassos with the sons of Autolykos.”

With that he pulled aside the rags from the great scar. And when the two had seen and observed it clearly, they threw their arms around wise Odysseus and began weeping and kissed him lovingly on his head and shoulders. And in the same way, Odysseus too kissed their heads and hands. And now the sun might have gone down on their sorrowing, if Odysseus himself had not stopped them, saying, “Refrain now from weeping and mourning, lest some one come out of the hall and see us and report it in the palace. Rather, go in one by one and not together, I first and you following, and let this be the sign between us. All the rest, the proud suitors, will not permit that I should be given the bow and quiver; so you, noble Eumaios, as you carry the bow through the hall, set it in my hands and tell the women to bar the well-fitting doors of their chamber. And if any of them hear the sound of groaning or the din of men in our walls, they must not come running out but remain where they are in silence at their work. But noble Philoitios, I charge you to bolt and bar the outer gate of the court and swiftly to tie the knot.”

With that he went into the well-ordered halls and went and sat on the bench from which he had risen. And the two servants of divine Odysseus went in also.

And now Eurymachos was handling the bow, warming it on all sides in the light of the fire, but he could not string it, and in his great heart he groaned mightily, and in heaviness of spirit he spoke and called aloud, saying, “Truly I am grieved for myself and for you all! It is not for the marriage that I mourn so greatly, though that trou-

bles me—there are many other Achaian women, some in sea-washed Ithaka itself and some in other cities. No, I grieve that we are so much worse than godlike Odysseus in might, since we cannot bend the bow. It will be a shame even for men yet unborn to hear of it.”

Then Antinoös, son of Eupeithes, answered him: “Eurymachos, this will not be so, and you yourself know it too. For today the feast of the archer god is held in the land, a holy feast. Who would be bending bows at such a time? No, set it quietly aside; suppose we let the axes all stand as they are? I do not think anyone will come to the hall of Odysseus, son of Laertes, and carry them away. Let the wine-bearer pour into each cup in turn for a sacrifice, so that after the drink offering we may set down the curved bow. And in the morning command Melanthios, the goatherd, to lead here the very best goats in all his herds, so that we may lay pieces of the thighs on the altar of Apollo the Archer and attempt the bow and end the contest.”

So spoke Antinoös, and the saying pleased them well. Then the attendants poured water on their hands, and servants topped off the mixing-bowls with drink and served out the wine to all, when they had poured into each cup in turn for a sacrifice.

Odysseus Strings the Bow

But when they had poured it and had drunk to their hearts' content, Odysseus of many counsels spoke among them out of his crafty heart, saying, “Hear me, you suitors of the renowned queen, so that I may say what my heart within me urges. I speak mainly to Eurymachos and to godlike Antinoös, since he has said rightly that for the present you cease from your archery and leave the outcome to the gods, and in the morning the god will give the victory to whoever he wishes. In the meantime, give me the polished bow, so that in your presence I may test my hands and strength to see whether I still have any force such as once was in my supple limbs, or whether my wanderings and meager food have destroyed it.”

So he spoke, and they all were very angry from fear lest he should string the polished bow. And Antinoös rebuked him and spoke and addressed him: “Wretched stranger, you have lost your mind completely. Are you not content to feast comfortably in our honored company and to lack no share of the banquet and to listen to our speech and our conversation, while no guest and beggar other than you may hear our speech? It is honey-sweet wine that wounds you, wine which is the curse of others too, of all who take great swallows and drink beyond measure. It was wine that darkened the mind of the Centaur, renowned Eurytion, in the hall of high-hearted Peirithoös, when he went to the Lapithae, and after that his heart was darkened with wine, he did evil things in his frenzy, in the house of Peirithoös. Then fury came over all the heroes, and they leaped up and dragged him out through the porch, when they had cut off his ears and nostrils with the pitiless sword, and then with darkened mind he carried around with him the burden of his sin in the foolishness of his heart. That was the beginning of the feud between the Centaurs and mankind, but he hurt himself first of all, being heavy with wine. In the same way, I declare great evil to you if you string the bow, for you will find no kindness from anyone in our land, and soon we will send you in a black ship to Echetos, the maimer of all men, and from there you will not be saved alive. Rather, drink at your ease and do not contend with men that are younger than you.”

Then wise Penelope answered him: “Antinoös, truly it is not fair or just to rob the guests of Telemachos of their due, whoever he may be that comes to this house. Do you think if that stranger strings the great bow of Odysseus, in the pride of his might and of his strength of arm, that he will lead me to his home and make me his wife? No, he himself, I think, has no such hope in his breast, so do not let any of you fret himself about that while feasting in this place; that would be most unfitting.”

Then Eurymachos, son of Polybos, answered her, saying, “Daughter of Ikarios, wise Penelope, it is not that we think that he will lead you to his home—far be such a thought from us—but we fear the speech of men and women, lest some day one of the worse

sort among the Achaians say, ‘Indeed, men far too common are courting the wife of one that is noble, and they cannot even string the polished bow. But a stranger and a beggar came in the course of his wanderings and easily strung the bow and shot through the iron.’ This is how they will speak, and this will be a reproach to us.”

Then wise Penelope answered him: “Eurymachos, there can never be a good reputation in the land for those that devour and dishonor the house of a prince. And why do you make this thing into a reproach? Our guest is large and well-built, and says he was born the son of a good father. So give him the polished bow, so that we may see what will happen. For I will say this, and it will surely be so. If he strings the bow, and Apollo grants him renown, I will clothe him in a mantle and a tunic, noble garments, and I will give him a sharp javelin to defend himself against dogs and men and a two-edged sword and sandals to wear on his feet, and I will send him wherever his heart and spirit urge him to go.”

Then wise Telemachos answered her, saying, “My mother, as for the bow, no Achaian has more right than I to give or to deny it to whomever I wish, neither the princes in rocky Ithaka nor in the isles on the side of Elis, the pastureland of horses. Not one of these will force me against my will, if I choose to give this bow, once and for all, to the stranger to take away with him. But you go to your own chamber and mind your own housewife business, the loom and distaff, and command your handmaids to do their work. But the bow will be the concern of men, for everyone, but especially for me, for I am the lord of the palace.”

Then in amazement she went back to her chamber and pondered on the wise saying of her son in her heart. She went up to her upper chamber with the women who were her handmaids and then mourned for Odysseus, her dear lord, till grey-eyed Athene cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Now the noble swineherd had taken the curved bow and was carrying it, when the suitors all shouted at him in the halls, and in this way one of the haughty youths would speak: “Where are you carrying the curved bow, you wretched swineherd, crazed in your wits? Soon

the swift hounds of your own breeding will devour you close by thy swine, alone and away from men, if Apollo and the other immortal gods will be gracious to us.”

In this way they spoke, and he set down the bow in that very spot, frightened because many shouted at him in the halls. But Telemachos from the other side spoke threateningly and called aloud: “Father, bring the bow here; you will soon regret trying to serve too many masters. Watch yourself, lest I who am younger than you chase you into the field and pelt you with stones, for in strength I am your better. If only I were so much mightier in strength than all the suitors in the halls, soon would I send many of them on a sorrowful way from our house, for they plot evil against us.”

So he spoke, and all the suitors laughed lightly at him and refrained from their cruel anger toward Telemachos. Then the swine-herd carried the bow through the hall and went up to wise Odysseus and set it in his hands. And he called the nurse Eurykleia from her chamber and spoke to her: “Wise Eurykleia, Telemachos bids you to bar the well-fitting doors of your chamber, and if any of the women hear the sound of groaning or the cries of men within our walls, do not let them go out but remain where they are in silence at their work.”

So he spoke, and her speech remained wingless, and she barred the doors of the well-ordered chambers.

Then Philoitios hurried silently out of the house and barred the outer gates of the fenced court. Now there lay beneath the gallery the cable of a curved ship, fashioned of the *byblos* plant¹ with which he secured the gates, and then he went inside. Then he went and sat on the bench from which he had risen and looked at Odysseus. He was already handling the bow, turning it every way and testing it on this side and on that, to see whether worms had eaten the horns when the master of the bow was away. And the men spoke in this

1 Papyrus. Homer mentions rope made of papyrus in several places, and Herodotus mentions it many times, including the cables used in the Persians rope bridge across the Hellespont and for sails, caulking, and rolls for writing (books). All references associate papyrus with Egypt, as the plant did not grow in Greece or Asia Minor. The word *byblos* comes from a city in Phoenicia, Gubla, later Gebal (cf. Ezekiel 27:9), suggesting that the region was a trading intermediary between Egypt and the Greeks, and all the products made from papyrus were made there if not in Egypt.

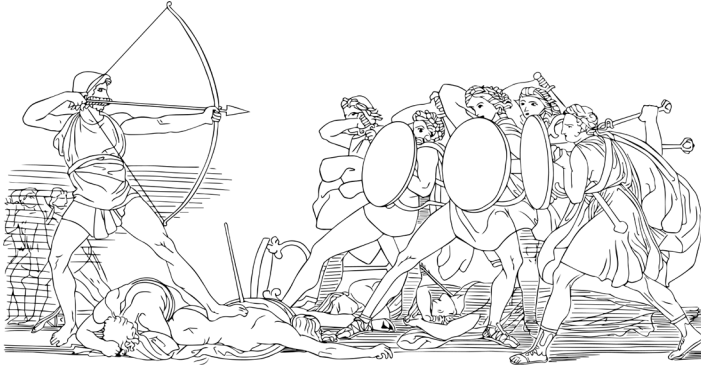
way, looking at each other: “Indeed, he has a good eye and has good knowledge of a bow! I think that either he himself has such a bow lying at home or else he is set on making one, so carefully does he turn it here and there in his hands, this dim-witted beggar.”

And another of the arrogant young men would say: “I hope that the fellow has just as much benefit from it as his ability to bend this bow!”

So spoke the suitors, but Odysseus of many counsels had lifted the great bow and viewed it on every side, and just as when a man that is skilled in the lyre and in singing easily stretches a cord around a new peg after tying the twisted sheep-gut at either end, in the same way, Odysseus immediately bent the great bow, without effort, and took it in his right hand and tested the bow-string which rang sweetly at the touch, in tone like a swallow. Then great grief came upon the suitors, and the color of their faces changed, and Zeus thundered loud showing his signs. And steadfast, great Odysseus was glad at that, because the son of deep-counseling Kronos had sent him a sign. Then he picked up a swift arrow which lay near his table alone while the other shafts were stored within the hollow quiver, those which the Achaians were soon to taste. He laid it on the bridge of the bow and held the notch and drew the string, while he sat on the bench and with straight aim shot the shaft and missed not one of the axes, beginning from the first axe-handle, and the bronze-weighted shaft passed clean through and out the last. Then he spoke to Telemachos, saying, “Telemachos, your guest who sits in the halls does not shame you. I did not miss my mark, nor was I wearied with the long bending of the bow. My strength is still steadfast—not as the suitors say scornfully to dishonor me. But now it is time for supper to be served to the Achaians, while it is still light, and after that we must indulge in other sports with the dance and the lyre, for these are the crown of the feast.”

With that he nodded with bent brows, and Telemachos, the dear son of divine Odysseus, buckled his sharp sword on and took the spear in his grasp and stood by his high seat at his father’s side, armed with the gleaming bronze.

Book XXII: The Battle With the Suitors



Odysseus Killing the Suitors

Odysseus Begins the Slaughter of the Suitors

Then Odysseus of many counsels stripped off his rags and leaped onto the great threshold with his bow and quiver full of arrows and poured out all the swift shafts there in front of his feet and spoke among the suitors: “Now this terrible trial is ended at last, and now I will know of another mark, which no man has ever struck, if I can hit it, and Apollo might grant me glory.”

With that he pointed the bitter arrow at Antinoös. That man was raising to his lips a lovely, two-eared chalice of gold, and as he was handling it to drink the wine, death was far from his thoughts. For who among the men at a feast would think that one man among so many, however strong, would bring on him foul death and black fate? But Odysseus aimed and struck him with the arrow in the throat, and the point passed clean out through his delicate neck, and he fell sidelong, and the cup dropped from his hand as he was struck, and at once through his nostrils there came up a thick jet of slain man’s blood, and quickly he kicked over the table away from him with his foot and spilled the food on the ground, and the bread and the roast

meat were fouled. Then the suitors raised a clamor through the halls when they saw the man fallen, and they leaped from their high seats, as men stirred up by fear, all through the hall, peering everywhere along the well-built walls, but nowhere was there a shield or mighty spear to lay hold on. Then they reviled Odysseus with angry words: “Stranger, you shoot at men to your own hurt! Never again will you enter other competitions—now utter doom is assured you. For now you have killed the man that was far the best of all the noble youths in Ithaka; therefore, vultures will devour you here.”

So each one spoke, for they thought that Odysseus had not slain him deliberately, but in their folly they did not know that the bands of death had fastened on each of their own heads. Then Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at them and spoke: “You dogs, you said in your hearts that I would never come home from the land of the Trojans, and you consumed my house and lay with the maid-servants by force and treasonously wooed my wife while I was still alive, and you had no fear of the gods who hold the wide heaven nor of the anger of men after this. But now the bands of death have been fastened on all of you.”

In this way he spoke, and pale fear took hold on all their limbs, and each man looked around to see where he might avoid utter destruction. And Eurymachos alone answered him and spoke: “If you are indeed Odysseus of Ithaka, having come home again, you have every right to speak this way about all that the Achaians have done, many foolish deeds in your halls and in the field. However, the man who is to blame for it all, Antinoös, now lies dead, for he brought all these things upon us, not longing very greatly for the marriage nor needing it badly but with another intention that the son of Kronos has not fulfilled for him, namely, that he might himself become king over all the land of established Ithaka, and he was going to lie in wait for your son and kill him. But now he is slain as he deserved, and you should spare your people, and we will go around the township and make amends to you for all that has been eaten and drunk in your halls, each man bringing an atonement of twenty oxen worth and

paying you back in gold and bronze until your heart is softened, but until then no one could blame you for being angry.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels looked fiercely at him and said, “Eurymachos, even if you gave me all your heritage, all that you now have, and whatever else you might in any way add to it, I would not keep back my hands from slaughter, before the suitors had paid for all their evil. And now the choice lies before you, whether to fight in fair battle or to run, if anyone may avoid death and the fates. But I think there are some who will not escape from utter destruction.”

He spoke, and their knees were immediately loosened, and their hearts melted within them. And Eurymachos spoke among them once more: “Friends, it is clear that this man will not restrain his unconquerable hands, but now that he has caught up the polished bow and quiver, he will shoot from the smooth threshold until he has slain us all; therefore, let us think about the delight of battle. Draw your blades and hold up the tables to fend off the arrows of swift death, and let us all attack him together and drive him, if we can, from the threshold and the doorway and then go through the city and raise the cry quickly. And then this man will soon have shot his last arrow.”

With that he drew his sharp, two-edged sword of bronze and leaped at Odysseus with a terrible cry, but in the same moment great Odysseus shot the arrow and struck him on the breast by the nipple and drove the swift shaft into his liver. So he let the sword fall from his hand, and, groveling over the table, he bowed and fell and spilled the food and the two-handled cup on the floor. And in his agony he struck the ground with his forehead, and, kicking with both his feet, he overturned the high seat, and the mist of death was shed over his eyes.

Then Amphinomos attacked renowned Odysseus, rushing straight at him, and drew his sharp sword, hoping to make him give back from the door. But Telemachos was ready for him and struck him from behind with a bronze-shod spear between the shoulders and drove it out through the breast, and he fell with a crash and struck the ground full with his forehead. Then Telemachos sprang away, leaving the long spear fixed in Amphinomos, for he greatly

feared that one of the Achaians might rush upon him with his blade and stab him as he pulled out the spear or strike him with a stroke of the sword. So he jumped up and ran and came quickly to his father and stood by him and spoke winged words: “Father, now I will bring you a shield and two spears and a helmet of bronze, close-fitting on the temples, and when I return I will arm myself and also give arms to the swineherd and to the oxherd there, for it is better to be clad in full armor.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Run and bring them while I have arrows to defend myself, lest they force me back from the doorway, one man against them all.”

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father and went out to the chamber where his famous weapons were lying. From there he took out four shields and eight spears and four helmets of bronze with thick plumes of horsehair, and he started to bring them and came quickly to his father. Now he strapped the gear of bronze onto his own body first, and, in the same way, the two servants put on their great armor and stood beside wise and crafty Odysseus. Now he, so long as he had arrows to defend himself, kept aiming and striking the suitors one by one in his house, and they fell thick one upon another. But when the arrows failed the prince in his archery, he leaned his bow against the doorpost of the established hall, against the shining faces of the entrance. He hung his four-fold shield around his shoulders and bound on his mighty head a well-crafted helmet with horsehair crest, and the plume waved aloft terrifyingly. And he grasped two mighty spears tipped with bronze.

Now there was in the well-built wall a side door, and by it at the highest level of the threshold of the well-built hall was a way into an open passage, closed off by well-fitted folding doors. Odysseus commanded the noble swineherd to stand near it and watch the way, for there was only way to it.

Then Agelaos spoke among them and declared his word to them all: “Friends, will not some man climb up to the side-door and send word to the people so that a cry would be raised immediately? Then this man will soon have shot his last arrow!”

Melanthios Betrays Odysseus and is Caught

Then Melanthios the goatherd answered him, saying, “It cannot be done, prince Agelaos, for the lovely gate to the courtyard is very close, and the entrance to the passage is dangerous, and one man, if he were brave, might keep back an army. But let me bring you armor from the inner chamber, so that you can be dressed in it, for I think that in that room and nowhere else Odysseus and his renowned son laid the armor.”

With that, Melanthios the goatherd climbed up the high wall of the hall to the inner chambers of Odysseus, from which he took twelve shields and as many spears and as many helmets of bronze with thick plumes of horsehair, and he came out and brought them quickly and gave them to the suitors. Then the knees of Odysseus were loosened and his heart melted within him, when he saw them buckling on the armor and brandishing the long spears in their hands, and he saw that the battle would be terrible. Quickly, he spoke winged words to Telemachos: “Telemachos, I am certain that one of the women in the halls is stirring up an evil battle against us, or perhaps it is Melanthios.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him: “My father, it is my fault, and no one else is to blame, for I left the well-fitted door of the chamber open, and one of them has been quick to notice it. Go now, noble Eumaios, and close the door of the chamber, and note if it is indeed one of the women who has done this evil or Melanthios, son of Dolios, as I think it is.”

In this way they spoke to one another. Now, Melanthios the goatherd went again to the chamber to bring the lovely armor. But the noble swineherd noticed, and quickly he spoke to Odysseus who stood near him: “Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, look, there is that cursed man again, whom we suspect, going to the chamber; tell me, shall I kill him if I prove to be the better man or bring him here to you, so that he may pay for the many evils that he has caused in your house?”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered, saying, “I and Telemachos will keep the arrogant suitors inside the halls, in spite of all their fury, but you two tie his feet and arms behind his back and throw him into the chamber and close the doors behind you and tie tightly a twisted rope to his body and hoist him up the lofty pillar until he is near the roof-beams, so that he may hang there and live and suffer terrible torment.”

So he spoke, and they listened and obeyed well. They went to the chamber, but the goatherd who was in it did not know they had come. Now he was looking for the armor in the secret place of the chamber, but those two stood waiting on either side of the door-posts. And when Melanthios the goatherd was crossing the threshold with a great helmet in one hand and in the other a wide shield, old and stained with rust, the shield of the hero Laertes that he carried when he was young—but at that time it had been stored, and the seams of the straps were loosened—then the two rushed on him and caught him and dragged him in by the hair and threw him on the floor in a sorrowful state, and they bound him hand and foot in a bitter bond, tightly winding each limb behind his back, just as the son of Laertes had commanded them, steadfast, great Odysseus. And they tied tightly to his body a twisted rope and hoisted him up the lofty pillar till he came near the roof-beams. Then spoke to him and taunted him, swineherd Eumaios: “Now indeed, Melanthios, you will spend the night lying in a soft bed as is proper for you, and you will see the early-born Dawn when she comes out from the streams of Okeanos, on her golden throne, in that hour when you are accustomed to drive the goats to make a meal for the suitors in the halls.”

So he was left there, stretched tight in the deadly bond. But those two got into their war-gear and closed the shining door, and went to Odysseus, the wise and crafty chief. There they stood, breathing fury, four men by the threshold, while those others within the halls were many good warriors. Then Athene, daughter of Zeus, came close to them, like Mentor in appearance and in voice, and Odysseus was glad when he saw her and spoke, saying, “Mentor, guard us from harm,

and remember me your dear companion, who befriended you often, and who are of the same age as me.”

So he spoke, knowing all the time that it was Athene, summoner of the host. But the suitors on the other side shouted in the halls, and first Agelaos, son of Damastor, rebuked Athene, saying, “Mentor, do not let the speech of Odysseus trick you into fighting against the suitors and helping him. For I think that this is how we will win: when we have slain these men, father and son, then you will perish with them, such deeds you are set on doing in these halls. You will pay the price with your own head. But when we have overcome your violence with our swords, we will combine all your possessions, all that you have at home or in the field, with the wealth of Odysseus, and we will not allow your sons or your daughters to remain in the halls, nor your good wife to move about in the town of Ithaka.”

So he spoke, and Athene was very angry in her heart and rebuked Odysseus with furious words: “Odysseus, you have no more great strength or any power as you did when for nine whole years you battled with the Trojans for high-born Helen of the white arms, and you killed many men in terrible warfare, and by your cleverness the wide-wayed city of Priam was taken. How then, now that you have come to your house and your own possessions, do you wail and have so little courage to stand before the suitors? No, come here, friend, and stand by me, and I will show you something, so that you may know what kind of man is Mentor, son of Alkimos, to repay good deeds in the ranks of the enemy.”

She spoke and did not yet give him clear victory but for a while still tested the might and power of Odysseus and his renowned son. She herself flew up to the roof-timber of the murky hall, like a swallow flies, and sat down there.

Now Agelaos, son of Damastor, urged on the suitors, and so did Eurynomos and Amphimedon and Demoptolemos and Peisandros, son of Polyktor, and wise Polybos, for these were in bravery far the best men of the suitors who were still alive and fought for their lives, for the rest had already fallen beneath the bow and the thick rain of arrows. Then Agelaos spoke among them and made known his word

to all: “Friends, now this man will at last restrain his unconquerable hands. For Mentor has left him and spoken empty boasts, and these men remain alone at the entrance of the doors. Therefore, now, do not throw your long spears all together, but six of you throw first, in hopes that Zeus will grant us to strike Odysseus and win glory. Of the rest we will take no heed as soon as that man has fallen.”

So he spoke, and they all eagerly threw their javelins as he commanded them, but Athene caused them all to be in vain. One man struck the doorpost of the well-established hall, and another the well-fastened door, and the ashen spear of yet another suitor, heavy with bronze, stuck fast in the wall. So when they had avoided all the spears of the suitors, steadfast, great Odysseus began to speak among them: “Friends, now my command is that we too throw and hurl our spears into the crowd of the suitors who are desperate to kill and strip us of armor even beyond the limit of their former sins.”

So he spoke, and they all took good aim and threw their sharp spears, and Odysseus struck Demoptolemos, and Telemachos struck Euryades, and the swineherd slew Elatos, and the oxherd Peisandros. So they all bit the wide floor with their teeth, and the suitors fell back into the inmost part of the hall. But the others rushed upon them and pulled out the arrows from the bodies of the dead.

Then once more the suitors threw their sharp spears eagerly, but Athene again caused them to fly in vain. One man struck the door-post of the well-built hall, and another the well-fastened door, and the ashen spear of another suitor, heavy with bronze, stuck in the wall. Yet Amphimedon hit Telemachos lightly on the hand by the wrist, and the shaft of bronze wounded the surface of the skin. And Ktesippos grazed the shoulder of Eumaios with a long spear high above the shield, and the spear flew over him and fell to the ground. Then again wise and crafty Odysseus and his men threw their swift spears into the crowd of the suitors, and now once more Odysseus, waster of cities, struck Eurydamas, and Telemachos struck Amphimedon, and the swineherd killed Polybos, and last the oxherd slew Ktesippos in the breast and boasted over him, saying, “O son of Polytherses, you lover of jeering, never yield to folly to talk so big

but leave your case to the gods, since they are far mightier than you. This gift is your repayment for the ox-foot that you recently gave to divine Odysseus when he went begging through the house.”

So spoke the keeper of the shambling oxen. Next Odysseus wounded the son of Damastor in close fight with his long spear, and Telemachos wounded Leokritos, son of Euenor, in the flank with his lance and drove the bronze point clean through so that he fell prone and struck the ground with his forehead. Then Athene held up her destroying aegis on high from the roof, and their minds were terrified, and they fled through the hall like a herd of cattle that the flitting gadfly attacks and scatters here and there in springtime when the long days begin. But Odysseus and his men attacked like vultures with crooked claws and curved beaks that come out from the mountains and dash upon smaller birds who fly low over the plain, stooping in terror from the clouds, while the vultures pounce on them and slay them, and there is no help or way of escape, and men happily watch the sport; in the same way, the companions of Odysseus attacked the suitors and smote them right and left through the hall, and there arose a hideous moaning as their heads were struck, and the floor all ran with blood.

Now Leodes grabbed Odysseus by the knees eagerly and pled with him and spoke winged words: “I beg by your knees, Odysseus, show mercy on me and have pity. For I have never yet wronged a maiden in your halls by presumptuous words or deeds; indeed, I urged the other suitors to refrain, whoever of them did those things. But they did not listen to me to keep their hands from evil. Therefore, they have met a shameful death because of their own foolish deeds. Yet I, the prophet among them, who have done no evil, will fall just as they do, for no grace remains for good deeds that have been done.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels looked askance at him and said, “If indeed you claim to be the prophet of these men, you must have prayed often in the halls that I would never have a happy return and that my dear wife would follow you and bear you children; therefore, you will not escape the bitterness of death.”

With that he seized with his strong hand a sword that lay where Agelaos had let it fall to the ground when he was slain and drove it clean through the neck of Leodes, and as he still spoke his head fell into the dust.

Odysseus Spares Faithful Servants

But the son of Terpias, the singer, still sought a way to avoid black fate—Phemios, who sang among the suitors against his will. He stood with the loud lyre in his hand close by the rear door, and his heart was torn within him, whether he should slip out of the hall and sit down by the well-crafted altar of great Zeus in the forecourt on which Laertes and Odysseus had burnt many pieces of the thighs of oxen or whether he should spring forward and beg Odysseus by his knees. And as he thought about it this seemed to him the better way, to embrace the knees of Odysseus, son of Laertes. So he laid the hollow lyre on the ground between the mixing-bowl and the high seat inlaid with silver and sprang forward and seized Odysseus by the knees and begged him and spoke winged words: “I beg you by your knees, Odysseus, show mercy on me and have pity. It will be a sorrow to you in the future if you kill me, a singer who sings before gods and men. No one has taught me but my own self, and the god has put into my heart all kinds of songs, and I think I sing to you as to a god, so do not be eager to cut off my head. Telemachos, your own dear son, will testify to this, that it was against my will that I came to your palace to sing to the suitors at their feasts, but being so many and stronger than I they forced me.”

So he spoke, and the mighty prince Telemachos heard him and quickly spoke to his father at his side: “Restrain your hand and do not wound this blameless man with the sword, and let us also save the henchman Medon, who always took care of me in our house when I was a child, unless perhaps Philoitios or the swineherd have

already killed him, or he has encountered you in your raging through the house.”

So he spoke, and Medon, wise of heart, heard him. For he lay crouching beneath a high seat, covered in the newly-skinned hide of an ox, to avoid black fate. So he rose up quickly from under the seat and threw off the ox-hide and sprang forward and caught Telemachos by the knees and begged him and spoke winged words: “Friend, here I am; I beg you to restrain your hand and speak to your father, lest he harm me with the sharp sword in the greatness of his strength, out of his anger for the suitors that consumed his possessions in the halls and in their folly held you in contempt.”

And Odysseus of many counsels smiled at him and said, “Take courage, for he has saved you and delivered you, so that you may know in your heart and tell it also to others, how far more excellent are good deeds than evil ones. But go out from the halls and sit down in the court away from the slaughter, you and the full-voiced singer, until I have finished everything that I must do in the house.”

With that the two went out and left the hall. So they sat down by the altar of great Zeus, peering about on every side, still expecting death. And Odysseus looked keenly all through the house, to see if any suitor was still alive and hiding to avoid black fate. But he found all of them fallen in their own blood in the dust, like fishes that the fishermen have drawn out of the meshes of the net into a hollow of the beach from out of the grey sea, and all the fish, longing for the salt sea-waves, are heaped upon the sand, and the sun shines hard and takes their life away; in the same way, the suitors lay heaped upon each other. Then Odysseus of many counsels spoke to Telemachos: “Telemachos, go, call the nurse Eurykleia, so that I may tell her a word that is on my mind.”

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father and knocked at the door and spoke to the nurse Eurykleia: “Up now, old woman, you who oversees all the women servants in our halls, come here; my father summons you and has something to say to you.”

So he spoke, and her speech remained wingless, and she opened the doors of the well-ordered halls and came out, and Telemachos

led the way before her. So she found Odysseus among the bodies of the dead, stained with the blood and soil of battle, like a lion that has eaten an ox of the homestead and goes on his way, and all his breast and his cheeks on either side are flecked with blood, and he is terrible to see; in the same way, Odysseus was stained, both hands and feet. Now the nurse, when she saw the bodies of the dead and the great gouts of blood, began to shout aloud for joy, seeing such a great event. But Odysseus stopped and restrained her in her eagerness, and, lifting his voice, he spoke winged words to her: “Rejoice in your own heart, old nurse, and be still and do not shout aloud, for it is an unholy thing to boast over slain men. The destiny of the gods has overcome these men, and their own cruel deeds too, for they honored no earthly men, neither the bad nor the good, who came among them. Therefore, they have met a shameful death through their own foolish deeds. But now, tell me about the women in my halls, which of them dishonor me, and which of them are guiltless.”

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered him, “My child, I will tell you the whole truth. You have fifty women-servants in your halls to whom we have taught the ways of housekeeping—how to card wool and to bear up under servanthood. Of these, twelve in all have gone a shameful way and do not honor me nor their lady Penelope. And Telemachos has just recently come into his full strength, and his mother did not allow him to take command over the women in this house. But now, let me go up to the shining, upper chamber and tell everything to your wife, on whom some god has sent a sleep.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Do not wake her yet, but command the women to come here, who have behaved themselves shamefully.”

So he spoke, and the old woman went through the hall to tell the serving women and to hurry their coming. Then Odysseus called Telemachos and the oxherd and the swineherd and spoke winged words to them: “Begin now to carry out the dead and tell the women to help you and then cleanse the lovely high seats and the tables with water and sponges. And when you have set the whole house in order, lead the maidens outside of the well-built hall, between the vaulted

room and the great fence of the court, and there slay them with your long blades, till they have all given up the ghost and forgotten the love that they used to have at the urging of the suitors, lying with them in secret.”

In this way he spoke, and the women came all in a crowd together, making a terrible lament and shedding big tears. So first they carried out the bodies of the slain and set them beneath the gallery of the fenced court and propped them on one another, and Odysseus himself hurried the women and directed them, and they carried out the dead against their will. After that they cleansed the lovely high seats and the tables with water and sponges. And Telemachos and the oxherd and the swineherd scraped with spades the floor of the well-built house, and the maidens carried all out and laid it outdoors

Unfaithful Servants Punished

Now when they had finished setting the hall in order, they led the maidens out from the established hall and drove them into a narrow space between the vaulted room and the great fence of the court, from which none could escape, and wise Telemachos began to speak to his friends, saying, “God forbid that I should take these women’s lives by a clean death, for they have poured dishonor on my head and on my mother and have lain with the suitors.”

With that word he tied the cable of a dark-prowed ship to a great pillar and flung it round the vaulted room and fastened it high, so that none of them would touch the ground with her feet. And just as when thrushes with long wings, or doves, fall into a net that is set in a thicket as they seek their roosting-place, and a deadly bed harbors them, in the same way, the women held their heads all in a row, and around all their necks nooses were put, so that they might die by the most pitiful death. And they writhed with their feet for a little while but not for long.

Then they led Melanthios out through the doorway of the court and cut off his nostrils and his ears with the pitiless sword, and they hacked off his private parts for the dogs to devour raw and cut off his hands and feet in their cruel anger.

After that they washed their hands and feet and went into the house to Odysseus, and all the work was over. So Odysseus called to the good nurse Eurykleia: “Old nurse, bring sulfur¹ that cleanses all pollution and bring me fire, so that I may purify the house with the sulfur, and bid Penelope to come here with her handmaidens and tell all the women to hasten into the hall.”

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered: “Yes, my child, in this you have spoken rightly. But let me bring you a mantle and a tunic for garments, and do not stand in the halls with your broad shoulders wrapped in rags; it would be shameful for you.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “First let a fire be made for me in the hall.”

So he spoke, and the good nurse Eurykleia was not slow to obey but brought fire and sulfur, and Odysseus thoroughly purged the women’s chamber and the great hall and the court.

Then the old woman went through the lovely halls of Odysseus to tell the women and to hasten their coming. So they came out of their chamber with torches in their hands and clamored around Odysseus and embraced him and kissed and clasped his head and shoulders and his hands lovingly, and a sweet longing came on him to weep and moan, for he remembered every one of them.

1 Some English translations render this word (Grk *theion*) as “brimstone” (see the footnote in Book 14), but the hellish connotations of that word are not appropriate in this context, which is about cleansing. Sulfur was widely used for fumigation and purification (and also medicinally and cosmetically) in the Mycenaean world, as in this passage, though the exact means of using it in the Mycenaean age are not known. When burned it melts into a blood-red liquid and burns with a blue flame. It is the fifth most abundant element on the earth and still used in many diverse ways.

Book XXIII: Odysseus and Penelope are Reunited



The Meeting of Odysseus and Penelope

Eurykleia Tells Penelope of Odysseus' Return and Victory

Then the old woman went up into the upper chamber, laughing aloud, to tell her mistress how her dear master was in the palace, and her knees moved fast for joy, and her feet stumbled over one another, and she stood over the lady's head and spoke to her, saying, "Awake, Penelope, dear child, so that you may see with your own eyes what you have longed for day after day. Odysseus has come home to his own house, though he was long in coming, and he has slain the arrogant suitors that troubled his house and devoured his substance and oppressed his son."

Then wise Penelope answered her: "Dear nurse, the gods have confused you, the gods who can make even the wise to be foolish, and who give understanding to the simple. They have disturbed your reason, even though before now you had a prudent heart. Why do you mock me with spirit full of sorrow, to say these wild words and to rouse me out of sweet slumber that had held me and overshadowed my eyelids? I have never slept so soundly since the day that Odysseus went off to see that evil Ilios, never to be named. Now go

back down to the women's chamber, for if any other of the maids of my house had come and brought me such news and wakened me from sleep, immediately I would have sent her back sorrowfully to the women's chamber, but this time your old age will protect you."

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered her: "I do not mock you, dear child; indeed, Odysseus is here and has come home, just as I tell you. He is that guest whom so many men dishonored in the halls. But long ago Telemachos knew who he was, that he was in the house, yet in his prudence he hid the plans of his father, so that he might take vengeance on the violence of the haughty suitors."

So she spoke, and then Penelope was glad, and, leaping from her bed, she fell on the old woman's neck and let fall the tears from her eyelids and, lifting her voice, spoke winged words to her: "Come, dear nurse, I beg you, tell me everything—if indeed he has come home as you say—how he has laid his hands on the shameless suitors, he being but one man, while they remained always in large groups in the house."

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered her: "I did not see it or know about it, I only heard the groaning of men being killed. We all sat astonished in an inner room of the well-built chambers, and the close-fitted doors of the room were closed, until your son called me from the chamber, for his father sent him for that purpose. Then I found Odysseus standing among the dead, who lay one upon the other all around him, stretched on the hard floor; it would have comforted your heart to see him, all stained like a lion with the blood and gore of battle. And now all the suitors are gathered in a heap by the gates of the court, while he is purifying his great house with sulfur and has kindled a great fire and has sent me out to call you. So come with me, that you may see your heart's delight, for you have suffered much sorrow. Your long desire has been fulfilled: your lord has come back alive to his own hearth and hath found both you and his son in the halls, and he has killed the suitors that caused such evil in his house—every one of them."

Then wise Penelope answered her: "Dear nurse, do not boast over them with laughter yet. You know how welcome the sight of

him would be in the halls to everyone and to me most of all and to his son that we two brought forth. But this is not a true story, as you say it is, no, it is one of the immortal gods that has killed the haughty suitors, in anger at their bitter insolence and evil deeds. For they did not honor any earthly men, neither the good nor the bad, that came among them. So they have suffered an evil fate through their own foolish deeds. But Odysseus, far away, has lost his homeward path to the Achaian land, and he himself is lost.”

Then the good nurse Eurykleia answered her: “My child, what word has escaped the door of your lips when you said that your lord, who is at this very moment in the palace, by his own hearthstone, would return no more? Your heart is always unwilling to believe. I will tell you a sure sign—the scar of the wound that the boar once gave him with his white tusk. I saw it while washing his feet, and I was eager to tell you about it, but he laid his hand on my mouth and in his wisdom did not allow me to speak. But come with me, and I will stake my life on it, and if I am wrong, kill me in a most grievous way.”

Then wise Penelope answered her: “Dear nurse, it is hard for you, however wise you may be, to understand the purposes of the immortal gods. Still, let us go to my son, so that I may see the suitors dead and the one who killed them.”

With that word she went down from the upper chamber, and her heart debated whether she should stand apart and question her dear lord or draw close and clasp and kiss his head and hands. But when she had come into the hall and had crossed the threshold of stone, she sat down opposite Odysseus, in the light of the fire, by the further wall. He was sitting by the tall pillar, looking down and waiting to know if perhaps his noble wife would speak to him when she saw him. But she sat long in silence, and amazement came upon her soul, and now she would look at him steadily with her eyes, and then again she did not recognize him, for he was dressed in poor rags. And Telemachos rebuked her and spoke and addressed her: “My mother, cruel mother with a hard heart, why do you turn away like this from my father and do not sit by him and question him and ask him everything? No other woman in the world would harden her

heart to stand aloof from her husband this way, who after so much sorrowful struggle had come to her in the twentieth year to his own country. But your heart is always harder than stone.”

Then wise Penelope answered him, saying, “Son, my mind is amazed within me, and I have no strength to speak nor to ask him anything, nor even to look at him face to face. But if in truth this is Odysseus, and he has indeed come home, truly we will know each other more surely because we have signs that only we two know, which no one else does.”

So she spoke, and steadfast, great Odysseus smiled, and quickly he spoke winged words to Telemachos: “Telemachos, let your mother test me in our chambers; in this way, she will soon come to know me better. But now I am filthy and dressed in foul clothing, and so she holds me in contempt and will not admit that I am he. Let us think then how all can turn out for the best. For whoever has slain only one man in a land, even one who does not leave many behind him to take up the feud for him, becomes an outlaw and leaves his family and his own country, but we have slain the mainstay of the city, the men who were far the best of all the noble youths in Ithaka. So I urge you to consider this.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “Father, you see to this, for they say that your counsel is by far the best among men, and no other mortal man can rival you. But we will go with you eagerly, and I do not think we will lack courage, so long as we have strength.”

And Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Then I will say what I think best. First, go to the baths, then dress yourselves in your tunics and bid the maidens in the chambers to take their garments too. Then let the divine singer, with his loud lyre in hand, lead us in the joyful dance. In this way any man who hears the sound from outside, whether a traveler or one of those who live nearby, will say that it is a wedding feast. So news of the slaughter of the suitors will not be spread through the town before we go out to our well-wooded farm-land. After that we will consider what useful counsel the Olympian may grant to us.”

So he spoke, and they listened and obeyed him. First they went to the baths, then clothed themselves in tunics, and the women wore finery, and the divine singer took the hollow harp and aroused in them the desire for sweet music and for the joyful dance. Then the great hall rang round them with the sound of the feet of dancing men and of beautifully-dressed women. And whoever heard it from outside would say, “Surely one of the many suitors has married the queen. She was hard-hearted and did not have the perseverance to keep the great house of her husband until he returned.”

Odysseus Proves His Identity to Penelope

In this way men spoke but did not know how things were truly ordained. Meanwhile, the housekeeper Eurynome had bathed great-hearted Odysseus in his house and anointed him with olive oil and threw over him a noble mantle and a tunic. Furthermore, Athene shed great beauty from his head downwards and made him greater and more mighty to behold and from his head caused deep, curling locks to flow like the hyacinth flower. Just as when some skilful man overlays gold on silver, one to whom Hephaistos and Pallas Athene have taught all kinds of crafts, and his handiwork is full of grace, in the same way, Athene shed grace over his head and shoulders, and he came out of the bath in appearance like the immortals. Then he sat down again on the high seat, from which he had risen, opposite his wife and spoke to her, saying, “Strange lady, surely to you beyond all women the Olympians have given a heart that cannot be softened. No other woman in the world would harden her heart to stand aloof like this from her husband, who after so much sorrowful struggle had come to her in the twentieth year to his own country. No, come, nurse, make a bed for me to lie all alone, for certainly her spirit within her is like iron.”

Then wise Penelope answered him again: “Strange man, I have no proud thoughts nor do I scorn you, nor am I too greatly aston-

ished, but I know very well what kind of man you were when you went away from Ithaka on the long-oared galley. Eurykleia, make up for him the good bed outside the well-built bridal chamber that he built himself. Bring the great bed out from there and put bedding on it, fleeces and rugs and shining blankets.”

So she spoke and tested her husband, but Odysseus, greatly displeased, spoke to his true wife, saying, “This is indeed a bitter word that you have spoken, lady. Who has moved my bed? It would be hard for anyone, no matter how skilled, unless a god were to come who might easily move it to another place, if he wished. But there is no man living, no matter how strong in his youth, who could easily lift it, for there is a great sign in the making of the bed, and it is that I made it and no one else. There was a long-leaved olive tree growing, and very large, in the inner court, and the trunk was as large as a pillar. I built the bedchamber around it until I had finished it off with close-set stones, and I roofed it over soundly and added to it strong doors fitting well. Next I cut off all the branches of the long-leaved olive and shaped the trunk upwards from the root and smoothed it around with the adze, well and skillfully, and made the lines straight and in this way made it into the bedpost, and I bored it with the auger. Beginning from this bedpost, I worked on the bed till I had finished it and made it lovely with inlaid work of gold and of silver and of ivory. Then I fastened on it a bright purple band of oxhide. This is the sign that I declare to you, and I do not know, lady, if the bedstead is still firmly fixed in its place, or if some man has cut away the stem of the olive tree and set the bedstead elsewhere.”¹

So he spoke, and at once her knees were loosened, and her heart melted within her, as she knew the sure sign that Odysseus had told her. Then she began weeping and ran straight toward him and threw her arms around his neck and kissed his head and spoke, saying, “Do not be angry with me, Odysseus, for you were always the wisest of

1 This feature of the bedpost Odysseus crafted from the trunk of a rooted olive tree strongly suggests that the “master” bedchamber was on the ground floor, not the second floor. Penelope may have had special chambers of her own on the second floor, from which she descends at the beginning of Book 21.

men. It is the gods that gave us sorrow, the gods who begrudged us that we should remain together and have joy in our youth and come to the threshold of old age.² So now do not be angry with me about all this nor indignant that at first when I saw you I did not welcome you immediately. For my heart in my breast shuddered, for fear lest some man should come and deceive me with his words, for there are many who devise evil schemes for profit. No, even Argive Helen, daughter of Zeus, would not have lain with a stranger and taken him for a lover, had she known that the warlike sons of the Achaians would bring her home again to her own dear country. However, it was the god that made her do this shameful deed; before that she never considered in her heart the thought of this bitter foolishness, from which sorrow came upon us too. But now that you have explained the sure signs concerning our bed, which no one ever knew except you and me and only one maidservant, the daughter of Aktor, whom my father gave me before I had come here, she who guarded the doors of our strong bridal chamber, now you soften my soul, thought it has been so guarded.”

So she spoke, and in his heart she stirred a still greater longing to lament, and he wept as he embraced his beloved and true wife. Just as when the sight of land is welcome to swimmers, whose well-built ship Poseidon has destroyed on the deep, driven with the wind and swelling waves, and only a few have escaped the grey sea-water and swum to the shore, and their bodies are all crusted with the brine, and gladly they have set foot on land and escaped an evil end; in the same way, the sight of her husband was welcome to her, and she could not take her white arms from around his neck. Rosy-fingered Dawn would have risen upon their weeping, but the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, had other thoughts. She lengthened the night in the extreme West, and on the other side she held back golden-throned Dawn by the stream Okeas and did not allow her to harness the swift-footed horses that carry light to men, Lampos and Phaethon, the always-youthful horses that bring the morning.

2 Here again is the common theme of the gods being envious of human happiness; compare Achilles' speech (the urns on the doorsill of Zeus) to Priam in Book 24 of the *Iliad*.

Then at last Odysseus of many counsels spoke to his wife, saying, “Lady, we have not yet come to the end of all our struggles; there will still be great labor, long and difficult, that I must bring to an end. This is what the spirit of Teiresias foretold to me when I went down into the house of Hades, to inquire about a homecoming for myself and my companions. So come, lady, let us go to bed, that immediately we may enjoy rest beneath the spell of sweet sleep.”

Then wise Penelope answered him: “Your bed indeed will be ready whenever your soul desires it, since the gods have caused you to come back to your well-founded home and your own country. But now that you have mentioned it, and the god has put it into your heart, tell me about this ordeal, for I think the time will come when I must hear of it, and timely knowledge does no harm.”

Odysseus Tells Penelope All His Story

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered her, saying, “Ah, why do you urge me to declare it? Yet I will tell you everything and hide nothing. But your heart will not rejoice at it, just as I myself have no pleasure in it. For Teiresias told me to journey to many cities of men, carrying a shaped oar in my hands till I should come to men who do not know the sea nor eat food seasoned with salt nor have knowledge of purple-cheeked ships nor of shaped oars, which are wings for ships. And he told me about many signs which I will not hide from you. At the time when another traveler meets me and says that I have a winnowing fan on my strong shoulder, he said I should fasten the shaped oar in the ground and make a great sacrifice to the Lord Poseidon with a ram and a bull and a boar, the mate of pigs, and then depart for home and offer holy great sacrifices to the immortal gods who keep the wide heaven, to each one in proper order. And my death will come far from the sea, the gentlest death that could be, which will end me, worn out, with smooth old age, and the people will be living happily around me. All this, he said, would be fulfilled.”

Then wise Penelope answered him, saying, “If indeed the gods will bring about for you a happier old age at last, then there is hope that you may yet have an escape from evil.”

So they spoke to one another. Meanwhile, Eurynome and the nurse spread the bed with soft coverlets by the light of the burning torches. But after they had busied themselves and spread the good bed, the old nurse went back to her chamber to lie down, and Eurynome, the chamber-maid, guided them on their way to the bed with torches in her hands, and when she had led them to the bridal-chamber, she departed. And so they came gladly to the comforts of their bed, as in years before. But Telemachos and the oxherd and the swineherd stopped dancing and made the women stop, and they all went to rest throughout the shadowy halls.

When the two had taken their fill of sweet love, they delighted in the stories which they told to each other. The fair lady spoke of all that she had endured in the halls at the sight of the ruinous throng of suitors, who in their pursuit of her slaughtered countless cattle and great sheep, and many a cask of wine was opened. And in turn, Odysseus of the seed of Zeus recounted all the griefs he had caused to other men, and all his own struggles and sorrow, and she was delighted with the story, and sweet sleep did not fall upon her eyelids till the story was ended.

He began by telling how he overcame the Kikones and then arrived at the rich land of the Lotus-Eaters and all that the Kyklops did and what a price he paid for the good men that he devoured and showed no pity. Then he told how he came to Aiolos who received him gladly and sent him on his way, but it was not yet ordained that he should reach his own country, for the storm-wind seized him again and carried him over the rich seas while he moaned with sorrow. Next he told how he came to Telepylos of the Laistrygonians who destroyed his ships and killed all his well-armored companions, and Odysseus alone escaped with his black ship. Then he told all the cleverness and many tricks of Kirke and how in a benched ship he sailed to the dank house of Hades, to seek the soul of Theban Teiresias. There he saw all those who had been his companions and his

mother who bore him and nurtured him while he was a little child. Then how he heard the song of the full-voiced Sirens and came to the Wandering Rocks and to terrible Charybdis and to Skylla, which men have never yet escaped without harm. Next he told how his company killed the oxen of Helios and how Zeus who thunders on high struck the swift ship with a flaming bolt, and the good crew perished all together, and he alone escaped from evil fates. And how he came to the island of Ogygia and to the nymph Kalypso, who kept him there in her hollow caves, longing to have him for her husband, and cherished him and said that she would make him never to know death or age all his days; yet she never won his heart within his breast. Next how with great labor he came to the Phaiakians, who heartily honored him as though he were a god and then sent him with a ship to his own dear country, with gifts of bronze and of gold and garments in plenty. This was the last part of the tale, when sweet sleep came quickly upon him, sleep that loosens the limbs of men, unknitting the cares of the soul.

Then the goddess, grey-eyed Athene, turned to new thoughts. When she considered that Odysseus had taken his fill of love and sleep, immediately she aroused from out of Okeanos the golden-throned Dawn to bring light to men. Then Odysseus rose from his soft bed and spoke these words to his wife, saying, “Lady, already have we had enough of struggles, you and I: you, in weeping here and longing for my troubled return, and I, while Zeus and the other gods bound me fast in pain, despite my longing to be home, though far away from my own country. But now that we both have come to the bed of our desire, take thought for the care of my wealth within the halls. As for the sheep that the proud suitors have slain, I myself will capture many more as spoil, and the Achaians will give others, till they fill up all my folds. But now I go to the well-wooded farm-land, to see my good father, who for love of me has been in sorrow continually. And this charge I lay on you, lady, though you are too wise to need it. With the rising sun the news will quickly spread about the suitors whom I slew in the halls. Therefore, go up with your hand-

maids to the upper chamber and stay there and see no man nor ask any questions.”

With that he buckled on his shoulder his great armor and roused Telemachos and the oxherd and the swineherd and commanded them all to take weapons of war in their hands. So they were not disobedient to his word but put on their armor and opened the doors and went out, and Odysseus led the way. Now there was light over all the earth, but Athene hid them in darkness and quickly led them out of the town.

Book XXIV: Odysseus and Laertes are Reunited— The Final Battle



Hermes Conducting the Souls of the Suitors to Hades

The Dead Suitors Encounter the Heroes in Hades

Now Kyllenian Hermes called out from the halls the souls of the suitors, and he held in his hand his wand that is lovely and golden, with which he lulls the eyes of men, of whoever he wishes, while others he wakens out of sleep. He roused and led the souls who followed, gibbering. And just as bats flit gibbering in the secret place of a terrifying cave when one has fallen down from the cluster on the rock, where they cling each to each up aloft, in the same way the souls gibbered as they traveled together, and Hermes, the Helper, led them down the dank ways. Past the streams of Okeanos and the White Rock, past the gates of the Sun they sped, and the land of dreams, and soon they came to the meadow of asphodel¹ where the souls of men live, the phantoms of men worn out. There they found

¹ Asphodel is a plant in the lily family, with long grey-ish leaves and yellow flowers on a spikey stalk. It is commonly associated in Homer and Hesiod with the dead; the fields of Hades where the souls of the blessed rest are covered in asphodel, and Greeks would plant asphodel on the graves of their departed loved ones.

the soul of Achilleus, son of Peleus, and the souls of Patroklos and of noble Antilochos and of Aias, who in face and form was greatest of all the Danaans after the noble son of Peleus.

So these were flocking around Achilleus, and the spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, came close sorrowfully, and around him were gathered all the other shades, all who had perished with him in the house of Aigisthos and met their doom. Now the soul of the son of Peleus spoke to him first, saying, “Son of Atreus, indeed we thought that you above all other heroes were always dear to Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, seeing that you were lord over many mighty warriors in the land of the Trojans where we Achaians suffered affliction. But deadly doom was to visit you early also, the doom that no man can avoid. Oh, if only in the fullness of your princely honor you had met death and fate in the land of the Trojans! Then all the Achaian people would have built you a barrow, and you would have won for you and your son great glory for future time. But now it has been decreed for you to perish by a most pitiful death.”

Then the soul of the son of Atreus answered and spoke: “You are blessed, son of Peleus, godlike Achilleus, who died in Troy-land far from Argos, and others fell around you, the best of the sons of Trojans and Achaians, fighting for your body, but you in the whirl of dust lay mighty and mightily fallen, forgetful of your horsemanship. And we struggled the whole day and would never have stopped fighting, if Zeus had not stopped us with a storm. After we had carried you to the ships from out of the battle, we laid your on a bier and washed your lovely flesh clean with warm water and ointments, and around you the Danaans shed many a hot tear and cut off their hair. And out of the sea came your mother with the immortal maidens of the waters when they heard the news, and a terrible wailing rose over the deep, and trembling fell on the limbs of all the Achaians. They would have sprung up and run for the hollow ships, had not one man held them back who knew much lore from old times, Nestor, whose counsel had always proved the best. With good will he addressed and spoke out among them: ‘Stand fast, Argives, do not flee, young lords of the Achaians. Look, it is his mother from the sea who is coming

with the immortal maidens of the waters to look on the face of her dead son.’

“So he spoke, and the high-hearted Achaians stopped fleeing. Then around you stood the daughters of the ancient one of the sea, lamenting pitifully, and they covered you in incorruptible robes. And all the nine Muses began the funeral dirge, replying one to the other with sweet voices; there you would not have seen an Argive who did not weep, so powerfully rose up the clear chant. So for seventeen days and nights without ceasing we mourned you, immortal gods and mortal men. On the eighteenth day we gave your body to the flames, and we slaughtered many fat sheep and shambling cattle around you. So you were burned in the garments of the gods and in ointments and sweet honey, and many heroes of the Achaians moved in their armor around the pyre when you were burning, both foot soldiers and horsemen, and a great noise rose up. But when the flame of Hephaistos had utterly consumed you, in the morning we gathered together your white bones, Achilles, and covered them in unmixed wine and in ointments. Your mother gave a two-handled golden urn and said that it was the gift of Dionysos and the workmanship of glorious Hephaistos. In it lie your white bones, great Achilles, mingled there with the bones of Patroklos, son of Menoitios, who also is dead, but separate from the dust of Antilochos, whom you honored above all your other companions after dead Patroklos. Then over them we piled a great and noble tomb, we the sacred host of Argive warriors, high on a jutting headland over the wide Hellespont, so that it might be seen from far out to sea by men that now are and by those that are to come. Then your mother asked the gods for glorious prizes in the games and set them in the midst of the contest grounds for the champions of the Achaians. In days past you have been at the funeral games of many a hero, when after some king’s death, the young men prepare themselves and get ready for the reward of victory, but if you could have seen these gifts you would have marveled greatly in spirit, such glorious prizes did the goddess set there to honor you, Thetis the silver-footed, for you were very dear to the gods. So even in death you have not lost your reputation, but there will be glory for

you forever among all men, Achilles. But what pleasure do I have in all this now that I have wound up the thread of war? For on my return Zeus devised for me an evil end at the hands of Aigisthos and my cursed wife.”

So they spoke to one another. And the Messenger, the slayer of Argos, came close to them, leading down the ghosts of the suitors slain by Odysseus, and the two heroes were amazed at the sight and went straight toward them. And the soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, knew the dear son of Melaneus, renowned Amphimedon, who had been his host, having his home in Ithaka. The soul of the son of Atreus spoke to him first, saying, “Amphimedon, what has happened to you, that you have come beneath the darkness of earth, all of you chosen men and of the same age? It is as though someone has chosen out and gathered together the best warriors in a city. Did Poseidon destroy you in your ships and rouse up contrary winds and the long waves? Or did unfriendly men, perhaps, harm you on the land as you were taking their oxen and fair flocks of sheep, or while they fought to defend their city and the women in it? Answer and tell me, for I declare myself a friend of your house. Do you not remember the day when I came to your house in Ithaka with godlike Menelaos to urge Odysseus to follow me to Ilios on the decked ships? And it was a full month before we had sailed across the wide sea, for we were scarcely able win to our cause Odysseus, waster of cities.”

Then the ghost of Amphimedon answered him and spoke: “Most famous son of Atreus, king of men, Agamemnon, I remember all these things, O beloved of Zeus, as you declare them, and I in turn will tell you the whole story well and truly, about our death and evil end, and how it happened. We courted the wife of Odysseus who was long gone, and she neither refused the hated marriage nor was inclined to bring it about, planning death and black fate for us. And this other trick she plotted in her heart—she set up in her halls a mighty web, fine of woof and very wide, on which she would weave, and she spoke among us: ‘You princely youths, my suitors, now that great Odysseus is dead, wait patiently, however eager you are to hasten this marriage of mine, till I finish the robe. I do not want the

threads to perish in vain, this death shroud for the hero Laertes, for the day when ruinous doom shall bring him low, death that lays men at their length. None of the Achaian women in the land will blame me, as they might if he were to lie without a winding-sheet, a man that had gained great possessions.’

“So she spoke, and our proud hearts agreed to it. So then in the daytime she would weave the mighty web and in the night unravel it, when she had torches placed near her. So for the space of three years she hid the thing by trickery and convinced the minds of the Achaians, but when the fourth year arrived, and the seasons came round, as the months waned, and many days were fulfilled, then one of her serving women who knew about it told us, and we found her unraveling the splendid web. So she finished it very much against her will. Now when she brought the robe to light, after she had woven the great web and washed it, and it shone like the sun or moon, at that very hour some evil god led Odysseus, I know not from where, to the upland farm, where the swineherd lived in his dwelling. There too came the dear son of divine Odysseus out of sandy Pylos, voyaging with his black ship. These two framed an evil death for the suitors and came to the famous town. Odysseus came later, but Telemachos went first and led the way. Now the swineherd brought Odysseus dressed in foul garments, in the likeness of a beggar, a wretched old man, leaning on a staff, and he was dressed in foul garments. And none of us, not even the elders, knew who he was at this sudden appearing, but with evil words we attacked him and hurled things at him. Yet for a while he hardened his heart to endure both the injuries and the evil words in his own halls, but at last, when the spirit of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, aroused him, by the help of Telemachos he gathered up all the great weapons and laid them away in the inner chamber and fastened the bolts. Next in his great craftiness he urged his wife to offer his bow and grey iron to the suitors to be the weapons of our contest, unfortunate men that we were, and the beginning of death. Not one of us could stretch the string of the strong bow; we fell far far short of the needed strength. But when the great bow came to the hands of Odysseus, then we all shouted and forbade

that he should be given the bow, however much he might ask for it, but Telemachos was urgent and commanded him to take it. Then he took the bow into his hands, steadfast, great Odysseus, and lightly he strung it and sent the arrow through the iron. Then immediately he went to the threshold and took his stand there and poured forth the swift arrows, looking angrily around, and struck king Antinoös. After that he let fly his arrows, winged for death, at the others with a straight aim, and the suitors fell thick one upon each other. Then it was known how some god was their helper, for pressing on as their passion drove them, they slaughtered the men right and left through the halls, and from it rose a hideous moaning, as heads were struck and the floor all ran with blood. So we perished, Agamemnon, and even now our bodies lie uncared for in the halls of Odysseus, for the friends of each one at home still know nothing, those who might wash the black-clotted blood out of our wounds and lay out the bodies and wail the funeral dirge, for that is what is owed to the dead.”

Then the ghost of the son of Atreus answered him: “Ah, blessed son of Laertes, Odysseus of many devices, you have a most excellent wife, so great was the wisdom of faithful Penelope, daughter of Ikarios, for she always remembered Odysseus, her wedded husband. Therefore, the fame of her virtue will never perish, but the immortals will make a gracious song in the ears of men on earth about the fame of faithful Penelope. In a very different way the daughter of Tyndareus devised evil deeds and killed her wedded husband, and the song about her will be hateful among men, and she has brought an evil reputation upon all womankind, even on the upright.”

In this way these two spoke to one another, standing in the house of Hades, beneath the secret places of the earth.

Odysseus Proves His Identity to His Father

Now when those others² had gone down from the city, quickly they came to the rich and well-ordered farm-land of Laertes, that he had gained for himself long ago, as the prize of great struggle in war. There was his house, and all around it were the huts in which the servants were accustomed to eat and live and sleep, servants who obeyed his commands. And in the house there was an old Sicilian woman who diligently cared for the old man in the upland far from the city. There Odysseus spoke to his servants and to his son, saying, “Now go inside the well-built house and quickly sacrifice the best of the swine for the midday meal, but I will test my father, to see whether he will know me again and recognize me when he sees me or not, since I have been gone so long,”

With that he gave the servants his weapons of war. Then they went quickly to the house, while Odysseus drew near to the fruitful vineyard to test his father. He did not find Dolios there, as he went down into the great garden, nor any of the servants or their sons. It happened that they had all gone to gather stones for a garden fence, with the old man leading.³ So he found his father alone in the terraced vineyard, digging around a plant. He was clothed in a filthy tunic, patched and unsightly, with mended leggings of oxhide bound about his legs to protect against the scratches of the thorns and long sleeves over his hands because of the brambles, and on his head he wore a goatskin cap, and in this way he nursed his sorrow. Now when steadfast, great Odysseus saw his father wasted away with age and in great grief of heart in this way, he stood still beneath a tall pear tree and shed a tear. Then he communed with his heart and soul, whether he should clasp his father’s neck and kiss him and tell him everything, how he had returned and come to his own country, or whether he should first question him and test him with words. And as he thought within himself, this seemed to him the better way, first

2 Odysseus, Telemachos, and their faithful herdsmen. See the end of Book 23.

3 Dolios.

to test his father and speak to him cleverly. So with this intention, great Odysseus went up to him. Now he was holding his head down and kept digging around the plant, while his famous son stood near him and spoke, saying, “Old man, you have no lack of skill in tending a garden; you care for everything well, and there is nothing whatever, either plant or fig-tree or vine or olive or pear or garden-bed in the whole garden, that is not well taken care of. But I will tell you another thing, and do not be angry in your heart at it. You yourself are not so well cared for, but a pitiful old age is on you, and you are withered and unkempt and dressed poorly. It cannot be to punish laziness that your master does not care for you; your face and build do not have the look of a slave, for you are like a kingly man, one who should lie in soft beds when he has washed and eaten well, as is the manner of the old. So tell me this plainly and fully. Whose servant are you, and whose garden do you tend? Furthermore, tell truly, that I may surely know, if it is Ithaka to which I have come, as someone yonder told me when I met him just now on the way here. He had little understanding, for he was unwilling to tell me everything or to pay attention to my words, when I questioned him concerning my friend, whether he is still alive or dead and in the house of Hades. For I will speak, and you must listen carefully; once did I entertain hospitably a man in my own dear country, who came to our home, and never yet has any mortal been dearer of all the strangers that have come to my house from far away. He claimed to be descended from Ithaka, and he said that his own father was Laertes, son of Arkeisios. So I brought him to our halls and gave him good entertainment, with all kindness, from out of the plenty that was in my house. I gave him the sort of gifts due to guests; I gave him seven talents of well-crafted gold and a mixing bowl of flowered work made of silver and twelve cloaks of single fold and as many blankets and as many noble mantles and tunics as well and, besides all these, four women skilled in all lovely handwork and most beautiful, the women of his choice.”

Then his father answered him, weeping: “Stranger, you have indeed come to that country about which you ask, but outrageous and presumptuous men control it. And these countless gifts you gave in

vain. For if you had found that man still living in the land of Ithaka, he would have sent you on your way with good gifts in return and with all hospitality, as is due to the man that begins the kindness. But tell me this plainly and fully: how many years have passed since you entertained him, your ill-fated guest and my son—if ever there was such a man—unfortunate man, whom far from his friends and his country's soil the fishes perhaps have devoured in the deep sea, or on the shore he has fallen prey to birds and beasts? His mother and father, we who begot him, did not weep over him or clothe him for burial. Nor did his bride, whom other men sought with rich gifts, faithful Penelope, mourn her husband upon the bier, as was right, nor closed his eyes, as is the due of the departed. And tell me this truly, that I may know with certainty, who are you and from where among the sons of men? Where is your city and where are your parents? Where now is your swift ship moored, that brought you here with your godlike companions? Have you come as a passenger on another man's ship, and they set you ashore and departed?"

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, "I will tell you everything most plainly. I come from Alybas, where I live in a glorious house, and I am the son of Apheidas, the son of Polypemon, the prince, and my name is Eperitos. But some god drove me wandering here from Sicania against my will, and my ship is moored yonder toward the upland, away from the city. But for Odysseus, this is now the fifth year since he went from there and left my country. He was unlucky, and yet he had birds of good omen on the right when he departed, so I gladly helped him on his way, and he gladly departed, and our hearts hoped to meet in friendship someday and give splendid gifts."

So he spoke, and a black cloud of sorrow fell on the old man. With both his hands he clutched the dust and ashes and poured them on his grey head with ceaseless groaning. Then the heart of Odysseus was moved, and up through his nostrils throbbed the keen sting of sorrow at the sight of his dear father. And he sprang towards him and threw his arms around his neck and kissed him, saying, "Look, my father, I am the man about whom you ask; in the twentieth year

I have come to my own country. Cease your weeping and tearful mourning, for I will tell you everything clearly, though there is great need of haste. I have slain the suitors in our halls and avenged their bitter scorn and evil deeds.”

Then Laertes answered him and spoke, saying, “If you are indeed Odysseus, my own child, who has come here, show me now a clear sign, so that I may be certain.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “First look at and consider this scar that the boar gave me with his white tusk on Parnassos, where I had gone and you sent me, you and my lady mother, to Autolykos my mother’s father, to get the gifts which he promised and vowed to give me when he came here. But I will tell you about all the trees through all the terraced garden, which you gave me once for my own, and I was begging you for this and that, being just a little child and following you through the garden. We were walking through these very trees, and you told me the names of each of them. You gave me thirteen pear trees and ten apple trees and forty fig trees, and as we went you named the fifty rows of vines you would give me, of which each one ripened at a different time, with all kinds of clusters on their boughs when the seasons of Zeus worked powerfully on them from on high.”

So he spoke, and immediately the old man’s knees became weak, and his heart melted within him, as he recognized the sure signs that Odysseus showed him. He threw his arms around his dear son, and steadfast, great Odysseus clutched him to his chest as he fainted. But when he had caught his breath, and his spirit returned to him, once more he answered and spoke, saying, “Father Zeus, indeed you gods still hold power on high Olympos, if truly the suitors have paid for their foolish pride! But now my heart is terribly afraid, lest soon all the men of Ithaka come up against us here and quickly send messengers everywhere to the cities of the Kephallenians.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered him, saying, “Take courage and do not let your heart be full of care about these matters. Let us go to the house that lies near the garden, for I sent Telema-

chos and the oxherd and the swineherd ahead there to prepare the meal as quickly as possible.”

After these words the two set out to the great halls. When they had come to the well-ordered house, they found Telemachos and the oxherd and the swineherd carving meat and mixing the dark wine. Meanwhile, the Sicilian handmaid bathed great-hearted Laertes in his house and anointed him with olive oil and threw a fair mantle around him. Then Athene came close and made the limbs of the shepherd of the people greater; she made him taller than before and mightier in appearance. Then he went out from the bath, and his dear son marveled at him, seeing him like the immortal gods in appearance. And, lifting his voice, he spoke winged words to him: “Father, surely one of the everlasting gods has made you nobler and greater to see.”

Then wise Laertes answered him, saying, “Father Zeus and Athene and Apollo, if only I were the way I was when I captured Nerikos, the well-founded castle on the cape of the mainland, being then the prince of the Kephallenians; if only with that same might and with armor on my shoulders I had stood to help you yesterday in our house and to beat back the suitors. I would have loosened the knees of many of them in the halls, and you would have rejoiced in your inmost heart!”

So they spoke with each other. But when the others had finished their tasks and prepared the feast, they sat down in an orderly fashion on chairs and high seats. Then they reached their hands for the meat. The old man Dolios came close, and his sons also came, tired from their work in the fields, for their mother, the aged Sicilian woman, had gone out and called them, she who took care of them and also diligently cared for the old man now that old age had laid hold on him. When they looked at Odysseus and recognized him, they stood still in the halls in great amazement. But Odysseus addressed them in gentle words, saying, “Old man, sit down to the food and forget your marveling, for we have long been eager to take hold of the food, as we awaited your coming in the hall.”

So he spoke, and Dolios ran straight toward him, reaching out with his hands, and he grasped the hand of Odysseus and kissed it

on the wrist and, lifting his voice, spoke winged words to him: “Beloved, since you have come back to us who longed terribly for you, and thought we would never see you again, and the gods have led you home again: greetings to you and most welcome, and may the gods give you all good fortune! And tell me this truly, that I may be certain, whether wise Penelope knows that you have come back here, or whether we should send a messenger.”

Then Odysseus of many counsels answered, saying, “Old man, she already knows everything; what need is there for you to bother with it?”

With that, the other man sat down again on his polished bench. And in the same way, the sons of Dolios gathered around famous Odysseus and greeted him well and clasped his hands and then sat down all in order by Dolios, their father. So they were busy with the meal in the halls.

The Battle With the Suitors’ Families

Now Rumor the messenger went swiftly all around the city, telling the tale of the disastrous death and fate of the suitors. The people heard it and all at once gathered together from every side with sighing and groaning in front of the house of Odysseus. And each one brought out his dead from the halls and buried them, but those that came from other cities they placed on swift ships and sent with fishermen, each to be carried to his own home. They all went together to the assembly-place, sorrowing in their hearts. When they had all gathered and come together, Eupheithes rose and spoke among them, for a comfortless grief lay heavy on his heart for his son Antinoös, the first man that great Odysseus had killed. Weeping for him, he addressed them and spoke: “Friends, truly this man has devised a terrible deed against the Achaians. Some he took away in his ships, many noble men, and he has lost his hollow ships and lost all of his companions, and others, by far the best of the Kephallenians, he has

slain when he came home. Let us go out quickly now, before he gets swiftly either to Pylos or to fair Elis, where the Epeians hold power, or else forever after we will be ashamed. For this is a scorn even for the ears of men yet unborn to hear, if we do not avenge ourselves on the killers of our sons and our brothers. Life would no longer be sweet to me, but I would rather die immediately and be with the departed. Let us go, lest these fellows get the advantage and depart over the sea.”

So he spoke weeping, and pity fell on all the Achaians. Then Medon and the divine singer came near to them out of the halls of Odysseus, for sleep had left them. They stood in the midst of the gathering, and amazement seized every man. Then Medon, wise of heart, spoke among them, saying, “Listen to me now, you men of Ithaka, for surely Odysseus did not plan these deeds without the will of the gods. I myself saw an immortal god who stood close to Odysseus in the perfect resemblance of Mentor; now as an immortal god he showed himself clearly in front of Odysseus, urging him on, and yet again he frightened the suitors as he stormed through the hall, and they fell thick on one another.”

So he spoke, and pale fear took hold of the limbs of all of them. Then the old man, the lord Halitherses, the son of Mastor, spoke among them, for he alone saw clearly before and after. With a good intention he addressed and spoke among them, saying, “Listen to me now, you men of Ithaka, to the word that I will say. Through your own cowardice, my friends, these deeds have happened to you. For you did not obey me or Mentor, the shepherd of the people, to make your sons stop their foolish ways. In their evil folly they worked a great villainy, wasting the wealth of a prince and dishonoring his wife, while they thought that he would never come home. So now let things be this way, and obey my counsel. Let us not go out against him, lest perhaps some may bring a curse upon themselves.”

So he spoke, but they leaped up with a great cry, most of them, while the rest remained there together, for his counsel was not pleasing to most of them, but they listened to Eupheithes, and immediately they rushed for their armor. So when they had put on their shining

armor, they gathered together in front of the spacious town. And Euphithes led them in his witlessness, for he hoped to avenge the slaying of his son, yet he himself was never to return but then and there to meet his doom.

Now Athene spoke to Zeus, the son of Kronos, saying, “Our father, son of Kronos, throned in the highest, answer and tell me what is now the hidden counsel of your heart? Will you still further rouse up evil war and the terrible din of battle, or are you inclined to unite them again in friendship?”

Then Zeus, the Gatherer of the Clouds, answered her, saying, “My child, why do you so urgently question me this way and ask this? Did not you yourself devise this very thought, that Odysseus would indeed take vengeance on these men at his coming? Do what you wish, but I will tell you of a better way. Now that great Odysseus has brought vengeance on the suitors, let them make a firm covenant together with a sacrifice and let him be king all his days, and let us make them forget the slaying of their children and their brothers; so both sides might love one another as before, and let them have peace and abundant wealth.”

With that he stirred up Athene to even greater eagerness, and from the peaks of Olympos she came rushing down.

Now when they had satisfied their desire for honey-sweet food, steadfast, great Odysseus began to speak among them, saying, “Let one of you go out and see whether the people are already coming close against us.”

So he spoke, and the son of Dolios went out at his command and stood on the outer threshold and saw them all nearby. Then immediately he spoke winged words to Odysseus: “Here they are, almost upon us! Quick, let us arm ourselves!”

With that they rose up and put on their armor, Odysseus and his men being four, and the six sons of Dolios, and also Laertes and Dolios put on their armor, grey-headed as they were, warriors by necessity. When they had put on their shining armor, they opened the gates and went out, and Odysseus led them.

Then Athene, daughter of Zeus, came close to them in the likeness of Mentor, in appearance and in voice. And steadfast, great Odysseus saw her and was glad, and immediately he spoke to Telemachos, his dear son: “Telemachos, soon you will learn this—when you yourself have got to the place of the battle where the best men test the outcome—not to bring shame on your father’s house, on us who in the past have been preeminent for might and courage over all the world.”

Then wise Telemachos answered him, saying, “You will see, if you wish, dear father, that in my mood I will not disgrace your lineage, as you say.”

So he spoke, and Laertes was glad and spoke, saying, “What a day has dawned for me, kind gods; yes, I am a happy man! My son and my son’s son are competing with each in courage!”

Then grey-eyed Athene stood beside Laertes and spoke to him: “O son of Arkeisios, by far the dearest of all my friends, pray first to the grey-eyed maiden and to father Zeus, then swing your long spear up high and hurl it.”

With that, Pallas Athene breathed into him great strength. Then he prayed to the daughter of mighty Zeus and immediately swung his long spear up high and hurled it and struck Eupheithes through his helmet with the cheek-piece of bronze. The armor did not keep out the spear that went clear through, and he fell with a crash, and his armor rattled around his body. Then Odysseus and his renowned son attacked on the front fighters and struck them with swords and two-headed spears. And now they would have slain them all and cut off their return, had not Athene called aloud, the daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, and stopped all the army of the enemy, saying, “Hold back your hands from fierce fighting, men of Ithaka, so that you part quickly without bloodshed.”

So spoke Athene, and pale fear took hold of them all. The weapons dropped from their hands in their terror and fell upon the ground as the goddess uttered her voice. They turned their steps to the city, as men eager for life, and steadfast, great Odysseus with a terrible shout gathered himself together and hurtled in on them, like an eagle flying high. Then in that moment the son of Kronos threw

down a flaming bolt, and it fell at the feet of the grey-eyed goddess, the daughter of the mighty Father. Then grey-eyed Athene spoke to Odysseus, saying, “Son of Laertes, seed of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, restrain yourself now and stop the strife of balanced war, lest the son of Kronos become angry with you, Zeus of the far-carrying voice.”

So spoke Athene, and he obeyed and was glad at heart. And after that Pallas Athene brought about a covenant between them with sacrifices, she, the daughter of Zeus, Lord of the aegis, in the likeness of Mentor, both in appearance and in voice.

