

HOMER

The Odyssey

Books One, Two & Three

Translated by D.W. Myatt

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Book I

The Muse shall tell of the many adventures of that man of the many stratagems

Who, after the pillage of that hallowed citadel at Troy,

Saw the towns of many a people and experienced their ways:

He whose vigour, at sea, was weakened by many afflictions

As he strove to win life for himself and return his comrades to their homes.

But not even he, for all this yearning, could save those comrades

For they were destroyed by their own immature foolishness
Having devoured the cattle of Helios, that son of Hyperion,
Who plucked from them the day of their returning.

So you, my goddess - daughter of Zeus - begin the story somewhere, for us.

It was when those many others, having avoided a grievous fate
In battle and at sea, were with their families
That he alone - desiring his own return and his wife -
Was detained by a beautiful goddess, the honoured Nymph Calypso,
In a hollowed-out cave, for she longed for him to be her lover.
But when through the turning of the seasons that year arrived
During which the gods determined he would return to his family at Ithica,
Not even then could he avoid having to struggle
As he could not be with his kinsmen. And all of the gods
Had an affection for him - except Poseidon
Who was unrelenting in his rage at Odysseus
Until that noble hero reached his own land.

It was when that god had gone to the distant Ethiopians -
To be with the remotest of peoples, those Ethiopians who were divided in two
With some where Hyperion sets, and some where he rises -
And was present at their sacrifices of sheep and of bulls
Where he sat, amusing himself at their feasting.
For, meanwhile, the other gods had assembled at the abode of Zeus on
Olympus

Where that father of gods and mortals spoke,

Desiring as He did to recall that which distinguished Aegisthus:

30 He whom the renowned Orestes, son of Agamemnon, had slain.

And so He recalled that person to those Immortals by saying this:

"How mortals do blame the gods for things!

Yet it is their own foolishness which weakens them over and above what is given them.

Thus it was with Aegisthus who over and above what was given to him

Seduced the wife of that descendant of Atreus whom he then killed on his homecoming

Even though he knew he would be destroyed because of such things.

For we had told him by sending Hermes - that keen eyed destroyer of Argus -

To say he should neither kill that person nor seduce his woman

Or else Orestes would exact retribution for that descendant of Atreus

When that youth began to long for his land.

Thus with his skillful reasoning did Hermes speak -

But Orestes refused to understand. And now he has paid for all those things together."

Then Athena - the goddess with those beautiful blue eyes - answered Him:

"You who are the son of Cronos and our father - you who are the supreme Chief -

It is certainly fitting that he was destroyed

As may anyone else who does such things perish in such a way as that.

But now my heart is pierced by Odysseus - he skilled in combat -

Who, unfortunately, has for a long while endured sufferings while far from his

kinfolk

50 On an island protected on all sides and in the middle of the sea.

It is an island abounding in trees which a goddess has made her abode:

She is the daughter of that dangerous god, Atlas -

He who has seen how deep is the whole of that sea

And who by himself holds those great pillars that keep earth and sky apart.

It is his daughter who detains that sad and unlucky person,

For continually she with her soft and flattering words seeks to enchant him

So that he might forget Ithica. But Odysseus,

Longing to see again even smoke rising from his homeland, desires to die.

And yet you - the Olympian one - have not directed your vigour at this.

For did not Odysseus reward you when beside those Argive ships

He performed those sacrifices in the vastness of Troy?

When then, Zeus, are you angry with him?"

In answer, Zeus - he who controls the clouds - said:

"My child - what a word you have let escape through the barrier of your teeth!

How could I forget Odysseus - he of supreme heroism -

He who is above other mortals in his resolution and above them

In the sacrifices he has given to the immortal race of gods who possess the vastness of the sky?

It is Poseidon - he who possesses the earth - who has remained hard in his fury

Because of that blinding of the eye of that Cyclops, noble Polyphemos:

He who was the best of all those of the race of Cyclops.

He was the one brought forth by the Nymph, Thoosa -

The daughter of Phorcys, lord of a barren salt-sea -
After she and Poseidon had copulated in a hollowed-out cave.
Yet Poseidon - he who makes the earth to tremble - does not kill Odysseus:
But has caused him to wander far from the land of his fathers.
But now let all of us who are here consider this matter
So that he can set forth and return. Thus will Poseidon let go of his fury
For even he cannot alone fight all the other immortals,
Being against what those gods resolve to do."

Then Athena - the goddess with those beautiful blue eyes - answered Him:
"You who are the son of Chronos and our father - you who are our supreme
Chief -
If it is indeed now pleasing to the changeless gods
That Odysseus - he skilled in combat - returns to his family,
Then now let us give encouragement to Hermes, that messenger who
destroyed Argus,
To go to the island of Ogygia so that he may swiftly
Announce to the Nymph with the finely-plaited hair this infallible plan
For the return of Odysseus - he of steadfast resolve - so that this homecoming
will be.
As for me, I shall enter Ithica to make his son understand
So that he calls those fierce, long-haired Achaeans to an assembly
And exposes those suitors who for a long while
Have sacrificed his father's huddling sheep and his shambling, dark-eyed
oxen.
And I shall send him to Sparta, and to Pylos of the sandy-beaches,
To gather information about the return of his father - should he hear anything

-
So that he shall acquire an honourable reputation among mortals."

When she had spoken thus, she fastened upon her feet those fine sandals
Of divine gold which convey her over the sea

And the boundless land alongside the blowing of the wind.

Then she took up that robust spear, pointed with sharpened bronze -

100 Heavy, large, thick - with which she subdues those heroic warriors among
the race of mortals

Which that daughter of a most valiant father is angry with.

So she rushed down from the heights of Olympus

To arrive at the outer porch of the dwelling of Odysseus

Near the entrance to his columned Hall. Holding in her hand her bronze spear,

She was seen there as a traveller, the Taphian pirate chief, Mentos.

There she found those arrogant suitors who were then at a board-game

In front of those doors, satisfying their desires

As they sat on the hides of oxen which they had slaughtered themselves.

With them were their own Officers and vigilant guards

Some of whom were mixing water and wine in jars

As some were washing the tables with extensively perforated sponges

Before setting them and sharing out the meat.

The first to see her was Telemachus - he of supreme nobility -

As he sat near those suitors absorbed by his anger,

Informed as he was by a vision of his honourable father: that he would arrive

To make those suitors flee from this dwelling

And be rightly honoured and master again of his own possessions.

Telemachus beheld Athena as he sat near those suitors with this wish,

And went directly to the porch, annoyed in his heart

That a traveller had had to wait so long outside his home.

Then, standing near her, he clasped her right hand and her bronze spear

And, addressing her, let fly these words:

"I am pleased to welcome you, a traveller. And when you have eaten

A meal, you must tell what it is that you are seeking."

Such were his words, and Pallas Athena went with him

Into that high-ceilinged dwelling

Where he placed the spear that he carried

Inside that well-polished spear-cabinet near to a large column

In which there were many spears belonging to Odysseus - he of steadfast resolve.

Then, guiding her to the chair for guests, he spread over it

A cloth of finely wrought linen, gave her a footstool

And seated himself on a decorated bench so that they were away from those suitors,

Lest this traveller pushed away the food,

Being displeased by having to be among the tumult of those overbearing ones -

And because he could then ask her about his absent father.

A female attendant from the fine golden urn that she carried

Poured a libation of water into a silver bowl

So that their hands were washed, and then placed beside them a polished table.

Then the venerable housekeeper served them the bread she had brought
And had placed before them much food, favouring them with what there was:
Her cook setting down for them cuts from many kinds of meat.

Beside them were placed goblets of gold

Which an Officer ensured were kept full of wine.

Soon, those arrogant suitors - one following another -

Came to seat themselves on chairs and on benches

With their own Officers pouring water over their hands

And their female servants heaping up bread into baskets

While boys filled jars ready for their drinking.

Then, those ones thrust their hands at what had been set before them.

150 After the desire for food and drink had left those suitors,

They turned their attention to other concerns:

To songs and to dancing, for such things accompany a feast.

Thus did an Officer place into the hands of Phemius an instrument of
unsurpassed beauty

And he was compelled by those suitors to sing.

So he began with that lyre a beautiful chant

As Telemachus spoke with Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes -

Keeping his head close to hers so that no one else would hear:

"Having welcomed you as a guest, will what I am about to relate displease you?

Those ones, there, concern themselves with this music and chant;

They are careless because they can devour, unpunished, the livelihood of
another -

Someone somewhere stormy whose whitened bones rot away

As they lie on land or are rolled around by the waves of the sea.

But were they to sight that man returning to Ithica,

All of them would wish for feet that were fast

Rather than for the wealth of gold and of clothes.

But instead, it seems that some unlucky fate has destroyed him

And we here have nothing to warm us - not even if some mortal here on this earth

Were to announce his arrival, for he has lost the day of his returning.

But now, without fear of anyone, inform me about the following:

Who are you? What is your ancestry and clan?

What kind of ship conveyed you? How did its mariners

Come to bring you to Ithica and who were they then claiming to be?

For your own feet could not have brought you to this place.

Declare these facts to me so that I know for certain

Whether this is your first journey here or whether you have been a guest of my father -

For many men used to stay with our family

As he himself used to go to and fro among the clans."

In answer, the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said:

"I shall declare everything for I fear no one.

I am Mentos - and proud to be the son of battle-hardened Anchialus.

Also, I am Chief of those most excellent oarsmen, the Taphians

And have only now arrived here with my companions

While sailing upon the dark deep sea to foreign-speaking tribes:

To Temea for bronze, and conveying gleaming iron.

My ship waits near to land - far from this citadel -

In that harbour, at Reithron, which is below the forest of Neion.

I am proud to accept your hospitality because our own fathers did so with each other -

And if you want to, go and ask that venerable heroic warrior, Laertes,

Who they say no longer comes to this citadel

But who instead, suffering from an injury, is by himself on his land

With just an old woman to wait upon him to give him food and drink

When weariness seizes his limbs after he has limped up and down

The terraces of his vineyard.

I travelled here, now, because I was told that your father was in his native land:

But it seems that the gods have obstructed his path.

For noble Odysseus is not lying dead somewhere on this earth

But is alive - detained on an island which is protected on all sides

And which is somewhere in the vastness of the sea

Where he is held by a furious, savage, race who detain him against his will.

200 For this, and how it will turn out, is my prophecy -

One which those immortal ones gave me the courage to cast out

Even though I myself am no prophet, having no clear understanding of augury.

And he will not be away from his beloved fatherland

For much longer, even if he is held in chains of iron

Since he will be planning how to return, being how he is very inventive.

But now tell me this, and explain it without fear of anyone:

Are you - who are so big - really the son of Odysseus?

Your features and your noble eyes are very much like his -

For we often met with one another before he sailed forth to Troy

Where went the most courageous of the Argives in their spacious ships.

But, since then, I have not seen Odysseus - nor he, me."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"To you, my guest, I shall declare it with no fear of anyone.

My mother has announced that I am his - although this is something I myself

Do not know since no person can ever be completely sure whose offspring he is.

But I wish I was the lucky son of someone

Who had attained his old age with all his possessions

Instead of which - since you have asked me - I am a descendant

Of the most unlucky of mortals: he whom it is said I am descended from."

In answer, the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said:

"The gods have decreed that hereafter your descendants

Will not be lacking in glory since Penelope has given birth to such a son as you.

But now, without fear of anyone, inform me about the following:

What have you to do with this crowd feasting here?

Is it is marriage, a banquet - or perhaps some public festival?

It is my opinion that they entertain themselves in this hall

In an overbearing, arrogant ill-mannered way

And any healthy man who happened to see them
Would be indignant at such disgraceful things."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

" I shall, since you, as a guest, have enquired and asked me about these things.

This family was wealthy - as it was steadfastly blameless

While he who was its man resided here.

But now it is different since the gods resolved to bring us bad luck

Having concealed him more completely than any other mortal

Which injures me worse than if they had conquered him

While he was among his comrades in the land of the Trojans

Or when his companions were nearby after that fighting was finished.

For then, the entire Achaean race would have prepared a tumulus for him

With his son inheriting his honourable name, whereas now

He is without an honourable name having been snatched from us by abductors

Who took him away silently and unobserved to leave me wounded and
lamenting.

But it is not only because of him that I am wounded and grieving

But because I have other injuries from the bad luck given me by the gods.

They are those eminent ones, there, who rule in the islands

Of Dulichium, Samos, Zancythus of the forests

And those Chiefs of rugged Ithica itself

All of whom seek to court my mother and who are exhausting this household.

She cannot refuse what would be an odious marriage

As she cannot fittingly make an end of this matter

250 And so they are killing this household by gnawing away at it
Just as they could soon break me who is by myself into pieces."

Then Pallas Athena - angry at this - said to him:

"Before the gods! How great is the need here for the absent Odysseus -
For him to set about these disrespectful ones with his fists!

Would that he would arrive at the outer gate of this dwelling

With his helmet on and holding his shield and two spears

And as he was when I myself first saw him,

At my own abode, drinking and enjoying himself

He having set out from Ephyra and from Ilus son of Mermerus.

He had gone there in that fast ship of his

In search of a man-killing potion with which to poison his bronze-headed
arrows:

But that person would not give it since he believed he would be blamed
By those gods who exist for aeons.

But my own father give it to him, for they were great comrades.

May it be the same Odysseus who engages those suitors

So that they all quickly die of the injuries he gives them

Because of that marriage they had hoped for!

But whether such things will be, depends on the gods:

On whether or not he on his returning obtains vengeance within his own
dwelling.

As for now, I shall tell you of a plan to drive those suitors out of this dwelling

So respectfully listen to what I have to say.

Tomorrow, invite those heroic warriors, the Achaeans, to an assembly
Saying to them all - and invoke the gods as witness - that you have this plan
To tell those suitors to disperse to their own concerns
And your mother that if a desire to marry attacks her
She should go to the dwelling of her very powerful father
So that her own kin can prepare the wedding-festival
And arrange for the numerous gifts that go with such a well-loved daughter.

As for yourself, if you will trust me, I have good advice:

That you equip a ship with twenty of the best oarsmen

To go in search of he, your father, away a long while,

For some mortal may have word of him or you may hear

That voice from Zeus which often provides our tribes with the most
information.

First go to Pylos to ask noble Nestor

And then on to Sparta to red-haired Menelaus

Who was the last of those bronze-armoured Achaeans to arrive.

For then if you hear that your father is alive or is returning,

Then you, though tired, should endure this for another year,

While if you hear that his being is no more and he is dead,

Then return to the fatherland that you love

To build his monument, perform as many funeral rites as are fitting,

And give up your mother to a man.

It is after you have done and achieved these things

That you should, with good judgement and courage, plan how to kill

Either by cunning or boldly, those suitors who are here in this dwelling -
For you must not occupy yourself with the things youngsters do,
Being no longer of that age.

Have you not been touched by how the noble Orestes
Seized an honourable name for himself among all our clans by killing
300 The cunning father-killer Aegisthus because of that killing of his
well-known father?

Thus should you, my friend - whom I see are strong and fully-grown -
Be as brave, so that those born after you will speak well of you.

But now I must descend down to my fast ship
And my companions, who cannot relax while I remain here.
You must be vigilant, and heed what I have said."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"Although a stranger, there is a comradely purpose in what you have declared
-

As from a father to his son - and I will not disregard it.

But now, even though you are eager to journey on, remain here today -

You can bathe and enjoy yourself as your heart desires

So that you can go to your ship, pleased by your courage,

With a valuable and very fine gift which will be treasured

And such as comrades present when accepting or offering hospitality."

Then the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said in reply:

"Since I long to travel again, do not detain me now

For that gift which your heart exhorts you to present to me

Can be given to me to carry back to my home when I return here.
Choose a very fine one, and you will obtain something of similar value."

Such were the words of Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes -
Who departed, unseen, as a bird when it has flown away.
And she had given him, with his vigour, a purpose and a boldness
As she had conjured up for him - more than anyone ever had - his father
So that when he considered these things, he - full of amazement -
Understood them, suspecting that his visitor had been one of the gods.
Thus did he - resembling a god himself - rush toward those suitors.

But they were silent as they sat listening to the chant of a famous Bard
Who chanted that saga of the misfortunes which Pallas Athena had decreed
For those Achaeans who had returned from Troy.
And hearing that divinely-inspired chanting in her upper chambers,
That daughter of Icarus, the discerning Penelope,
Had come forth from her rooms, shielding her face with a magnificent veil,
To descend those high stairs - not by herself, but with two female servants -
To stand by a column of the stoutly-built roof
With those loyal attendants on either side of she
Who, in tears, said this to that most honoured of Bards:
"Phemius, since your knowledge of those bewitching chants -
By which bards make famous the exploits of men and gods - is great,
Chant another one as you sit with those there
And they drink their wine in silence.

For you should cease that injurious chant
Which exhausts the heart within me since for a long while after
I, more than anyone else, am struck by unbearable grief
Because I yearn for that man who for a long while I have had only memories of
-
He who has an honourable name throughout both Hellas and Argos."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"Mother - why are you hostile to this most skilful of Bards
Whose purpose here is to provide enjoyment?

It is not Bards who are the cause of such things -
Rather, it is Zeus who causes them:

For it is He who bestows inventiveness upon each and every mortal
According to His will.

350 It is not right to revile the Bard for chanting about the unlucky fate of
those Danaans

For our tribes give more applause for a saga
Which informs them all about some hearty person.

You should be informed about such courage and brave of heart

For Odysseus was not the only one who had his return from Troy destroyed:
There were many other men who were lost.

You should go to your chambers to manage your own work

Of weaving and spinning, and also command your attendants

To occupy themselves with their work. That mythos is of interest to all men -
And to me most of all because the dignity of this family now depends upon
me."

And so she went back to her chambers with admiration of him,
For she was given courage by her son's vigourous words.
Thus with her female attendants she entered those highest of rooms
To weep for her beloved husband Odysseus
Until Athena of the beautiful blue eyes placed pleasing sleep onto her eyelids.

In the dimly-lit halls, the suitors all began shouting
As everyone of them voiced their wish to lie with her in intercourse,
Causing Telemachus - he full of vigour - to say to them:

"You who are suitors for my mother are unnecessarily abusive!

Now eat, and enjoy yourselves without any shouting
For it is a fine thing to listen to such a Bard as this
Who has a voice such as a god might have.

And, at the dawn of day, let us all go to seat ourselves

In the Meeting-Place where I will say to you in public

That you should go forth out of this dwelling

To do your feasting elsewhere, devour your own possessions

And be guests in turn in each other's homes.

But if you resolve that it is more agreeable and more favourable to you

To stand your ground and destroy one man's livelihood

Without paying any compensation, then eat on!

For I shall call aloud to the gods, who exist for aeons,

So that from Zeus there will be a deed of revenge

With you being destroyed in this dwelling with no compensation paid to your kin!"

Such were his words, and they all clenched their teeth,
Astonished at Telemachus because of his courageous declaration.
And it was Antinous, that son of Eupheides, who was the first to speak to him.
"Telemachus - it must be the gods themselves who have instructed you
In bold declarations and how to courageously declare them!
May that son of Chronos never make you the Chief
Of this island of Ithica even if it is your father's inheritance!"

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"Antinous - though you will be displeased by what I say,
Were Zeus to offer me such a thing, my choice would be to take it.
Even though you have said this is one of the worst things that can happen,
It cannot be so bad to become a Chieftain -
Wealth is swift to arrive and the person himself becomes honoured.
Nevertheless, there are many other Achaean Chiefs,
Even on this island of Ithica - both recent and established -
Any one of which could have this, since noble Odysseus has been killed.
As for me, I shall be master of my own family
And those female slaves which noble Odysseus captured and gave to me."

Then Eurymachus, that son of Polybus, said to him in answer:

400 "Telemachus - as to which Achaean will be the Chief

Of this island of Ithica: that depends on the gods.

But whatever, may you hold onto your own possessions and be master of your household.

And - while there are settlements on Ithica - may the man who has the strength

To counter your will and deprive you of your possessions, never arrive!

But now, my brave man, I wish to ask you about that stranger.

From where did he come? What region did he claim was his own?

Where was he born and who are his ancestors?

Did he bring a message about the return of your father -

Or did he come here seeking something to his advantage?

For he got up and left very swiftly as if not to wait

For us to discover who he was - although there was nothing cowardly about him."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"Eurymachus - since my father's return has been destroyed

I no longer trust messages, however they arrive,

As I do not concern myself with the revelations my mother seeks

When she invites some soothsayer into this dwelling.

That stranger came from a Taphian comrade of my father -

He proudly affirmed he was Mentès, the son of battle-hardened Anchialus,

And Chief of those most excellent oarsmen, the Taphians."

So was he named by Telemachus who however had the judgement

To recognize an immortal god.

Then those suitors turned to ribald songs, and to dancing,

Desiring as they did to enjoy themselves until the end of day arrived.

And they were still enjoying themselves as the dark at the end of the day arrived

When each and every one of them went to take their rest within their own dwellings.

As for Telemachus - whose elevated chambers had been built to overlook
The very beautiful courtyard - he retired to his sleeping-place
To consider many different plans.

The loyal Eurycleia had gone with him, carrying burning torches.

She was the daughter of Ops, that son of Peisenor,

And had been the property of Laertes who had purchased her
For twenty oxen when she was newly ripe.

She was, while in his dwelling, like a loyal wife to him

Although to avert his wife's anger they never came together in his sleeping-
place.

It was she who carried burning torches for Telemachus

And who, out of all of the servants, loved him the most
For she had nursed him when he was young.

So she opened the doors to his stoutly-built chambers

And he, seating himself on his bed, took off his tunic

To place it into the hands of that loyal now elderly woman

Who, skillfully folding that tunic, hung it on a wooden peg

Near to that ornately-carved bed.

Then, leaving his chambers, she pulled the doors together

By their silver rings and secured the bolt inside by its protruding thong.

And he was there, covered by a sheepskin, all of the night

As he occupied himself planning the journey which Athena had advised he
take.

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Book II

When the red-fingers of that early-rising Bringer of Warmth appeared,
The beloved son of Odysseus, rousing himself from his sleeping-place,
Attended to his clothes, affixed a sharp sword over his shoulder,
And bound to his healthy feet fine sandals,
Resembling a god as he went forth from his chambers
To command his clear-voiced Heralds
To call those fierce, long-haired Achaeans to assemble.
And such was their summons that they came together swiftly.

And when they were all gathered at the assembly
He, armed with his bronze spear, went there -
Not by himself, for he took two of his hunting dogs with him.
And Athena graced him with an agreeable majesty
So that all the warriors there turned to look at him as he arrived

With the Elders giving way as he went to seat himself in his father's place.

The first to address the assembly was that heroic warrior, Aegyptius -

He who, now bent by age, had seen a great many things

And whose beloved son had gone with the noble Odysseus,

In those spacious ships, to Ilion of the well-bred horses.

This was Antiphus, master of the spear, who however was slaughtered in a hollow cave

By that savage Cyclops who then prepared him, last, as his evening meal.

Of his three other sons, one - Eurynomus - was among those suitors

While the other two had for a long while maintained their ancestral estates.

But he could not disregard the painful wound from that other son,

And it was this which had brought many a tear to he who now addressed that assembly:

"You men of Ithica - listen to what I have to say.

There has not been a meeting of this, our tribal assembly,

Since the noble Odysseus left with those spacious ships.

So who is it who has such a need -

Is it a young man, or one who is older, as I am?

Are troops about to arrive here - and he has heard a message

Which he will accurately relate since he was the first to hear it?

Or will he announce and tell of some other public concern?

He is certainly brave! May he therefore be fortunate with Zeus achieving for him

That excellence which he considers he wants."

Such were his words, and this was a propitious omen for that beloved son of

Odysseus

Who was not seated for long because of his desire to address that assembly

And who therefore stood up among them with the Herald, Peisenor -

He experienced in giving sound advice - placing the sceptre of authority into his hands.

Then - first in reply to that Elder - he said this:

"Elder, you shall soon know who that person is: he is not far from you.

Since it is I who now has the most bad luck, I had the warriors assemble here

Although I have not heard some message about troops being about to arrive

Which I can accurately relate since I was the first to hear it.

Nor will what I announce and tell of be some other public concern.

Rather, it is my own need because of two misfortunes that have befallen my family.

There is the loss of my honourable father

Who once was your Chief and an attentive father to me,

And there is something much greater which has happened to my entire family

Which will swiftly and utterly wreck us with my own living being completely destroyed!

50 This is those suitors for my mother who press themselves around her contrary to her wishes

And who, although they are the beloved sons of the most eminent men here,

Shiver at setting sail for the dwelling of Icarus, her father,

So that he, setting a dowry for his daughter,

Can give her to the person he chooses and who, of those who went there, he would favour.

Instead, every day they come and gather in our dwelling,

Sacrificing our cattle, our sheep and our fattened goats,
Feasting and wantonly drinking our strong wine,
With many other things of ours being consumed.
And there is no man such as Odysseus
To defend this family from such a misfortune:
We cannot defend ourselves, and, had we done so,
It would have been bad for us because we have no one experienced in combat.
I myself would have defended them had I some troops on my side.
But what they are doing can no longer be tolerated - it is not honourable
How this family is being destroyed! You should be indignant
And ashamed to face those other clans who dwell nearby.
Also, you should be in dread of the wrath of the gods
Lest they turn their anger upon you because of cowardly deeds.

Thus do I ask - by Zeus the Olympian and by the goddess Themis
Who established such assemblies as these and who always ends them -
That you who are my friends apply yourselves to this
So that I am left alone to rub away at my own injurious grief.
Or is it that my father - the honourable Odysseus - once opposed
The will of those well-armed Achaeans causing them misfortune,
And you by opposing my will are obtaining payment, causing me misfortune,
Through encouraging those others? But then it would be better
If it was you who were devouring my treasures and my herds
For, were you eating them, I might obtain compensation
By going around accosting others with the story,

Demanding our possessions be returned, until all of them were given back.
But instead you are now inflicting incurable wounds upon my heart."

So did he speak, in anger - but then he let the sceptre of authority fall to the ground

As the fire of lamentation came upon him. And he had captured the sympathy
Of all of the warriors there so that they were all silent with not one of them willing

To answer Telemachus with harsh words:

Except Antinous, who answered him by saying this:

"Telemachus - how boldly you speak! How unrestrained is your strength!

What is this insulting thing that you say? Do you wish to place such a brand on us?

You should not have accused those Achaean suitors

Since it is your mother, whom you love, who knows these things are to her advantage.

For it is now the third year - and will soon be the fourth -

During which she has distracted the passion in the hearts of those Achaeans.

She gives all of us an expectation, with promises to every man

And messages being sent, although what she desires is something else.

There is also this other stratagem which she, on reflection, discovered:

In her dwelling she had a large weaving frame erected and on it weaved

Fine and very long threads, saying to us then:

"You young men who are my suitors - even though the noble Odysseus is dead

And you are eager to marry me, you must wait,

For I have this shroud to finish so that what has been spun

Will not be lost to the winds.

This is for the tomb of that heroic warrior Laertes

100 When that destructive fate which is the long-sleep of death overpowers him.

For otherwise some woman from among our Achaean clan would quite rightly revile me

Because he who had acquired so much would be laid to rest without a shroud."

Such were her words, and we with our strong passion for her trusted her.

But while she in daylight weaved that large tapestry,

When it was night, she - with flaming torches beside her - unravelled it.

And for three years while we of the Achaean clan trusted her, she tricked us.

Then, when the seasons of the fourth year had arrived,

One of the women - who knew of this for certain - told us

And we went to find her unravelling that splendid tapestry.

Thus - although it was contrary to her wishes - she was compelled to complete it.

Hence it is that we, her suitors, answer you so that you, with your courage,

Will know what all other Achaeans know.

You should provide an escort for your mother to go to her father,

Exhorting her to marry whomsoever he recommends who is agreeable to her.

If she encourages we who are of the Achaean clan for much longer, then she should

With courage consider those things which Athena so bestowed upon her -

She is skilled in intricate work and she excels in understanding what is to her advantage.

Indeed, we have no ancient knowledge of previous Achaean women -

They of the beautifully plaited hair, such as Tyro,

Alcmene, and Mycene who wore hers as a beautiful crown -
Who could equal the resolution that Penelope has shown.
Can it therefore be her fate to lack resolution in this?
And your living and your possessions will be devoured
For as long as she keeps that resolve
Which the gods seem to have placed in her heart.
For by this she acquires for herself great renown
While for you there is only a yearning for what was a considerable living.
As for us, we shall not go to our estates or indeed anywhere else
Until she marries the Achaean which she herself desires."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"Antinous - how could I, contrary to her will, turn out from my dwelling
She who produced and nourished me even were my father dead
Or even if he is alive in some foreign land?
I would be unfortunate because of the large compensation payable to Icarus
Were I to choose to send my mother away.
And there would be the misfortunes I would suffer caused by her father
With daimons bringing me others because those dreaded Furies
Would be invoked as my mother left to go forth from her dwelling.
And our tribes would quite rightly revile me.
No such tales will ever be told about me!

But as for you others - if I rightly revile your courage
Then go forth from my dwelling, devour your own possessions

And be guests in turn in each other's homes.

But if you resolve that it is more agreeable and more favourable to you

To stand you ground and destroy one man's livelihood

Without paying compensation, then eat on!

For I shall call aloud to the gods, who exist for aeons,

So that from Zeus there will be a deed of revenge

With you being destroyed in my dwelling with no compensation paid to your kin!"

So spoke Telemachus, and Zeus - he whose perception is vast - sent him

Two eagles which were flying high above the summit of the mountain

From where they came down by means of the breeze that was blowing -

Their wings stretched out and near to each other -

150 Until they arrived above the middle of that meeting-place of the numerous opinions.

Then, they whirled around shaking their stout wings

And, with a deadly look about them, made for the heads of everyone there

Before tearing at each other's cheeks and throats with their talons.

Then they rushed away to the East, over the citadel and the dwellings

Of those who in astonishment had watched those birds with their own eyes

And whose passions were aroused because they wondered what might occur.

And it was that venerable, heroic warrior Halitherses, son of Mastor,

Who addressed them, for he excelled those of a similar age as he

In his knowledge of augury and in explaining omens.

His understanding of those there was good, and he spoke to them thus:

"You men of Ithica - listen to what I have to say.

And what I will make known I say especially to you suitors

Since you will be rolled down by a great injury

Because Odysseus cannot now be far from his loved ones

And may indeed already be nearby,

Planning that slaughter which will be the fate of all of you.

And he will also be the misfortune of many more of you who are here

And who dwell in Ithica of the beautiful sunsets.

But long before this, we should find some way of restraining them -

Although it would be better for them to restrain themselves now.

For I who have so prophesied am not lacking in experience,

Having a good knowledge of such things,

And what I announced would befall Odysseus is being achieved

Just as I related it when the very resourceful Odysseus boarded his ship

As the Argives were setting forth for Ilion.

I announced then that many misfortunes would afflict him;

That he would lose his many Comrades

And arrive back at his home - unrecognized by anyone - in the twentieth year.

And now all these things are being achieved."

Then Eurymachus, that son of Polybus, said in answer:

"Old man, go on back to your family and make predictions

About your descendants, for if you do not, they might suffer some misfortune or other!

About this, even I am a better prophet than you

For there are many birds who wander about during the daylight
Which are not fateful - and Odysseus has perished far away from here.
If you had gone and been lost with him,
You would not now be declaring this thing a divine revelation
As you would not now be unleashing the fury of Telemachus
Nor receive from him a gift for your family, were he to provide one.
About this, what I shall say will be achieved -
That if you, who has a great knowledge of ancient things,
Were advising a young man and so encouraging him to be savage,
Then it would be particularly troublesome for him,
Since he does not have the power for such deeds,
But also for you, old man, for we would fix a penalty for you
Which you, with your courage, would be indignant at
As you paid it, and which would be a savage blow for you.

I myself, before everyone here, propose this for Telemachus:
That he exhorts his mother to go back to her father
So that her own kin can prepare the wedding-festival
And arrange for the numerous gifts that go with such a well-loved daughter.
For, until then, we who are of this Achaean tribe will not put an end
To this difficult courting, for we do not fear anyone
200 And certainly not Telemachus, however many tales he tells.
Nor do we respect what you, old man, tell us is some divine revelation
Yet to be fulfilled, and which makes us even more hostile to you.
For we will damage his possessions by eating away at them -

Perhaps until there is nothing left -
For as long as she puts off marrying an Achaeans
Since every day we who are rivals for her perfection wait for her
And not once have we gone with any of those others
Who would be suitable for us to take as a wife."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said in answer:

"Eurymachus - and all you other proud suitors.

I will not ask you again as I will not announce anything else

Since, now, the gods and all Achaeans have observed this.

Therefore, grant me a fast ship and twenty comrades

Who can manage a journey, there and back, with me

For I am going to Sparta and to Pylos of the sandy beaches

To enquire if my father - who has been away a long while - is returning,

For some mortal may have word of him or I may hear

That voice from Zeus which often provides our tribes with the most
information.

And, if I hear that my father is alive or is returning,

Then I will, though by then tired, endure this for another year,

While if I hear that his being is no more and he is dead,

Then I shall return to this, the fatherland that I love,

To build his monument, perform as many funeral rites as are fitting

And give up my mother to a man."

Such were his words, and he sat down again

Whereupon there stood up among them Mentor -

He who had been a comrade of Odysseus, the distinguished -
And whom Odysseus when about to set sail assigned to his family
With him to trust Laertes and to be a stout guard for them all.
He understood those there very well, and addressed them by saying this:
"You men of Ithica - listen to what I have to say.
No longer do I desire that your Chieftain be someone friendly and mild
Nor one informed by a knowledge of what is fitting.
Instead, he should be savage and treat you badly
Since not one of you warriors has made mention of the most heroic Odysseus -
He who was your Chief - and how he was as an indulgent father to you.
I do not envy those arrogant suitors, employing their vigour to do a
treacherous thing,
For they have revealed themselves by so vigorously devouring
The possessions of Odysseus who, so they say, will never return.
But now it is this whole clan whom I quite rightly revile
Since all of you sit there without calling out
To accost those suitors, so stopping those few
Because there are many more of you."

Then Leocritus, son of Euenor, said in answer:

"You - the unlucky Mentor who has lost his purpose - why are you urging them
To put an end to us? For it is difficult to get men,
Even when they have the advantage of numbers, to go to war over some feast!
And even were the noble Odysseus himself to arrive in Ithica
While we proud suitors were in his dwelling

And he through his courage saught eagerly to expel us from his home,
Then, even though his woman had longed for it, there would be no rejoicing
250 At his arrival since he would in that very place meet with his inauspicious
fate

Because we have the advantage of numbers.

So as for you - what you have said is not fitting.

But, now, let those warriors disperse, each to their own work

With Mentor and Halitherses aiding that person to go on his travels

For they have been comrades of his father since before this began.

And yet, I suspect that person will stay in Ithica for a long while yet,

Listening out for messages, and also never complete those travels."

Such were his words, after which those there abandoned their assembly

And dispersed each to their own families

Except for those suitors who went to the dwelling of the most heroic Odysseus.

As for Telemachus, he went away by himself to the sands of the beach

Where, washing his hands in the grey salty sea, he invoked the goddess
Athena:

"Hear me! - You who, as a god, yesterday came to my dwelling

To ask me to journey in a ship over the dark of the sea

To inquire after the return of my father who has been away a long while.

But now the whole of my Achaean clan are putting this off

Chiefly because of those cowardly and overbearingly arrogant suitors."

Such were his words of invokation, and Athena came toward him

Resembling Mentor in body and in speech,

And addressed him, letting fly these words:

"Telemachus - you will not be unlucky nor lacking in resolution

If you hereafter instill into yourself the determination of your father

Whose nature was to accomplish those deeds he said he would.

For then, you will not be wandering about on your travels, with nothing accomplished.

Yet if you were not begotten by Penelope from his seed

Then I have no expectation of you accomplishing those things that you want.

Few sons reach the level of their father -

Most fall short, with only a few being better.

So if you are, hereafter, not unlucky nor lacking in resolution

And if Odysseus left behind in you at least some of his resourcefulness,

Then I expect you to accomplish those deeds that you say you will.

As for those suitors - leave them to their plans and desires,

For they have no judgement, no understanding and are unworthy.

They do not see that the dark fate of death -

Which will kill them all in one day - is getting nearer to them.

And they will not keep you from those travels that you desire for much longer

For I am your comrade, as I was to your father,

And will prepare a fast ship for us since I am going with you.

Therefore, go back to your dwelling to meet with those suitors

And equip yourself with provisions, all of which should be put into vessels:

The wine in amphoras and that nourishing food of mortals -

Barley, for bread - in stout hide bags.

And I myself by going among our clan will soon gather together
Companions who of their own accord will go with us.
Also, there are a great many ships on this island of Ithica,
Both new and old, from which I will select the best one
And have swiftly made ready for the vastness of the sea."

So spoke Athena, the daughter of Zeus.

And Telemachus did not stand there for long after that goddess had spoken
But instead - absorbed by his anger - went to his dwelling
Where he found those arrogant suitors in the courtyards of his home
300 Slitting open his goats and roasting his pigs.

And Antinous, laughing, went directly to Telemachus

Calling out his name, and, taking hold of his hand, said to him:

"Telemachus! How boldly you speak! How unrestrained is your strength!

But do not concern your heart with matters of treachery - whether words, or
deeds;

Instead, eat and drink with me as you did before

For our Achaean clan will bring about for you

A ship with elite oarsmen so you can swiftly go

To Pylos of the sandy beaches for information about your proud father."

But Telemachus - he full of vigour - said to him in answer:

"Antinous - I cannot feast with you who are so overbearingly insolent,

And be at my ease and good humoured, without speaking out.

For were they not sufficient for you - the abundance of my possessions

That you suitors devoured then when I was young?

But now I am old enough, I have enquired about things for myself
And, having listened to the stories, there has grown within me
A passion to cast upon you an injurious fate which I will try to do
Whether I am here among our clan or whether I go to Pylos!
And my announcement of my travels will not have been in vain
For even though I cannot yet be master of a ship or oarsmen,
I could still go as a passenger
Which is, I suppose, to your advantage."

So did he speak, pulling his hand from the hand of Antinous.
And, as those suitors occupied themselves with their feasting,
They insulted Telemachus and made cutting remarks about him,
With one of those overbearing young men saying this:
"Telemachus is certainly contriving to shed our blood,
And to assist him he will bring others from Pylos of the sandy beaches
Or even from Sparta, so great is his yearning for this.
Or perhaps he will go to the fertile lands of Ephyra
To obtain from there that life-destroying potion
Which he will place into our wine in order to kill us all."

And another of those overbearing young men said this:
"But it is possible that he in a spacious ship while wandering about
Will perish, like Odysseus, far from his folk -
Although this would greatly increase our work
Since we would have to divide his possessions among ourselves

And permit his mother - and whomsoever took her as wife - to have his dwelling!"

Such were their words, and Telemachus went across to that wide, high-ceilinged

Storeroom of his father where there was an abundance of fragrant oil;

Clothing in chests; gold and bronze in heaps;

And wines of an agreeable vintage in casks -

Which, being unblended, were the most excellent of drinks -

And which stood close to one another around the walls

For when Odysseus, having endured a great many misfortunes, returned to his home.

These were behind stout double doors which were locked

With a housekeeper nearby during the day and the night

Who, being shrewd and resolute, was the guardian of everything there.

This was Eurycleia, the daughter of Ops who himself was the son of Peisenor.

And Telemachus - having called out her name - said this to her beside that chamber:

"My dear nurse - pour out for me into amphoras some of that agreeable wine,

350 Although not the most delicious that you guard

For it is possible that Odysseus the unlucky, being born of Zeus,

Will arrive someday, having escaped both from death and his unfortunate fate.

Fill twelve for me, fitting lids to them all.

Also, put barley - for bread - into well-sewn skins,

And give me twenty measures of mill-ground barley-grain.

And you are to be the only one who knows of this.

Now have all these things collected together

For I shall take them away at the end of the day
When my mother, planning to go to her bed, ascends to her upper chambers.
This is because I am going to Sparta, and to Pylos of the sandy beaches,
To enquire about my father - for I may hear something there."

So he spoke, and his old nurse, Eurycleia - who loved him - cried out
And began to weep before letting fly these words:

"Dear Telemachus - why are you considering such an aim as that?

Why choose to cast yourself away on many other lands,

And so be alone, when you are so loved, here? For your father, Odysseus -

He born of Zeus - died among foreigners while far from his clan.

And, as soon as you are gone, those others will thereafter be treacherously
plotting

How they can, by cunning, destroy you and so divide among themselves all
these things here.

And there is no necessity for you to endure the misfortunes

Of the inexhaustible sea nor those of a wanderer."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said to her in answer:

"My dear nurse - have courage, for this is not being done without the
assistance of a god.

Now, take an oath not to tell my mother about this

Before either the eleventh or the twelfth day has arrived -

Unless of course she, having heard something, rushes forth to seek me -

For by then she should not lament and so harm her beautiful complexion."

So he spoke, and that elderly woman swore a great oath not to do that.

Then she - having completed that oath - immediately went
To pour out for him wine into amphoras,
And to put barley - for bread - into well-sewn skins.
As for Telemachus, he went back into his dwelling to meet those suitors
Whereupon the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes -
Resolved to do something else.
So, resembling Telemachus, she went throughout the whole of the citadel
Bringing to every man she had selected the revealing story
And exhorting them, at the end of the day, to assemble by the fast ship
Which belonged to Noëmon, the illustrious son of Phronius, and which she
asked him for.
And he gave his approval willingly.
With the setting of the sun, all the pathways became shadowy
And she had them drag that fast ship into the sea
And place in it all the kinds of equipment that such a ship, for many oarsmen,
carries.
After they had moored it on the edge of the harbour, the goddess assembled
together
Those honourable companions so as to give encouragement to each and every
one of them.
Then the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - resolved to do
something else.
Thus she went to the dwelling of the most heroic Odysseus
Where she spread over those suitors an agreeable tiredness
Which caught them as they drank so that their goblets fell from their hands.
And they did not remain there long, but roused themselves to go and sleep in
their homes

Because of the tiredness which she brought down upon their eyes.

Then Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - went to speak with Telemachus,

400 Calling him out from his large, well-situated dwelling

Where she, resembling Mentor in body and in speech, said this:

"Telemachus - your well-armed, fierce, Achaean companions are now waiting
At their oars, ready to go forth with you.

Therefore, let us go and no longer put off these travels."

Such were the words of Pallas Athena, who swiftly led the way

With Telemachus walking behind her.

But when they had descended down to the sea and their ship,

They discovered their companions - fierce Achaeans - on the beach.

And Telemachus - strong and admirable - said this to them:

"Comrades! Since all our provisions are now assembled in my dwelling,
Let us bring them here. And be assured - my mother does not know of this,
Nor do any of my servants, except one, who heard the story from me."

Such were his words, and they followed him,

Carrying everything down - with that son of Odysseus encouraging them -

To place it in that ship for many oarsmen.

Athena was the first to board that ship where she seated herself in its stern.

Next came Telemachus, who seated himself beside her.

Then the others, having cast off and rolled up the stern ropes,

Came aboard to seat themselves at their oars.

So it was that Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - sent them a

fair-following breeze

Which strongly blew from the West to rush them over that wine-dark sea

With Telemachus calling out encouragement as his comrades

Took hold of the rigging. And they harkened to this encouragement

As they hoisted the pine-wood mast into its hollowed-out stay

By those forestays which held it in place,

And hauled up the white sails by those skillfully-braided ox-hide ropes.

Thus did that wind blow upon the main sail

So that the keel of the ship loudly went through the purple sea-swell

With them settling-down to their journey as they were hastened through the sea-swell,

Having secured the rigging on that black ship.

Then they set up jars which they filled to the brim with wine

And poured libations to those undying gods who have existed for aeons:

But especially to that daughter of Zeus with those beautiful blue eyes.

Thus did that ship voyage on its journey for the whole of that night

Until the dawn of day.

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Book III

As the sun ascended into a gleaming bronze sky, it left behind
That most beautiful water's edge to reveal -
To both the immortal ones and those mortal men -
The tilled, grain-giving fields of Pylos
Where Neleus had built his well-situated citadel.
For they had arrived there, as - on the sands of the beach - bulls, black all
over,
Were being sacrificed to the azure-haired one who makes the earth to tremble.
There were nine groups of them, each of five hundred
And each of which had presented nine bulls.
So it was that while those there feasted on the sacrificial hearts and livers -
With the thighs being burnt for the gods -
Telemachus and his comrades went directly in to land, furling up the sails
onto the mast
Of that well-balanced ship and mooring her so that they could go ashore.
Athena was the first to leave that ship, and, as Telemachus followed her,
The goddess - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said this to him:
"Telemachus - you must not any longer go unnoticed,
Since you have sailed over the sea for this: so that you can find out
What destiny your father followed and if, and where, the earth has concealed
him.
So now go directly to Nestor, that subduer of wild-horses,
For I know that he conceals his own abilities from others.

And, when you ask him, he will, because he is so very strong, speak directly
Without missing his target as he will never, by words, deceive you."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said to her in answer:

"Mentor - how shall I approach him? How do I greet him?

For I have no experience of giving eloquent speeches,

And a young man should not show himself up when asking an Elder
something."

In answer, Athena - the goddess with those beautiful blue eyes - said:

"Telemachus - what you understand by yourself you will have an opinion about;

As for other things, a divinity will offer you advice,

For I am in no doubt that you could not have been born,

And would not have grown up, without the aid of the gods."

Such were the words of Pallas Athena who swiftly led the way,

With Telemachus walking behind her,

Until they arrived at where the clans of Pylos were assembled into groups

With Nestor seated with his sons as his comrades

Were preparing a feast by roasting meat on spits.

And when those men saw the strangers, they all crowded round them,

Raising their arms in salutation and inviting them to stay.

The first to reach them and do this was Peisistratus, Nestor's son,

Who raised his arm in salutation to both of them and had them seated

On soft sheepskins there on that sandy beach

Near to his father, and his brother Thrasymedes,

Where he gave them a share of the sacrificial hearts and livers,

Poured wine into a gold chalice

And, raising his goblet to them in welcome, addressed Athena -

That daughter of Aegis-carrying Zeus - by saying this:

"Will you, our guests, drink to and so honour the Lord Poseidon?

For it is his feast which you, arriving here, have chanced upon.

And if you do - as is only fitting - dedicate this drink to the god,

Then afterwards offer this chalice, of agreeable wine, to this person, here,

So that he can also dedicate it to the god. For I suspect that he

Drinks to and so honours our immortal ones, and all mortals should yield to the gods.

But since he is younger than you - about the same age as me -

50 I offer this gold chalice to you first."

Such were his words, and he placed that chalice of agreeable wine

Into the hands of Athena who was pleased because that vigorous, worthy man

Had offered her that gold chalice first.

And she, after taking many drinks in honour of the Lord Poseidon, asked this:

"Poseidon - you who possess the earth - listen to me!

Since I have drunk to and so honoured you, do not refuse to accomplish

These deeds. First, bestow upon Nestor and his sons glory in battle,

And then reward all the clans of Pylos because of this glorious sacrifice of oxen.

Also, permit Telemachus and myself to return when we have undertaken

That which we came here, in our dark ship, to do."

Such did she ask for, although she was the one who would accomplish them all.

So it was that she gave that very fine two-handled chalice to Telemachus,
And the beloved son of Odysseus asked for the same things.

Then, when the meat was roasted, it was removed from the spits
And divided up into shares with everyone partaking in a most glorious feast
Until the desire for food and drink left them

When Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - gave the first
speech:

"Only now, after they have eaten their fill, is it proper
To question strangers and ask them what clan they are.
So, you who are our guests - what clan are you? From where
Have you come by way of the sea?
Are you traders? Or wanderers, blown by the winds,
Who, as pirates, voyage over the sea at the risk of your lives,
Bringing misfortune to foreigners?"

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - gave his answer boldly
For he had understood what Athena had suggested
So that he might ask about his absent father:

"Nestor, son of Neleus: esteemed warrior of our Achaean tribe!
Since you ask what clan are we, I shall tell you.
We are Ithacans, from the settlement below Mount Neion.
Our task is our own, and we do not speak on behalf of our folk.
We are seeking to hear any information concerning my father,
The noble Odysseus - he of steadfast resolve - of whom it is said
That he fought with you when you emptied that citadel of its Trojans.

Of all those others who did battle with the Trojans,
We have been informed where each of those who perished were so unluckily
destroyed.
But the son of Chronos has not granted us any information about Odysseus
And no one has been able to tell us, for certain, where he perished -
Whether he was brought down on land by a man opposed to his purpose,
Or whether by the surging waves of a tempestuous sea.
So that is why I now bow to you - to ask if you are willing
To tell me how he who was born to endure many misfortunes
So unluckily perished, for you may have seen it with your own eyes,
Or heard the story from some traveller.
And do not seek to please me because you respect me
Or have some affection for me -
But tell me exactly how it was if you chanced to see it.
I ask you this since perhaps my father - the honourable Odysseus -
Having given you his loyalty, achieved the deeds he said he would
100 Against the Trojans in their land where our Achaean tribe suffered such
bad luck.
If this is so, mention it to me now, relating it without missing your target."
Then Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - answered him
thus:
"My friend - I shall mention our afflictions then which we, the sons of this
Achaean clan,
Endured with indomitable determination there in that land.
For it was there that we had to forage for booty - both on land
And in ships over the dark of the sea - wherever Achilles led us!

It was there that we did battle with that strong community governed by Priam;
There where the best among us were slain!

For there lies war-loving Aias; there lies Achilles;

And Patroclus - whose advise was worthy of a god.

There lies my own beloved son, the strong and brave Antilochus,
Who had distinguished himself as a runner, and in single combat.

And many other misfortunes afflicted us there -

Who of our tribe could recite the whole saga?

Because of the misfortunes which afflicted the noble Achaeans there

You would, if you remained here, be still finding out about them after five or
six years,

Although they would soon encourage you to return to the land of your fathers.

For nine years we attacked them - using every kind of stratagem -

So as to fasten misfortune upon them, although the son of Chronos

Hardly ever allowed this to be achieved.

And no man there tried to be the equal of Odysseus in resourcefulness,

For your noble father - if indeed you are his offspring -

Was vastly superior to them in every kind of stratagem.

But now that I look closely at you, I am amazed -

For even your voice resembles his, and the voice

Of any other young man would not have this resemblance.

Also, the noble Odysseus and I were there, together, all that while,

Never once divided in our aims or when we addressed the clan-assemblies.

So it was that we with our purposeful aims, and resolute of heart,

Planned what would be best for the Argives.

And, after we had sacked that great citadel of Priam,

We proceeded to our ships. But a god would scatter our Achaean clans

With Zeus - who understood them - resolving on an injurious home-coming

For the Argives, since not all of them had shown good judgement or been fair.

Thus were many of them pursued by fateful misfortunes

Because of the destructive rage of that blue-eyed daughter of a most valiant
father

Who placed strife between those two sons of Atreus.

So it was that those two summoned all the Achaean clans to an assembly -

Foolishly and against custom because at the setting of the sun

When those of our Achaean tribe arrived full of wine.

And there, the sons of Atreus gave speeches as to why they had assembled
those warriors

With Menelaus exhorting all the Achaeans

To consider returning to their homes over the vastness of the sea.

But Agamemnon was most displeased by this since his plan

Was for them to remain there to offer sacrifices of oxen

To save those warriors from the mighty fury of Athena.

In this, he was immature, not knowing that she would never yield about that,

And no god - having existed for aeons - swiftly changes what they have
resolved to do.

Thus did those two stand there exchanging angry words

As there suddenly arose from those well-armed Achaeans an extraordinary
clamour

150 Because they were divided among themselves as to which plan was best.

And that night, there was anger among us as we excitedly considered them,
Although Zeus it was who so badly injured us.

With the dawning of day, some of us dragged our ships into the beautiful sea
To place in them our possessions and our well-bosomed concubines,
While half of all the warriors remained to stay there with Agamemnon,
Son of Atreus, who was a watchful guard for his warriors.

We, the other half, having embarked, set sail - and swiftly did we go
As if some god had spread great monsters upon that sea!

Thus we arrived at Tenedos where we sacrificed to the gods

Since we longed for our homes. But a fierce Zeus did not yet allow us to return
And stirred up an injurious quarrel to divide us yet again.

Thus did those loyal to the very canny Chieftain Odysseus - he skilled in
combat -

Turn their ships around to go back,

So bringing pleasure to Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

As for me and those assembled with me, we fled in our ships

Since we knew a daimon was devising to bring us bad luck.

The war-loving son of Tydeus, and his comrades, also fled

As did red-haired Menelaus who left after them

And who caught us at Lesbos where we were eager for the long voyage

Either by going up above rugged Chios

And past the island of Psyra - holding it on our left -

Or by going below Chios through the storms of Mimas.

About this we asked the god to reveal to us a sign

And he exhorted us to cut through the middle of the sea to Euboea
In order to swiftly pass that bad luck by.

Then, a loud-sounding favourable breeze blew,
And so very swiftly did we escape by way of that fish-full sea
That it was during the night that we came to Geraestus
Where we placed many thigh bones from sacrificed bulls
On the altar of Poseidon, having measured-out how vast was that sea.
And, on the fourth day while the comrades of Diomedes - son of Tydeus
And subduer of wild horses - and he himself, moored their ships in Argos,
I held to my course for Pylos, since that favourable breeze
Never once ceased after the god began to breathe it out.

Thus, my friend, I arrived here without any information about
And without having seen who, of those Achaeans, was saved and who perished.
However, while I have been here in this my homeland, I have heard rumours
And shall, as is only fitting, inform you of them since I cannot conceal them
from you.

It is said that those fierce Myrmidons, masters of the spear, were lucky
And did return, commanded as they were by the illustrious son of the very
brave Achilles.

Also lucky was Philoctetes, the glorious son of Poias,
And Idomeneus who brought back to Crete every one of his comrades
Who had survived the fighting - for the sea did not take any of them from him.

As for one of the sons of Atreus - even though you are far away, you must have
heard

How Aegisthus plotted to so miserably destroy him on his arrival,
And how he himself so painfully paid the penalty for it.

For it is good for a man to leave behind a son when he is killed,

For then that son can avenge his father's death

As the son of that renowned man did to the treacherous killer Aegisthus!

You also, my friend - whom I see are fully-grown and strong -

200 Could be as brave as Orestes, for then those born after you will speak well
of you."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said to him in answer:

"Nestor, son of Neleus: esteemed warrior of our Achaean tribe!

That person did indeed take his revenge - and his name is now widely
honoured

Among Achaeans who will tell the saga for generations to come.

Perhaps the gods will give such strength to me

So that I can take my revenge upon those suitors who grievously overstep the
mark,

And who, in their arrogance, are dishonourably plotting against me.

But the gods have not allotted such a good fortune as that

To either my father or me so that now I have to undertake that entirely alone."

Then Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - said to him in
answer:

"My friend - since you have, in speaking to me, mentioned this,

There are indeed rumours of many suitors for your mother being in your home

Against your will who are plotting to do you harm.

So tell me - did you willingly submit to their domination

Or has some portent from some god caused the folk of your clan to shun you?
Who is there who knows when Odysseus will arrive
To pay them back for their violations - either by himself
Or together with his own Achaean clan?
But perhaps Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - will choose to
befriend you
As she did Odysseus to whom she gave great glory in battle
While he was in the land of the Trojans where we Achaeans endured much bad
luck:
And I have never seen the gods so visibly befriend someone
As Pallas Athena so visibly assisted him.
If she did consider you of value and so choose to befriend you
Then many of those suitors would be made to forget about that marriage!"

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said to him in answer:
"Venerable sir - what you speak of has not yet been brought about
Although it is good of you to, and I admire you for, saying it.
But I no longer expect it since the gods have not chosen to do this."

In answer the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said:
Telemachus! What a word you have let escape through the barrier of your
teeth!
It is easy for a god, should they choose to, to keep a mortal safe even when far
away.
My own wish would be to endure much bad luck
And then travel back to my country to behold the day of my return
Rather than travel directly back and be slain in my own home,

As Agamemnon was slain because of the treachery of his wife and Aegisthus.
Yet death is there for everyone alike - and not even the gods
Are able to protect a mortal they have befriended
When that destructive fate which is the long-sleep of death overpowers him."

Then Telemachus - he full of vigour - said to her in answer:

"Mentor - let us no longer speak about this thing, even though it afflicts us,
For I am almost certain that Odysseus will never return since the immortal ones
Must surely by now have planned some dark fate for him, as well as his death.
Instead, I now wish to ask Nestor some questions to find out about some other things,
For he understands others and knows more about our customs than them,
Having been - so it is said - a Chieftain for three generations of mortals,
And, to look at, he seems to me to be one of those immortals.

Nestor, son of Neleus - disclose to me the story of how

Agamemnon, son of Atreus and chieftain of vast domains, did die.

Where was Menelaus? And what deceitful plan did the treacherous Aegisthus use

250 Since he did kill someone so much stronger than himself?

Was Menelaus, then, wandering among other tribes, and not in Achaean Argos,

Thus giving that person the courage to kill?"

Then Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - said to him in answer:

"Young man - for you I shall give a speech which will disclose everything.

Surely you have your own opinion about what would have happened
If the red-haired Menelaus, son of Atreus, had returned from Troy
To find Aegisthus alive and in his home.
For then Aegisthus would have died without ever having soil heaped upon him
Because left out in the open far from the settlement
For dogs and birds to feast upon, with no Achaean women
Weeping for him, such was the magnitude of his treacherous deed!
For it was while we were at Troy, partaking in numerous combats,
That he - secure in horse-loving Argos - was gratifying himself
And bewitching Agamemnon's wife with numerous speeches.
At first, however, Clytaemnestra refused to do what was unseemly for someone
As well-bred as her, for she had an excellent understanding of what was
required.
Also, there was with her a Bard who had been commanded by that son of
Atreus
To guard his wife while he himself was away at Troy.
But then the gods bound to her the fate of being conquered,
And Aegisthus had that Bard taken to and left upon an uninhabited island
To be found by, and game for, birds of prey.
Thus did he who was willing lead she who was willing to his home.
Because of this, he burnt many thighs from bulls on the altar of the gods
As he hung up many fine tapestries and many fine things of gold as offerings,
For he never expected that his desire to so complete his work would be
fulfilled.
It was after this that we - that son of Atreus and I - set sail together

From the land of the Trojans, for we were good comrades.
Thus we reached sacred Sunium, headland of the Athenian clan,
Where the arrows of Phoebus Apollo came to the steersman
Of Menelaus' ship and painlessly killed him
As he held between his hands the rudder of his then swiftly sailing ship.
This was Phrontis, son of Onetor, who was superior to anyone from our tribes
In steering a ship when storm-winds rushed upon it.
So Menelaus was detained there, even though he was eager to journey on,
Until he had buried and completed the funeral rites of his comrade.
But when he went forth again over the dark sea
In his finely-carved ship, he swiftly arrived near to that high mountain at
Maleia
Where Zeus - he who perceives things from afar - planned a hostile journey for
them.
So he breathed upon them to spread around them a loud-sounding stormy
wind
With mountainous surging waves as big as monsters from the sea!
Thus he divided up those ships, with some being driven toward that part of
Crete
Where the Cydonian clan had settlements beside the Iardanus river.
This was where - at Gortyn's end with its cloudy waters -
A smooth rock rises high out of the sea,
And where Notos - the South Wind - pushes great surging waves toward
The adverse side of the Gulf, with that narrow rock dividing
Those great surging waves before they go to Phaestus.
Some of the ships made it there, but the men in them just escaped destruction

As those surging waves smashed those ships on the reefs.
And five of those ships with the azure-painted bows
300 Were driven by that wind and its sea toward Egypt
Where Menelaus was presented with considerable provisions and gold
Before he with his ships wandered among foreign-speaking tribes.

Meanwhile, Aegisthus was in his homeland deceitfully planning treachery.
After he had killed that son of Atreus, he enslaved his own clansfolk
And ruled over them in gold-rich Mycene for seven years.
But the eighth year was unlucky for him, for the noble Orestes arrived
From an Athenian settlement and slaughtered that father-killer,
The treacherous Aegisthus, for the killing of Orestes' well-known father.
After that slaughter, Orestes entertained his Argive clan by a wake
For his mother, whom he hated, and for the cowardly Aegisthus.
And, that very same day, Menelaus - he brave in combat - arrived,
Bringing with him vast wealth: as much as his ships could carry.

As for you, my friend - do not wander far from your home for long
Having left behind in your home your possessions and those overbearing
insolent men,
Or they will divide up and so devour all your possessions
And your travels will become infamous!
But now, I exhort you to go to Menelaus
For it is not that long since he arrived back from tribes in those foreign lands
From where he must have considered his return to be unlikely
Since it was those storm-winds which were the cause of his wrong course

Out into the vastness of that sea from which, during any year,
Not even birds arrive from, so vast and formidable is it.

You could go to him in your ships with your comrades,
Or you could go by land, for there are chariots and horses here
And my own sons to escort you to where
Is the noble Lacedaemon clan of the red-haired Menelaus.

And, when you ask him something, he will speak to you without missing his
target

As he would never, by words, deceive you since he is so very strong."

Such were his words, and, with the going-down of the sun, darkness arrived.

Then the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said this:

"Venerable sir - you have related those things correctly.

Well now - shall we offer up the tongues of those bulls, pour out wine,

So that, having made libations to Poseidon and the other immortals,

We, your guests, can concern ourselves with sleeping since it is the hour for it?

Because what was clear to us is now becoming nebulous,

It is no longer fitting for us to continue to sit here

At this god's feast. Thus, we should take our leave of you."

Such were the words of that daughter of Zeus, and they harkened to them,

With Officers pouring water over their hands

While boys filled jars ready for their drinking

And placed into the goblets of everyone there the first offering of wine.

Then, while standing, libations were made and those tongues cast into the fire,

With everyone then drinking as much as their hearts desired
Until Athena and Telemachus - he of supreme nobility -
Were about to take their leave to go back to their spacious ships.
But Nestor detained them there by saying this to them:
"May Zeus and all the other immortal gods defend me
From you going from what is mine to your fast ships
As if you were leaving someone who, being poor, had no night garments
And who had so few coverings and rugs in his dwelling
350 That neither he nor any guest of his could sleep comfortably!
I, however, do have coverings and beautiful rugs
And no son of Odysseus will lay himself down to sleep
On the deck of his ship so long as I am alive
And so long as there are children of mine left in my home
To provide hospitality for any guest who arrives at my dwelling."

In answer, the goddess Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes - said:
"My friend - your words are well-taken. It is certainly fitting
For Telemachus to yield over this, for it would be much more agreeable for
him.

Thus he will accompany you when you go to rest in your home.

I, however, must go to our black ship

To re-assure our comrades and tell them all about this

For I am the only one among them who can call himself an Elder.

The rest are young men who accompany us out of comradeship,

All of them being about the same age as the very brave Telemachus.

So now I should go to lay myself down to rest upon our spacious black ship.
And, at the dawn of day, I shall go to the very brave Cauconian clan,
For they owe me some booty from a while ago which is not a small amount.
Now, since this young man is a guest in your homeland,
Provide him with a chariot, a son of yours as escort,
And horses who excel because of their agility and strength."

After giving voice to these words, Athena - she with those beautiful blue eyes -
departed,

Appearing as a sea-eagle to them. And everyone who saw this was amazed
With that venerable Elder so astonished by what he had seen with his own eyes
That he took hold of Telemachus by the hand and addressed him with these
words:

"My friend - I do not believe you will ever lack courage or be unlucky
If the gods so escort and accompany you while you are still young!
For that could be no one other than she who inhabits the Halls of Olympus
And who is that daughter of Zeus born near Triton who presides over booty!
She it was who valued your noble father above other Argives.

My Lady - favour me by granting noble renown
To me, my offspring and she, my wife, whom I respect.
To you, My Lady, I shall sacrifice an unblemished, untamed, broad-faced ox
Which no one has ever tried to place a yoke upon
And whose horns I shall - before the sacrifice - cover all over with gold."

Such were the words he addressed to Pallas Athena, who heard them.

So it was that Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan -

Led his sons, relatives and Telemachus away from there to his very fine dwelling.

And, after arriving at the splendid dwelling of that Chieftain,

They, in proper order, seated themselves on chairs and on benches.

Then that venerable Elder poured into a vessel

An agreeable wine in its eleventh year which a female servant

Had opened for him by rolling back its covering veil.

This was what that venerable Elder poured into a vessel from which he made

Many libations in honour of Athena, the daughter of Aegis-carrying Zeus.

Then, after the libations when everyone had drunk as much as their hearts desired,

Every one of them went to lie down in that dwelling

Where Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan -

Gave Telemachus - the beloved son of the most heroic Odysseus - a place to sleep:

The wooden bed under the high-ceilinged porch

400 Where he was near to Peisistratus - master of the spear and among the best of men -

Who of all those sons of Nestor had still to be married.

Nestor himself slept in the innermost chamber of that lofty dwelling

Where his woman, the mistress of that dwelling, had prepared his bed.

Then, when the red-fingers of that early-rising Bringer of Warmth appeared,

Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - came forth to seat himself

Upon those polished stones - white and glistening as if covered in oil -

Which were in front of his lofty gates

And upon which Neleus - he whose advise was worthy of a god - used to sit
Before it was his fate to be slain by Hades.

But now it was the Gerenian, Nestor, who sat there

As guardian of that Achaean clan, holding the sceptre of authority.

His sons left their chambers to assemble and gather round him there:

These were Echephron, Stratius, Perseus, Aretus and the heroic Thrasymedes.

The sixth to arrive was that heroic warrior Peisistratus

Who brought with him and who seated among them, the noble Telemachus.

Then Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - directed them
thus:

"My sons -it is my wish that you swiftly accomplish these things for me,

Because the first thing I must do is offer up a sacrifice to Athena

Who was visible to us when she came to our rich feast for that god.

So, one of you should go the fields so that an ox is swiftly brought here

Having been urged on by one of our herdsmen.

Another of you should go the black ship of the noble Telemachus

To lead here all of his comrades, leaving only two behind.

Another of you should go to command the goldsmith Laerces to come here

So that the horns of that ox can be covered all over with gold.

The rest of you should remain here after telling the female servants

Within this splendid dwelling to prepare a feast

And to provide, for everyone, chairs, benches and clear water."

Such were his words, and all of his sons occupied themselves with those things

So that an ox arrived from the fields; the comrades of the vigorous
Telemachus

Arrived from their well-balanced ship; the goldsmith arrived bearing in his arms

Those bronze tools with which he accomplished his art:

A hammer, anvil and well-made fire-tongs

Which he used to work gold. Athena also arrived.

To be present at the sacrifice. Then the venerable Nestor - master of horse -

Gave the gold which the goldsmith prepared and then placed around the horns of the ox

To honour the goddess who would be pleased when she saw it.

It was Stratius and the noble Echephron who led that ox by its horns.

With them was Aretus who had conveyed from a store-room

A decorated bowl of water which he carried in one hand

While his other hand held a basket full of barley.

Near to them was Thrasymedes - he steadfast in the tumult of battle -

Who held in his hands a double-headed axe with which to strike the ox

While Perseus held the bowl for the blood. The venerable Nestor - master of horse -

Began the sacrifice by washing his hands and casting barley over the ox.

Then, with many invocations to Athena, he made the first offering

By casting hairs from the head of the ox into the fire.

And when he had cast the barley and made his invocations,

One of his sons - the very brave Thrasymedes -

Went to the ox and struck it so that the double-headed axe

450 Just cut into the tendons of the neck to release from it its strength.

At this, the women there - the daughters and female relatives of Nestor,

And Eurydice, his wife, eldest of the daughters of Clymenus - made loud

ululations.

Then Nestor's other sons lifted the ox off the ground and held it

So that Peisistratus - among the best of men - could slit its throat.

Thus did its dark blood pour out from it as the life in its bones was released.

Swiftly then did they dismember it, as they swiftly and fittingly cut off

The thighs still whole, covered then all over with fat and placed more meat upon them.

This was what that venerable Elder placed into the flames

From forked wood, over which he poured a libation of wine.

Then those young men came and stood beside him, holding in their hands five-pronged forks.

After the thighs were burnt and they had partaken of the heart and liver,

They cut the rest of the meat into joints,

Some of which they pierced right through to stick them

Onto the spits that they held in their hands

So that they could roast the meat by holding out those spits.

Meanwhile, Telemachus had been bathed by the beautiful Polycaste,

She who was the ripest of those daughters of Nestor, son of Neleus.

And when she had bathed him, she anointed his body with oil from olives

And put upon him a handsome tunic and cloak

So that he resembled an immortal as he went forth from that bathing-place

To seat himself near to Nestor, who was as a watchful guard for his warriors.

Thus did they stay there feasting on what they took for themselves -

Having roasted the rest of the meat, with attentive officers

Pouring out wine for them into goblets of gold -

Until the desire for food and drink left them

When Nestor - that master of horse from the Gerenian clan - said this:

"My sons - let there be brought here for Telemachus

Horses with beautiful manes and a chariot

To harness them to so that he can undertake his journey swiftly."

Such were his words, and they, harkening to them, were fast in obeying them

For they soon had those horses harnessed to a chariot.

Then after those women who were stewards of such things had placed into it

Cooked-meat, bread and wine of the kind that noble Chieftains consume,

Telemachus proceeded into that very fine chariot.

Then Peisistratus, son of Nestor and among the best of men, embarked beside him,

Took the reins, whipped up the horses

And drove them away. Thus - without any desire not to - they sallied forth

Across that plain near Pylos to leave behind them that lofty citadel.

And, during the whole of that day, that harness shook as they kept the horses in it.

Then, as the sun set and all the pathways became shadowy,

They arrived at Pherae where was the dwelling of Diocles,

Son of Ortilochus who himself was the son of Alpheus.

There, they were welcomed as guests; and there they slept that night.

And when the red-fingers of that early-rising Bringer of Warmth appeared,

They harnessed their horses to that splendid chariot, embarked upon it,

And - having driven past the forecourt and through the lofty porch -
They whipped up the horses and drove away. Thus - without any desire not to -
They sallied forth until they reached a wheat-producing plain
Where they hastened on so as to complete their journey
With the horses then swiftly bearing them along
Until, with the setting of the sun, all the pathways became shadowy.

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