

PREVIOUSLY, ON THE ODYSSEY ...

- Telemachos wakes up and wants to go check on his mom. He leaves and orders that Eumaios is to bring the "beggar" to town during the day so that he can beg for food.
- Back in the great hall, Penelope is ecstatic to see her son alive. She asks him for news of Odysseus, but Telemachos tells her to be patient.
- Telemachos, who seems awfully bossy, orders her to go bathe, change her clothes, and pray that Zeus will help them with their revenge against the suitors. Meanwhile, he has to take care of the passenger (cough *murderer* cough) who unexpectedly sailed with him yesterday.
- Telemachos' friend brings Theoklymenos (the cousin-murderer) to Telemachos and asks the prince to send some maids so that they can get Menelaos's gifts into the house.
- Um, let's wait until the suitors are gone, says Telemachos.
- The men eat while Penelope weaves and asks (again) for news of Odysseus.
- Telemachos tells her that Odysseus was last seen alive on the island of Kalypso, you know, the hot goddess.
- Theoklymenos interrupts and tells Penelope about the sign he interpreted for Telemachos the day before—the sign which prophecies that Odysseus is in fact already back in Ithaka and plotting revenge. But Penelope doesn't believe it. (Phew. That was a close one!)
- The suitor (who are playing sports and engaging in other manly pursuits—real sports, not C.O.D. for Xbox 360, or Pokémon on Game Boy Advance) to come in for dinner.
- Meanwhile, Odysseus and Eumaios head into town.
- Eventually, the pair runs into Melanthios the lonely goatherd (high on the hills, lay ee odl lay ee odl-oo). He mocks and abuses the beggar, but Odysseus doesn't respond. He just prays (aloud) to the gods that Melanthios gets what he deserves.
- Given what we've seen so far, we're about 99% sure this will in fact happen.

AND WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, WE PROUDLY PRESENT BOOK XVII:

- 290 Now as these two were conversing thus with each other,
a dog who was lying there raised his head and ears. This was
Argos, patient-hearted Odysseus' dog, whom he himself
raised, but got no joy of him, since before that he went to sacred
Ilion. In the days before, the young men had taken him
out to follow goats of the wild, and deer, and rabbits;
295 but now he had been put aside, with his master absent,

but dies before revealing his identity

- and lay on the deep pile of dung, from the mules and oxen,
which lay abundant before the gates, so that the servants
of Odysseus could take it to his great estate, for manuring.
300 There the dog Argos lay in the dung, all covered with dog ticks.
Now, as he perceived that Odysseus had come close to him,
he wagged his tail, and laid both his ears back; only
he now no longer had the strength to move any closer
to his master, who, watching him from a distance, without Eumaios
noticing, secretly wiped a tear away, and said to him:
305 'Eumaios, this is amazing, this dog that lies on the dunghill.
The shape of him is splendid, and yet I cannot be certain
whether he had the running speed to go with this beauty,
or is just one of the kind of table dog that gentlemen
keep, and it is only for show that their masters care for them.'
310 Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:
'This, it is too true, is the dog of a man who perished
far away. If he were such, in build and performance,
as when Odysseus left him behind, when he went to Ilion,
315 soon you could see his speed and his strength for yourself. Never
could any wild animal, in the profound depths of the forest,
escape, once he pursued. He was very clever at tracking.
But now he is in bad times. His master, far from his country,
has perished, and the women are careless, and do not look after him;
320 and serving men, when their masters are no longer about, to make them
work, are no longer willing to do their rightful duties.
For Zeus of the wide brows takes away one half of the virtue
from a man, once the day of slavery closes upon him.'
325 So he spoke, and went into the strongly-settled palace,
and strode straight on, to the great hall and the haughty suitors,
But the doom of dark death now closed over the dog, Argos,
when, after nineteen years had gone by, he had seen Odysseus.
Godlike Telemachos was the first by far to notice
330 the swineherd as he came into the house, and quickly he nodded
to summon him over. The swineherd, looking about him, picked up
a chair that was lying near where the carver sat, cutting
much meat for the suitors, as these feasted all through the palace.
This he took and placed it by Telemachos' table
facing him, then sat down there himself, and the herald
took a portion, and served him, and passed him bread from the basket.
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Odysseus in his own house

340 Close after him Odysseus now came into the palace,
 looking as he did like a dismal vagabond and an old man,
 propping on a stick, and wore foul clothing upon his body.
 He sat down then on the ashwood threshold, inside the doorway,
 leaning against the doorpost of cypress wood, which the carpenter
 once had expertly planed, and drawn it true to a chalkline;
 but Telemachos spoke a word to the swineherd, calling him over,
 taking and giving him a whole loaf from the beautiful basket,
 with meat, as much food as both arms could hold in their compass:
 'Take all this and give it to the stranger, but also tell him
 to go about among the suitors, and beg from all of them.
 Modesty, for a man in need, is not a good quality.'

345 So he spoke, and the swineherd went, when he heard his order.
 He came and stood close by Odysseus, and spoke in winged words:
 'Stranger, Telemachos gives you this, and also he tells you
 to go about among the suitors, and beg from all of them.
 He said that modesty, for a poor man, is no good quality.'

350 Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:
 'Lord Zeus, let Telemachos be one of the prosperous
 men; let everything befall him that his heart longs for.'

355 He spoke, and with both hands accepting everything, laid it
 there in front of his feet, on top of the ugly wallet,
 and ate it, all the while the singer sang in the halls. Then,
 when he had eaten his dinner, and the divine singer was finished,
 the suitors raised their tumult along the halls; but Athene
 came then and stood close by Odysseus, son of Laertes,
 and stirred him to go collect his bits of bread from the suitors,
 and so learn which of them were fair, which unfair; but even
 so, she would not deliver any of them from disaster.

365 He went on his way, from left to right, so to beg from each man,
 reaching his hand out always, as if for a long time he had been
 a beggar, and they took pity and gave, and they wondered at him;
 they asked each other what man he was, and where he came from.
 But now Melanthios, the goat-herding man, said to them:

370 'Hear me now, you suitors of our glorious queen, concerning
 this stranger; for I have seen him before; know then
 that it was the swineherd who guided him here, but I do not know
 clearly
 who the man is himself, or what race he claims to come of.'

begs from the suitors

375 So he spoke. Antinoös spoke then and scolded the swineherd:
 'O most distinguished swineherd, why did you bring this fellow
 to the city? Do we not already have enough other
 vagabonds, and bothersome beggars to ruin our feasting?
 Or, now that men gather here to eat up your master's substance,
 is that not enough, but you had to invite this one in also?'

380 Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to him in answer:
 'Antinoös, though you are noble, this was not well spoken.
 For who goes visiting elsewhere so as to call in another
 stranger, unless he is one who works for the people, either
 a prophet, or a healer of sickness, or a skilled workman,
 or inspired singer, one who can give delight by his singing?'

385 These are the men who all over the endless earth are invited.
 But nobody would ask in a beggar, one who would feed on
 himself. You, though, beyond all the other suitors, are heavy
 on the servants of Odysseus, and me most of all, but I
 for my part do not care, while still circumspect Penelope
 lives in the palace, together with godlike Telemachos.

390 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:
 'Silence. Do not answer him at such length. Antinoös
 has made it his habit always to irritate others with hurtful
 words, and stir them up, and encourages others to do so.'

395 So he spoke, and then addressed his words to Antinoös:
 'Antinoös, as a father for his son you take good care
 of me, when you tell our stranger guest to get out of the palace,
 with a strict word. May this not be the end god makes of it.

400 Take and give. I do not begrudge you. I even urge you.
 And do not have any respect for my mother, nor yet for any
 thrall beside, who lives in the house of godlike Odysseus.
 But such is not the kind of intention you keep within you.
 You are more eager to eat, yourself, than to give to another.'

405 Then in turn Antinoös said to him in answer:
 'High-spoken intemperate Telemachos, what accusations
 you have made. If all the suitors would hand him this kind of present,
 the house would then do without him for the space of three months.'

410 So he spoke, and picked up a footstool that lay by the table
 and showed it. He had his shining feet on it as he feasted.
 But all the others gave to him, and they filled his wallet
 with bread and meat, and Odysseus was on the point of finishing

Odysseus struck by Antinoös

- his test of the Achaians, and getting back free to his doorsill;
but now he stood by Antinoös, and spoke a word to him:
'Give, dear friend. You seem to me, of all the Achaians,
not the worst, but the best. You look like a king. Therefore,
you ought to give me a better present of food than the others
have done, and I will sing your fame all over the endless
earth, for I too once lived in my own house among people,
prospering in wealth, and often I gave to a wanderer
according to what he was and wanted when he came to me;
and I had serving men by thousands, and many another
good thing, by which men live well and are called prosperous. Only
Zeus, son of Kronos, spoiled it all—somehow he wished to—
when he put it into my head to go with the roving pirates
to Egypt, a long voyage, so that I must be ruined.
I stayed my oarswept ships inside the Aigypotos River.
Then I urged my eager companions to stay where they were, there
close to the fleet, and to guard the ships, and was urgent with them
to send lookouts to the watching places, but they following
their own impulse, and giving way to marauding violence,
suddenly began plundering the Egyptians' beautiful
fields, and carried off the women and innocent children,
and killed the men, and soon the outcry came to the city.
They heard the shouting, and at the time when dawn shows, they came
on us, and all the plain was filled with horses and infantry
and the glare of bronze; and Zeus who delights in the thunder flung
down
a foul panic among my companions, and none was so hardy
as to stand and fight, for the evils stood in a circle around them.
There they killed many of us with the sharp bronze, and others
they led away alive, to work for them in forced labor;
but they gave me away, into Cyprus, to a stranger arriving,
Dimetor, Iasos' son, who was the strong king in Cyprus.
From there I came here, where I am now, suffering hardships.
Then Antinoös answered him in turn, and said to him:
'What spirit brought this pain upon us, to spoil our feasting?
Stand off, so, in the middle, and keep away from my table,
or otherwise you may find yourself in a sorry Cyprus
or Egypt, you are so bold a one, and a shameless beggar.
You went the whole circle and stood by all, and they all gave to you

who is scolded by the others

- recklessly, for there is no holding back nor spating
of favors from another man's goods, since each has plenty.'
Now resourceful Odysseus spoke, as he drew back from him:
'Shame; the wits in you, it is clear, do not match your outward
beauty. You would not give a bit of salt to a servant
in your own house, since now, sitting at another's, you could not
take a bit of bread and give it to me. It is there in abundance.'
He spoke, and Antinoös in his heart grew still more angry.
Looking at him from under his brows, he addressed him in winged
words:
'Now I think that you can no longer make a respectable
retreat out of the palace, since what you say is scurrilous.'
He spoke, and threw the footstool and hit him in the right shoulder
near the base, in the back, but he stood up to it, steady
as a rock, nor did the missile thrown by Antinoös shake him,
but he shook his head in silence, deeply devising evils.
He went back to the sill and sat there, and spread out before him
the wallet that was well filled, and spoke a word to the suitors:
'You who are suitors of this most glorious queen, hear me
while I speak out what the heart within my breast urges:
there is no grief that comes to the heart, nor yet any sorrow,
when a man is hit, fighting in battle for the sake of his own
possessions, either to guard his shining sheep or his cattle;
but Antinoös struck me all because of my wretched belly,
that cursed thing, who bestows many evils on men. Therefore,
if there are any gods or any furies for beggars,
Antinoös may find his death before he is married.'
Then Antinoös, son of Eupheithes, gave him an answer:
'Go in peace, stranger, and sit down, or go away elsewhere,
or else, for the way you talk, the young men might take you and drag you
by hand or foot through the house, and tear the skin on your body.'
So he spoke, but all the rest were wildly indignant,
and this is the way one of these haughty young men would speak to him:
'Antinoös, you did badly to hit the unhappy vagabond:
a curse on you, if he turns out to be some god from heaven.
For the gods do take on all sorts of transformations, appearing
as strangers from elsewhere, and thus they range at large through the
cities,
watching to see which men keep the laws, and which are violent.'

Eumaios tells Penelope

So spoke the suitors, but he paid no attention to what they were saying.

But Telemachos sustained in his heart a great sorrow over the blow, but he did not let fall from his eyes any groundward

490 tear, but shook his head in silence, deeply devising

evils. But when circumspect Penelope heard that the stranger

had been struck in her halls, she spoke to her serving women:

'Thus, I pray, may the archer Apollo strike at the striker.'

495 Then the housekeeper, Eurynome, spoke and answered:

'If only some fulfillment befell our prayers. Then not one of these men would be alive to meet the Dawn in her splendor.'

Circumspect Penelope said to her in answer:

'Mother, they are all hateful, since all are devising evils,

500 but Antinoös, beyond the rest, is like black death. Here is

a stranger, some unfortunate man, who goes through our palace

asking alms of the men, for his helplessness forces him to it.

Then all the others gave and filled his bag, but this man

struck him with a footstool at the base of the right shoulder.'

505 So Penelope, sitting up in her chamber, conversed

with her serving women, while great Odysseus was eating his dinner.

But now she summoned the noble Eumaios, and tell the stranger

'Go on your way now, noble Eumaios, and tell the stranger

to come, so I can befriend him, and so I can ask him

510 if he has somewhere heard any news of steadfast Odysseus

or seen him in person. He seems like a man who has wandered widely.'

Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to her in answer:

'If only these Achaians, my queen, would let you have silence!

Such stories he tells, he would charm out the dear heart within you.

515 Three nights I had him with me, and for three days I detained him

in my shelter, for he came first to me. He had fled from a vessel;

but he has not yet told the story of all his suffering.

But as when a man looks to a singer, who has been given

from the gods the skill with which he sings for delight of mortals,

520 and they are impassioned and strain to hear it when he sings to them,

so he enchanted me in the halls as he sat beside me.

He says that he is a friend by family of Odysseus,

with his home in Crete, where lives the generation of Minos,

and from there he made his way to this place, suffering hardships,

525 driven helpless along. He claims he has heard that Odysseus

about his unknown guest

is near, in the rich country of the men of Thesprotia, and alive, and bringing many treasures back to his household.'

Then in turn circumspect Penelope said to him:

'Go now, call him here, so he can tell me directly,

530 and let these people sit by the doors and play their games, or else

go and do it at home, whenever the spirit favors.

For their own properties are stored, unspoiled, in their houses,

bread, and sweet wine, but this their own house-people eat. Meanwhile,

they, day by day visiting our house, and always

535 dedicating our oxen, and our sheep and fat goats,

hold their festival and recklessly drink up our shining

wine; and most of it is used up, for there is no man here

such as Odysseus was, to keep the plague from his household.

But if Odysseus could come, and return to the land of his fathers,

540 soon, with his son, he could punish the violence of these people.'

She spoke, and Telemachos sneezed again, and around him the palace

re-echoed terribly to the sound. Penelope, laughing,

spoke presently to Eumaios and addressed him in winged words:

'Go, please, and summon the stranger into my presence. Do you

545 not see how my son sneezed for everything I have spoken?

May it mean that death, accomplished in full, befall the suitors

each and all, not one avoiding death and destruction.

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you.

If I learn that everything he says is truthfully-spoken,

550 I will give him beautiful clothing to wear, a tunic and mantle.'

So she spoke, and the swineherd went, when he heard what she told

him,

and he came and stood close by Odysseus and spoke in winged words:

'Father and friend, circumspect Penelope, mother

of Telemachos, summons you, for her heart is urgent to find out

555 from you about her husband, though she is suffering troubles.

And if she learns that all you say is truthfully spoken,

she will give you a tunic and mantle to wear, what you have need of

most of all; and you, by begging your bread through the city,

can keep your belly sustained; and he who will can give to you.'

560 Then in turn much-enduring great Odysseus answered him:

'Eumaios, by and by I will tell everything truly

to the daughter of Ikarios, circumspect Penelope.

For I know well about him, we have suffered the same sad story.

Eumaios goes back

- 565 Only now I am afraid of this swarm of rough suitors,
whose outrageous violence goes up into the iron
sky. For even now, as I went through the house, doing
no harm, and this man struck me and gave me over to suffering,
Telemachos could not save me from this, nor could any other.
Tell Penelope, therefore, for all her eagerness, to wait
for me in the palace until the sun has set. Let her
then question me about her husband's day of homecoming,
giving me a seat close to the fire, since these are wretched
clothes I have. You know this yourself; you are my first patron.
- 570 So he spoke, and the swineherd went, when he heard what he told him.
But Penelope said to him as he stepped over the threshold:
"You do not bring him, Eumaios? What is this vagabond thinking?
Does he fear some indignity, or is he otherwise bashful
about the house? A bashful vagabond makes a bad beggar."
Then, O swineherd Eumaios, you said to her in answer:
"He speaks within reason, as another man might think also,
in keeping away from the violence of these insolent men. Therefore
he tells you to wait until after the sun has gone down. For you
yourself also, my queen, this way it will be much better:
to talk in private to the stranger, and hear his story."
- 580 Then in turn circumspect Penelope answered him:
"So it shall be. The stranger's thought is not without good sense,
since never yet among mortal mankind have there been any
men who have been so violent in their wild endeavors."
So she instructed him, and the noble swineherd went back
into the crowd of the suitors, when he had understood all of it.
At once he spoke his winged words to Telemachos, leaning
his head close to him, so that none of the others might hear him:
"Dear child, I am going back to guard the pigs and that other
livelihood that is yours and mine. Let all be in your charge
here. First of all take care of yourself, and be very watchful
against harm to you. There are many Achaians who wish you evil.
May Zeus destroy them before they can make any harm befall us."
- 595 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:
"So it shall be, my father. Go, when you have had your supper;
but come again in the morning, and bring us beautiful victims.
I myself will see to things here, as will the immortals."
So he spoke, and the other sat down again on a polished
- 600

leaving Odysseus in the palace

- 605 chair. But when he had had his fill of eating and drinking,
he went on back to the pigs, and left the courts and the palace
full of banqueters, who took their pleasure in singing
and dancing. By now the later part of the day had come on.