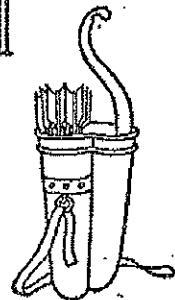


BOOK XXII



Now resourceful Odysseus stripped his rags from him, and sprang up atop the great threshold, holding his bow and the quiver filled with arrows, and scattered out the swift shafts before him on the ground next his feet, and spoke his word to the suitors:

5 'Here is a task that has been achieved, without any deception.
Now I shall shoot at another mark, one that no man yet
has struck, if I can hit it and Apollo grants me the glory.'

He spoke, and steered a bitter arrow against Antinoös.
He was on the point of lifting up a fine two-handled
10 goblet of gold, and had it in his hands, and was moving it
so as to drink of the wine, and in his heart there was no thought
of death. For who would think that one man, alone in a company
of many men at their feasting, though he were a very strong one,
would ever inflict death upon him and dark doom? But Odysseus,
15 aiming at this man, struck him in the throat with an arrow,
and clean through the soft part of the neck the point was driven.
He slumped away to one side, and out of his stricken hand fell
the goblet, and up and through his nostrils there burst a thick jet
of mortal blood, and with a thrust of his foot he kicked back
20 the table from him, so that all the good food was scattered
on the ground, bread and baked meats together; but all the suitors
clamored about the house when they saw that the man was fallen,
sprang up from their seats and ranged about the room, throwing
their glances every way all along the well-built walls,

Odysseus reveals himself

but there was never a shield there nor any strong spear for them.

But they scolded Odysseus in words full of anger, saying:

'Stranger, it is badly done to hit men. You will never achieve any more trials. Now your sudden destruction is certain, of the youth of Ithaka. For that the vultures shall eat you.'

Each spoke at random, for they thought he had not intended to kill the man, poor fools, and they had not yet realized how over all of them the terms of death were now hanging.

But looking darkly upon them resourceful Odysseus answered:

'You dogs, you never thought that I would any more come back from the land of Troy, and because of that you despoiled my household, and forcibly took my serving women to sleep beside you, and sought to win my wife while I was still alive, fearing neither the immortal gods who hold the wide heaven, nor any resentment sprung from men to be yours in the future. Now upon all of you the terms of destruction are fastened.'

So he spoke, and the green fear took hold of all of them, and each man looked about him for a way to escape sheer death. Only Eurymachos spoke up and gave him an answer:

'If in truth you are Odysseus of Ithaka, come home, what you have said is fair about all the wickedness done you by the Achaeans, much in your house and much in the country. But now the man is down who was responsible for all this, Antinoös. It was he who pushed this action,

not so much that he wanted the marriage, or cared for it, but with other things in mind, which the son of Kronos would not grant him: to lie in wait for your son and kill him, and then be king himself in the district of strong-founded Ithaka. Now he has perished by his own fate. Then spare your own

people, and afterward we will make public reparation for all that has been eaten and drunk in your halls, setting each upon himself an assessment of twenty oxen.

We will pay it back in bronze and gold to you, until your heart is softened. Till then, we cannot blame you for being angry.'

Then looking darkly at him resourceful Odysseus answered: 'Eurymachos, if you gave me all your father's possessions, all that you have now, and what you could add from elsewhere, even so, I would not stay my hands from the slaughter,

until I had taken revenge for all the suitors' transgression.

Now the choice has been set before you, either to fight me or run, if any of you can escape death and its spirits.

But I think not one man will escape from sheer destruction.'

So he spoke, and the others' knees, and the heart within them, went slack, but Eurymachos cried a second time, to the suitors:

'Dear friends, now this man will not restrain his invincible hands, but since he has got the polished bow and the quiver, he will shoot at us from the smooth threshold, until he has killed us one and all. Then let us all remember our warchart.'

Draw your swords and hold the table before you, to ward off the arrows of sudden death; let us all make a rush against him together, and try to push him back from the doors and the threshold, and go through the town. So the hue and cry could be most quickly raised, and perhaps this man will now have shot for the last time.'

So he spoke aloud, and drew from his side the sharp sword, brazen, and edged on either side; and made a rush at him, crying his terrible cry. At the same time, noble Odysseus shot an arrow, and struck him in the chest, by the nipple, and the speeding arrow fixed in his liver, and his sword tumbled out of his hand on the floor, as he, sprawling over the table,

doubled and fell, and on the floor the good food was scattered, rattled the chair, and over his eyes the death mist drifted. Amphimachos, springing forward to face glorious Odysseus, made a rush against him, and drew his sharp sword, thinking he might be forced to give way from the doors; but now Telemachos was too quick with a cast of the brazen spear from behind him between the shoulders, and drove it through to the chest beyond it.

He fell, thunderously, and took the earth full on his forehead. Telemachos sprang away, and left behind the far-shadowing spear where it was in Amphimachos, turning back, for fear that as he pulled out the far-shadowing spear, some other Achian might drive at him in an outrush, or else strike him from close up.

He went on the run, and very soon he reached his dear father, and stood there close beside him and addressed him in winged words:

'Father, now I will go and bring you a shield, and two spears, and a helmet all of bronze fitting close to your temples.'

The battle begins

The singer and herald spared.

335 Zeus of the court, and crouch at the structure, where once Odysseus
and Laertes had burned up the thighs of many oxen,
or rush up and make entreaty at the knees of Odysseus.
Then in the division of his heart this way seemed best to him,

340 Thereupon he laid the hollowed lyre on the ground,
between the mixing bowl and the chair with its nails of silver,
but he himself rushed in and caught the knees of Odysseus,
and spoke to him in winged words and in supplication:
'I am at your knees, Odysseus. Respect me, have mercy.
345 You will be sorry in time to come if you kill the singer
of songs. I sing to the gods and to human people, and I am
taught by myself, but the god has inspired in me the song-ways
of every kind. I am such a one as can sing before you
as to a god. Then do not be furious to behold me.'

350 Telemachos too, your own dear son, would tell you, as I do,
that it was against my will, and with no desire on my part,
that I served the suitors here in your house and sang at their feasting.
They were too many and too strong, and they forced me to do it.'

So he spoke, and the hallowed prince Telemachos heard him.

355 Quickly then he spoke to his father, who stood close by him:
'Hold fast. Do not strike this man with the bronze. He is innocent.
And let us spare Medon our herald, a man who has always
taken care of me when I was a child in your palace;

360 unless, that is, Philoitos or the swineherd has killed him,
or unless he came in your way as you stormed through the palace.'

So he spoke, and Medon, a man of prudent thoughts, heard him;
for he had hidden under a chair, and put on about him
the hide of an ox, freshly skinned, so avoiding black death.

He came out quickly from under the chair, and took off the oxhide,
365 and then rushed in and caught hold of the knees of Telemachos,
and spoke to him in winged words and in supplication:
'Here I am, dear friend. Hold fast, and speak to your father,
before—since he is so strong—he destroys me with the tearing
bronze, in anger over the suitors, who kept ruining

370 his goods in his palace and, like fools, paid you no honor.'

Then resourceful Odysseus smiled upon him and answered:

'Do not fear. Telemachos has saved you and kept you
alive, so you may know in your heart, and say to another,

that good dealing is better by far than evil dealing.

375 But go out now from the palace and sit outside, away from
the slaughterer, in the courtyard, you and the versatile singer,
so that I can do in the house the work that I have to.'

So he spoke, and the two went away, outside the palace,
and sat down both together beside the altar of mighty
Zeus, looking all about them, still thinking they would be murdered.

Odysseus looked about his own house, to see if any
man still was left alive, escaping the black destruction;
but he saw them, one and all in their numbers, lying fallen
in their blood and in the dust, like fish whom the fishermen
have taken in their net with many holes, and dragged out
onto the hollow beach from the gray sea, and all of them
lie piled on the sand, needing the restless salt water;
but Helios, the shining Sun, bakes the life out of them.

Like these, the suitors now were lying piled on each other.

380 Then at last resourceful Odysseus said to Telemachos:
'Telemachos, come now, summon in the nurse, Eurykleia,
so that I can say what is on my mind to say to her.'

So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father.

He opened the door and called out to the nurse, Eurykleia:

385 'Rise and come here, aged woman, you who watch over
all that the serving women do here in our palace.
Come here. My father calls you. He has something to tell you.'

So he spoke, and she had no winged words for an answer,
but she opened the doors of the strong-built great hall, and went

390 on inside, but Telemachos went ahead, leading her.

There she found Odysseus among the slaughtered dead men,
who has been feeding on an ox of the fields, and goes off
covered with blood, all his chest and his flanks on either
405 side bloody, a terrible thing to look in the face; so
now Odysseus' feet and the hands above them were spattered.

She, when she saw the dead men and the endless blood, began then
to raise the cry of triumph, having seen it was monstrous
work, but Odysseus checked her and held her, for all her eagerness,
and spoke to her and addressed her in winged words, saying:

410 'Keep your joy in your heart, old dame; stop, do not raise up
the cry. It is not piety to glory so over slain men.

These were destroyed by the doom of the gods and their own hard actions,

for these men paid no attention at all to any man on earth who came their way, no matter if he were base or noble.

415 So by their own recklessness they have found a shameful death. Now assemble here the women who are in the palace, both those who have done me no honor, and those who are innocent.'

Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to him in answer:

420 'So, my child, I will tell you the whole truth of the matter. You have fifty serving women here in your palace, and these I have taught to work at their own tasks, the carding of wool, and how to endure their own slavery. Of these fifty, twelve in all have taken to immorality.

They pay no attention to me, or even to Penelope.

Telennachos is but lately come of age, and his mother would not let him be in charge of the serving women.

But come, let me go up to the shining upper chamber and tell your wife. Some god has sent down a sleep upon her.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her:

430 'Do not waken her yet, but tell those women who have been shameful in their devisings to come here to my presence.'

So he spoke, and the old woman went through the Palace, bringing the message to the women and urging them onward.

But Odysseus, calling Telennachos and the oxherd and swineherd to him, spoke to them in winged words, saying:

435 'Begin the work of carrying out the bodies, and tell the women to help, and after that to wash the beautiful chairs and tables clean, with water and porous sponges.

Then, after you have got all the house back in good order, lead all these maid-servants out of the well-built palace

between the round-house and the unfaulted wall of the courtyard, and hew them with the thin edge of the sword, until you have taken the lives from all, and they forget Aphrodite, the goddess they had with them when they lay secretly with the suitors.'

440 So he spoke, and the women all in a huddle came out, with terrible cries of sorrow, and the big tears falling. First they carried away the bodies of all the dead men, and laid them under the portico of the well-built courtyard, stacking them on each other. Odysseus himself directed them

and hurried them on. They carried the bodies out. They had to. Then, after they had done this, the women washed the beautiful chairs and tables clean, with water and porous sponges.

After this Telennachos, the oxherd and the swineherd, 455 scraped out the floor of the strongly constructed house, with shovels, and the women carried the scrapings away, and piled them outside. But after they had got all the house back in good order, leading the maid-servants out of the well-built palace,

between the round-house and the unfaulted wall of the courtyard, they penned them in a strait place from which there was no escaping. Now the thoughtful Telennachos began speaking among them:

I would not take away the lives of these creatures by any clean death; for they have showered abuse on the head of my mother, and on my own head too, and they have slept with the suitors.

460 So he spoke, and taking the cable of a dark-prowed ship, fastened it to the tall pillar, and fetched it about the round-house; and like thrushes, who spread their wings, or pigeons, who have flown into a snare set up for them in a thicket, trying to find a resting place, but the sleep given them was hateful; so their heads were all in a line, and each had her neck caught fast in a noose, so that their death would be most pitiful.

They struggled with their feet for a little, not for very long. They took Melanthios along the porch and the courtyard.

465 They cut off, with the pitiless bronze, his nose and his ears, tore off his private parts and gave them to the dogs to feed on raw, and lopped off his hands and feet, in fury of anger.

Then, after they had washed their own hands and feet clean, they went into the house of Odysseus. Their work was ended. But Odysseus said to the beloved nurse, Eurykleia:

470 Bring me brimstone, old drama, the cure of evils, and bring me fire, so I can sulphur the hall, and tell Penelope to come here now, together with her attendant women, and tell all the serving maids to come here to the palace.'

Then the beloved nurse Eurykleia said to him in answer:

475 'All this you have said, my child, was fair and orderly. But come now, let me bring you out a mantle and tunic, and do not stand thus here in the hall, with your broad shoulders covered over with rags as they are. That would be scandalous.'

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered her: 480

Odysseus cleans the palace

'Before all this, let me have the fire in my palace.'

He spoke, and the dear nurse Eurykleia did not disobey him.
She brought him out the fire and brimstone; and then Odysseus
cleaned his palace, house and courtyard alike, with sulphur.

- 495 The old woman went off through the fine house of Odysseus,
 to take the message to the women and tell them to gather.
They came from the main house, and in their hands held torches,
and all the serving women clung to Odysseus, and greeted him,
and made much of him, and kissed him on his head and his shoulders.
500 and hands, admiring him, and sweet longing for lamentation
 and tears took hold of him. He recognized all these women.