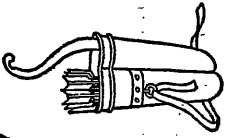


# BOOK XXIV



- Hermes is leading the suitors' ghosts to the Underworld where Achilles is talking about the Trojan war, while Agamemnon is still ranting about his sluttish wife.
- The suitors summarize the *Odyssey* Books I-XXII. Apparently it was all Penelope's fault.
- Agamemnon rejoices for Odysseus, happy that the man has such a faithful wife. Unlike his own.
- Back in the land of the living, Odysseus reaches Laertes's garden lands; he sends Telemachos and the herdsmen up to the hut to prepare a good meal, and goes in search of his father.

- but Odysseus  
went closer to the abundant orchard, searching. He did not find either Dolios, as he came into the great orchard, nor any of his thralls, nor his sons, for all these had gone off to gather stones and make them into a wall retaining the orchard, and the old man had guided them on their errand; but he did find his father alone in the well-worked orchard, spading out a plant, and he had a squalid tunic upon him, patched together and ugly, and on his legs he had oxhide gaiters fastened and patched together, to prevent scratching, and gloves on his hands because of the bushes, and he was wearing a cap of goatskin on his head, to increase his misery.
- Now when much-enduring great Odysseus observed him, with great misery in his heart, and oppressed by old age, he stood underneath a towering pear tree and shed tears for him, and deliberated then in his heart and his spirit whether to embrace his father and kiss him and tell him everything, how he was come again to his own dear country, or question him first about everything, and make trial of him. In the division of his heart this way seemed best to him,

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- 240 first to make trial of him and speak in words of mockery. With this in mind, noble Odysseus came straight up to him. He was digging around a plant with his head held downward, and now his glorious son stood near, and spoke to him, saying: 'Old sir, there is in you no lack of expertness in tending your orchard; everything is well cared for, and there is never a plant, neither fig tree nor yet grapevine nor olive nor pear tree nor feek bed uncared for in your garden. But I will also tell you this; do not take it as cause for anger. You yourself are ill cared for; together with dismal old age, which is yours, you are squalid and wear foul clothing upon you. It is not for your laziness that your lord does not take care of you, nor is your stature and beauty, as I see it, such as ought to belong to a slave. You look like a man who is royal, and such a one as who, after he has bathed and eaten, should sleep on a soft bed; for such is the right of the elders. But come now; tell me this and give me an accurate answer. What man's thrall are you? Whose orchard are you laboring?
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- Odysseus says he is from Alybas ("Roamer-Town"), is the son of Apheidas ("Unsparing"), who is in turn the son of lord Polypemon ("old King Pain" or "A great possessor or sufferer"). His own name is Eperitos ("Man of Strife," or "at the oar") and he once housed Odysseus on his journey home. 5 years ago.

- 315 He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Laertes. In both hands he caught up the grimy dust and poured it over his face and grizzled head, groaning incessantly. The spirit rose up in Odysseus, and now in his nostrils there was a shock of bitter force as he looked on his father. He sprang to him and embraced and kissed and then said to him: 'Father, I am he, the man whom you ask about. I am here, come back in the twentieth year to the land of my father. But stay now from your weeping, shedding of tears, and outcry, for I tell you this straight out; the need for haste is upon us. I have killed the suitors who were in our palace, avenging all their heart-hurting outrage and their evil devisings.' Then in turn Laertes answered him and said to him: 'If in truth you are Odysseus, my son, who have come back here, give me some unmistakable sign, so that I can believe you.' Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him: 'First, then, look with your eyes upon this scar and know it. The wild boar inflicted it with his white tusk, on Parnassos, when I went there; for you and my queenly mother had sent me to Autolykos, my mother's dear father, so I could be given those gifts, which he promised me and consented to when he came to us. Or come then, let me tell you of the trees in the well-worked
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orchard, which you gave me once. I asked you of each one, when I was a child, following you through the garden. We went among the trees, and you named them all and told me what each one was, and you gave me thirteen pear trees, and ten apple trees, and forty fig trees; and so also you named the fifty vines you would give. Each of them bore regularly, for there were grapes at every stage upon them, whenever the seasons of Zeus came down from the sky upon them, to make them heavy.

340 He spoke, and Laertes' knees and the heart within him went slack, as he recognized the clear proofs that Odysseus had given. He threw his arms around his dear son, and much-enduring great Odysseus held him close, for his spirit was fainting. But when he had got his breath back again, and the spirit gathered into his heart, once more he said to him, answering:

345 'Father Zeus, there are gods indeed upon tall Olympos, if truly the suitors have had to pay for their reckless violence. But now I am terribly afraid in my heart that speedily the men of Ithaka may come against us here, and send out messages everywhere to the Kephallenian cities.'

• They go back to the farmhouse where the other men have prepared a meal. Laertes is joyous and Athene makes him look young again.

355 — So these were busy in the hall preparing their dinner; but Rumor, a messenger, went swiftly through all the city, crying aloud the terrible death and doom of the suitors; and the people as they heard it came, from their several places, to gather, with groaning and outcry, before the house of Odysseus. They carried the corpses out of the house, and each one buried his own, and sent back all who had come from the other cities, giving them in charge of fishermen to take in their fast ships. They themselves, sorrowful at heart, gathered in assembly.

420 But when they were all assembled and in one place together, Eupheithes stood up and addressed them, since unforgettable sorrow was stored away in his heart for the sake of Antinoös, his son, who was the first to be killed by noble Odysseus. For his sake weeping tears he now stood forth and addressed them:

425 'Friends, this man's will worked great evil upon the Achaians. First he took many excellent men away in the vessels with him, and lost the hollow ships, and lost all the people, and then returning killed the best men of the Kephallenians. Come then, before he can make his way quickly over to Pylos, or else to shining Elis, where the Epeians are lords, let us go, or else we shall then be shamed forever; all this shall be a disgrace, even for the men hereafter to hear of, if we do not take revenge on the murderers of our brothers

430 and sons; for there would be no pleasure in my heart to go on living, but I would wish to die and be with the perished.

So let us go, before they cross the sea, and escape us.'

440 He spoke, weeping, and pity took hold of all the Achaians. But now Medon arrived, and with him the inspired singer, from the palace of Odysseus, since now the sleep had left them; they stood in their midst, and amazement seized upon each man of them. Then Medon, full of prudent thoughts, spoke forth and addressed them:

445 'Hear me now, you men of Ithaka; for Odysseus devised what he did, not without the consent of immortal gods. I myself saw an immortal god who was standing beside Odysseus. In every way it resembled Mentor. An immortal god was seen, at one time in front of Odysseus urging him on, and then next time he would rout the suitors, and dash about the hall, while they fell one after another.'

450 So he spoke, and the green fear took hold of all of them. Now Halitherses, Mastor's son, an aged warrior, spoke to them. He alone saw what was before and behind him.

Now in kind intention toward all he spoke forth and addressed them: 'Hear me now, you men of Ithaka; hear what I tell you. It is by your own weakness, dear friends, that these things have happened. You would not listen to me, nor to Mentor, shepherd of the people, when we told you to make your sons give over their senseless mood; for they, in their evil recklessness, did a great wrong in showing no respect to the wife, despoiling the possessions, of a lordly man. They thought that he never would be coming home. Now let it be thus. Hear me, and do as I tell you. Let us not go there. He who does might incur some evil.'

455 So he spoke, but more than half who were there sprang up with a great cry—though others stayed where they were assembled—since Halitherses' speech did not please their hearts, but they listened to Eupheithes, and now suddenly they ran for their armor. Now they, when in the shining bronze they had shrouded their bodies, assembled all in a body in front of the spacious city. Eupheithes was their leader in their foolishness. He thought he would avenge the slaughter of his son, but he was not ever to come back, but must himself encounter his death there.

460 Now Athene spoke a word to Zeus, son of Kronos: 'Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty, tell me what I ask. What does your mind have hidden within it? Will you first inflict evil fighting upon them, and terrible strife, or will you establish friendship between the two factions? Then Zeus the gatherer of the clouds said to her in answer:

465 'My child, why do you ask and question me in these matters? For was not this your own intention, as you have counseled it, how Odysseus should make his way back, and punish those others? Do as you will; but I will tell you how it is proper. Now that noble Odysseus has punished the suitors, let them make their oaths of faith and friendship, and let him be king always; and let us make them forget the death of their brothers and sons, and let them be friends with each other, as in the time past, and let them have prosperity and peace in abundance.'

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530 cried out in a great voice and held back all the company:  
'Hold back, men of Ithaka, from the wearisome fighting,  
so that most soon, and without blood, you can settle everything.'  
So spoke Athene, and the green fear took hold of them,  
and in their terror they let fall from their hands their weapons,  
which fell all on the ground at the cry of the goddess speaking.  
535 Striving to save their lives, they turned in flight toward the city.  
With a terrible cry, much-enduring Odysseus, gathering  
himself together, made a swoop, like a high-flown eagle.  
But the son of Kronos then threw down a smoky thunderbolt,  
540 which fell in front of the gray-eyed daughter of the great father.  
Then the gray-eyed goddess Athene said to Odysseus:  
'Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,  
'hold hard, stop this quarrel in closing combat, for fear  
Zeus of the wide brows, son of Kronos, may be angry with you.'  
545 So spoke Athene, and with happy heart he obeyed her.  
And pledges for the days to come, sworn to by both sides,  
were settled by Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis,  
who had likened herself in appearance and voice to Mentor.

So he spoke, and stirred on Athene, who was eager before this,  
and she went in a flash of speed down the pinnacles of Olympos.  
When the men had put away their desire for delicious feasting,  
much-enduring great Odysseus began speaking among them:  
490 'Let someone go out now and see if they are approaching.'  
But now came their way the daughter of Zeus, Athene,  
likening herself in appearance and voice to Mentor.  
Seeing her, much-enduring great Odysseus was happy,  
505 and presently he spoke to his dear son, Telemachos:  
'Telemachos, now yourself being present, where men do battle,  
and the bravest are singled out from the rest, you must be certain  
not to shame the blood of your fathers, for we in time past  
all across the world have surpassed in manhood and valor.'  
510 Then the thoughtful Telemachos said to him in answer:  
'You will see, dear father, if you wish, that as far as my will goes,  
I will not shame my blood that comes from you, which you speak of.'  
So he spoke, and Laertes also rejoiced, and said to them:  
'What day is this for me, dear gods? I am very happy.'  
515 My son and my son's son are contending over their courage.'  
Then standing close beside him gray-eyed Athene said to him:  
'Son of Arkeisios, far dearest of all my companions,  
make your prayer to the gray-eyed girl and to Zeus her father,  
then quickly balance your far-shadowing spear, and throw it.'  
520 So Pallas Athene spoke, and breathed into him enormous  
strength, and, making his prayer then to the daughter of great Zeus,  
he quickly balanced his far-shadowing spear, and threw it,  
and struck Eupethes on the brazen side of his helmet,  
nor could the helm hold off the spear; but the bronze smashed clean  
through.  
525 He fell, thunderously, and his armor clattered upon him.  
Odysseus and his glorious son fell upon their front fighters,  
and began to strike with swords and stab with spears leaf-headed.  
And now they would have killed them all, and given none of them  
homecoming, had not Athene, daughter of Zeus of the aegis,