

BOOK ONE



ATHENA VISITS ITHACA

The invocation to the Muse; the gods discuss Odysseus and decide he should return; Athena goes to Ithaca to encourage Telemachus, speaks to him disguised as Mentès, offering advice about dealing with his mother and the suitors and suggesting he go on a trip to Pylos and Sparta; Penelope speaks to Phemius, the singer, asking him to change the song; Telemachus criticizes her; Penelope goes upstairs; Euryclēia carries the lit torches to escort Telemachus to his rooms.

Muse, speak to me now of that resourceful man
who wandered far and wide after ravaging
the sacred citadel of Troy. He came to see
many people's cities, where he learned their customs,
while on the sea his spirit suffered many torments,
as he fought to save his life and lead his comrades home.
But though he wanted to, he could not rescue them—
they all died from their own stupidity, the fools.
They feasted on the cattle of Hyperion,
god of the sun—and so he snatched away their chance



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of getting home someday. So now, daughter of Zeus,
tell us his story, starting anywhere you wish.* [10]

The other warriors, all those who had escaped
being utterly destroyed, were now back safely home,
facing no more dangers from battle or the sea.
But Odysseus, who longed to get back to his wife
and reach his home, was being held in a hollow cave
by that mighty nymph Calypso, noble goddess,
who desired to have Odysseus as her husband.
But as the seasons came and went, the year arrived 20
in which, according to what gods had once ordained,
he was to get back to his home in Ithaca—
not that he would be free from troubles even there,
among his people. The gods pitied Odysseus,
all except Poseidon, who kept up his anger [20]
against godlike Odysseus and did not relent
until he reached his native land.†

But at that moment,
Poseidon was among the Ethiopians,
very far away, those same Ethiopians,
the most remote of people, who live divided 30
in different groups, one where Hyperion goes down,
the other where he rises.‡ Poseidon went there

* The Muses: Divine patrons of the arts and daughters of Zeus.

† Poseidon: God of the sea, divine brother of Zeus, often called “encircler of the earth” or “Earthshaker” (because he rules over earthquakes).

‡ Ethiopians: To the ancient Greeks, the name Ethiopia did not necessarily denote the country of today, but was rather used as a loose term for various peoples imagined as living at the ends of the earth.

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to receive a sacrificial offering to him—
bulls and rams—and was now sitting at a banquet,
enjoying himself. But other gods had gathered
in the great hall of Olympian Zeus. Among them all,
the father of gods and men was the first to speak.
In his heart he was recalling royal Aegisthus,
whom Orestes, Agamemnon's celebrated son, [30]
had slaughtered. With him in mind, Zeus now
addressed them: 40

“It's disgraceful how humans blame the gods.
They say their tribulations come from us,
when they themselves, through their own foolishness,
bring hardships which are not decreed by Fate.
Now there's Aegisthus, who took for himself
the wife of Agamemnon, Atreus's son,
and then butchered him, once the man came home.
None of that was set by Fate. Aegisthus knew
his acts would bring about his total ruin.
We'd sent Hermes earlier to speak to him. 50
The keen-eyed killer of Argus told him
not to slay the man or seduce his wife,
for Orestes would avenge his father,
once he grew up and longed for his own land. [40]
That's what Hermes said, but his fine warning
did not persuade Aegisthus in his heart.
So he has paid for everything in full.”*

*Aegisthus had seduced Agamemnon's wife, Clytaemnestra, while Agamemnon was in Troy, and, when he returned from the war, the two lovers killed Agamemnon and took control of Argos. Orestes, who was away at the time, came back to Argos in disguise and avenged his father. This famous story is referred to a number of times in *The Odyssey*.



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Athena, goddess with the gleaming eyes, answered Zeus:

“Son of Cronos and father to us all,
 you who rule on high, yes indeed, Aegisthus 60
 now lies dead, something he well deserved.*
 May any other man who does what he did
 also be destroyed! But my heart is torn
 for versatile Odysseus, ill-fated man,
 who has had to suffer such misfortune
 for so many years, far away from friends.
 He’s on an island, surrounded by the sea,
 the one that forms the ocean’s navel stone.[†] [50]
 And there, in the forests, lives a goddess,
 daughter of tough-minded Atlas, who knows 70
 the ocean depths and by himself holds up
 those gigantic pillars which separate
 earth and heaven. That’s the one whose daughter
 prevents the sad, unlucky man from leaving.
 Her soft seductive speech keeps tempting him,
 urging him to forget his native land.
 Odysseus yearns to see even the smoke
 rising from Ithaca and longs for death.
 Yet, despite that, Olympian Zeus, your heart
 does not respond to him. Did not Odysseus 80 [60]
 offer you delightful sacrifices
 on Troy’s far-reaching plain beside the ships?
 If so, why are you so angry with him?”

* Cronos: Leader of the Titans, he was overthrown by his son Zeus and imprisoned deep in the earth.

[†] The Greek word *omphalos* (navel stone) Homer uses here is to describe Calypso’s island of Ogygia.

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Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered her and said:

“My child,
what a speech has passed your barrier of teeth!
How could I forget godlike Odysseus,
preeminent among all mortal men
for his intelligence and offerings
to the immortal gods who hold wide heaven?
But Earthshaker Poseidon, a stubborn god, 90
is still furious about that Cyclops,
the one whose eye Odysseus destroyed,
godlike Polyphemus, the mightiest [70]
of all the Cyclopes. Thoosa bore him,
the sea nymph, a daughter of that Phorcys
who commands the restless deep.* Poseidon,
down in those hollow caves, had sex with her.
That’s the reason Earthshaker Poseidon
makes Odysseus wander from his country.
But he has not killed him yet. So come now, 100
let’s all of us consider his return,
so he can journey back to Ithaca.
Poseidon’s anger will relent. He can’t
fight the immortal gods all by himself,
not with all of us arrayed against him.”

Athena, goddess with the gleaming eyes, replied: [80]

“Son of Cronos and father to us all,
ruling high above, if immortal gods

* The Cyclopes (singular Cyclops): Aggressive uncivilized man-eating monsters with only one eye. In Book Nine, we find out how Odysseus earned Poseidon’s anger. Phorcys: A primordial god of the sea.

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now find it pleasing for wise Odysseus
to return back home, then let's send Hermes, 110
killer of Argus, as our messenger,
over to the island of Ogygia,
so he can quickly tell that fair-haired nymph
our firm decision—that brave Odysseus
will now leave and complete his voyage home.
I'll go to Ithaca and urge his son
to action and put courage in his heart,
so he will call those long-haired Achaeans [90]
to assembly, and there address the suitors,
who keep on butchering his flocks of sheep 120
and shambling bent-horned cattle.* I'll send him
on a trip to Sparta and sandy Pylos,
to learn about his father's voyage home—
he may hear of it somewhere—and to gain
a worthy reputation among men.”

Athena spoke. Then she tied those lovely sandals
on her feet, the immortal, golden sandals
which carry her as fast as stormy blasts of wind
across the ocean seas and endless tracts of land.
She took with her that weighty, powerful spear— 130
immense and sturdy, with a point of sharpened
bronze— [100]

* The god Hermes is often called the “killer of Argus” because he killed the monster Argus, whom goddess Hera had ordered to keep watch on Io, so that she would not get into sexual mischief with Zeus. The suitors are the rich young aristocratic men of Ithaca and the islands who are seeking to marry Penelope, Odysseus's wife, in the belief that Odysseus is dead.

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with which she conquers ranks of human warriors
when they annoy her, daughter of a mighty father.
She raced down from the peak of Mount Olympus,
sped across to Ithaca, and then just stood there,
at Odysseus' outer gate before the palace,
on the threshold, her hand still gripping the bronze spear,
in the form of Mentès, a foreigner, the chief
who ruled the Taphians.* There she met the suitors,
those arrogant men, who were enjoying themselves 140
playing checkers right outside the door, sitting down
on hides of cattle they themselves had butchered.
Some heralds and attendants were keeping busy
blending fine wine with water in the mixing bowls. [110]
Some were wiping tables down with porous sponges
and setting them in place, while others passed around
huge quantities of meat. Godlike Telemachus
observed Athena first, well before the others.
He was sitting with the suitors, his heart troubled,
picturing in his mind how his noble father 150
might get back, then scatter the suitors from his home,
win honour for himself, and reassert control
of his own household. As he thought about all this,
sitting there among the suitors, he saw Athena.
At once he hurried over to the outer gate,
for in his heart he considered it disgraceful
that a stranger should linger at his door for long. [120]
He moved up beside Athena, grasped her right hand
and took her bronze-tipped spear. Then he spoke to her—
his words had wings:

* Mentès: An old friend of Odysseus.

“Welcome to you stranger. 160
You must enjoy our hospitality.
Then, after you have had some food to eat,
you can tell us what you need.”

After saying this,
Telemachus led Athena into his home.
She followed. Once they came inside the
high-roofed house,
he walked to a tall pillar carrying the spear
and set it in a finely-polished rack, which held
many other spears belonging to Odysseus.
He brought Athena in and sat her in a chair,
a beautifully constructed work. Beneath it 170
he rolled out a linen mat and then set in place [130]
a footstool for her feet. Beside her he drew up
a lovely decorated chair for him to sit in.
They were somewhat distant from the other people,
in case the noise the suitors made disturbed the guest
and made him hate the meal because he had to share
the company of overbearing men. Then, too,
Telemachus wished to discuss his absent father.
A female servant carried in a fine gold jug
and poured water out into a silver basin, 180
so they could wash their hands. Beside them she set down
a polished table. Then the worthy housekeeper [140]
carried in the bread and put it down before them.
She laid out a rich selection of fine things to eat,
drawing freely on supplies she had in store.
A carver sliced up many different cuts of meat
and served them. Then he brought out goblets made of gold,
as a herald went back and forth serving the wine.

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Then, one after another, the proud suitors came.
They sat down on reclining seats and high-backed
chairs. 190

Heralds poured water out for them to wash their hands,
and women servants piled wicker baskets full of bread,
while young lads filled their bowls up to the brim
with drink.

The suitors reached out with their hands to
help themselves
to the fine food prepared and placed in front of them.
When each and every man had satisfied his need [150]
for food and drink, their hearts demanded something
more—
dancing and song—the finest joys of dinner feasts.

A herald gave a splendid lyre to Phemius,
so he was forced to sing in front of all the suitors.* 200
On the strings he plucked the prelude to a lovely song.
But then Telemachus, leaning his head over
close to Athena, so no one else could listen,
murmured to her:

“Dear stranger, my guest,
I’ll tell you something—please don’t get upset.
These men here, they spend all their time like this,
with songs and music—it’s easy for them,
because they gorge themselves on what belongs [160]
to someone else, and with impunity,
a man whose white bones may well be lying 210
on the mainland somewhere, rotting in the rain,
or in the sea, being tossed around by waves.

* lyre: Stringed instrument resembling a small harp.



If they saw him return to Ithaca,
 they'd all be praying they had swifter feet
 rather than more wealth in gold or clothing.
 But by now some evil fate has killed him,
 and for us there is no consolation,
 not even if some earth-bound mortal man
 should say that he will come. The day has passed
 when he might have got back home. But tell me, 220
 and speak candidly—Who are your people?
 Who are you? What city do you come from?
 What about your parents? What kind of ship [170]
 did you sail here in? What about the crew?
 By what route did they come to Ithaca?
 Who do they say they come from? For I know
 there's no way you could reach this place on foot.
 And I also need to understand one point,
 so tell me the truth—this present visit,
 is it your first journey here, or are you 230
 a guest-friend of my father's? Many men
 have arrived here in our home as strangers,
 since he became a roaming wanderer
 among all sorts of people.*

*A guest friend refers to someone who has been welcomed and entertained in that house before or someone who has entertained a nobleman in his own house. Telemachus is trying to establish whether Mentos already has that relationship established on the basis of past visits or whether this is his first visit to Odysseus's home. Guest friendship involved a complex set of rituals about hospitality (which includes the exchange of appropriate gifts).

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Then Athena,
goddess with the gleaming eyes, answered Telemachus:

“To you I will indeed speak openly.
I can tell you that my name is Mentēs, [180]
a son of wise Anchialus, and king
of Taphians, who love the oar.* I’ve come,
as you surmise, with comrades on a ship, 240
sailing across the wine-dark sea to men
whose style of speech is very different,
on my way to Temese for copper,
and carrying a freight of shining iron.
My ship is berthed some distance from the town,
close to the fields, in Reithron’s harbour,
below Mount Neion’s woods. We can both claim
that we indeed are guest-friends, the two of us,
just as our fathers were so long ago.
If you want, go up and ask Laertes, 250
that old fighter, who, they say, no longer comes
down to the city, but who bears his troubles
in fields far from the town.† He has with him [190]
an old attendant woman, who prepares
his food and drink, once his legs grow weary
hobbling up and down his vineyard hills.
I’ve travelled here because some people claim
your father has apparently come back.
But immortal gods are still preventing him
from returning home. For there is no chance 260

* Taphians: Sea-faring people of the island of Taphos.

† Laertes: The father of Odysseus.

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that brave Odysseus has been killed somewhere.
No. He's still alive but being detained
on an island, surrounded by the sea,
with wild and hostile men restraining him,
holding him back against his will. But now, [200]
let me tell you about a prophecy
the gods have set right here inside my heart,
which, I think, will come to pass—even though
I am no prophet and have no sure skills
in reading omens from the birds. I say 270
Odysseus will not stay away much longer
from his dear native land, not even if
he's chained in iron fetters. He'll devise
some way to get back home, for he's a man
of infinite resources. But come now,
tell me this, and speak straight and to the point.
Are you in truth Odysseus' son? You're tall,
your head and handsome eyes look just like his,
astonishingly so. We used to spend
a lot of time together, before he left 280
and sailed away to Troy, where other men, [210]
the best of all the Argives, voyaged, too,
in their hollow ships. But since those days,
Odysseus and I have not seen each other."

Noble Telemachus then answered her and said:

"Stranger, I will speak quite frankly to you.
My mother says I am Odysseus' son.
I can't myself confirm that, for no man
has ever yet been sure about his parents.

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I wish I'd been the son of some man blest 290
to reach old age among his own possessions,
for now—and I say this because you asked—
I'm the son of a man who is, they say,
of all mortal men, the most unfortunate.” [220]

Goddess Athena with the gleaming eyes answered him:

“Well then, at least the gods have given you
a family which, in days to come, will have
a glorious name, since Penelope
has given birth to such a noble son.
But come, speak openly and tell me this— 300
What is this feast? Who are these crowds of men?
Why do you need this? Is it a wedding?
Or a drinking party? It seems clear enough
this is no meal where each man brings his share,
and I can see that people here are acting
in an insulting, overbearing way,
while dining in your home. Looking at them
and their disgraceful conduct, any man
who mingled with them, if he had good sense,
would lose his temper.”

Noble Telemachus 310 [230]

then said to Athena in reply:

“Stranger,

since you've questioned me about the matter,
I'll tell you. Our house was once well on its way
to being rich and famous—at that time
Odysseus was alive among his people.

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But now the gods with their malicious plans
have changed all that completely. They make sure
Odysseus stays where nobody can see him—
gods have not dealt with other men this way.
I would not show such grief if he were dead, 320
not if he'd fallen among his comrades [240]
in the land of Troy, or if he'd perished
in his friends' arms, once the war was over.
Then the Achaeans all would have put up
a tomb for him, and he'd have won great fame
in future days—so would his son, as well.
But as things stand, some spirits of the storm
have snatched him off and left no trace. He's gone
somewhere people cannot see or hear him,
abandoning me to tears and sorrow. 330
But it's not him alone who makes me sad
and cry out in distress. For now the gods
have brought me more intolerable grief.
All the best young men who rule the islands,
Dulichium and wooded Zacynthus,
and Same, as well as those who lord it here
in rocky Ithaca—they are all now
wooing my mother and ravaging my house.*
She won't turn down a marriage she detests, 340
but can't bring herself to make the final choice. [250]
Meanwhile, these men are feasting on my home
and soon will be the death of me as well."

* Dulichium, Zacynthus, and Same are islands close to Ithaca, part of Odysseus's kingdom.

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This made Pallas Athena angry—she said to him:

“It’s bad Odysseus is still wandering
when you need him here so much! He could lay
his hands on these disrespectful suitors.
I wish he’d come home now and make a stand
right at the outer gate, with helmet on,
two spears and his own shield—the sort of man
he was when I first saw him in our house, 350
drinking and enjoying himself. At that time,
he was returning from the home of Ilus,
the son of Mermerus, from Ephyre.
Odysseus had gone there in his fast ship, [260]
seeking a man-killing poison, something
he could smear over his bronze arrow points.
However, Ilus did not give him any,
for he revered the gods who live forever.
But my father gave him some—his heart felt
a very strong affection for Odysseus. 360
How I wish Odysseus from way back then
would now return and mingle with the suitors.
They’d all come to a speedy end and find
their courtship painful. But all these matters
lie in the laps of gods—he may return
and take out his revenge in his own hall,
or he may not. But I’d encourage you
to think of ways to force these suitors out, [270]
to rid your halls of them. So hear me out.
Listen now to what I’m going to tell you. 370
Tomorrow you must summon the Achaeans
to an assembly and address them all,



appealing to the gods as witnesses.*

Tell the suitors to go back to their homes.

As for your mother, if her heart is set
on getting married, then let her return
to where her father lives, for he's a man
of great capabilities and power.

He'll organize the marriage and arrange
the wedding gifts, as many as befit 380
a well-loved daughter. Now, as for yourself,
if you'll listen, I have some wise advice.

Get yourself a crew of twenty rowers [280]
and the best boat you possess. Then leave here—
set off in search of news about your father,
who's been gone so long. Some living mortal
perhaps can tell you something, or you may hear
a voice from Zeus, which often brings men news.

Sail first to Pylos—speak to noble Nestor.

After you've been there, proceed to Sparta 390
and fair-haired Menelaus, the last one
of all bronze-clad Achaeans to get home.†

* Achaeans: Strictly speaking, the term “Achaeans” refers to the inhabitants of Achaea, a region of the Peloponnese in Greece. However, here and in the rest of Homer's text the word designates residents of Greece generally, in contrast to those who do not speak Greek (the barbarians). Homer does not use the term “Greeks” or “Hellenes,” words which to modern readers might suggest a greater degree of political unity than what, in fact, prevails. Occasionally, instead of the name Achaeans, Homer uses the word “Argives” (citizens of Argos) or “Danaans” (descendants of Danaus) as a general name for all the Greeks.

†Nestor: King of Pylos, whose army had fought with the Achaeans during the Trojan War and who had returned home safely afterwards. Menelaus: King of Sparta and husband of Helen (whose abduction by Paris, a prince of Troy, had ostensibly incited the Trojan War).

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If you hear reports your father is alive
and coming home, you could hang on a year
still wasting his resources. But if you hear
that he is dead and gone, then come back home, [290]
to your dear native land, build him a tomb,
and carry out as many funeral rites
as are appropriate. Give your mother
over to a husband. When you've done that 400
and brought these matters to a close, then think,
deep in your mind and heart, how you might kill
these suitors in your home, either openly
or by some trick. You must not keep on acting
like a child—you're now too old for that.
Have you not heard how excellent Orestes
won fame among all men when he cut down [300]
his father's murderer, sly Aegisthus,
because he had killed his famous father?
You are fine and strong, I see, and you, too, 410
should be brave, so people born in future years
will say good things of you. I must go now,
down to my swift ship and to my comrades.
I suspect they're getting quite impatient
waiting for me. Make sure you act with care—
and think about what I've been telling you."

Prudent Telemachus then answered her:

"Stranger,
you've been speaking to me as a friend,
thinking as a father would for his own son—
and what you've said I never will forget. 420
But come now, though you're eager to be off,



stay here a while. Once you've enjoyed a bath [310]
and your fond heart is fully satisfied,
go back with joyful spirits to your ship,
carrying with you an expensive gift,
something truly beautiful, which will be
my gift to you, an heirloom of the sort
dear guest-friends give to those who are their friends."

Goddess Athena with the gleaming eyes then said:

"Since I'm eager to depart, don't keep me 430
a moment longer. And whatever gift
your heart suggests you give me as a friend,
present it to me when I come back here.
Pick me something truly beautiful.
It will earn you something worthy in return."

This said, Athena with the gleaming eyes departed,
flying off like some wild sea bird. In his heart she put [320]
courage and strength. She made him recall his father
more keenly than before. In his mind, Telemachus
could picture her—a sense of wonder filled his heart. 440
He believed she was a god. So he moved away.
And then the noble youth mingled with the suitors.
The famous minstrel Phemius was performing,
as they sat in silence, listening. He was singing
of the return of the Achaeans, that bitter trip
Athena forced on them when they sailed home from Troy.*

* Athena, though a supporter of the Achaeans during the war, was outraged at the way their army behaved during the sack of Troy, especially at their savage treatment of Troy's holy places. So she punished the army by making the voyage home very difficult or even fatal for many of its leaders.

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In her upper room, the daughter of Icarius,
wise Penelope, heard man's inspired song.
She came down the towering staircase from
her room, [330]
but not alone—two female servants followed her. 450
When beautiful Penelope reached the suitors,
she stayed beside the door post in the well-built room,
a small bright veil across her face. On either side
her two attendants waited. With tears streaming down,
Penelope addressed the famous singer:

“Phemius,
you know all sorts of other ways to charm
an audience, actions of gods and men
which singers celebrate. As you sit here,
sing one of those, while these men drink their wine
in silence. Don't keep up that painful song, 460 [340]
which always breaks the heart here in my chest,
for, more than anyone, I am weighed down
with ceaseless grief which I cannot forget.
I remember, always with such yearning,
my husband's face, a man whose fame has spread
far and wide through Greece and central Argos.”

Sensible Telemachus answered her and said:

“Mother, why begrudge the faithful singer
delighting us in any way his mind
may prompt him? One cannot blame the singers. 470
It seems to me it's Zeus's fault. He hands



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to toiling men, each and every one of them,
 whatever he desires. There's nothing wrong
 with this man's singing of the evil fate [350]
 of the Danaans, for men praise the most
 the song which they have heard most recently.
 Your heart and spirit should accept his song.
 For Odysseus was not the only man
 at Troy who lost his chance to see the day
 he would come back. Many warriors were killed. 480
 Go up to your rooms and keep busy there
 with your own work, the spindle and the loom.
 Tell your servants to perform their duties.
 Talking is men's concern, yes, every man's,
 but especially mine, since in this house
 I'm the one in charge."

Astonished at his speech, [360]

Penelope went back up to her own chambers,
 keeping her son's prudent words lodged in her heart.
 With her attendant women she climbed up the stairs,
 went straight to her rooms and there wept for
 Odysseus, 490
 her dear husband, until gleaming-eyed Athena
 cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

In the shadowy halls
 the suitors then started to create an uproar,
 each man shouting out his hope to lie beside her.
 Then shrewd Telemachus began his speech to them:

"You suitors of my mother, who display
 such insolent arrogance, let us for now

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enjoy our banquet. But no more shouting,
for it's grand to listen to a singer [370]
as fine as this one—his voice is like a god's. 500
But in the morning let us all assemble,
sit down for a meeting, so I can speak
and tell you firmly to depart my home.
Prepare your feasts elsewhere, ones that eat up
your own possessions, moving house to house.
If you think it's better and would prefer
that one man's livelihood should be consumed
without paying anything, I'll call on
the immortal gods to see if mighty Zeus
will bring about an act of retribution. 510
And if you are destroyed inside my home, [380]
you will not be avenged."

Telemachus finished.

They all bit their lips, astonished he had spoken out
so boldly. Then, Antinous, son of Eupéithes,
answered him:

"Telemachus, the gods themselves,
it seems, are teaching you to be a braggart
and give rash speeches. I do hope that Zeus,
son of Cronos, does not make you king
of this island Ithaca, even though
it is your father's legacy to you." 520

Shrewd Telemachus then answered him and said:

"Antinous, will you be angry with me,
if I say something? I would be happy [390]



to accept that, if Zeus gave it to me.
Are you maintaining that becoming king
is the very worst of trials for mortal men?
No. To be king is not something evil.
One's family gets rich immediately,
and one receives more honours for oneself.
But there are other kings of the Achaeans, 530
many of them here in sea-girt Ithaca,
young and old, one of whom could well be king,
since lord Odysseus is now dead, but I
will rule our home and servants, battle spoils
which noble lord Odysseus won for me."

Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, replied:

"Telemachus, these matters surely lie [400]
in the gods' laps—which of the Achaeans
will rule in Ithaca. But you can keep
all your possessions for yourself as king 540
in your own home. Let no man come with force
and seize your property against your will,
no, not while men still live in Ithaca.
But I would like to ask you, my good man,
about that stranger. Where does he come from?
From what country does he claim to be?
Where are his family, his paternal lands?
Does he bring news of your father's coming,
or is he here pursuing his own business?
He jumped up so fast and left so quickly! 550
He did not stay to let himself get known. [410]
And yet to look at him, he did not seem
a worthless man."

BOOK ONE

Prudent Telemachus
then answered him and said:

“Eurymachus,
my father’s journey back to Ithaca
is no doubt done for. I no longer trust
in messages, no matter what the source.
Nor do I care for any prophecy
my mother picks up from those soothsayers
she summons to these halls. That foreigner 560
is a guest-friend of my father’s. He says
that he’s from Taphos. His name is Mentès,
son of wise Anchialus. He rules as king
over oar-loving Taphians.”

He said this, [420]
but in his heart Telemachus had recognized
the immortal goddess. At that point, the suitors
switched to dancing and to singing beautiful songs.
They entertained themselves until dark evening fell.
Then each of them retired to his own house to sleep.

Telemachus moved up to where his room was built, 570
high in the splendid courtyard, with a spacious view,
his mind much preoccupied on his way to bed.
Accompanying him, quick-minded Eurycleia
held two flaming torches. She was Ops’s daughter, [430]
son of Peisenor. Some years ago Laertes
had purchased her with his own wealth—at the time,
she was in her early youth—paying twenty oxen.
In his home he respected her the way he did
his noble wife, but not once did he have sex with her,



because he wanted to avoid annoying his wife. 580
She was now carrying two blazing torches for him.
Of all the female household slaves she was the one
who loved him most, for she had nursed him as a child.
He opened the doors of the well-constructed room,
sat down on the bed, and pulled off his soft tunic,
gave it to the wise old woman, who smoothed it out,
and folded it, then hung the tunic on a peg
beside the corded bedstead. Then she left the room, [440]
closing the door by pulling its silver handle.
She slid the bolt across, using its leather thong. 590
Telemachus lay there all night long, warmly wrapped
in sheep's wool, his mind reflecting on the journey
which Athena had earlier proposed to him.