

## BOOK FOURTEEN Odysseus Meets Eumaeus

[Odysseus leaves the harbour and moves inland to the farm of Eumaeus, the swineherd; Eumaeus welcomes Odysseus and prepares a meal for him; Eumaeus talks about his absent master; Odysseus assures Eumaeus that his master will return, but Eumaeus does not believe him; Odysseus tells Eumaeus a long made-up story about his identity and his adventures in Egypt and elsewhere, telling him he heard news of Odysseus' return; Eumaeus still does not believe him; the other swineherds arrive; Eumaeus prepares a sacrifice and another meal; Odysseus tells another story about an incident in the Trojan War; Eumaeus prepares a bed for Odysseus, then goes outside to guard the boars.]

Odysseus left the harbour, taking the rough path  
into the woods and across the hills, to the place  
where Athena told him he would meet the swineherd,  
who was, of all the servants lord Odysseus had,  
the one who took best care of his possessions.  
He found him sitting in the front part of his house,  
a built-up courtyard with a panoramic view,  
a large, fine place, with cleared land all around.  
The swineherd built it by himself to house the pigs,  
[10] property belonging to his absent master.  
He hadn't told his mistress or old man Laertes.  
He'd made it from huge stones, with a thorn hedge on top  
and surrounded on the outside with close-set stakes  
facing both ways, made by splitting oaks apart  
to leave the dark heart of the wood. Inside the yard,  
to house the pigs, he'd packed twelve sties together.  
In each one fifty wallowing swine were penned,  
sows for breeding. The boars, far fewer of them,  
stayed outside. The feasting of the noble suitors  
[20] kept their numbers low, for the swineherd always sent  
the finest of all fattened hogs for them to eat.  
Three hundred and sixty boars were there—four dogs,  
fierce as wild animals, always lay beside them.  
These the swineherd, a splendid man, had raised himself.  
He was trimming off a piece of coloured ox-hide,

shaping sandals for his feet. Three of his fellows  
had gone off, herding pigs in different directions.  
He'd had to send a fourth man to the city  
with a boar to be butchered for the suitors,  
[30] so they could eat meat to their heart's content.

All of a sudden the dogs observed Odysseus.  
They howled and ran at him, barking furiously.  
Odysseus was alert enough to drop his staff  
and sit. Still, he'd have been severely mauled  
in his own farmyard, but the swineherd ran up fast  
behind them, dropping the leather in his hands.  
Charging through the gate and shouting at his dogs,  
he scattered them in a hail of stones here and there.  
Then he spoke out to his master:  
"Old man,  
[40] those dogs would've ripped at you in no time,  
and then you'd have heaped the blame on me.  
Well, I've got other troubles from the gods,  
things to grieve about. For as I stay here,  
raising fat pigs for other men to eat,  
I'm full of sorrow for my noble master,  
who's probably going hungry somewhere,  
as he wanders through the lands and cities  
where men speak a foreign tongue, if, in fact,  
he's still alive and looking at the sunlight.  
[50] But follow me, old man. Come in the hut.  
When you've had enough to eat and drink  
and your heart's satisfied, you can tell me  
where you come from, what troubles you've endured."

With these words, the loyal swineherd went inside the hut,  
brought Odysseus in, and invited him to sit,  
after piling up some leafy twigs and, over them,  
spreading out the shaggy skin of a wild goat,  
the large and hairy hide which covered his own bed.  
Odysseus was glad to get this hospitality,

so he addressed him, saying:

[60] “Stranger,  
may Zeus and other gods who live forever  
give you what you truly want—you’ve welcomed me  
with such an open heart.”

Then, swineherd Eumaeus,  
you answered him and said:<sup>1</sup>

“It would be wrong,  
stranger, for me to disrespect a guest,  
even if one worse off than you arrived,  
for all guests and beggars come from Zeus,  
and any gift from people like ourselves,  
though small, is welcome. It’s the fate of slaves  
[70] always to fear young masters who control them.  
The gods are holding up the journey home  
of the man who would’ve loved me kindly  
and given me possessions of my own,  
a home, a plot of land, a wedded wife  
worthy of being wooed by many suitors,  
the sorts of things a generous master gives  
a servant who has toiled so hard for him,  
whose work the gods have helped to thrive and grow,  
the way the tasks I put my mind to here  
[80] have prospered. If my master was at home  
and growing old, he would’ve given me  
so many things. But he has perished.  
How I wish all of Helen’s relatives  
had died, brought to their knees, since she  
loosed the knees of so many warriors.  
He went to Troy, famous for its horses,  
to carry out revenge for Agamemnon  
by fighting Trojans.”

After saying this,  
he quickly cinched a belt around his tunic,  
[90] went out to the pig pens where the swine were held,

picked out two from there, brought them in, and killed them.  
He singed and cut them up, then skewered them on spits.  
Once he'd roasted them completely, he picked them up  
and, without taking out the spits, carried them still hot  
over to Odysseus. Then he sprinkled over them  
white barley meal. In a bowl carved out of ivy wood  
he mixed wine sweet as honey. Then he sat down  
opposite Odysseus, inviting him to dine:  
"Eat now, stranger, what a servant offers,  
[100] meat from a young pig, for the suitors take  
the fatted hogs. Their hearts have no pity  
and don't ever think about gods' anger.  
The truth is this—the blessed gods don't love  
men's reckless acts. No. They honour justice  
and men's righteousness. Even enemies  
with cruel intentions can invade the lands  
of someone else, and Zeus awards them spoils.  
They fill their ships and then sail off for home.  
And even in the hearts of men like these  
[110] falls a great fear of vengeance from the gods.  
But these suitors here, I think, know something—  
they've heard a voice from one of the gods  
about my master's painful death. That's why  
they don't want to have a righteous courtship  
or go back to their own homes. No. Instead,  
without a care they waste our property  
in all their insolence, sparing nothing.  
Every day and night Zeus sends, they kill  
our animals, and not just one or two,  
[120] and, with their arrogance, they draw our wine,  
taking what they want and even more.  
My master used to be a man of substance,  
beyond all measure. No warrior hero  
on the dark mainland or Ithaca itself  
possessed as much. Twenty men combined  
did not have so much wealth. I'll tell you this—  
on the mainland he's got twelve cattle herds,

as many flocks of sheep and droves of pigs  
and wide-ranging herds of goats, all of these  
[130] tended by foreign herdsmen or his own.  
And here, on the edges of this island,  
graze wandering herds of goats, eleven in all,  
with loyal servants keeping watch on them.  
To serve the suitors, every one of them  
keeps driving in a creature from his flock,  
the fattest one which seems to him the best.  
That always happens, each and every day.  
As for me, I guard and raise these pigs.  
I choose with care and then deliver them  
the finest of the boars.”

[140] Eumaeus finished.  
Meanwhile Odysseus eagerly devoured the meat  
and drank the wine in silence. He was ravenous.  
He was also sowing troubles for the suitors.  
Once he'd eaten his heart's fill and had enough,  
Eumaeus filled the bowl from which he drank himself  
and gave it to him full of wine. Odysseus took it,  
happy in his heart, and spoke winged words to him:  
“My friend, who was the man who used his wealth  
to purchase you? Was he powerful and rich,  
[150] as you've just said? You claim he was destroyed  
helping Agamemnon get his revenge.  
Tell me. I may know him, a man like that.  
Zeus and the rest of the immortal gods  
know if I've seen him or heard any news.  
For I've been travelling a lot.”

Then Eumaeus,  
a worthy man, answered him and said:  
“Old man,  
no wanderer who came with news of him  
could convince his wife or his dear son.  
Men who roam about, when they need a meal,

[160] have no desire to speak the truth—they lie.

Whoever moves around and reaches here,  
this land of Ithaca, goes to my mistress  
with some made-up tale. She receives him well,  
with hospitality, and questions him  
about each detail. Then she starts to grieve,  
and tears fall from her eyes, as is fitting  
when a woman's husband dies far away.  
You too, old man, would make up a story  
quickly enough, if someone offered you

[170] a cloak and tunic and some clothes to wear.

But by this time swift birds and dogs have ripped  
the flesh from off his bones, and his spirit's  
slipped away. Or else in the sea the fish  
have eaten him, and his bones now lie  
on shore somewhere, buried in deep sand.  
Anyway, he died out there. From now on,  
it's the fate of all his friends to grieve,  
especially me—however far I travel,  
I'll never come across another man

[180] who'd match him as a gentle master,

not even if I went back home again  
to where my mother and my father live,  
where I was born, where they reared me themselves.  
I don't mourn for them so much, though I yearn  
to see them again with my own eyes  
and be in my own native land once more.  
What grips me is a longing for Odysseus,  
who is gone. Even though he is not here,  
stranger, I speak his name with full respect.

[190] His love for me was great, and in his heart

he cared. So although he may be absent,  
I call him my dear master."

Resourceful lord Odysseus  
then answered him and said:

"My friend,

since you're so resolved in your denials,  
when you declare he'll not come home again,  
and your heart always clings to this belief,  
I won't just tell you Odysseus will be back—  
no, I'll take an oath on it. When he comes,  
when he gets back home, give me my reward  
[200] for my good news—let me have fine clothing,  
a cloak and tunic. Until that moment,  
there's nothing I'll accept, despite my need.  
For just as I despise the gates of Hades,  
I hate the man who, in his poverty,  
tells stories which are lies. Now let Zeus,  
the first of gods, this welcoming table,  
and the hearth of excellent Odysseus,  
which I have reached, let them bear witness—  
all these things will happen the way I say—  
[210] Odysseus will come here within a month,  
between the waning and the rising moons.  
He'll get back home and take out his revenge  
on anyone here who has not honoured  
his wife and noble son.”

Then, swineherd Eumaeus,  
you answered him and said:  
“Old man,  
I won't be rewarding you for that good news.  
Odysseus won't be coming back. Drink up.  
Relax. Now, let's talk of something else.  
I don't want to remember all those things.  
[220] The heart here in my chest gets full of grief,  
when someone mentions my good master.  
So let's forget about your oath. I wish  
Odysseus would come home—that's what I want.  
So does Penelope, Laertes, too,  
the old man, and noble Telemachus.  
Right now I'm always grieving for the boy,  
the child Odysseus had, Telemachus.

The gods brought him up just like a sapling,  
and, as a man, I thought he'd be a match  
[230] for his dear father, with a splendid shape  
and handsome. But one of the immortals  
warped his better judgment—perhaps it was  
some human being. For he's gone on a trip  
to sacred Pylos to find out some news  
about his father. Now noble suitors  
lie in wait for him as he comes home,  
and so the race of noble Arceisius  
will die without a name in Ithaca.<sup>2</sup>  
But let's just let him be—they may get him,  
[240] or he may escape, if the son of Cronos  
holds out his hand to guard him. But come now,  
old man, tell me about your troubles.  
Give me the truth, so I clearly understand—  
Who are you among men? Where are you from?  
Where are your city and your parents?  
On what kind of ship did you get here?  
How did sailors bring you to Ithaca?  
Who did they claim they were? For I don't think  
you reached this place on foot."

Resourceful Odysseus  
then answered him and said:  
[250] "All right, then,  
I'll tell you the truth of what you've asked me.  
I wish we two had food and honey wine  
to last a while, so we could feast in peace  
inside your hut, while others did the work.  
I could easily go on for one whole year  
and never finish talking of those things  
my heart has suffered, all those torments  
I've endured, thanks to what the gods have willed.  
I claim my family comes from spacious Crete.  
[260] I'm a rich man's child, and in his house  
many other sons were born and raised,



his legal children from his lawful wife.  
My mother was a purchased concubine.  
Still, Castor, son of Hylax, the man  
I claim as my own father, honoured me,  
just as he did his true-born sons. Back then,  
since he had wealth and land and worthy sons,  
the Cretans in the country looked on him  
as if he were a god. But lethal Fates  
[270] took him to Hades' home, and his proud sons  
divided up his goods by drawing lots.  
They gave me a really tiny portion  
and assigned a house. But I won a wife  
from people who had many rich estates,  
thanks to my courage—for I was no fool,  
nor was I a coward. Now all that strength  
has gone. A host of troubles wears me down.  
But by examining the husk, I think,  
you can assess the plant. Back then, Ares  
[280] and Athena gave me strength and courage,  
the power to break ranks of men apart.  
When I picked the finest troops for ambush  
devising perils for my enemies,  
my proud spirit never gave me any sense  
that I might die. I always jumped out first,  
and my spear killed whatever enemy  
ran off in front of me. That's what I was like  
when it came to war. But I got no joy  
from working on the land or household chores,  
[290] like raising lovely children. No. Instead,  
I was always fond of ships with oars  
and wars with polished shields and arrows,  
deadly things, so horrible to others.  
I think I loved those things because a god  
somehow set them in my heart. Different men  
find their delight in different kinds of work.  
Before Achaea's sons set foot in Troy,  
I'd led warriors and fast ships nine times

against soldiers from foreign lands and won  
[300] enormous quantities of loot. I'd pick out  
what pleased me and then later get much more,  
when we drew lots. Soon my house grew rich,  
and Cretans honoured and respected me.  
But when far-seeing Zeus planned that fatal trip  
which loosed the knees of many warriors,  
they asked me and famous Idomeneus  
to lead their ships to Troy. There was no way  
one could refuse—the people's voice insisted.  
So we Achaean sons fought there nine years,  
[310] and ransacked Priam's city in the tenth.  
We set out for home, but then some god  
scattered the Achaeans. And Counselor Zeus  
devised some difficulties just for me,  
to make me miserable. I stayed at home,  
enjoying my children, the wife I'd married,  
and my wealth only for a single month.  
Then my heart urged me to outfit some ships  
and sail to Egypt with my noble comrades.  
I manned nine ships. The fleet was soon prepared.  
[320] My loyal companions feasted for six days—  
I gave them many beasts to sacrifice,  
as offerings to the gods and to prepare  
a banquet for themselves. On the seventh day,  
we left wide Crete. North Wind provided us  
a stiff and welcome breeze, so we sailed on  
quite easily, like drifting down a stream.  
None of my ships was harmed, no one got sick  
or injured, and we stayed in our seats,  
while wind and helmsman held us on our course.  
[330] The fifth day we reached Egypt's mighty river,  
where I moored my curving ships. Then I told  
my loyal comrades to stay there with the ships,  
keeping watch on them, while I sent out scouts  
to find some places we could use as lookouts.  
But my crew, overcome with arrogance,

and trusting their own might, at once began  
to plunder the Egyptians' finest fields.  
They took their women and small children, too,  
and killed the men. Shouts soon reached the city,  
[340] and, once they heard the noise, Egyptians came,  
as daylight first appeared. The entire plain  
filled up with chariots and infantry,  
all flashing bronze. Zeus, who hurls the lightning,  
threw a nasty panic in my comrades,  
so no one dared to stay and face the fight.  
We were badly threatened from all quarters.  
They killed many of our men with their sharp bronze,  
and took some alive, so they could force men  
to do their work for them. Then Zeus himself  
[350] put an idea in my heart—but still,  
I wish I'd died and met my fate right there,  
in Egypt, since all sorts of troubles still  
lay waiting for me—I at once removed  
the finely crafted helmet from my head  
and the shield slung round my shoulders. My hand  
let go my spear. I ran out straight ahead,  
to the chariot of the king, clutched his knee,  
and kissed it. Because he pitied me,  
he saved my life. He set me in his chariot,  
[360] and, as I wept, he took me to his home.  
Many of his men, armed with their ash spears,  
charged at me—their anger was so great,  
they were keen to slaughter me. But the king  
restrained them—he wanted to respect  
the rage of Zeus, the god of strangers,  
who is especially irked at wicked deeds.  
I stayed there seven years and gathered up  
a great deal of wealth from those Egyptians,  
for they all gave me gifts. When the eighth year  
[370] came wheeling in, a Phoenician man arrived,  
a greedy rogue who understood deceit.  
He'd already brought men lots of trouble.

Well, he won me over with his cunning  
and took me with him, until we reached  
his house and his possessions in Phoenicia.  
I stayed there with him an entire year.  
But as the days and months kept passing by  
and yearly seasons rolled around once more,  
he put me on a sea-going ship to Libya,  
[380] making up a story for me of some scheme  
that I'd be carrying a cargo with him,  
whereas, in fact, once we were there, he meant  
to sell me off for an enormous profit.  
Though I suspected something, I had to go  
aboard the ship with him. North Wind blew  
a fresh and welcome breeze, and we sailed off,  
a mid-sea course on the windward side of Crete.<sup>3</sup>  
Then Zeus planned the destruction of his men.  
When we'd sailed past Crete, we saw land no more,  
[390] only sky and sea. Then the son of Cronos  
sent a black cloud above our hollow ship.  
Underneath the sea grew dark. All at once,  
Zeus thundered and then hurled a lightning flash  
down on our ship, which shook from stem to stern  
and filled with sulphurous smoke, as Zeus' bolt  
came crashing down. All the crew fell overboard  
and floated on the waves, like cormorants,  
by our black ship—the god then took away  
the day of their return. As for me,  
[400] though anguish filled my heart, Zeus himself  
set my hands on the colossal main mast  
from our black-prowed ship, so once again  
I could escape destruction. I hung on,  
and was carried off by dreadful winds  
for nine full days. On the tenth dark night,  
a huge rolling wave threw me up on shore  
in Thesprotian land, and there the king,  
Pheidon, ruler of the Thesprotians,  
welcomed me, without demanding ransom.<sup>4</sup>

- [410] When I'd been overcome with weariness  
and freezing wind, his dear son had met me,  
helped me stand again, and brought me home,  
to his father's palace. He gave me clothes—  
a tunic and a cloak. There I heard reports  
about Odysseus. For king Pheidon said  
he'd welcomed him with entertainments,  
as he was returning to his native land.  
He showed me what Odysseus had gathered,  
all the bronze and gold and well-worked iron,  
[420] so many riches stored in Pheidon's home,  
they'd feed ten generations after him.  
Odysseus, he said, had gone to Dodona,  
to hear from the massive towering oak tree,  
sacred to the god, what Zeus had willed  
about his own return to that rich land  
of Ithaca, after being away so long—  
whether he should do so openly or not.<sup>5</sup>  
As he poured libations in his house,  
he swore to me a ship had been hauled down  
[430] and a crew prepared to take Odysseus  
to his native land. However, before that,  
he sent me off, since, as it so happened,  
a ship with a crew of Thesprotians,  
full of corn, was sailing to Dulichium.  
He told them to take me there, treating me  
with all due kindness, and deliver me  
to king Acastus. But those sailors' hearts  
were more attracted to a nasty scheme  
concerning me—so I would be reduced  
[440] to utter wretchedness. Thus, when the ship  
had sailed some distance from the land, they tried  
from that day forward to make me their slave.  
They ripped away my clothes, cloak and tunic,  
and dressed me differently, a ragged cloak  
and filthy tunic ripped to bits, these here—  
the ones you see before your very eyes.

They reached the fields of sunny Ithaca  
that evening. Inside that well-decked ship  
they tied me up with tightly twisted rope  
[450] and went ashore, in a rush to eat a meal  
beside the sea. But the gods themselves  
with ease untied my bonds, and so I wrapped  
my rags around my head and slipped away  
down a smooth plank, chest first into the sea.  
Then with both arms I paddled and swam off.  
I left the water far away from them  
and moved inland, where leafy bushes grew,  
and lay crouching down. They began to shout  
and wandered here and there. But then they thought  
[460] there was no point in searching any more.  
So they went back on board their hollow ship.  
The gods themselves concealed me easily  
and led me on my way. They brought me here,  
to the farmyard of a man who understands.  
My fate, I think, is to continue living.”

Then, swineherd Eumaeus, you answered him and said:  
“Stranger, you’re unlucky. The tale you tell  
has really touched my heart, all those things  
you’ve suffered, all the places where you roamed.  
[470] But I don’t think it’s all just as you said,  
and what you mentioned of Odysseus  
does not convince me. Given who you are,  
why must you tell such pointless falsehoods?  
I know well that in my master’s journey home  
he was totally despised by all the gods.  
That’s why they didn’t kill him over there,  
among the Trojans or in his comrades’ arms,  
when he was done with war. All Achaeans then  
would have made him a tomb—and for his son  
[48] he would’ve won great fame in days to come.  
Now the spirits of the storm have snatched him,  
and there’s no glory. And as for me, I live

here among the pigs, far away from men.  
I don't go to the city, unless I'm called  
to travel there by wise Penelope,  
when a message reaches her from somewhere.  
Then people sit around the man who's come  
and ask him questions about everything,  
both those who are grieving for their ruler,  
[490] who's been away so long, and other men  
who're happy to consume his livelihood  
without paying anything. I don't like  
to investigate it or ask questions,  
not since the day a man from Aetolia  
tricked me with his story. He'd killed a man.  
After moving around in many lands,  
he reached my home. I gave him a fine welcome.  
He said he'd seen Odysseus with Cretans  
in Idomeneus' home, mending his ships,  
[500] which had been damaged in some storms. He claimed  
he'd return by summer or harvest time,  
with his fine comrades and many treasures.  
And so you, you long-suffering old man,  
since a spirit led you to me, shouldn't try  
to cheer me up or secure my favour  
by telling falsehoods. That's not the reason  
I show you respect and give you welcome,  
but because I pity you and fear Zeus,  
god of strangers."

Then resourceful Odysseus  
answered Eumaeus with these words:  
[510] "The heart in your chest  
is really hard to sway. That oath I swore,  
even that action didn't influence you  
or win you over. But come now, let's make  
this promise—the gods who hold Olympus  
will stand as witnesses for both of us  
in days to come—if your master does get back

to his own home, you'll give me some clothing,  
a cloak and tunic, and then send me off  
to Dulichium, as my heart desires,  
[520] and if your master doesn't come the way  
I say he will, then set your men on me  
and have them throw me off a towering cliff,  
so some other beggar will be careful  
to avoid deception."

The splendid swineherd  
then said in reply:  
"Yes, stranger, what a way for me  
to gather fame and fortune among men,  
both now and in the future, to kill you,  
steal your precious life, after bringing you  
to my own hut and entertaining you!  
[530] I could later pray to Zeus, Cronos' son,  
with a sincere heart. Now it's time to eat.  
I hope my comrades get here quickly,  
so we can make a tasty meal here in the hut."

As these two were talking like this to each other,  
the other herdsmen came in with their swine.  
They shut the sows up in their customary pens,  
so they could sleep. The pigs gave out amazing squeals,  
as they were herded in. Then the trusty swineherd  
called out to his companions:  
"Bring a boar in here,  
[540] the best there is, so I can butcher it  
for this stranger from another country.  
We too will get some benefit from it,  
seeing that we've worked hard for such a long time  
and gone through troubles for these white-tusked pigs,  
while others gorge themselves on our hard work  
without paying anything."

Once he'd said this,



with his sharp bronze axe he chopped up wood for kindling,  
while others led in a big fat boar, five years old,  
and stood him by the hearth. The swineherd's heart was sound,  
[550] and he did not forget the gods. So he began  
by throwing in the fire some bristles from the head  
of the white-tusked boar and praying to all the gods  
that wise Odysseus would come back to his own home.  
Then he raised his arm, and with a club made out of oak,  
which he'd left lying beside him, he struck the boar.  
Life left the beast. Then the others slit its throat,  
singd its bristles, and quickly carved it up.  
At first, the swineherd offered pieces of the meat  
from all the limbs, set in layers of rich fat.  
[560] After sprinkling barley meal all over these,  
he threw them in the fire. They sliced up the rest,  
put it on spits, cooked it with care, drew it all off,  
and set heaps of meat on platters. The swineherd,  
whose heart always concerned itself with what was fair,  
stood up to carve, and as he served up all the meat,  
he split it into seven portions. Saying a prayer,  
he set one aside for Hermes, son of Maia,  
and for the nymphs. The rest he gave to each of them,  
honouring Odysseus with a long cut from the back  
[570] of the white-tusked boar. That pleased his master's heart.  
So resourceful Odysseus spoke to him and said:  
"Eumaeus, may father Zeus treat you as well  
as you are treating me with this boar's chine,  
the very finest cut of meat, even though  
I'm just a beggar."

Then, swineherd Eumaeus,  
you replied by saying:  
"Eat up, god-guided stranger,  
and enjoy the kind of food we offer.  
A god gives some things and holds others back,  
as his heart prompts, for he can do all things."

[580] Eumaeus spoke and offered to eternal gods  
the first pieces he had cut. He poured gleaming wine  
as a libation, passed it over to Odysseus,  
sacker of cities, then sat to eat his portion.  
Mesaulius served the bread, a servant  
Eumaeus purchased on his own, when his master  
was away. He'd not informed his mistress  
or old man Laertes. He'd acquired the slave  
from Taphians, using resources of his own.<sup>6</sup>  
So they stretched out their hands to the generous meal  
[590] set out in front of them. Once they'd had their fill  
of food and drink, and their hearts were quite content,  
Mesaulius took away their food. They'd eaten  
so much bread and meat, they were keen to get some rest.  
Night came on, bringing storms. There was no moon.  
And Zeus sent blustery West Wind blowing in with rain,  
a steady downpour all night long. Odysseus  
spoke to them, trying to test Eumaeus, to see if,  
given all the hospitality he'd shown,  
he'd take off his cloak and give it to Odysseus,  
[600] or would urge one of his comrades to give up his.  
"Eumaeus and the rest of you, his work mates,  
hear me now—I wish to tell a story,  
prompted by this wine, which can confuse our wits.  
Wine can make a man, even though he's wise,  
sing out loud, or giggle softly to himself,  
or leap up and dance. It can bring out words  
which were better left unsaid. But still,  
since I've begun to speak, I'll hide nothing.  
I wish I were as young, my strength as firm,  
[610] as when we were setting up an ambush  
and guiding men to it below Troy's walls.  
Our leaders were Odysseus and Menelaus,  
son of Atreus—and along with them,  
I was third in command, on their orders.  
When we reached the steep walls of the city,  
we lay down in thick bushes round the place,

swampy reeds, crouched down behind our weapons.  
A nasty night came on. North Wind dropped off,  
and it was freezing cold. Snow fell on us,  
[620] like frost from high above, bitterly cold.  
Our shields were caked with ice. Now, the others  
all wore cloaks and tunics, and could rest there  
quite easily, their shields across their shoulders.  
But when I'd set out, like a fool I'd left  
my cloak behind with my companions,  
Not thinking I'd feel the cold without it,  
I'd just brought my shield and shining doublet.  
Well, when it was the third watch of the night  
and the stars had shifted their positions,  
[630] I spoke to Odysseus, who was close by.  
When my elbow nudged him, he was all ears,  
instantly prepared to listen:

‘Resourceful Odysseus, Laertes’ son,  
and child of Zeus, I won’t be here for long,  
not among the living. Instead, this cold  
will kill me off. I don’t have a cloak.  
Some spirit deluded me, made me come  
with just a tunic. Now there’s no way out.’

“That’s what I said. In his heart he had a plan—  
[640] that’s the kind of man he was for scheming  
or for fighting war. With a quiet whisper,  
he spoke to me:

‘Keep silent for the moment,  
in case one of our Achaeans hears you.’

“Then he propped his head up on his elbow,  
and spoke out, saying:

‘Listen to me, friends.  
As I slept, a dream sent from the gods

came to me. We've moved a long way forward,  
too far from our ships. I wish some man  
would tell Agamemnon, son of Atreus,  
[650] shepherd of his people, in the hope  
he'd tell more men to come out from the fleet.'7

"Once he'd said this, Thoas jumped up quickly,  
Andraemon's son. He threw off his purple cloak  
and started running to the ships. Well then,  
I was happy to lie down in his cloak.  
Then Dawn appeared on her golden throne.  
I wish I were as young as I was then,  
and my strength as firm. Then in this farmyard,  
some swineherd would give me a cloak to wear,  
[660] from kindness and respect for a brave man.  
But now, with filthy clothing on my skin,  
I receive no honours."8

Then, swineherd Eumaeus,  
you answered him and said:  
"Old man, that story  
you just told us is all right—you've spoken  
to the point and made your wishes clear.  
You won't lack clothes or any other thing  
which a long-suffering suppliant should get  
from those he meets, for tonight at least.  
When morning comes you'll have to dance around  
[670] in those rags of yours. We don't have many cloaks  
or other tunics here. We've each got only one.  
But when Odysseus' dear son arrives,  
he'll give you clothes himself, a cloak and tunic,  
and send you where your heart desires to go."

After saying this, he jumped up and placed a bed  
for Odysseus near the fire. On the bed he threw  
some skins from sheep and goats. Odysseus lay down there.  
Eumaeus covered him with a huge thick cloak,

which he kept there as a change of clothing,  
[680] something to wear whenever a great storm blew.  
So Odysseus went to sleep there, and the young men  
slept around him. But Eumaeus had no wish  
to have his bed inside and sleep so far away  
from all his boars. So he prepared to go outside.  
Odysseus was pleased he took so many troubles  
with his master's goods while he was far away.  
First, Eumaeus slung his sharp sword from his shoulder  
and wrapped a really thick cloak all around him,  
to keep out the wind. Then he took a massive fleece  
[690] from a well-fed goat and grabbed a pointed spear  
to fight off dogs and men. Then he left the hut,  
going to lie down and rest where the white-tusked boars  
slept beneath a hollow rock, sheltered from North Wind.