

CHAPTER ONE

BOOK FOURTEEN

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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:¹

"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.²

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.³
 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.⁴
 [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.⁵
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. o
 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.⁶
 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.