

13

Odysseus Lands in Ithaca

Book Thirteen

The wandering is over. Carried home asleep by the Phaeacians, Odysseus wakes on a shore he does not know – for Athene has veiled Ithaca in mist. Goddess and hero meet at last as equals in cunning, trade disguises and lies with evident delight, and lay their plans; and the man who left a king returns to his own kingdom as a ragged old beggar, ready to take the measure of his enemies.

NAME

SET

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BOOK THIRTEEN

Odysseus Lands in Ithaca

Home at last. The Phaeacians land the sleeping Odysseus on Ithaca; Poseidon punishes them; and Athene meets her favourite, reveals his homeland, and disguises him as a beggar to face the suitors.

WHAT HAPPENS

- The Phaeacians give Odysseus their parting gifts and carry him home asleep, setting him ashore on Ithaca with his treasure.
- Poseidon, enraged, turns their returning ship to stone in sight of their harbour – the doom foretold in Book 8.
- Odysseus wakes but, wrapped in Athene's mist, does not know his own island; Athene appears disguised as a young shepherd.
- Cautious as ever, he tests her with a false Cretan tale; delighted, she reveals herself and they plot the suitors' downfall together.
- Athene disguises him as an old beggar and sets off to fetch Telemachus from Sparta.

WHO WE MEET

Odysseus

home at last, but hidden and scheming

Athene

his patron goddess, his equal in cunning

Poseidon

who takes his revenge on the Phaeacians

Eumaeus

the loyal swineherd, his first refuge to come

WHY IT MATTERS FOR ESSAYS

Book 13 turns the poem homeward and begins the long second half on Ithaca. Note the fulfilment of Poseidon's threat against the Phaeacians, the delicious meeting of two master-tricksters (the theme of disguise and *mētis*), and the beggar disguise that shapes everything up to the killing of the suitors. **Prescribed:** examined in context – know it closely.

Odysseus Lands In Ithaca

— THE TALE ENDS

Odysseus' tale was finished. Held in the spell of his words they all remained still and silent throughout the shadowy hall, till at last Alcinous turned to his guest and said:

'Odysseus, now that you have set foot on the bronze floor of my
5 great house I feel assured that you will reach your home without any further wanderings from your course, though you have suffered much. But now, friends, this is my wish – let it stand as an order to every one of you who comes to my palace to drink the sparkling wine of the elders and enjoy the minstrel's song. The clothing, gold
10 ornaments and other presents that our counsellors brought here are already packed for our guest in a polished strong-box. I now suggest that in addition we each give him a large tripod and a cauldron. Later we will recoup ourselves by a collection from the people, since it would be hard on us singly to show such generosity with no return.'

— GIFTS AND FAREWELL

15 Alcinous' proposal was approved and all went home to their beds. As soon as Dawn came, fresh and rosy-fingered, they came bustling down to the ship with their welcome bronze-ware gifts, and the great Alcinous himself went up and down the vessel, stowing them carefully under the benches, so that they would not hamper any of
20 the crew as they pulled on the oars. This done, they returned for a banquet to Alcinous' palace, and great Alcinous slew an ox for them to sacrifice to Zeus of the Black Cloud, the son of Cronos, who is lord of all. They burnt the thighs and settled down to enjoy the splendid feast, while in their midst the people's favourite, Demodocus, that
25 divine bard, sang to the music of his lyre.

— IMPATIENT TO LEAVE

But Odysseus kept turning his face to the blazing Sun, impatient for it to set, as he was longing to be on his way. He was like a
ploughman who yearns for his supper after his two brown oxen have pulled the ploughshare up and down the field all day; the sunset
30 is welcome to him, and his legs are weary as he plods homeward. Like him Odysseus welcomed the setting of the Sun that day. No sooner was it set than he appealed to the Phaeacians, those lovers of the oar, and to Alcinous in particular:

'Lord Alcinous, my most worshipful prince, make your drink-
35 offerings now and see me safely off. And farewell to you all! For now my dearest wishes have been fulfilled: I have your escort home and I have your welcome gifts. May the gods in heaven bless them, and

LINES 27–28

a ploughman who yearns for his supper A

simile: Odysseus, aching for the sun to set so he can sail, is compared to a ploughman longing for his supper after a long day driving the oxen up and down the field.

may I find my wife and loved ones safe and sound on my return home. As for you whom I leave behind, may you all bring happiness to
 40 your good wives and to your children; and may the gods prosper you in every way and keep your people from harm!"

This speech of Odysseus won the approval of the whole company. They felt he had spoken in the right way and so now gave instructions that their guest should be sent on his way. Mighty
 45 Alcinous called to his squire. 'Pontonous,' he said, 'mix a bowl of wine and serve everyone in the hall so that we can make a drink-offering to Father Zeus before seeing our visitor off to the land of his birth.' Pontonous mixed the mellow wine, went his rounds and served each of the guests, who, from their seats, then made libations to the
 50 blessed gods that lived in the far-flung heavens. Then the gallant Odysseus rose from his chair and put his two-handled cup in Arete's hands. He spoke, and his words were winged: 'My Queen, here's fortune all your life, until man's common lot, old age and death, comes to you! I take my leave of you now. Here in your home may
 55 you be happy in your children, your people, and Alcinous your King!'

— THE VOYAGE HOME

With this the noble Odysseus stepped across the threshold. Mighty Alcinous ordered a squire to accompany him and lead him to the good ship and the sea-shore. Arete sent with him a party of serving-women, one with a clean cloak and tunic, another in charge of his
 60 strong-box, and a third carried bread and red wine.

When they had come down to the ship and the sea, the young nobles who were to escort him took charge of his baggage, including all the food and drink, and stowed it in the polished ship. For Odysseus himself they spread a rug and sheet on the ship's deck, well aft, so
 65 that he might enjoy unbroken sleep. Then he too climbed on board and quietly lay down, while the crew took their seats at the oars in order, and untied the cable from the pierced stone that held it. No sooner had they swung back and churned the water with their blades than sweet oblivion sealed Odysseus' eyes in sleep, delicious and
 70 profound, the very counterfeit of death.

And now, **like a team of four stallions** on the plain who start as one at the touch of the whip, leaping forward to make short work of the course, so the stern of the ship leaped forward, and a great dark wave of the surrounding sea surged in her wake. With unfaltering speed
 75 she forged ahead, and not even the wheeling falcon, the fastest creature that flies, could have kept her company. Thus she sped lightly on, cutting her way through the waves and carrying a man wise as the gods are wise, who in long years of war on land and wandering across the cruel seas had suffered many agonies of spirit

LINE 71

like a team of four stallions Two **similes** for the magic ship's speed: her stern leaps forward like a four-horse team breaking into a gallop at the whip, and she runs so fast that not even a falcon, the swiftest bird alive, could keep pace.

80 but was now lapped in peaceful sleep, forgetting all he had endured.

— LANDFALL ON ITHACA

When the brightest of all stars came up, the star which often ushers in the tender light of early Dawn, the ship's voyage was done and she drew near to Ithaca. Now in that island is **a cove named after Phorcys**, the Old Man of the Sea, with two projecting headlands
85 sheer to seaward but sloping down on the side towards the harbour. They protect it from the heavy swell raised by rough weather in the open and allow large ships to ride inside without tying up, once they are within mooring distance of the shore. At the head of the cove grows a long-leaved olive-tree and nearby is a pleasant, hazy cavern
90 sacred to the Nymphs whom we call Naiads. This cave contains a number of stone basins and two-handled jars, which are used by bees as their hives; also great looms of stone where the Nymphs weave marvellous fabrics of sea-purple; and there are springs whose water never fails. The cave has two mouths. The one that looks north
95 is the way down for men. The other, facing south, is for no the gods; and as immortals come in by this way men do not trespass there.

It was here that the Phaeacians put in, knowing the place; and such was the headway of the ship, rowed by those able hands, that a full half of her keel's length mounted the beach. They rose from the
100 benches, jumped out, and made it their first task to lift Odysseus, sheet, glossy rug and all, out of the hollow ship and deposit him on the sand still fast asleep. Next they took out all the treasures which, at the prompting of the great-hearted Athene, their noble countrymen had given him when he left for home. These they
105 stacked in a pile by the trunk of the olive-tree, well away from the path, in case some passer-by should find them before he awoke and rob him. This done, they set out for home.

— POSEIDON'S REVENGE

And now the Lord of the Earthquake, who had by no means forgotten the threats he had once uttered against the noble Odysseus, asked
110 Zeus what he intended. 'Father Zeus, the immortal gods will lose respect for me, now that these mortals fail to respect me, these Phaeacians, I mean, **who after all are my descendants**. I said that Odysseus would suffer much before he reached his home, though I never put a final ban on his return, once you had promised it and
115 nodded your assent. But now these people have brought him over the sea in their good ship and landed him asleep in Ithaca, after showering gifts upon him, countless gifts of bronze, gold and woven stuffs; far more than he could ever have won for himself from Troy, even if he had come back unhurt with his fair share of the spoils.'

120 'Really!' replied Zeus, the Gatherer of the Clouds. 'How can you, the

LINES 83–84

a cove named after Phorcys The ship lands at the cove of **Phorcys** (an old sea-god), sheltered by two headlands, with the sacred cave of the **Naiads** (water-nymphs) close by – where Odysseus and Athene will soon hide the Phaeacian treasure.

LINE 112

who after all are my descendants A cruel irony: the **Phaeacians** are Poseidon's own descendants, yet it is they he punishes for helping Odysseus home. Zeus lets him do it

great and mighty Earthshaker, say such a thing? It is not true that the gods don't respect you. It would indeed be a serious matter if they made disrespectful remarks about the eldest and best of their company. As for mankind, if anyone in the pride of his power treats

125 you with disrespect, you have all the future in which to take your revenge. You are free to please yourself: act as your heart directs.'

'Lord of the Black Cloud,' Poseidon answered him, 'I should indeed like to do as you say, but I have always respected your anger and try to avoid it. Now, however, I propose to wreck that fine ship of the

130 Phaeacians on the misty seas as she comes back from her mission, to teach them once and for all to give up this habit of escorting travellers. And I will also fence their town with a ring of high mountains.'

'Dear brother,' said the Gatherer of the Clouds, 'this is what I think

135 best. When all eyes in the city are fixed on the ship's approach turn her into a rock looking like a ship off-shore. Everyone will be astounded. Then there's no need to throw a circle of high mountains round their city.'

— THE SHIP TURNED TO STONE

When he heard this answer from Zeus, Poseidon made for Scherie,

140 where the Phaeacians live; and there he waited till the approaching ship, making good headway, came close to the land. The Earthshaker then drew near to her and with one blow from the flat of his hand **turned her into stone** and rooted her to the sea-bottom. Then he went away.

145 The Phaeacian spectators, oarsmen themselves and seamen of repute, looked at each other and cried out in words that flew: 'Who in heaven's name has stopped our swift ship out at sea as she was making port? Only a moment ago she was in full view.' They might well ask, for they had no inkling of what had happened till Alcinous

150 explained.

'Alas!' he cried. 'My father's prophecy of long ago comes back to me! He used to maintain that Poseidon resented our giving safe-conduct to all and sundry, and he foretold that one day he would wreck one of our fine ships on the high seas as she was returning from such a

155 mission, and would overshadow our city with a ring of high mountains. That is what the old man used to say, and now it's all coming true. But listen and accept what I say. For the future give up your custom of seeing home any traveller who comes to our city; and for the present let us sacrifice twelve picked bulls to Poseidon. He

160 may take pity on us and refrain from hemming in our town with a long mountain range.' In great trepidation they at once prepared the bulls for sacrifice. So the chieftains and counsellors of the Phaeacian

LINE 143

turned her into stone Poseidon's old grudge now falls on the Phaeacians: he turns their returning ship to stone in sight of their harbour. This is the doom foretold back in Book 8, and it makes them resolve never to ferry strangers again.

people gathered round the altar and interceded with the Lord Poseidon.

— A STRANGER'S SHORE

165 The good Odysseus now awoke from sleep on his native soil. After so long an absence, he failed to recognize it, because the goddess, Pallas Athene, Daughter of Zeus, **had thrown a mist over the place**. Her intention was to make Odysseus unrecognizable, to tell him precisely how things stood, and to prevent his being recognized by
170 his wife and friends or the people of the town before the Suitors had paid for all their transgressions. As a result everything in Ithaca, the long hill-paths, the welcoming bays, the beetling rocks and the leafy trees, seemed unfamiliar to its King. He leapt to his feet and stood staring at his native land. Then he groaned, and slapping his thighs
175 with his hands he cried out in dismay:

‘Oh no! Whose country have I come to this time? Are they some brutal tribe of uncivilized savages, or a kindly and godfearing people? Where shall I put all these goods of mine, and where on earth am I myself to go? If only I had stayed there with the Phaeacians! Then I
180 could have gone on to some other powerful prince, who would have received me well and seen me on my way home. As it is, I don’t know where to hide them, and I certainly can’t leave them here, or someone else will steal them. And what a blow to find that those Phaeacian lords and chieftains were not exactly wise and honest
185 men! They said they would put me down in my own sunny Ithaca, and then they carry me off to this outlandish place. A broken promise – for which I pray they may be punished by Zeus, the god of suppliants, who watches all mankind and punishes offenders. But now I had better count my belongings and make sure that the crew
190 have not robbed me and gone off with anything in their hollow ship.’

With that he checked his fine tripods and cauldrons, his gold and his splendid woven fabrics, and found not a single item missing. So his thoughts turned to his native land, and, homesick and grieving, he dragged himself along the shore of the sounding sea. Athene now
195 appeared, disguised as a young shepherd, with all the delicate beauty that marks the sons of kings. A handsome cloak was folded back across her shoulders, she had sandals on her glistening feet and she carried a javelin in her hand. She was a welcome sight to Odysseus, who came forward at once and spoke winged words.

— ATHENE IN DISGUISE

200 ‘Good-day to you, friend. Since you are the first person I have met in this place, do not be hostile, but save these treasures and save me; so I pray to you as I would to a god and kneel at your feet. But tell me exactly where I am. What part of the world is this? What is the

LINE 167

had thrown a mist over the place Athene has poured a **mist** over Ithaca so that Odysseus won’t know it – and won’t be known – until she has briefed him. That is why he wakes on his own island without realising he is finally home.

country called and who live here? Is it one of the sunny islands or is
 205 this fertile slope running down to the sea part of the mainland?’

‘sir,’ said the goddess of the gleaming eyes, ‘you must be a simpleton
 or have travelled very far from your home to ask me what this country
 is. It has a name by no means inglorious. In fact it is known to
 thousands, to all the peoples who live in the direction of dawn and
 210 sunrise and all who live in the opposite direction, towards the
 twilight West. True, it is rugged and unfit for driving horses, and
 though not extensive it is very far from poor. Corn grows well and
 there is wine too. Rain and fresh dew are never lacking; and it has
 excellent pasture for goats and cattle, timber of all kinds, and
 215 watering-places that never fail. And so, my friend, the name of Ithaca
 has travelled even as far as Troy; and that, they say, is a good long way
 from Achaea.’

Odysseus’ patient heart leapt up as Pallas Athene, Daughter of aegis-
 bearing Zeus, told him its name, and he revelled in the knowledge
 220 that he was on his native soil. He addressed her with words on
 wings, but not with the truth. True as ever to his own interests, he
 held back the words that were on his lips.

— A CRETAN TALE

‘Of course,’ he said, ‘I heard tell of Ithaca even over there across the
 sea in the spacious land of Crete. And now I have come here myself
 225 with all this booty, leaving the other half of my fortune to my
 children. For I am an exile. I had killed Idomeneus’ son, the great
 runner Orsilochus, who was faster on his feet than any living man in
 the whole island of Crete. He tried to fleece me of all the booty I had
 won at Troy, my reward for the long-drawn agonies of war and all the
 230 miseries of voyages by sea, merely because I refused to obey his
 father and serve under him at Troy and preferred to lead my own
 command. So with a friend at my side I laid an ambush for him at the
 side of the road, and struck him with my bronze spear as he was
 coming in from the country. There was a pitch-black sky that night
 235 covering the heavens and not a soul saw us; so no one knew that it
 was I who’d killed him.

‘However, with the man’s blood fresh on my hands, I hastily sought
 out a Phoenician ship, and threw myself on the mercy of its honest
 crew. I made them a suitable payment from my booty and told them
 240 to take me on board and set me down in Pylos or the good land of
 Elis, where the Epeians rule. But the wind was too strong and drove
 them off their course, much to their distress, for they had no wish to
 cheat me. Driven back from there we reached this island during the
 night and made the harbour by dint of rowing. And though we badly
 245 needed food not a man among us thought of his supper; we all

LINE 224

in the spacious land of Crete Cautious even now, Odysseus never gives a stranger the plain truth. Here he spins the first of several invented life-stories (his famous ‘Cretan lies’): an exile from **Crete** who killed a man and fled. It is pure *mētis* – and he is aiming it, without knowing, at a goddess.

tumbled out of the ship and lay down just as we were. I was so exhausted that I fell sound asleep. Meanwhile the crew fetched my belongings out of the good ship and put them down on the sand where I lay. After which they embarked once more and set sail for
 250 their own fine city of Sidon, leaving me and my troubles behind.'

That was Odysseus' story. The bright-eyed goddess smiled at him and caressed him with her hand. She now wore the appearance of a woman, tall, beautiful and accomplished. Then she spoke, and her words winged their way to him.

— THE GODDESS REVEALED

255 'Anyone who met you, even a god, would have to be a consummate trickster to surpass you in subterfuge. You were always an obstinate, cunning and irrepressible intriguer. So you don't propose, even in your own country, to drop the tricks and lying tales you love so much! But no more of this. We both know how to get our own way: in
 260 the world of men you have no rival in judgement and argument, while I am pre-eminent among the gods for ingenuity and ability to get what I want.

'And yet you did not recognize Pallas Athene, Daughter of Zeus, who always stands by your side and guards you through all your
 265 adventures. It was I who made all the Phaeacians take to you so kindly. And here I am once more, to contrive a cunning scheme with you, to hide the treasures that the Phaeacian nobles, prompted by me, gave you when you left for home, and to warn you of all the trials you will have to undergo within your palace. Bear these with
 270 patience, for bear them you must. Tell not a single person, man or woman, that you are back from your wanderings; but endure all aggravation in silence and submit yourself to the indignities that will be put upon you.'

'Goddess,' the nimble-witted Odysseus replied, 'it is hard for a man
 275 to recognize you at sight, however expert he may be, for you are always changing your disguise. But this I know well, that you were gracious to me in the old days so long as we Achaeans were campaigning at Troy. Yet when we had sacked Priam's lofty citadel and gone on board our ships, and a god had scattered the Achaean
 280 fleet, I did not notice you then, Daughter of Zeus, nor see you set foot on my ship to save me from any of my ordeals. No; I was left to wander through the world with a stricken heart, till the gods put an end to my sufferings and the day came, in the rich land of the Phaeacians, when you comforted me with your talk and yourself
 285 guided me to their city. But now I beseech you in your Father's name – since I cannot believe that I have come to my bright Ithaca but feel that I must be wandering in some foreign country and that you

LINES 255–256

a consummate trickster Athene drops her disguise and laughs with delight at his lying. She is Odysseus' special patron among the gods.

spoke as you did in a spirit of provocation to lead me astray – tell me, am I really back in my own beloved land?’

290 ‘That shows how your mind always works!’ said Athene, goddess of the flashing eyes. ‘And that is why I cannot desert you in your misfortunes: you are so persuasive, so quick-witted, so self-possessed. Any other man on returning from his travels would have rushed home in high spirits to see his children and his wife. You, on
295 the contrary, are in no hurry even to ask questions and to learn the news. No; with your own eyes you must first make sure of your wife – who, by the way, does nothing but sit at home with her eyes never free from tears as the slow nights and days pass sorrowfully by.

‘As for your home-coming, **I myself was never in any doubt**: I knew
300 in my heart that you would get back, though with the loss of all your men. But you must understand that I was not prepared to oppose my uncle Poseidon, who was incensed when you blinded his own son, and has nursed his grudge against you. And now, to convince you, let me show you the Ithacan scene. Here is the harbour of Phorcys, the
305 Old Man of the Sea; and there at the head of the harbour is the long-leaved olive-tree, and near by the pleasant, hazy cave that is sacred to the Nymphs whom men call Naiads. This is the broad vaulted cavern where you made many potent sacrifices to the Nymphs. The forest-clad slopes behind are those of Mount Neriton.’

— HOME AT LAST

310 As she spoke the goddess dispersed the mist, and the countryside stood plain to view. Joy came at last to the noble, long-suffering Odysseus. Overjoyed at the sight of his own land, he kissed the fertile soil, then with uplifted hands invoked the Nymphs: ‘I had thought, you Nymphs of the Springs, you Daughters of Zeus, that I
315 should never set eyes on you again! Accept my greetings and my loving prayers. I will give gifts too as in days gone by, if this warrior Daughter of Zeus allows me to live and see my son grow up.’

‘Be bold,’ said Athene of the flashing eyes, ‘and dismiss all such worries from your heart. Our immediate task is to hide your goods in
320 some corner of this sacred cave where they may lie in safety. After that we must decide on our best course for the future.’

The goddess now plunged into the gloom of the cavern to explore it for a hiding-place, while Odysseus set about bringing in all his belongings, the gold, the indestructible bronze and the fine fabrics
325 the Phaeacians had given him. After he had stowed them carefully away, Pallas Athene, Daughter of Zeus, closed the entrance with a stone.

The two of them then sat down by the trunk of **the sacred olive-tree**

LINE 299

I myself was never in any doubt Athene reassures Odysseus that she never doubted he would reach home, and that she has been watching over him throughout – though she avoided openly crossing her uncle **Poseidon** while his anger burned.

LINE 328

the sacred olive-tree The **olive** was Athene’s own sacred tree – so it is fitting that she and Odysseus settle beneath one to lay their plans.

to scheme the downfall of the presumptuous Suitors. The bright-eyed goddess was the first to speak.

— PLOTTING THE SUITORS' FALL

'Odysseus, favourite of Zeus, son of Laertes, master of ingenuity, consider now how you will come to grips with these shameless Suitors who for three whole years have been lording it in your palace, paying court to your incomparable wife and offering her marriage-gifts. All this time she has pined for your home-coming, and though she has given them all some grounds for hope and made promises in private messages to each, her real wishes are very different.'

'Great Heavens!' cried Odysseus of the nimble wits. 'I would certainly have come to the same miserable end as King Agamemnon directly I set foot in my home, if you, goddess, had not made all this clear to me. But come, devise some ingenious scheme to punish these miscreants. And take your stand at my side, filling me with the spirit that dares all, as you did on the day when we pulled down Troy's shining diadem of towers. Ah, Lady of the Bright Eyes, if only you would aid me with such eagerness as you did then, I could fight against three hundred, with you beside me, gracious goddess, with your whole-hearted support to count on.'

'I will indeed stand at your side,' Athene the bright-eyed goddess answered. 'I shall not forget you when the time comes for this task of ours. As for those Suitors who are wasting your fortune, I can already see them staining your broad floors with their blood and brains. But now to work! I am going to change you beyond recognition. I shall wither the smooth skin on your supple limbs and rob your head of its dark locks; I shall clothe you in rags that one would loathe to see on a human being and I shall dim your bright eyes till you are repulsive to the whole gang of Suitors and even your wife and the son you left at home.'

'And now for your part – you must first of all [go to the swineherd in charge of your pigs](#). His heart is as loyal to you as ever, and he is devoted to your son and your wise Queen Penelope. You will find him watching over his swine out at their pastures by the Raven's Crag and at the Spring of Arethusa, where they find the right fodder to make them fat and healthy, feeding on their favourite acorns and drinking water from deep pools. Stay there, sit down with him, and question him about whatever you want to know. Meanwhile I will go to Sparta, the city of fair women, to summon Telemachus, your own son, Odysseus, who has travelled to the broad vale of Lacedaemon and visited Menelaus in the hope of hearing news of you, whether you are still alive.'

Resourceful Odysseus replied: 'But why, in your omniscience, did

LINES 358–359

[go to the swineherd in charge of your pigs](#)

Athene sends Odysseus first to his loyal **swineherd, Eumaeus** – the humble servant who has stayed faithful through the long years. His hut, out by the Raven's Crag and the Spring of Arethusa, is where the next book takes us.

you not tell him that I am? Do you want him too to roam the barren seas in misery while strangers eat him out of house and home?’

‘You need not be alarmed for him,’ the bright-eyed goddess answered. ‘I myself was his escort, so that he would win fame from

375 his journey there. He is in no difficulties, but is sitting quite at ease in Menelaus’ palace, in the lap of luxury. It is true that those young men in their black ship are determined to kill him before he can reach home. But I have an idea that they will not succeed. No; sooner than that, the earth will close over some of these Suitors who are
380 wasting your wealth.’

— THE BEGGAR

Athene touched him now with her wand. She **withered the smooth skin** on his supple limbs, robbed his head of its dark locks, covered his whole body with an old man’s wrinkles, and dimmed the brightness of his fine eyes. And she changed his clothing into a
385 shabby cloak and tunic, filthy rags grimy with smoke. Over his back she threw a large and well-worn hide of a nimble stag; and finally she gave him a staff and a poor, shabby knapsack with a shoulder-strap.

Their plans prepared, the two parted company, and Athene went on her way to **the sacred land of Lacedaemon** to fetch Odysseus’ son.

LINES 381–382

withered the smooth skin With a touch of her wand Athene transforms Odysseus into a bent, ragged old **beggar**, so that he can move through his own kingdom unrecognised and take the measure of the suitors before he strikes.

LINE 389

the sacred land of Lacedaemon **Lacedaemon** is another name for **Sparta**. Athene goes there to fetch **Telemachus**, who has been visiting Menelaus (back in Book 4), and bring him safely home to his father.

