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The Feud is Ended

Book Twenty-Four

The last homecoming, and the last danger. Down in Hades the dead suitors tell their story, and even there Penelope's name is honoured above all faithless wives. In a country orchard Odysseus finds his broken old father and, by a scar and a boyhood gift of trees, is known at last. But the dead must be answered for: their kinsmen take up arms, and only Zeus's thunderbolt and Athene's command can halt the feud – and give Ithaca, and the poem, its peace.

NAME

SET

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BOOK TWENTY-FOUR

The Feud is Ended

The close of the poem: the suitors' ghosts in Hades, the reunion with old Laertes, and a threatened blood-feud stopped by the gods themselves.

WHAT HAPPENS

- Hermes leads the suitors' souls to Hades, where Amphimedon tells Agamemnon the tale, and Penelope's faith is praised above Clytemnestra's treachery.
- Odysseus finds his father Laertes in grief, tests him, then proves himself by the scar and the fruit-trees.
- Eupheithes rouses the suitors' kinsmen to revenge, and the two sides arm for battle.
- Zeus and Athene decree peace; Athene, as Mentor, rejuvenates Laertes, who kills Eupheithes.
- A thunderbolt from Zeus halts the fighting, and Athene binds both sides in a covenant of peace.

WHO WE MEET

Odysseus

home, and reconciled with father and people

Laertes

the old king who strikes the last blow

Agamemnon

who names Penelope's glory from beyond the grave

Athene & Zeus

who impose the final peace

WHY IT MATTERS FOR ESSAYS

Book 24 rounds off every thread: a second underworld scene that weighs the two homecomings (Odysseus' and Agamemnon's), the last of the recognitions, and the gods' imposition of peace to break the cycle of vengeance. Note the framing of Penelope against Clytemnestra and the restoration of order. **Unprescribed:** read for the story and its essay background, not examined in context.

The Feud Is Ended

— THE SOULS OF THE SUITORS

And now Cyllenian Hermes began to summon the souls of the Suitors from the palace, holding in his hand the splendid golden wand that he can use at will to cast a spell on men's eyes or wake them from sleep. He marshalled and led them with this, and they
 5 obeyed his summons, **squeaking as bats squeak** when they flutter around after one of them falls from the cluster in which they hang upside down from the rocky roof in the depth of some mysterious cave. With such squeaking the ghosts journeyed on together, following Hermes the Deliverer down the dark paths of decay. Past
 10 Ocean's Stream, past the White Rock, past the Gates of the Sun and the region of dreams they went, and before long they reached the meadow of asphodel, which is the dwelling-place of souls, the disembodied wraiths of men.

Here they encountered the souls of Peleus' son Achilles, of Patroclus,
 15 of the handsome Antilochus, and of Ajax, who in stature and in manly grace was second to none of the Danaans except the peerless son of Peleus. These were gathered round Achilles' soul. And now there came near them the soul of Agamemnon, Atreus' son, who came to them plunged in grief and surrounded by the souls of all that met
 20 their doom and died with him in Aegisthus' house. Achilles' soul addressed him first. 'Agamemnon, we used to think of you, among all our princes, as the lifelong favourite of Zeus the Thunder-lover, because of the size and bravery of the army you commanded in the land of Troy when we Achaeans suffered so much. But you too were
 25 to be visited in your prime by that deadly Fate which no man born can evade. How I wish you could have met your doom and died at Troy in the full enjoyment of the honour due to you as our leader. For then the whole nation would have joined in building you a mound and you would have left a great name for your son to inherit. But
 30 instead you were doomed to die a pitiable death.'

'Son of Peleus, godlike Achilles,' the soul of Atreus' son replied, 'happy man, to have died in the land of Troy far away from Argos. There the flower of the Trojan and Achaean forces fell around you in the battle for your body. Mighty you lay in a swirl of dust, a mighty corpse, all
 35 your horsemanship forgotten. And the whole day long we fought. Indeed we never would have ceased had Zeus not stopped us with a storm. Then we carried you off from the battlefield to the ships, cleansed your fair flesh with warm water and unguents, and laid you on a bed. Your countrymen gathered round you, shedding hot tears
 40 and cutting their hair.'

LINE 5

squeaking as bats squeak The second visit to the underworld. **Hermes**, guide of the dead (the *psychopompos*), leads the souls of the dead suitors down to Hades. They follow him 'gibbering like bats' in a cave – a **simile**.

— ACHILLES' FUNERAL

'Your mother, when she heard the tidings, came up from the sea with the immortal Sea-Nymphs, and a mysterious cry came over the waters. All the Achaeans were seized by panic and would have leaped up and fled on to the ships, but for one man, Nestor, rich in ancient
 45 wisdom. It was not for the first time that his wise counsels had prevailed. With their best interests at heart he addressed them, calling out: "Halt, Argives! Achaeans, stand your ground! This is Achilles' mother who has come out of the sea with her immortal Sea-Nymphs to be with her dead son." At this the brave Achaeans
 50 checked their flight. The daughters of the Old Sea-god stood round you with bitter lamentations, and wrapped your body in an imperishable shroud. *The Nine Muses chanted your dirge* in sweet antiphony and you would not have seen a single Argive without tears in his eyes, such was the clear-voiced Muses' song.

55 'For seventeen days and seventeen nights we mourned for you, immortal gods and mortal men alike; and on the eighteenth day we committed you to the flames, with a rich sacrifice of fatted sheep and crooked-horned cattle round you. You were burnt in the clothing of the gods, with lavish unguents and sweet honey; and
 60 Achaean heroes in full armour, infantry and charioteers, moved in procession round the pyre where your body was burning and filled the air with sound. When the Hephaestean flames had consumed your body, we gathered your white bones at dawn, Achilles, and steeped them in unmixed wine and oil. Your mother gave us a golden
 65 urn, a gift, she said, from Dionysus, made by the great Hephaestus. In this your white bones lie, my illustrious Achilles, and mingled with them the bones of Menoetius' son Patroclus, dead before you, but separate from those of Antilochus, who next to Patroclus was your closest friend. Over their bones we soldiers of the mighty Argive
 70 force built up a great and glorious mound, on a foreland jutting out over the broad waters of the Hellespont, so that it might be seen far out at sea by the men of today and future ages.

'Then, in the middle of the arena where the Achaean champions were to test their skill, your mother placed the magnificent prizes
 75 she had asked the gods to give. You have attended the funerals of many heroes, when the young men strip and make ready for the games in honour of their dead king, but if you had seen the splendid prizes offered in your honour by the divine silver-footed Thetis you would have marvelled at them as the most wonderful you had ever
 80 seen. For the gods loved you very dearly. So even death, Achilles, did not destroy your name, and your great glory will last for ever among all mankind. But after I had brought the war to a close, what satisfaction was there for me? For on my journey home Zeus planned

LINE 52

The Nine Muses chanted your dirge In Hades, Agamemnon and Achilles talk. Agamemnon describes **Achilles' funeral**: the sea-nymphs rose from the sea, the nine **Muses** sang the dirge, and a great mound was raised over him.

a miserable end for me at the hands of Aegisthus and my accursed
85 wife.'

— AMPHIMEDON'S TALE

So they talked together and Hermes the Giant-killer approached,
ushering into the world below the ghosts of the Suitors whom
Odysseus had killed. Astonished at the sight, the pair moved quickly
towards them and the soul of Agamemnon, Atreus' son, recognized
90 the famous Amphimedon, Melaneus' son, who had entertained him
in his home in Ithaca. The soul of Atreus' son was the first to speak.
'Amphimedon,' he said,

'what catastrophe has brought you all down into the land of darkness,
all chosen men and all of the same age? Someone choosing a city's
95 best would have selected men like these. Did Poseidon raise
tempestuous winds and surging waves, and over- no whelm you and
your ships? Or did enemies strike you down as you were rounding
up their cattle and their flocks, or as they were defending their town
and women? Tell me, for you and I have been host and guest. Don't
100 you remember the time when I came over to your house in Ithaca
with godlike Menelaus to persuade Odysseus to join forces with me
and sail against Ilium? It was a full month before we completed our
voyage over the wide sea, so hard was it to win over Odysseus,
Sacker of Cities.

105 'Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon, lord of men,' the soul of
Amphimedon replied, 'I well remember all that you speak of, favourite
of Zeus, and will give you a full and honest account of our tragic end
and the manner of our death.

'In the prolonged absence of Odysseus we began to court his wife.
110 She refused to give an absolute "No" or an absolute "Yes" to a
marriage which was so distasteful to her, but scheming instead to
bring about our downfall and our death she devised this trick. On her
loom in her house she set up a great web and began weaving a large
and delicate piece of work. And she said to us: "My lords, my Suitors,
115 now that noble Odysseus is dead, restrain your ardour, do not urge
on this marriage till I have done this work, so that the threads I have
spun may not be altogether wasted. It is a shroud for Lord Laertes.
When he succumbs to the dread hand of remorseless Death that
stretches all men out at last, I must not risk the scandal there would
120 be among my countrywomen here if one who had amassed such
wealth were laid to rest without a shroud."

'That is what she said, and we magnanimously consented, so by day
she used to weave at the great web, but every night had torches set
beside it and undid the work. For three years she took us in by this
125 stratagem. A fourth began, and the seasons were slipping by, when

LINE 90

the famous Amphimedon Amphimedon, one of the dead suitors, recognises Agamemnon and tells him how they died: Penelope's web, the beggar's return, the contest of the bow and the killing.

one of her women, who knew all about it, gave her mistress away. We caught her unravelling her beautiful work, and she was forced reluctantly to complete it. But no sooner had she woven the great web, laundered the robe and shown it to us gleaming like the sun or
130 moon, than some evil god landed Odysseus out of the blue in a distant corner of his estate where the swineherd had his hut. Noble Odysseus' son, just back from sandy Pylos in his black ship, made for the same place. The two of them plotted our assassination, and made their way to the famous city of Ithaca, or, rather, Telemachus went
135 first and Odysseus followed later. The swineherd brought him down disguised in rags, and looking like a wretched old beggar as he hobbled along with his staff. In the miserable clothes he was wearing none of us, not even the older members, realized that this was Odysseus when he suddenly appeared among us. In fact we abused
140 and insulted him and threw things at his head. For the moment he put up patiently with the abuse and blows in his own palace.

'But when the will of Zeus, Lord of the Aegis, stirred him, with Telemachus' help he removed the excellent weapons they possessed and stowed them in the store-room and bolted the doors. Then, in
145 his cunning, he persuaded his wife to set out in front of the doomed Suitors a bow and some grey iron axes, to be a test of our prowess and the instruments of our death. Not one of us could string the mighty weapon; we were far too weak. But when it came to handing the great bow to Odysseus, we all protested loudly that he should not
150 have it, however much he argued. Telemachus was the only one who encouraged him and told him to take it. And so the patient good Odysseus got his hands on the bow, which he strung without effort, and shot through the iron rings. Then he leapt on to the threshold and with murder in his eyes tipped out his swift arrows, and shot
155 Lord Antinous; after which, aiming carefully, he shot at the rest of us with his deadly shafts. We fell thick and fast; and it was obvious that some god was on their side. For in their fury they charged through the hall and hacked us down right and left. As heads were smashed ghastly screams filled the hall and the whole floor ran with blood.

160 'That, Agamemnon, is how we were destroyed. And our corpses still lie uncared-for in Odysseus' palace, as the news has not yet reached our homes and brought our friends to wash the dark blood from our wounds, to lay our bodies out and mourn for us, as is a dead man's right.'

165 'Son of Laertes, shrewd Odysseus!' the soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, cried.

— PENELOPE'S FAME

'You are a fortunate man to have won a wife of such pre-eminent

virtue! How faithful was your flawless Penelope, Icarius' daughter!
How loyally she kept the memory of the husband of her youth! The
170 glory of her virtue will not fade with the years, but the deathless gods
themselves will make a beautiful song for mortal ears in honour of the
constant Penelope. **What a contrast with Clytaemnestra**, the
daughter of Tyndareus, and the infamy she sank to when she killed
me, the husband of her youth. The song men will sing of her will be
175 one of detestation. She has destroyed the reputation of her whole
sex, virtuous women and all.'

Those were the words that passed between them as they stood in
Hades' Halls, under the secret places of the earth.

Odysseus and his party left the town behind, and before long had
180 reached the rich and well-run farmlands of Laertes, which he had
reclaimed from their natural state by his own exertions long ago.
Here was his cottage, surrounded by outbuildings where the serfs
that laboured for him had their meals and sat and slept. An old Sicilian
woman lived in the cottage, devoting all her care to the old man's
185 comfort on his farm, far from the town.

When they reached the place, Odysseus said to his son and his
servants: 'Go into the main building now and straight away kill the
best pig you can find for our midday meal. Meanwhile I shall test my
father, to find out whether he will know me when he sees me, or fail
190 to recognize me after so long an absence.'

As he spoke, he handed his armour to the servants, who then went
straight into the house, and Odysseus moved off towards the
luxuriant vineyard on his quest. As he made his way down into the
great orchard, he did not see Dolius or any of the serfs or Dolius'
195 sons, who had all gone with the old man at their head to gather
stones for the vineyard wall. He found his father alone on the
vineyard terrace hoeing round a tree. He was wearing a filthy,
patched and shabby tunic, a pair of stitched cowhide leggings
strapped round his shins to protect them from scratches, and gloves
200 to save his hands from the brambles. There he stood, with a hat of
goatskin on his head to emphasize his grief.

When the patient good Odysseus saw how old and worn his father
looked and realized the depth of his misery, he halted under a tall
pear-tree and the tears came into his eyes. He deliberated in his
205 heart and mind whether to hug and kiss his father, and tell him the
whole story of his own return home to his native land, or first to
question him and thoroughly test him. Upon reflection he thought it
better to start by testing him with words that would rouse him. With
this purpose in mind the good Odysseus went straight up to his
210 father.

LINE 172

What a contrast with Clytaemnestra

Agamemnon contrasts Penelope with his own wife **Clytemnestra**, who murdered him when he came home from Troy. She is the standing foil to the faithful Penelope.

Laertes was still hoeing round the tree with his head down, as his illustrious son came up and spoke to him.

— AT LAERTES' FARM

'Old man, **you keep everything so well tended** here that I can see there is little about gardening that you do not know. There is
 215 nothing, not a green thing in the whole enclosure, not a fig, olive, vine, pear or bed that is not carefully looked after. But I cannot help remarking – and please don't take offence – that you don't look after yourself very well; in fact, what with your unkempt appearance and your shabby clothes old age has hit you very hard. Yet it can't be on
 220 account of any laziness that your master fails to look after you, nor is there anything in your build and size to suggest the slave. You look more like a man of royal blood, the sort of person who sleeps on a soft bed when he has had his bath and dined; this is how the old should be treated. However, tell me the truth. Whose serf are you and whose is
 225 this garden you look after? And tell me honestly – I need to be sure – am I really in Ithaca? A fellow I met on my way up here just now assured me that I was. But he was not very obliging; he couldn't be bothered to answer me properly or listen to what I said, when I mentioned a friend of mine and asked him whether he was still in
 230 the land of the living or dead and gone to Hades' Halls.

'Listen, and I'll tell you about him. Some time ago in my own country I was host to a man who arrived at our house and proved the most attractive visitor I have ever entertained from abroad. He said he was an Ithacan, and that Arceisius' son Laertes was his father. I took him
 235 in, made him thoroughly welcome and gave him every comfort that my rich house could offer, including presents worthy of his rank. Seven talents of wrought gold he had from me, a solid silver wine-bowl with a floral design, twelve single-fold cloaks, twelve rugs, twelve splendid robes and twelve tunics, and besides all this, four
 240 women skilled in fine handicraft and good-looking. I let him choose them himself.'

'sir,' said his father, with tears on his cheeks, 'Yes, you have come to the land you're seeking; but it's in the hands of violent and evil men. The gifts you lavished on your friend were given in vain, though had
 245 you found him alive in Ithaca he would have sent you on your way with an ample return in presents and hospitality, as is right when such an example has been set. But please tell me exactly how long ago it was that you were host to that unfortunate man, my unhappy son – if I ever had one – who far from friends and home has been
 250 devoured by fishes in the sea or fallen a prey, maybe, to the wild beasts and birds on land. His mother and I, we two who brought him into the world, had no chance to wrap his body up and lament over him, nor had his richly dowered wife, constant Penelope, the chance

LINE 213

you keep everything so well tended Laertes is Odysseus' father, the old former king of Ithaca. He has withdrawn to his country farm and let himself go, in grief for his lost son.

to close his eyes and mourn him on his deathbed – the tributes due
255 to the dead.

‘But tell me about yourself – I’m curious. Who are you, sir, and where
do you come from? What is your native town and who are your
parents? And where is she moored, the good ship that brought you
here with your gallant crew? Or were you travelling **as a passenger**
260 **on someone else’s ship**, which landed you and sailed away?’

‘I will tell you all you wish to know,’ said the subtle Odysseus. ‘I come
from Alybas. My home is the palace there, for my father is King
Apheidas, Polypemon’s son. My own name is Eperitus. I sailed from
Sicania, but some god drove me here against my will; and my ship is
265 anchored opposite open country some way from the town. As for
Odysseus, it is five years since he bade me farewell and left my
country, ill-fated man. And yet the omens when he left were good –
birds on the right, which pleased me as I said goodbye, and pleased
him as he started out. We both had every hope that we should meet
270 again as host and guest and give each other splendid gifts.’

When Laertes heard this, a black cloud of misery enveloped him.
Groaning heavily, he picked the black dust up in both his hands and
poured it over his grey head. Odysseus’ heart was touched, and
suddenly, as he watched his dear father, a sharp spasm of pain shot
275 through his nostrils. He rushed forward, flung his arms round his
neck, and kissed him. ‘Father,’ he cried, ‘here I am, the very man you
asked about, home in my own land after twenty years. But no more
tears and lamentation, for I have news to tell you, and there is need
for haste. I have killed that gang of Suitors in our palace. I have taken
280 revenge for their bitter insults and all their crimes.’

Laertes answered him: ‘If you who have come here really are my son
Odysseus, home again, give me some definite proof to convince me.’

— LAERTES KNOWS HIM

‘To begin with,’ the quick-witted Odysseus said, ‘look at this scar,
where I was wounded by the white tusk of a boar when I went to
285 Parnassus. You and my mother had sent me to my grandfather
Autolycus, to fetch the gifts he solemnly promised me when he came
to visit us. Then again, I can tell you all the trees you gave me one
day on this terraced garden. I was only a little boy at the time,
trotting after you through the orchard, asking about this and that,
290 and as we wound our way through these very trees you told me all
their names. You gave me **thirteen pear-trees**, ten apple-trees, and
forty fig-trees, and at the same time you pointed out the fifty rows of
vines that were to be mine. Each ripened at a different time, so that
the bunches on them were at various stages of ripeness as the
295 seasons of Zeus weighed down their branches.’

LINES 259–260

as a passenger on someone else’s ship

Odysseus tries one of his false tales on
Laertes before revealing himself – the last of
the disguising lies he tells through the poem.

LINE 291

thirteen pear-trees Odysseus proves who he
is to Laertes by the **scar** and by naming the
fruit-trees Laertes gave him as a boy: thirteen
pears, ten apples, forty figs. A recognition-
token, like the scar and the bed before it.

At these words Laertes' knees gave way and his heart melted, for he recognized the positive proof given by Odysseus. He flung his arms round the neck of his beloved son, and patient good Odysseus clasped him fainting to his breast. When his breath came back and he

300 returned to consciousness he said to his son, 'By Father Zeus, you gods are still there on high Olympus if those Suitors have really paid the price for their outrageous insolence! But in my heart I have a horrible fear now that all the people of Ithaca will soon be on us here, and that they will send urgent messages for help to every town in
305 Cephallenia.'

'Have no fear,' said his resourceful son, 'and do not feel anxious about that; but come with me to the farmhouse here by the orchard. I sent Telemachus ahead with the cowman and swineherd to prepare a meal as quickly as they could.'

310 When they had finished talking the two set out, and in the pleasant well-built farmhouse they found Telemachus and the two herdsmen carving lavish portions of meat and mixing the sparkling wine. His Sicilian maid-servant bathed the greathearted Laertes in his room and rubbed him with oil and put a cloak around him. Athene came
315 and filled out the limbs of this shepherd of his people, making him seem taller and sturdier than before, so that as he stepped out of the bath his own son was amazed to see him looking like an immortal god.

'Father,' he exclaimed, and his words were winged, 'I'm sure one of
320 the immortal gods has made you handsomer and taller than ever!'

To which the thoughtful Laertes replied: 'By Father Zeus, Athene and Apollo, if only I could have been the man I was when as King of the Cephallenians I took the stronghold of Nericus on the mainland cape, and like that have stood by you yesterday in our palace, with armour
325 on my shoulders, and beaten off those Suitors! I'd have laid many of them low in the halls and delighted your heart!'

So they talked together, and the others finished their task of preparing the meal. They took their places on seats and chairs, and were helping themselves to food, when the old man Dolius came in
330 with his sons, weary after their work. They had been called in by their mother, the old Sicilian woman, who looked after them and lovingly cared for their old father now that his years sat heavily upon him. When they set eyes on Odysseus and realized who he was, they stopped short in amazement. Odysseus joked pleasantly with them
335 as he greeted them. 'Old man,' he said, 'sit down to your lunch. And all of you, stop looking so amazed. We have been longing to get our hands on the food in here, waiting all this time and expecting you every minute.'

Dolius ran up with outstretched arms, seized Odysseus by the hand,
 340 and kissed him on the wrist. 'So you have come back to us, my dear
 master,' he said, with words that had wings, 'and fulfilled our dearest
 wishes! We had given up hope, but the gods have led you back.
 Greetings and welcome home, and may the gods shower their
 blessings on you! But tell me this, for I am anxious – has the wise
 345 Penelope heard of your arrival here, or shall we send someone to tell
 her?'

'She knows already, my old friend,' resourceful Odysseus answered,
 'Why must you concern yourself with that?' Dolius sat down again on
 his polished stool, and now it was his sons' turn to gather round the
 350 famous Odysseus, welcome him and clasp his hand. Then they all
 took their seats by Dolius their father.

— THE KINSMEN GATHER

So they busied themselves with their meal in the farmhouse. But
 Rumour the messenger flew rapidly through the town, with the
 fateful news of the Suitors' hideous death. When the people heard it,
 355 with one accord they gathered from all sides in front of Odysseus'
 palace, with wailing and lamentation. They carried out the corpses
 and each group buried their dead; the corpses from other towns were
 put on ships and sent home in the care of the crews. Grieving, they
 made their way in a body to the meeting-place, and there, when they
 360 were all duly gathered, **Eupeithes rose to address them**. His heart
 was heavy with inconsolable grief for his son, Antinous, the first of
 the great Odysseus' victims.

'Friends,' he began, weeping for his son, 'What terrible harm this man
 has done to us Achaeans! He sailed away taking many of our fine
 365 young men in his hollow ships, but he lost his ships, he lost his men,
 and now on his return he has killed the best of the Cephallenians.
 Quick, now! Before he can escape to Pylos or to sacred Elis where
 the Epeians rule, let us make a move, or our shame will last for ever.
 We shall be disgraced even in the eyes of generations yet unborn if
 370 we do not avenge ourselves on the murderers of our sons and
 brothers. I, for one, should find no further pleasure in living, but
 should prefer to die and join the dead. Let us make a move or they
 may be across the seas before we can stop them.'

His tears and his words stirred all his countrymen to pity. But at this
 375 moment Medon and the divine minstrel appeared. On waking they
 had come straight from the palace, and now took their stand in the
 centre of the assembly. Everyone was amazed, but the wise Medon
 spoke out. 'Listen, fellow-Ithacans, it was not against the will of the
 deathless gods that Odysseus carried out his plans. With my own
 380 eyes I saw an immortal, **who looked exactly like Mentor**, standing at

LINE 360

Eupeithes rose to address them **Eupeithes** is
 the father of Antinous, the first suitor killed.
 He rouses the suitors' kinsmen to take
 revenge for their dead sons.

LINE 380

who looked exactly like Mentor **Athene** again
 takes the form of **Mentor**, an old friend of
 Odysseus, to stand at his side for the fight.

his side. And this immortal was at one moment ahead of Odysseus, cheering him on, and at the next storming through the hall, striking terror into the Suitors; they fell in heaps.'

At these words the blood drained from their cheeks; and now the
 385 hero, old Halitherses, Master's son, the only man there who could look into the future as well as into the past, rose up to give them some well-meant advice. 'Ithacans,' he cried, 'Listen to what I have to say. Your own stupidity, my friends, is to blame for what has happened. You would not listen to me or to Mentor, the shepherd of
 390 the people, when we urged you to check your sons in their career of folly. They were guilty of a great wrong, because they wickedly abandoned all standards of civilized behaviour, plundering the estate and insulting the wife of our greatest man, whom they counted on never seeing here again. Be persuaded by me. Let us not make a
 395 move; or I fear that some of you may bring doom on your heads.'

At the end of this speech, some of them remained where they were, but more than half leaped to their feet with loud war-cries, rejecting his advice and following that of Eupheithes, the great persuader. They rushed to arms, equipped themselves in their gleaming bronze and
 400 mustered outside the spacious town. Eupheithes in his folly took command. He saw himself avenging his son's death, though he was never to come back alive but was to meet his fate in that very place.

— THE GODS DECIDE

It was now that Athene said to Zeus: 'Father of ours, Son of Cronos, King of Kings, answer my question and say what thoughts are
 405 hidden in your heart. Will you further this strife with its horrors and turmoil or [establish peace between the two sides](#)?'

To this Zeus the Cloud-gatherer replied: 'My child, why come to me with such questions? Was it not your own idea that Odysseus should return and avenge himself on his enemies? Act as you please, but I
 410 will tell you the best way. Since the noble Odysseus has had his revenge on the Suitors, let them make a treaty of peace to establish him as King in perpetuity, and let us wipe from their minds the memory of the slaughter of sons and brothers. Let them be friends as before and let peace and plenty prevail.' With this encouragement
 415 from Zeus, Athene, who had already set her heart on action, flashed down at once from the peaks of Olympus.

In the farmhouse, after they had enjoyed a satisfying meal, the patient good Odysseus said: 'Will one of you go and see whether they aren't close to us already!' At his bidding, one of Dolius' sons jumped
 420 up and went to the threshold. Standing there, he saw them all quite close and called to Odysseus with words that flew: 'They are on us, quick! To arms!' Whereupon they leaped up and put on their armour –

LINE 406

[establish peace between the two sides](#) On Olympus, **Zeus** and **Athene** agree the outcome: Odysseus is to stay king, and both sides are to swear an oath of peace, the killing of the suitors forgiven and forgotten.

Odysseus and the three with him, and Dolius' six sons. Laertes and Dolius, grey-headed though they were, also armed themselves, warriors by necessity. When all were clad in gleaming bronze they opened the gates and went out, Odysseus leading.

They were now joined by Athene, Daughter of Zeus, who had assumed Mentor's appearance and voice. The patient, good Odysseus was overjoyed to see her. He turned at once to his dear son and said: 'Telemachus, when you find yourself in the thick of battle, where the best men prove their mettle, you will soon learn how not to disgrace your father's house. In all the world there has been none like ours for courage and manliness.'

And the thoughtful Telemachus replied: 'If you care to, father, you will see me in my present mood by no means disgracing my father's house, as you put it.'

Laertes was delighted. 'Dear gods!' he exclaimed. 'What a day this is to warm my heart! My son and grandson competing in valour!'

— LAERTES' SPEAR

Athene of the flashing eyes came up to him now and said: 'Laertes, son of Arceisius, dearest of all my friends, pray to the Lady of the flashing eyes and to Father Zeus; then quickly **poise your long spear and throw it**.'

As she spoke Pallas Athene breathed vigour into him, and he immediately poised his long spear with a prayer to the Daughter of

LINES 441–442

poise your long spear and throw it Athene puts fresh strength into the aged **Laertes**, who throws his spear and kills **Eupeithes**.

445 great Zeus, and threw it. He struck Eupeithes on the bronze cheek-guard of his helmet. The helmet failed to stop the spear; the bronze point pierced clean through and with a clang of armour Eupeithes crashed to the ground. Then Odysseus and his illustrious son
 450 attacked the front rank of the enemy and struck them with their swords and double-pointed spears. They would have destroyed them all and seen that none went home alive, if Athene, Daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, had not raised a great cry and checked the whole throng: 'Ithacans, stop this disastrous fight and separate at once before blood is shed.'

— ZEUS INTERVENES

455 At Athene's cry the colour drained from their cheeks. In terror at the sound of her voice they let their weapons drop from their hands on to the ground. Then they turned and made for the city for dear life. The much-enduring good Odysseus raised a terrifying war-cry, gathered himself together and pounced on them *like a swooping*
 460 *eagle*. But at this moment Zeus flung a flaming thunderbolt which fell in front of the bright-eyed Daughter of that formidable Sire. Athene called out to Odysseus: 'Odysseus, favourite of Zeus, resourceful son of Laertes, hold your hand! Stop fighting your countrymen, in case you incur the wrath of Zeus the Thunderer.'

— PEACE

465 Odysseus obeyed her, and his heart rejoiced. Then Pallas Athene, Daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, still using Mentor's form and voice for her disguise, *established peace between the two sides*.

LINES 459–460

like a swooping eagle Odysseus charges 'like a swooping eagle' (a **simile**), but **Zeus** throws down a thunderbolt and **Athene** calls out to stop the fighting.

LINE 467

established peace between the two sides

The poem ends here. **Athene**, still in Mentor's form, makes both sides swear oaths and 'established peace between the two sides'.

