Meanwhile noble Odysseus retired to his rest in the forecourt, under him spreading an untanned oxhide, placing upon it many a fleece of the sheep the Achaians had offered as victims; over him, when he lay down, Eurýnomê threw on a mantle.

There in his heart for the suitors Odysseus was pondering evils while he was lying awake. Then out of the palace the women came, those who had before been going to bed with the suitors, each entertaining the others with laughter and happy amusements. But as for him, in his breast was a heartfelt anger arising; much he was pondering over the thoughts in his mind and his spirit, whether to spring upon them and accomplish the death of each woman or to allow them to lie once more with the arrogant suitors this last, final occasion; the heart inside him was growling. Just as a bitch who has taken a stand by her powerless puppies growls at a man that she does not know and is eager to fight him, so was he growling inside, indignant at their wicked actions. Striking himself on the breast, he spoke to his heart in reproval: "Steady, my heart, and endure: you suffered another more shameful thing on the day that the Cyclops, resistless in power, was eating those strong comrades of mine; you endured till Nobody's cunning led you away from the cavern in which you expected to perish."

So he spoke in his breast as he pressed the appeal on his own heart. Therefore his heart held, bound by persuasion; and ever unblenching so it endured; he himself kept twisting one way and the other.

As when a man keeps shifting a paunch that has been stuffed full with suet and blood, in a huge fire's blaze, one way and the other turning it over, and wishes for it to be rapidly roasted, so did he twist one way and the other and kept meditating how he could manage to lay his hands on the shameless suitors, being but one against many. Athena, descending from heaven,
Athena encourages Odysseus; Penelope wishes to die

BOOK 20

came up close to him there; she had likened her form to a woman; standing above his head, she spoke these words and addressed him:

"Why do you wake, who beyond all mortals are destiny-ridden? This is in fact your house; in the house this woman is your wife; as for the child, he is surely the son anybody would long for."

Speaking to her then answered Odysseus of many devices: "Certainly all this, goddess, you speak as is fitting and proper. Yet there is this that the heart in my breast still keeps meditating, how I can manage to lay my hands on the shameless suitors—being but one, while they in the palace are always together. Then a more difficult thing in my breast I keep meditating—thus: if indeed, by the succor of you and of Zeus, I should kill them, where would I go to escape? I ask you to think about these things."

Speaking to him made answer the goddess bright-eyed Athena:

"Obstinate man! Some people will trust an inferior comrade, though he is mortal, and knows no counsel as crafty as mine is; I am a god, however, who keep a continual watch on you in all of your trials; and this I will say to you plainly: if in fact there were fifty battalions of men who are mortal standing around us, eagerly striving to kill us in battle, even from them you would drive their cattle away and their fat sheep. But allow slumber to take you; a pain this is, to be watching all night, lying awake; you will soon rise out of your troubles."

Such words when she had spoken, she poured sleep over his eyelids; straightway the glorious goddess herself went back to Olympos.

While he was held by slumber, releasing the cares from his spirit, loosing his limbs, his devoted and virtuous wife was awakened; there in her soft bed she sat up, and she wept and bewailed him. But then, when in her heart she was quite satisfied with her weeping, first did the splendor of women to Artemis make her entreaty:

"Artemis, august goddess and daughter of Zeus, how I wish that you by striking my chest with an arrow would take out the life breath now, this moment, or else that a stormwind seizing upon me then would be gone from here, bearing me forth on the vaporous pathways, casting me down at the mouth of the back-flowing river of ocean, just as it was when the stormwinds seized Pandareos' daughters, girls whose parents the gods had destroyed, so that they were forsaken there in the palace, as orphans; and bright Aphroditè provided nourishment, giving them cheese, sweet honey, and wine to their pleasure. Hera to them moreover beyond all women presented
beauty and sensible minds; chaste Artemis granted them stature;
how to do glorious handcraft work they were taught by Athena.
Then, when bright Aphrodite ascended to lofty Olympos,
so as to seek for the girls the fulfillment of flourishing marriage,
praying to Zeus the great thunderbolt-hurler, who knows about all things
well—what is fated and what not fated for men who are mortal—
that was the time those maidens were all snatched up by the stormwinds,
who gave them to the hateful Erinyes to be taken care of;
so may the gods with Olympian dwellings annihilate me now,
or may the fair-haired Artemis strike me down, so that I go
under the hateful earth with my mind's eye still on Odysseus,
lest I gladden the thoughts of another, inferior husband.
But an endurable evil possesses a person whenever
somebody weeps all day, without cease in her heart is lamenting,
yet sleep holds her at night; for of all it makes her forgetful,
both of the good and the evil, when it comes over her eyelids.
But now even the dreams that a god sent against me are evil,
since last night there was sleeping beside me a man who resembled
him as he was when he went with the army; and therefore my heart felt
joyful, for I did not think it a dream but a genuine vision.”
So she spoke, and at once upon her came Dawn of the gold throne.
There to her voice as she wept kept listening noble Odysseus;
then as he pondered her words, it seemed to his heart that already
now she had recognized him and beside his head she was standing.
So he gathered the mantle and fleeces on which he was lying,
laid them down on a chair in the hall, then taking the oxhide
out, laid it on the ground, and to Zeus prayed, lifting his hands up:
“Zeus our father, if willing at last you gods have conveyed me
over the dry and the wet to my land, when much you had harmed me,
let someone among those who are waking impart me an omen,
speaking within, and without let a portent of Zeus appear also.”
So he spoke in his prayer; Zeus Counselor heard him and heeded;
straightway then he sounded his thunder from shining Olympos,
high aloft out of the clouds, so that noble Odysseus was joyful.
Out of the house nearby where the shepherd of people had set up
mills was an omen of words dispatched by a woman, a miller—
sitting at them, twelve women in all were engaged in the labor,
barley and wheat meal they were producing, the marrow of people.
Now were the others asleep, since they were through grinding their wheat meal;
only the one had not finished, for she was the weakest among them;
stopping her mill, she spoke this word as a sign to her master:

"Zeus our father, who rule as the lord of the gods and of mankind,

115 loudly you sounded your thunder from out of the star-filled heaven,

nor is a cloud anywhere; as a sign you show this to someone.

Even for me, though wretched, fulfill this word that I utter:

may those suitors on this very day for the last and the final
time in the house of Odysseus partake of a pleasurable dinner,

120 they indeed who have loosened my knees in heart-anguishing labor

making the barley meal; for the last time now may they banquet!"

So did she say; then noble Odysseus rejoiced at the omen,
as at the thunder of Zeus; for the guilty, he thought, would be punished.

There in the beautiful house of Odysseus, the rest of the handmaids

gathered together and kindled a weariless fire on the hearthstone.

Out of his bed then rising, Telémachos, godlike in manhood,

125 put on his clothing and hung his keen-edged sword on his shoulder;

under his glistening feet he fastened his beautiful sandals;

then he took up his powerful spear, well-pointed with sharp bronze.

Going to stand on the threshold, he spoke and addressed Eurykleía:

"Mamma dear, how have you honored the stranger and guest in our palace?

Given him food and a bed? Or instead does he lie uncared for?

That is the way my mother can be, though a sensible woman—

130 she is impulsive in showing respect to the one who is worse of

men who are mortal; the better she sends from the house without honor."

Then spoke answering him Eurykleía, sagacious and prudent:

"Child, now I wish you would not lay blame upon her who is blameless.

For as he sat there, wine he was drinking as long as he wanted;

as to the food, no more was he hungry, he said, for she asked him.

Afterward, when he at last began thinking of bed and of sleeping,

135 she then ordered the women attendants to spread out his bedding;

he however, like one who is utterly woeful and hapless,

had no wish to be going to sleep on a bed or in blankets,

but on the untanned hide of an ox and on fleeces of sheep he

slept outside in the forecourt; and we put a mantle upon him."

So she spoke; and Telémachos set forth out of the palace,

140 holding his spear, and together with him went two of his swift hounds.

He went on to the meeting, to join with the well-greaved Achaians.

Meanwhile the women attendants were called by the glorious woman

old Eurykleía the daughter of Ops, offspring of Peisénor:

"Come now; some of you busy yourselves in sweeping the palace,

145 sprinkle the floor, then throw on the well-made armchairs the purple
coverlets; others of you get busy with sponges and wipe off
thoroughly all of the tables and then go clean out the wine bowls,
also the well-wrought cups, double-handled; and others among you
go to the spring after water and come back bringing it quickly.

155 For it will not be long that the suitors are gone from the palace;
they will arrive quite early, for all take part in this feast day.”
So did she say; they carefully listened to her and obeyed her.
Twenty of them went out to the spring with its deep dark water,
while right there in the palace the others were skilfully working.

160 Into the house came haughty menservants, and they then started
splitting the firewood well and expertly; and shortly the women
came back up from the spring; just after them entered the swineherd,
driving in three fat swine, those which were the best of the whole herd.
These he allowed to go search out food in the lovely enclosure,
while he himself in gentle and kind words spoke to Odysseus:

“Dear friend, do the Achaians regard you with greater respect now,
or do they slight you still in the house, as before they were doing?”

Speaking to him then answered Odysseus of many devices:

“Surely I wish that the gods, Eumaíos, would punish the outrage
which in their recklessness these arrogant men have been wreaking
here in another man’s house, and they have no share of discretion.”

Such were the things they spoke and addressed each one to the other.
Then did Melánthios, herdsman of goats, come up and approach them,
driving the goats that were best by far among all of the goat flocks
170 for the repast of the suitors; with him came two of the herdsmen.
These goats under the echoing portico then they tethered,
while he himself spoke out to Odysseus in words of derision:

“Stranger, will you even now in the house be giving us trouble,
begging your keep of the men, and will you not get along outdoors?
180 As for the two of us, I am quite sure we will never be parted
till we have tested our fists, since you are without due order
when you are begging; and other Achaians as well hold banquets.”
He said; Odysseus of many devices returned him no answer;
silently shaking his head, he secretly plotted him evils.

185 Third then coming to them was Philoútios, leader of people,
driving a sterile heifer and fat goats in for the suitors.
These had been carried across by ferrymen, those who provide for
other men also conveyance, whoever arrives at their landing.
These beasts under the echoing portico then he tethered,
190 while he himself stood close to the swineherd, making inquiry:
“What new stranger is this who has come so recently, swineherd, here to our palace? And who are the people he claims to derive from? Where does his family live now, and where are the fields of his fathers? He is ill fated but seems in stature a king and a leader.

Yet it is true that the gods bring pain to far-wandering mortals, anytime—even for kings—they spin out sorrow and hardship.”

Thus, and he greeted him then with his right hand, standing beside him. Raising his voice he spoke, and in these winged words he addressed him: “Welcome, father and stranger; and may good fortune attend you ever hereafter; but now you are held by many misfortunes.

Oh father Zeus, there is no other god more baneful than you are! You do not show any pity for men when once you beget them, when they plunge in the midst of affliction and miserable hardships.

I began sweating as soon as I thought, my eyes became tearful, when I remembered Odysseus, because he too, I suppose, is wearing old rags like these as he wanders about among mankind, if he perhaps still lives, still looks upon Helios’ sunlight.

If he has died already and dwells in the palace of Hades, ah me then for the faultless Odysseus, who set me in charge of cattle, a young boy still, in the Képhallénians’ district.

Now that stock has become quite numberless, nor among men has anyone’s breeding of broad-browed cattle produced such an increase; these are the ones which strangers command me to bring to themselves for eating, and do not care in the least for the child in the palace,

nor do they quake at the gods’ supervision; for they are already eager to share out the wealth of the lord who long has been absent. But it is this that the heart in my own dear breast is revolving often, that while his son is alive, it would be a great evil going away to the country of others and taking the cattle there among alien men; yet this is more dreadful, to stay here taking in charge those cattle for other men, suffering hardships.

Certainly I would have fled long since and arrived at another proud-souled king, since this is no longer a place to put up with; but of the luckless man I think still, if coming from somewhere he might cause those suitors throughout his palace to scatter.”

Speaking to him then answered Odysseus of many devices: “Oxherd, since you seem like a man neither evil nor senseless—I am myself well aware what wisdom has entered your spirit—therefore I will say this, and a great oath swear you upon it:

Zeus be witness the first of the gods, and this table of friendship,
also the hearthstone of faultless Odysseus, to which I have come now—
while you are still inside it, Odysseus will come to his dwelling;
then with your own eyes, should you desire it, you will observe those
suitors be slaughtered who here in the palace are playing the masters.”

Speaking to him then answered the herdsman, tender of cattle:

“Stranger and friend, may the scion of Kronos accomplish your saying!
Then you would learn what strength I have and what hands to employ it!”

So in like fashion Eumaios was praying to all of the gods for
various-minded Odysseus to come back home to his palace.

Such things then they spoke and addressed each one to the others,
while for Telémachos’ death and destruction the suitors were making
ready their plots; but a bird came over their heads on the left side—
it was a high-flying eagle; a tremulous dove it was holding.

Then Amphínomos spoke and addressed them, giving them counsel:

“Friends, this plan of ours now never will run true to our wishes,
plotting Telémachos’ murder; instead, let us think about feasting.”

So Amphínomos spoke, and his words found favor among them.
When they had gone back into the palace of godlike Odysseus,
first having laid their mantles aside on benches and armchairs,
they made sacrifice then of the full-grown sheep and the fat goats,
sacrificed sleek hogs also, as well as a cow from the ox herd.

Then they roasted the innards and shared them out, and the wine they
blended in mixing bowls; and the swineherd passed out the goblets.
Bread also they were served by Philoítios, leader of people,
piled in beautiful baskets; the wine was poured by Melántheus.

They stretched forth eager hands to partake of the food lying ready.

Managing things to their profit, Telémachos seated Odysseus
well inside of the strong-built hall, close by the stone threshold,
setting an ugly old stool for him there and a little low table.

Near him placing a share of the innards and pouring the wine out
into a gold-wrought goblet, he spoke these words and addressed him:

“Sit right here in your place with the men while drinking your wine now.
I myself will defend you against the insults and the fists of
all of the suitors at need; since this is in no way a public
house but the house of Odysseus, and it was for me that he gained it.
But as for you now, suitors, restrain your hearts from abuses
and from your fists, so as not to arouse any rancor or fighting.”

So he spoke; and they all kept biting their lips with their teeth in
wonder at hearing Telémachos now, he was talking so boldly.

Then among them thus spoke Antínoös son of Eupeíthes:
but Ktesíppos scolds him

"Let us Achaians accept this word of Telémachos, even though it is harsh—in saying these things, he threatens us gravely. Zeus son of Kronos would not let us do it, or we would have stopped him, here in the halls, before now, though he is an eloquent speaker."

Thus Antínoös spoke; to his words he paid no attention.

Meanwhile up through the town a divine hecatomb for the gods was led by the heralds; the long-haired men, the Achaians, were gathered under the shadowy grove of Apollo who shoots from a distance.

When they had roasted the outermost flesh and had taken the spits out, then they divided the portions and dined on a sumptuous dinner; those who were serving the meat set down by Odysseus a portion equal to what they received themselves, since it had been ordered so by Telémachos, much loved scion of godlike Odysseus.

By no means did Athena permit that the arrogant suitors keep their deeds from heart-anguishing outrage, so even greater pain might enter the heart of Odysseus the son of Laërtes. There was among those suitors a man most lawless in spirit—he had been named Ktesíppos; he made his dwelling in Samè. He was confiding his hopes for success in abundant possessions when he courted the wife of Odysseus, who long had been absent. He was the one who then spoke out to the arrogant suitors:

"Listen to me now, valorous suitors, so I can say something. Long since now has the stranger been getting a share, as is proper, equal to ours, since it is not noble or just to be treating guests of Telémachos lightly, whoever may come to this dwelling. But come, I will present him a guest-gift too, so that he may offer a present himself to the bathwater pourer or else to some other servant of those in the palace of godlike Odysseus."

So having said, in his large strong hand he picked up an ox hoof out of the basket it lay in, and threw it; Odysseus avoided it by easily ducking his head, and he smiled in his spirit grimly, sardonically, as it struck the strong wall of the palace. Thus did Telémachos speak to Ktesíppos in words of reproval:

"This was indeed, Ktesíppos, a better thing now for your spirit, you did not strike this stranger; for he has avoided the missile. For with my keen-edged spear, in the midriff I would have struck you; then would your father, instead of a wedding, have worked on arranging funeral rites for you here. So nobody show any ugly deeds in my house; for already I notice them all and I know which ones are the good, which worse, though before I was still quite childish.
Nevertheless these deeds we still are enduring as we keep seeing the sheep flocks slaughtered, the wine being drunk, and the victuals always devoured; for indeed it is hard for one man to check many.

But come, do me no harm any longer, with hostile intention; if now you are indeed with a bronze sword eager to kill me, I would desire even that myself; it would be much better rather to die than forever to see these scandalous actions, strangers abusively treated and battered, and women attendants shamefully harried about by the men in the beautiful palace.”

So did he say; then all of the people were hushed in silence; finally then Ageláos the son of Damastor addressed them: “Friends, no man should become enraged at a thing that is spoken justly and so use quarrelsome words when giving an answer. Do not at all maltreat this stranger nor yet any other servant among those here in the palace of godlike Odysseus. But to Télémachos and to his mother a word that is milder I would address, if to both of their hearts it would give any pleasure. For so long as the hearts in your breasts could keep on expecting various-minded Odysseus to come back home to his palace, then it was not blameworthy to wait for him nor to restrain us suitors who come to the house, since that would have been much better if to the country Odysseus returned, came back to his palace; now it is finally clear that he never will have a homecoming. But come, sit by your mother and put this counsel before her: ‘Marry the man who is noblest, the one who provides the most presents,’ so that in happiness you will control all the goods of your fathers, eating and drinking, and she may be tending the house of another.”

Thoughtful Télémachos then spoke out to him, giving an answer: “Now by Zeus, Ageláos, as well as the pains of my father, who far distant from Ithaka, surely, has died or yet wanders, not in the least I oppose my mother’s marriage but bid her marry whomever she wishes, and I will give numberless presents. I would be shamed if I drove her unwilling away from the palace, speaking in words of constraint—may a god not cause it to happen!”

So did Télémachos speak; in the suitors Pallas Athena roused unquenchable laughter and caused their minds to beaddled. Now they were laughing with jaws which seemed like somebody else’s; spattered with blood was the meat they ate, and the eyes of them all were filled as the tears welled up; and their souls thought only of wailing.

These words then godlike Theoklýmenos uttered among them:
The Odyssey of Homer by Homer, Translated by Rodney Merrill
http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=17219
The University of Michigan Press, 2002

Theoklýmenos sees grim omens; the suitors laugh

"Miserable men! What evil is this you suffer? In night your heads, your faces, and down to the knees underneath are enshrouded; lamentation is kindled, and over your cheeks are tears flooding; sprinkled with blood are the beautiful walls and the bases of pillars; phantoms are crowding the porch, and the courtyard also is crowded, ghosts who are parting for Êrebos under the dusk; and the sun has perished from out of the sky as a baneful mist overspreads it."

So he spoke, and at him they all began merrily laughing.

It was Eurýmachos, Pólybos' son, who was first to address them:

"Out of his mind is the stranger arrived from abroad just lately. Come, young men, let us quickly escort him out of the palace, so he may go to assembly, for here it seems to him nighttime."

Then in return godlike Theoklýmenos spoke and addressed him:

"No, Eurýmachos, I do not ask you to furnish me escorts. I have eyes, and I have ears too, and both feet to convey me, also a mind in my breast that is not so shabbily fashioned. These I will use to go out, since I am aware of the evil coming upon you, which not one of you suitors will flee from nor will avoid, you who in the palace of godlike Odysseus, doing to men such violent deeds, plot follies so reckless."

So he spoke and went out of the house well-built as a dwelling; then he came to Peiraíos, who welcomed him gladly and kindly. Straightway all of the suitors, as each one looked at the others, taunted Telémachos over his guests by laughing about them.

Such were the words which one of the arrogant youths would have spoken: "No one, Telémachos, has less luck with his strangers and guest-friends, seeing that one of them you have here is a scavenging vagrant, victuals and wine he is always wanting, and not in the least is skillful in works or in bodily strength, but a weight on the farmland.

As for the other one now, he stood and began prophesying. But if you trust me a little, it might be much to your profit: putting the strangers upon some galley of numerous oarlocks, let us to Sicily send them—a worthwhile price it would fetch you."

Thus those suitors would say; to their words he paid no attention, but at his father he looked in silence and always was keeping watch for the time he could lay his hands on the shameless suitors.

Putting a beautiful stool just opposite where they were sitting, noble Ikários' daughter Penelope, thoughtful and prudent, listened to all that was spoken by each man there in the palace.

For indeed they were laughing as they made ready a banquet
They prepare a joyless banquet

pleasant and sweet to the heart, since they had killed numerous victims. No other supper could ever be made more joyless than this one which that powerful man and the goddess were soon to be setting there for the suitors; for they were the first to devise such scandals.