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Book 1

1. Tell me, O muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover, he suffered much upon the sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home. Do what he might he could not save his men, for they perished through their own folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things, O daughter of Zeus, from whatsoever source you may know them.
2. All who escaped death in battle or by shipwreck had got safely home except Odysseus, and he, though he was longing to return to his wife and country, was detained by the goddess Calypso, who wanted to marry him. But as years went by, there came a time when the gods settled that he should go back to Ithaca. Even when he was among his own people, his troubles would not yet be over; nevertheless, all the gods had now begun to pity him except Poseidon, who still persecuted him without ceasing and would not let him get home.

In the remainder of book 1 we are introduced to the son of Odysseus, Telemachus. He awaits the return of his father, whom he has never met. In his father's absence, a group of suitors have taken over his home, hoping for the hand of Penelope, Odysseus' wife, in marriage. She has avoided choosing one, but in the meantime the suitors are spending their time feasting and wasting away the goods of her household. Telemachus is coming of age, which means he is a threat to the suitors, who wish to marry his mother and become king. After prompting from a goddess, Telemachus decides to go abroad in search of information about his father. Before making this move, he calls an assembly and addresses the suitors. This represents the first phase of a quest; we should recall what the important skills are for a hero to understand this – speaking and fighting. So, just as much as this story is the story of Odysseus' quest to return home, it is the story of Telemachus quest to become a man and take up his place in society. Read with that quest in mind.

Book Two

3. Now when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Telemachus rose and dressed himself. He bound his sandals on to his comely [*handsome, beautiful*] feet, tied his sword about his shoulder, and left his room looking like an immortal god. He at once sent the criers round to call the people to an assembly, so they called them and the people gathered. Then, when they were got together, he went to the place of assembly spear in hand – not alone, for his two hounds went with him. Athena endowed him with a presence of such divine comeliness that all marveled at



him as he went by, and when he took his place' in his father's seat even the oldest councilors made way for him.

4. Aegyptius, a man bent double with age, and of infinite experience, was the first to speak. His son Antiphus had gone with Odysseus to Troy. "Men of Ithaca," he said, "hear my words. From the day Odysseus left us there has been no meeting of our councilors until now; who then can it be, whether old or young, that finds it so necessary to convene us? Has he got wind of some host approaching, and does he wish to warn us, or would he speak upon some other matter of public moment? I am sure he is an excellent person, and I hope Zeus will grant him his heart's desire."
5. Telemachus took this speech as of good omen and rose at once, for he was bursting with what he had to say. He stood in the middle of the assembly and the good herald Pisenor brought him his staff. Then, turning to Aegyptius, "Sir," said he, "it is I, as you will shortly learn, who have convened you, for it is I who am the most aggrieved. I have not got wind of any host approaching about which I would warn you, nor is there any matter of public moment on which I would speak. My grievance is purely personal, and turns on two great misfortunes which have fallen upon my house. The first of these is the loss of my excellent father, who was chief among all you here present, and was like a father to every one of you; the second is much more serious, and before long will be the utter ruin of my estate. The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Icarius, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, but day by day they keep hanging about my father's house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness; we have now no Odysseus to ward off harm from our doors, and I cannot hold my own against them. I shall never all my days be as good a man as he was, still I would indeed defend myself if I had power to do so, for I cannot stand such treatment any longer; my house is being disgraced and ruined. Have respect, therefore, to your own consciences and to public opinion. Fear, too, the wrath of heaven, lest the gods should be displeased and turn upon you. I pray you by Zeus and Themis, who is the beginning and the end of councils, [do not] hold back, my friends, and leave me singlehanded – unless it be that my brave father Odysseus did some wrong to the Achaeans which you would now avenge on me, by aiding and abetting these suitors. Moreover, if I am to be eaten out of house and home at all, I had rather you did the eating yourselves, for I could then take action against you to some purpose, and serve you with notices from house to house till I got paid in full, whereas now I have no remedy."

Later Telemachus goes on to outline his plan to go abroad in search of some word of his father. In his travels, Telemachus first visits Nestor, whom we met in the Iliad. Nestor sends him to see Menelaus, now at home in Sparta with his wife, Helen. We pick things up in book four where Telemachus has just arrived at the home of Menelaus and Helen.



Book 4

6. They reached the low lying city of Lacedaemon where they drove straight to the abode of Menelaus. They found him in his own house, feasting with his many clansmen in honor of the wedding of his son, and also of his daughter, whom he was marrying to the son of that valiant warrior Achilles. He had given his consent and promised her to him while he was still at Troy, and now the gods were bringing the marriage about; so he was sending her with chariots and horses to the city of the Myrmidons over whom Achilles' son was reigning. For his only son he had found a bride from Sparta, daughter of Alector. So the neighbors and kinsmen of Menelaus were feasting and making merry in his house. There was a bard also to sing to them and play his lyre, while two tumblers went about performing in the midst of them when the man struck up with his tune.
7. Telemachus and the son of Nestor stayed their horses at the gate, whereon Eteoneus, servant to Menelaus, came out, and as soon as he saw them ran hurrying back into the house to tell his Master. He went close up to him and said, "Menelaus, there are some strangers come here, two men, who look like sons of Zeus. What are we to do? Shall we take their horses out, or tell them to find friends elsewhere as they best can?" Menelaus was very angry and said, "Eteoneus, son of Boethous, you never used to be a fool, but now you talk like a simpleton. Take their horses out, of course, and show the strangers in that they may have supper. You and I have stayed often enough at other people's houses before we got back here, where heaven grant that we may rest in peace henceforward."
8. So Eteoneus bustled back and bade other servants come with him. They took their sweating horses from under the yoke, made them fast to the mangers, and gave them a feed of oats and barley mixed. Then they leaned the chariot against the end wall of the courtyard, and led the way into the house. Telemachus and Pisistratus were astonished when they saw it, for its splendor was as that of the sun and moon. When they had admired everything to their heart's content, they went into the bath and washed themselves.
9. The servants brought them woolen cloaks and shirts, and the two took their seats by the side of Menelaus. A maidservant brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands; and she drew a clean table beside them. Another servant brought them bread and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, while the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side.
10. Menelaus then greeted them saying, "Fall to, and welcome; when you have done supper I shall ask who you are, for the lineage of such men as you cannot have been lost. You must be descended from a line of scepter-bearing kings, for poor people do not have such sons as you are." He then handed them a piece of fat roast loin, which had been set near him as being a prime part, and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them. As soon as they had had



enough to eat and drink, Telemachus said to the son of Nestor, with his head so close that no one might hear, "Look, Pisistratus, man after my own heart, see the gleam of bronze and gold- of amber, ivory, and silver. Everything is so splendid that it is like seeing the palace of Olympian Zeus. I am lost in admiration."

11. Menelaus overheard him and said, "No one, my sons, can hold his own with Zeus, for his house and everything about him is immortal. Among mortal men, well, there may be another who has as much wealth as I have or there may not, but at all events I have travelled much and have undergone much hardship, for it was nearly eight years before I could get home with my fleet. I went to Cyprus, Phoenicia and the Egyptians; I went also to the Ethiopians, the Sidonians, and the Erembians, and to Libya where the lambs have horns as soon as they are born, and the sheep lamb down three times a year. Everyone in that country, whether master or man, has plenty of cheese, meat, and good milk, for the ewes yield all the year round.
12. But while I was travelling and getting great riches among these people, my brother was secretly and shockingly murdered through the perfidy [*faithlessness, treason*] of his wicked wife, so that I have no pleasure in being lord of all this wealth. Whoever your parents may be they must have told you about all this. Would that I had only a third of what I now have so that I had stayed at home, and all those were living who perished on the plain of Troy, far from Argos. I grieve, as I sit here in my house, for one and all of them. At times I cry aloud for sorrow, but presently I leave off again, for crying is cold comfort and one soon tires of it. Yet grieve for these as I may, I do so for one man more than for them all. I cannot even think of him without loathing both food and sleep, so miserable does he make me, for no one of all the Achaeans worked so hard or risked so much as he did. He took nothing by it, and has left a legacy of sorrow to myself, for he has been gone a long time, and we know not whether he is alive or dead. His old father, his long-suffering wife Penelope, and his son Telemachus, whom he left behind him an infant in arms, are plunged in grief on his account."
13. Thus spoke Menelaus, and the heart of Telemachus yearned as he bethought him of his father. Tears fell from his eyes as he heard him thus mentioned, so that he held his cloak before his face with both hands. When Menelaus saw this he doubted whether to let him choose his own time for speaking, or to ask him at once and find what it was all about.
14. While he was thus in two minds Helen came down from her high vaulted and perfumed room, looking as lovely as Artemis herself. Adraste brought her a seat, Alcippe a soft woollen rug while Phylo fetched her the silver work-box which Alcandra wife of Polybus had given her. Polybus lived in Egyptian Thebes, which is the richest city in the whole world; he gave Menelaus two baths, both of pure silver, two tripods, and ten talents of gold. Besides all this, his wife gave Helen some beautiful presents, to wit, a golden distaff [*a tool for holding material to be spun*], and a silver work-box that ran on wheels, with a gold band round the top of it. Phylo now placed this by her side, full of fine spun yarn, and a distaff charged with violet colored wool was laid upon



the top of it. Then Helen took her seat, put her feet upon the footstool, and began to question her husband.

15. "Do we know, Menelaus," said she, "the names of these strangers who have come to visit us? Shall I guess right or wrong? – but I cannot help saying what I think. Never yet have I seen either man or woman so like somebody else (indeed when I look at him I hardly know what to think) as this young man is like Telemachus, whom Odysseus left as a baby behind him, when you Achaeans went to Troy with battle in your hearts, on account of my most shameless self."
16. "My dear wife," replied Menelaus, "I see the likeness just as you do. His hands and feet are just like Odysseus'; so is his hair, with the shape of his head and the expression of his eyes. Moreover, when I was talking about Odysseus, and saying how much he had suffered on my account, tears fell from his eyes, and he hid his face in his mantle."
17. Then Pisistratus said, "Menelaus, son of Atreus, you are right in thinking that this young man is Telemachus, but he is very modest, and is ashamed to come here and begin opening up discourse with one whose conversation is so divinely interesting as your own. My father, Nestor, sent me to escort him hither, for he wanted to know whether you could give him any counsel or suggestion. A son has always trouble at home when his father has gone away leaving him without supporters; and this is how Telemachus is now placed, for his father is absent, and there is no one among his own people to stand by him."
18. "Bless my heart," replied Menelaus, "then I am receiving a visit from the son of a very dear friend, who suffered much hardship for my sake. I had always hoped to entertain him with most marked distinction when heaven had granted us a safe return from beyond the seas. I should have founded a city for him in Argos, and built him a house. I should have made him leave Ithaca with his goods, his son, and all his people, and should have sacked for them some one of the neighboring cities that are subject to me. We should thus have seen one another continually, and nothing but death could have interrupted so close and happy an intercourse. I suppose, however, that heaven grudged us such great good fortune, for it has prevented the poor fellow from ever getting home at all."
19. Thus did he speak, and his words set them all a weeping. Helen wept, Telemachus wept, and so did Menelaus, nor could Pisistratus keep his eyes from filling, when he remembered his dear brother Antilochus whom the son of bright Dawn had killed. Thereon he said to Menelaus:
20. "Sir, my father Nestor, when we used to talk about you at home, told me you were a person of rare and excellent understanding. If, then, it be possible, do as I would urge you. I am not fond of crying while I am getting my supper. Morning will come in due course, and in the forenoon I care not how much I cry for those that are dead and gone. This is all we can do for the poor things. We can only shave our heads for them and wring the tears from our cheeks. I had a brother who died at Troy; he was by no means the worst man there; you are sure to have known him – his



name was Antilochus. I never set eyes upon him myself, but they say that he was singularly fleet of foot and in fight valiant."

21. "Your discretion, my friend," answered Menelaus, "is beyond your years. It is plain you take after your father. One can soon see when a man is son to one whom heaven has blessed both as regards wife and offspring and it has blessed Nestor from first to last all his days, giving him a great old age in his own house, with sons about him who are both well-disposed and valiant. We will put an end therefore to all this weeping, and attend to our supper again. Let water be poured over our hands. Telemachus and I can talk with one another fully in the morning."
22. At this Asphalion, one of the servants, poured water over their hands and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them.
23. Then Zeus's daughter Helen bethought her of another matter. She drugged the wine with an herb that banishes all care, sorrow, and ill humor. Whoever drinks wine thus drugged cannot shed a single tear all the rest of the day, not even though his father and mother both of them drop down dead, or he sees a brother or a son hewn in pieces before his very eyes. This drug, of such sovereign power and virtue, had been given to Helen by Polydamna wife of Thon, a woman of Egypt, where there grow all sorts of herbs, some good to put into the mixing-bowl and others poisonous. Moreover, everyone in the whole country is a skilled physician, for they are of the race of Paeon. When Helen had put this drug in the bowl, and had told the servants to serve the wine round, she said:
24. "Menelaus, son of Atreus, and you my good friends, sons of honorable men (which is as Zeus wills, for he is the giver both of good and evil, and can do what he chooses), feast here as you will, and listen while I tell you a tale in season. I cannot indeed name every single one of the exploits of Odysseus, but I can say what he did when he was before Troy, and you Achaeans were in all sorts of difficulties. He covered himself with wounds and bruises, dressed himself all in rags, and entered the enemy's city looking like a beggar. In this disguise he entered the city of Troy, and no one said anything to him. I alone recognized him and began to question him, but he was too cunning for me. When, however, I had washed and anointed him and had given him clothes, and after I had sworn a solemn oath not to betray him to the Trojans till he had got safely back to his own camp and to the ships, he told me all that the Achaeans meant to do. He killed many Trojans and got much information before he reached the Argive camp, for all which things the Trojan women made lamentation, but for my own part I was glad. My heart was beginning to wander to my home, and I was unhappy about the wrong that Aphrodite had done me in taking me over there, away from my country, my daughter, and my lawful wedded husband, who is indeed by no means deficient either in person or understanding."
25. Then Menelaus said, "All that you have been saying, my dear wife, is true. I have travelled much, and have had much to do with heroes, but I have never seen such another man as Odysseus.



What endurance too, and what courage he displayed within the wooden horse, wherein all the bravest of the Argives were lying in wait to bring death and destruction upon the Trojans.

26. "How sad," exclaimed Telemachus, "that all this was of no avail to save him, nor yet his own iron courage. But now, sir, be pleased to send us all to bed, that we may lie down and enjoy the blessed boon of sleep." At this Helen told the maid servants to set beds in the room that was in the gatehouse, and to make them with good red rugs, and spread coverlets on the top of them with woolen cloaks for the guests to wear. So the maids went out, carrying a torch, and made the beds, to which a man-servant presently conducted the strangers. Thus, then, did Telemachus and Pisistratus sleep there in the forecourt, while the son of Atreus lay in an inner room with lovely Helen by his side.
27. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Menelaus rose and dressed himself. He bound his sandals on to his comely feet, girded his sword about his shoulders, and left his room looking like an immortal god. Then, taking a seat near Telemachus he said: "And what, Telemachus, has led you to take this long sea voyage to Lacedaemon? Are you on public or private business? Tell me all about it."
28. "I have come, sir replied Telemachus, "to see if you can tell me anything about my father. I am being eaten out of house and home; my fair estate is being wasted, and my house is full of miscreants who keep killing great numbers of my sheep and oxen, on the pretense of paying their addresses to my mother. Therefore, I am suppliant at your knees if you may tell me about my father's end, whether you saw it with your own eyes, or heard it from some other traveler – for he was a man born to trouble. Do not soften things out of any pity for myself, but tell me in all plainness exactly what you saw. If my brave father Odysseus ever did you loyal service either by word or deed when you Achaeans were harassed by the Trojans, bear it in mind now and tell me truly."
29. Menelaus on hearing this was very much shocked. "So," he exclaimed, "these cowards would usurp a brave man's bed? A hind might as well lay her new born young in the lair of a lion, and then go off to feed in the forest or in some grassy dell: the lion when he comes back to his lair will make short work with the pair of them – and so will Odysseus with these suitors. By father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, if Odysseus is still the man that he was when he wrestled with Philomeleides in Lesbos, and threw him so heavily that all the Achaeans cheered him – if he is still such and were to come near these suitors, they would have a short shrift and a sorry wedding. As regards your questions, however, I will not deceive you, but will tell you without concealment all that the old man of the sea told me.
30. "I was trying to come on here, but the gods detained me in Egypt, for my hecatombs had not given them full satisfaction, and the gods are very strict about having their dues. Now off Egypt, about as far as a ship can sail in a day with a good stiff breeze behind her, there is an island called



Pharos. It has a good harbor from which vessels can get out into open sea when they have taken in water. There, the gods becalmed me twenty days without so much as a breath of fair wind to help me forward. We should have run clean out of provisions and my men would have starved, if a goddess had not taken pity upon me and saved me. It was Idothea, daughter to Proteus, the old man of the sea, for she had taken a great fancy to me.

31. "She came to me one day when I was by myself, as I often was, for the men used to go with their barbed hooks, all over the island in the hope of catching a fish or two to save them from the pangs of hunger. 'Stranger,' said she, 'it seems to me that you like starving in this way – at any rate it does not greatly trouble you, for you stick here day after day, without even trying to get away though your men are dying by inches.'
32. "'Let me tell you,' said I, 'whichever of the goddesses you may happen to be, that I am not staying here of my own accord, but must have offended the gods that live in heaven. Tell me, therefore, for the gods know everything, which of the immortals it is that is hindering me in this way, and tell me also how I may sail the sea so as to reach my home.'
33. "'Stranger,' replied she, 'I will make it all quite clear to you. There is an old immortal who lives under the sea hereabouts and whose name is Proteus. He is an Egyptian, and people say he is my father. He is Poseidon's head man and knows every inch of ground all over the bottom of the sea. If you can snare him and hold him tight, he will tell you about your voyage, what courses you are to take, and how you are to sail the sea so as to reach your home. He will also tell you, if you so will, all that has been going on at your house both good and bad, while you have been away on your long and dangerous journey.'
34. "'Can you show me,' said I, 'some trap by means of which I may catch this old god without his suspecting it and finding me out? For a god is not easily caught, not by a mortal man.'
35. "'Stranger,' said she, 'I will make it all quite clear to you. About the time when the sun shall have reached mid heaven, the old man of the sea comes up from under the waves, heralded by the West wind that furs the water over his head. As soon as he has come up he lies down, and goes to sleep in a great sea cave, where the seals – Halosydne's chickens as they call them – come up also from the grey sea, and go to sleep in shoals all round him; and a very strong and fish-like smell do they bring with them. Early to-morrow morning I will take you to this place and will lay you in ambush. Pick out, therefore, the three best men you have in your fleet, and I will tell you all the tricks that the old man will play you.'
36. "'First he will look over all his seals, and count them; then, when he has seen them and tallied them on his five fingers, he will go to sleep among them, as a shepherd among his sheep. The moment you see that he is asleep seize him. Put forth all your strength and hold him fast, for he will do his very utmost to get away from you. He will turn himself into every kind of creature that goes upon the earth, and will become also both fire and water; but you must hold him fast and grip him tighter and tighter, till he begins to talk to you and comes back to what he was when



you saw him go to sleep. Only then you may slacken your hold and let him go; and you can ask him which of the gods it is that is angry with you, and what you must do to reach your home over the seas.'

37. "Having so said she dived under the waves, whereon I turned back to the place where my ships were ranged upon the shore; and my heart was clouded with care as I went along. When I reached my ship we got supper ready, for night was falling, and camped down upon the beach.
38. "When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I took the three men on whose prowess of all kinds I could most rely, and went along by the sea-side, praying heartily to heaven. Meanwhile the goddess fetched me up four seal skins from the bottom of the sea, all of them just skinned, for she meant playing a trick upon her father. Then she dug four pits for us to lie in, and sat down to wait till we should come up. When we were close to her, she made us lie down in the pits one after the other, and threw a seal skin over each of us. Our wait would have been intolerable, for the stench of the seals was most distressing, but here, too, the goddess helped us for she put some ambrosia under each man's nostrils, which was so fragrant that it killed the smell of the seals.
39. "We waited the whole morning and made the best of it, watching the seals come up in hundreds to bask upon the sea shore, till at noon the old man of the sea came up too, and when he had found his fat seals he went over them and counted them. We were among the first he counted, and he never suspected any guile, but laid himself down to sleep as soon as he had done counting. Then we rushed upon him with a shout and seized him; at which he began at once with his old tricks, and changed himself first into a lion with a great mane; then all of a sudden he became a dragon, a leopard, a wild boar; the next moment he was running water, and then again directly he was a tree, but we stuck to him and never lost hold, till at last the cunning old creature became distressed, and said, "Which of the gods was it, Son of Atreus, that hatched this plot with you for snaring me and seizing me against my will? What do you want?"
40. "You know that yourself, old man," I answered, "you will gain nothing by trying to put me off. It is because I have been kept so long in this island, and see no sign of my being able to get away. I am losing all heart; tell me, then, for you gods know everything, which of the immortals it is that is hindering me, and tell me also how I may sail the sea so as to reach my home?"
41. "Then," he said, "if you would finish your voyage and get home quickly, you must offer sacrifices to Zeus and to the rest of the gods before embarking; for it is decreed that you shall not get back to your friends, and to your own house, till you have returned to the heaven fed stream of Egypt, and offered holy hecatombs to the immortal gods that reign in heaven. When you have done this they will let you finish your voyage."
42. I was broken hearted when I heard that I must go back all that long and terrible voyage to Egypt; nevertheless, I answered, "I will do all, old man, that you have laid upon me; but now tell me, and tell me true, whether all the Achaeans whom Nestor and I left behind us when we set sail from



Troy have got home safely, or whether any one of them came to a bad end either on board his own ship or among his friends when the days of his fighting were done.”

43. “Son of Atreus,” he answered, “why ask me? You had better not know what I can tell you, for your eyes will surely fill when you have heard my story. Many of those about whom you ask are dead and gone, but many still remain, and only two of the chief men among the Achaeans perished during their return home. As for what happened on the field of battle – you were there yourself. A third Achaean leader is still at sea, alive, but hindered from returning. Ajax was wrecked, for Poseidon drove him on to the great rocks of Gyrae; nevertheless, he let him get safe out of the water. Then, in spite of all Athena’s hatred he would have escaped death, if he had not ruined himself by boasting. He said the gods could not drown him even though they had tried to do so, and when Poseidon heard this large talk, he seized his trident in his two brawny hands, and split the rock of Gyrae in two pieces. The base remained where it was, but the part on which Ajax was sitting fell headlong into the sea and carried Ajax with it; so he drank salt water and was drowned.
44. “Your brother and his ships escaped, for Juno protected him, but when he was just about to reach the high promontory of Malea, he was caught by a heavy gale which carried him out to sea again. This drove him to the foreland where Thyestes used to dwell, but where Aegisthus was then living. By and by, however, it seemed as though he was to return safely after all, for the gods backed the wind into its old quarter and they reached home. Agamemnon kissed his native soil and shed tears of joy at finding himself in his own country.
45. “Now there was a watchman whom Aegisthus kept always on the watch, and to whom he had promised two talents of gold. This man had been looking out for a whole year to make sure that Agamemnon did not give him the slip and prepare war; when, therefore, this man saw Agamemnon go by, he went and told Aegisthus who at once began to lay a plot for him. He picked twenty of his bravest warriors and placed them in ambush on one side of the courtyard, while on the opposite side he prepared a banquet. Then he sent his chariots and horsemen to Agamemnon and invited him to the feast. He got Agamemnon there, all unsuspecting of the doom that was awaiting him, and killed him when the banquet was over as though he were butchering an ox in the shambles. Not one of Agamemnon’s or Aegisthus’ followers were left alive; they were all killed there in the cloisters.’
46. “Thus spoke Proteus, and I was broken hearted as I heard him. I sat down upon the sands and wept; I felt as though I could no longer bear to live or look upon the light of the sun. Presently, when I had had my fill of weeping and writhing upon the ground, the old man of the sea said, ‘Son of Atreus, do not waste any more time in crying so bitterly; it can do no manner of good. Find your way home as fast as ever you can, for Aegisthus is still alive, and even though Orestes has already succeeded in killing him, you may yet come in for his funeral.’



47. "On this I took comfort in spite of all my sorrow, and said, 'I know, now, about Ajax and Agamemnon, tell me, therefore, about the third man of whom you spoke. Is he still alive, but at sea, and unable to get home? Or is he dead? Tell me, no matter how much it may grieve me.'
48. "'The third man,' he answered, 'is Odysseus who dwells in Ithaca. I can see him on an island sorrowing bitterly in the house of the nymph Calypso, who is keeping him prisoner, and he cannot reach his home for he has neither ships nor sailors to take him over the sea. As for your own end, Menelaus, you shall not die in Argos, but the gods will take you to the Elysian plain, which is at the ends of the world. There fair-haired Rhadamanthus reigns, and men lead an easier life than anywhere else in the world, for in Elysium there falls not rain, nor hail, nor snow, but Oceanus breathes ever with a West wind that sings softly from the sea, and gives fresh life to all men. This will happen to you because you have married Helen, and are Zeus's son-in-law.'
49. "As he spoke he dived under the waves, whereon I turned back to the ships with my companions, and my heart was clouded with care as I went along. When we reached the ships we got supper ready, for night was falling, and camped down upon the beach. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we drew our ships into the water, and put our masts and sails within them. Then we went on board ourselves, took our seats on the benches, and smote the grey sea with our oars. I again stationed my ships in the heaven-fed stream of Egypt, and offered hecatombs that were full and sufficient. When I had thus appeased heaven's anger, I raised a barrow to the memory of Agamemnon that his name might live forever, after which I had a quick passage home, for the gods sent me a fair wind.
50. "And now for yourself, Telemachus, stay here some ten or twelve days longer, and I will then speed you on your way. I will make you a noble present of a chariot and three horses. I will also give you a beautiful chalice that so long as you live you may think of me whenever you make a drink-offering to the immortal gods."
51. "Son of Atreus," replied Telemachus, "do not press me to stay longer. I should be contented to remain with you for another twelve months, for I find your conversation so delightful that I should never once wish myself at home with my parents. But my crew whom I have left at Pylos are already impatient, and you are detaining me from them. As for any present you may be disposed to make me, I had rather that it should be a piece of plate. I will take no horses back with me to Ithaca, but will leave them to adorn your own stables, for you have much flat ground in your kingdom where lotus thrives, as also meadowsweet and wheat and barley, and oats with their white and spreading ears. In Ithaca we have neither open fields nor racecourses, and the country is more fit for goats than horses—I like it the better for that. None of our islands have much level ground, suitable for horses, and Ithaca least of all."
52. Menelaus smiled and took Telemachus' hand within his own. "What you say," said he, "shows that you come of good family. I both can, and will, make this exchange for you, by giving you the

Odyssey 1, 2, & 4 by Homer (excerpts)

YEAR I



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finest and most precious piece of plate in all my house. It is a mixing-bowl by Hephaestas's own hand, of pure silver, except the rim, which is inlaid with gold. Phaedimus, king of the Sidonians, gave it me in the course of a visit which I paid him when I returned thither on my homeward journey. I will make you a present of it."

53. Thus did they converse; meanwhile, guests kept coming to the king's house. They brought sheep and wine, as well as bread that their wives had put up for them. Thus they were busy cooking their dinners in the courts.

Telemachus proceeds homeward after this. It is only in book five that the action shifts to Odysseus, still trapped on Calypso's island. Hermes is dispatched with the news that Odysseus must be released, and his adventures then continue after that.