

all of my ships and all my loyal men.

So all day long till sunset we were sitting,  
feasting on meat and drinking sweet strong wine.

But when the sun went down and darkness fell,  
we went to sleep beside the breaking waves.

Then when rose-fingered Dawn came, bright and early,

I roused my men and told them to embark  
and loose the cables. Quickly they obeyed,

sat at their rowing benches, all in order,

and struck the gray saltwater with their oars.

So we sailed on, with sorrow in our hearts,  
glad to survive, but grieving for our friends."

560

BOOK 10



## The Winds and the Witch

"We reached the floating island of Aeolus,

who is well loved by all the deathless gods.

Around it, on sheer cliffs, there runs a wall

of solid bronze, impregnable. Twelve children

live with him in his palace: six strong boys,

and six girls. He arranged their marriages,

one sister to each brother. They are always

feasting there with their parents, at a banquet

that never ends. By day, the savor fills

the house; the court reverberates with sound.

At night they sleep beside the wives they love

on rope beds plied with blankets.

We arrived

at that fine citadel. He welcomed me

and made me stay a month, and asked for news

of Troy, the Argive ships, and how the Greeks

went home. I told him everything. At last

I told him he should send me on my way.

So he agreed to help me, and he gave me

Aeolus

a bag of oxhide leather and he tied  
the gusty winds inside it. Zeus, the son  
of Cronus, made him steward of the winds,  
and he can stop or rouse them as he wishes.  
He bound the bag with shining silver wire  
to my curved ship, so no gust could escape,  
however small, and he made Zephyr blow  
so that the breath could carry home our ships  
and us. But it was not to be. Our folly  
ruined us. For nine days and nights we sailed,  
and on the tenth, our native land appeared.  
We were so near, we saw men tending fires.  
Exhausted, I let sweet sleep overcome me.  
I had been doing all the steering, hoping  
that we would get home sooner if I did.  
But while I slept my men began to mutter,  
saying the great Aeolus gave me gifts—  
silver and gold that I was taking home.  
With glances to his neighbor, each complained,

'It seems that everybody loves this man,  
and honors him, in every place we sail to.  
He also has that loot from sacking Troy.  
We shared the journey with him, yet we come  
back home with empty hands. And now Aeolus  
has made this friendly gift to him. So hurry,  
we should look in the bag, and see how much  
is in there—how much silver, how much gold.'

That bad idea took hold of them; they did it.  
They opened up the bag, and all the winds  
rushed out at once. A sudden buffet seized us  
and hurled us back to sea, the wrong direction,  
far from our home. They screamed and I woke up,

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and wondered if I should jump off the ship  
and drown, or bite my lip, be stoical,  
and stay among the living. I endured it,  
covered my face, and lay on deck. A blast  
of storm wind whooshed the ships back to the island  
of great Aeolus. They began to weep.  
We disembarked and filled our jars with water,  
and hungrily the men devoured their dinner.  
When they were done, I took one slave with me  
and one crew member, back to see Aeolus.  
He was at dinner with his wife and children.  
We entered and sat down beside the doorposts.  
Startled, they asked,

'Why are you here again?  
You had bad luck? What happened? Surely we  
helped you go on your way, and meant for you  
to reach your homeland, where you wished to go.'

I answered sadly, 'Blame my men, and blame  
my stubborn urge to sleep, which ruined us.  
Dear friends, you have the power to put things right.'

I hoped these words would soften them, but they  
were silent. Then the father yelled, 'Get out!  
You nasty creature, leave my island! Now!  
It is not right for me to help convey  
a man so deeply hated by the gods.  
You godforsaken thing, how dare you come here?  
Get out!'

He roared and drove us from his palace.  
Dispirited, we sailed away. The men  
grew worn out with the agony of rowing.

our folly had deprived us of fair winds.

We rowed six days and nights; the seventh day we came to Laestrygonia—the town of Telepylus upon the cliffs of Lamos.

A herdsman there, returning to his home, can greet another herdsman going out.

A sleepless man could earn a double wage by herding cows, then pasturing white sheep—the paths of day and night are close together.

We reached the famous harbor, all surrounded by sheer rock cliffs. On each side, strips of shore jut out and almost meet, a narrow mouth.

No waves rear up in there, not even small ones.

White calm is everywhere. So all the others harbored their ships inside, crammed close together.

I was the only one who chose to moor my ship outside the harbor, fastening the cables to a rock a way away.

I disembarked and climbed a crag to scout.

I saw no sign of cattle or of humans, except some smoke that rose up from the earth.

I picked two men, and one slave as the third, and sent them to find out what people lived and ate bread in this land. They disembarked and walked along a smooth path, where the wagons brought wood down from the mountains to the city.

They met a girl in front of town, out fetching some water. She was heading for the fountain of Artaky, the whole town's water source.

She was the strapping child of Antiphates, king of the Laestrygonians. They asked her about the king and people of the country. She promptly took them to the high-roofed palace of her own father. When they went inside

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they found a woman, mountain-high. They were appalled and shocked. The giantess at once summoned the king her husband from the council; he tried to kill my men, and grabbing one he ate him up. The other two escaped, back to the ship. The king's shout boomed through town.

Hearing, the mighty Laestrygonians thronged from all sides, not humanlike, but giants.

With boulders bigger than a man could lift they pelted at us from the cliffs. We heard

the dreadful uproar of ships being broken and dying men. They speared them there like fish.

A gruesome meal! While they were killing them inside the harbor, I drew out my sword

and cut the ropes that moored my dark-cheeked ship, and yelling to my men, I told them, 'Row

as fast as possible away from danger!'

They rowed at double time, afraid to die.

My ship was lucky and we reached the sea beyond the overhanging cliffs. The rest, trapped in the bay together, were destroyed.

We sailed off sadly, happy to survive, but with our good friends lost. We reached Aeaea,

home of the beautiful, dreadful goddess Circe, who speaks in human languages—the sister of Aeetes whose mind is set on ruin.

Those two are children of the Sun who shines on mortals, and of Perse, child of Ocean.

Under the guidance of some god we drifted silently to the harbor, and we moored there.

For two days and two nights we lay onshore, exhausted and our hearts consumed with grief.

On the third morning brought by braided Dawn, I took my spear and sharp sword, and I ran

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*god chose*

up from the ship to higher ground, to look for signs of humans, listening for voices. I climbed up to a crag, and I saw smoke rising from Circe's palace, from the earth up through the woods and thickets. I considered if I should go down and investigate, since I had seen the smoke. But I decided to go back down first, to the beach and ship and feed my men, and then set out to scout.

When I had almost reached my ship, some god took pity on me in my loneliness, and sent a mighty stag with great tall antlers to cross my path. He ran down from the forest to drink out of the river; it was hot.

I struck him in the middle of his back; my bronze spear pierced him. With a moan, he fell onto the dust; his spirit flew away.

I stepped on him and tugged my bronze spear out, and left it on the ground, while I plucked twigs and twines, and wove a rope, a fathom's length, well knotted all the way along, and bound the hooves of that huge animal. I went down to my dark ship with him on my back. I used my spear to lean on, since the stag was too big to be lugged across one shoulder. I dumped him down before the ship and made a comforting pep talk to cheer my men.

170

✓ 'My friends! We will not yet go down to Hades, sad though we are, before our fated day. Come on, since we have food and drink on board, let us not starve ourselves; now time to eat!'

They quickly heeded my commands, and took

*god chose to*

150

to see the big stag lying on the beach. It was enormous. When they finished staring, they washed their hands and cooked a splendid meal. So all that day till sunset we sat eating the meat aplenty and the strong sweet wine. When darkness fell, we went to sleep beside the seashore. Then the roses of Dawn's fingers appeared again; I called my men and told them,

'Listen to me, my friends, despite your grief. We do not know where darkness lives, nor dawn, nor where the sun that shines upon the world goes underneath the earth, nor where it rises. We need a way to fix our current plight, but I do not know how. I climbed the rocks to higher ground to look around. This is an island, wreathed about by boundless sea. The land lies low. I saw smoke in the middle, rising up through the forest and thick bush.'

19

At that, their hearts sank, since they all remembered what happened with the Laestrygonians, their King Antiphatēs, and how the mighty Cyclops devoured the men. They wept and wailed, and shed great floods of tears. But all that grieving could do no good. I made them wear their armor, and split them in two groups. I led one, and made godlike Eurylochus lead the other. We shook the lots in a helmet made of bronze; Eurylochus' lot jumped out. So he

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went with his band of twenty-two, all weeping. Those left behind with me were crying too. Inside the glade they found the house of Circe built out of polished stones, on high foundations.

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she tamed with drugs. They did not rush on them, but gathered around them in a friendly way, their long tails wagging, as dogs nuzzle round their master when he comes back home from dinner with treats for them. Just so, those sharp-clawed wolves and lions, mighty beasts, came snuggling up. The men were terrified. They stood outside and heard some lovely singing. It was Circe, the goddess. She was weaving as she sang, an intricate, enchanting piece of work, the kind a goddess fashions. Then Poltes, my most devoted and most loyal man, a leader to his peers, said,

220

'Friends, inside someone is weaving on that massive loom, and singing so the floor resounds. Perhaps a woman, or a goddess. Let us call her.'

They shouted out to her. She came at once, opened the shining doors, and asked them in.

230

So thinking nothing of it, in they went. Eurylochus alone remained outside, suspecting trickery. She led them in, sat them on chairs, and blended them a potion of barley, cheese, and golden honey, mixed with Pramnian wine. She added potent drugs to make them totally forget their home.

They took and drank the mixture. Then she struck them, using her magic wand, and penned them in the pigsty. They were turned to pigs in body and voice and hair; their minds remained the same. They squealed at their imprisonment, and Circe threw them some mast and cornel cherries—food

240

Drugs for sleep + HOME

267

Eurylochus ran back to our black ship, to tell us of the terrible disaster that happened to his friends. He tried to speak, but could not, overwhelmed by grief. His eyes were full of tears, his heart was pierced with sorrow. Astonished, we all questioned him. At last he spoke about what happened to the others.

250

'Odysseus, we went off through the woods, as you commanded. In the glade we found a beautiful tall house of polished stone.

✶ We heard a voice: a woman or a goddess was singing as she worked her loom. My friends called out to her. She opened up the doors, inviting them inside. Suspecting nothing, they followed her. But I stayed there outside, fearing some trick. Then all at once, they vanished. I sat there for a while to watch and wait, but none of them came back.'

260

At this, I strapped my silver-studded sword across my back, took up my bow, and told him, 'Take me there.' He grasped my knees and begged me tearfully,

'No no, my lord! Please do not make me go! Let me stay here! You cannot bring them back, and you will not return here if you try. Hurry, we must escape with these men here! We have a chance to save our lives!'

I said,

'You can stay here beside the ship and eat and drink. But I will go. I must do this.'

270

I left the ship and shore, and walked on up,  
crossing the sacred glades, and I had almost  
reached the great house of the enchantress Circe,  
when I met Hermes, carrying his wand  
of gold. He seemed an adolescent boy,  
the cutest age, when beards first start to grow.  
He took my hand and said,

*Hermes, I will tell*

'Why have you come

across these hills alone? You do not know  
this place, poor man. Your men were turned to pigs  
in Circe's house, and crammed in pens. Do you  
imagine you can set them free? You cannot.  
If you try that, you will not get back home.  
You will stay here with them. But I can help you.  
Here, take this antidote to keep you safe  
when you go into Circe's house. Now I  
will tell you all her lethal spells and tricks.  
She will make you a potion mixed with poison.

290

Its magic will not work on you because  
you have the herb I gave you. When she strikes you  
with her long wand, then draw your sharpened sword  
and rush at her as if you mean to kill her.  
She will be frightened of you, and will tell you  
to sleep with her. Do not hold out against her—  
she is a goddess. If you sleep with her,  
you will set free your friends and save yourself.  
Tell her to swear an oath by all the gods  
that she will not plot further harm for you—  
or while you have your clothes off, she may hurt you,  
unmanning you.'

300

The bright mercurial god

pulled from the ground a plant and showed me how

its root is black, its flower white as milk.  
The gods call this plant Moly. It is hard  
for mortal men to dig it up, but gods  
are able to do everything. Then Hermes  
flew through the wooded island, back towards  
high Mount Olympus. I went in the house  
of Circe. My heart pounded as I walked.  
I stood there at the doorway, and I saw her,  
the lovely Circe with her braided hair.  
I called; she heard and opened up the doors  
and asked me in. I followed nervously.  
She led me to a silver-studded chair,  
all finely crafted, with a footstool under.  
In a gold cup she mixed a drink for me,  
adding the drug—she hoped to do me harm.  
I sipped it, but the magic did not work.  
She struck me with her wand and said;

31

'Now go!

Out to the sty, and lie there with your men!  
But I drew my sharp sword from by my thigh  
and leapt at her as if I meant to kill her.  
She screamed and ducked beneath the sword, and grasped  
my knees, and wailing asked me,

320

'Who are you?

Where is your city? And who are your parents?  
I am amazed that you could drink my potion  
and yet not be bewitched. No other man  
has drunk it and withstood the magic charm.  
But you are different. Your mind is not  
enchanted. You must be Odysseus,  
the man who can adapt to anything.  
Bright flashing Hermes of the golden wand!

330

has often told me that you would sail here  
from Troy in your swift ship. Now sheathe your sword  
and come to bed with me. Through making love  
we may begin to trust each other more.'

I answered, 'Circe! How can you command me  
to treat you gently, when you turned my men  
to pigs, and you are planning to play tricks  
in telling me to come to bed with you,  
so you can take my courage and my manhood  
when you have got me naked? I refuse  
to come to bed with you, unless you swear  
a mighty oath that you will not form plans  
to hurt me anymore.'

When I said that,  
at once she made the oath as I had asked.  
She vowed and formed the oath, and then at last  
I went up to the dazzling bed of Circe.

Meanwhile, four slaves, her house girls, were at work  
around the palace. They were nymphs, the daughters  
of fountains and of groves and holy rivers  
that flow into the sea. One set fine cloths  
of purple on the chairs, with stones beneath them.  
Beside each chair, another pulled up tables  
of silver and set golden baskets on them.

The third mixed up inside a silver bowl  
sweet, cheering wine, and poured it in gold cups.  
The fourth brought water, and she lit a fire  
beneath a mighty tripod, till it boiled.  
It started bubbling in the copper cauldron;  
she took me to the bathtub, and began  
to wash my head and shoulders, using water

340

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360

my deep soul-crushing weariness away.  
After the bath, she oiled my skin and dressed me  
in fine wool cloak and tunic, and she led me  
to a silver-studded well-carved chair, and set  
a footstool underneath. Another slave  
brought water for my hands, in a gold pitcher,  
and poured it over them, to a silver bowl.  
She set a polished table near. The cook  
brought bread and laid a generous feast, and Circe  
told me to eat. But my heart was unwilling.  
I sat there with my mind on other things;  
I had forebodings. Circe noticed me  
sitting, not touching food, and weighed by grief.  
She stood near me and asked, 'Odysseus!  
why are you sitting there so silently,  
like someone mute, eating your heart, not touching  
the banquet or the wine? You need not fear.  
Remember, I already swore an oath.'

380

But I said, 'Circe, no! What decent man  
could bear to taste his food or sip his wine  
before he saw his men with his own eyes,  
and set them free? If you are so insistent  
on telling me to eat and drink, then free them,  
so I may see with my own eyes my crew  
of loyal men.'

So Circe left the hall

holding her wand, and opened up the pigsty  
and drove them out, still looking like fat boars,  
large and full grown. They stood in front of her.  
Majestic Lady Circe walked among them,  
anointing each with some new drug. The potion  
had made their bones loose.

390

but younger than before, and much more handsome,  
and taller. Then they recognized me. Each  
embraced me tightly in his arms, and started  
sobbing in desperation. So the house  
rang loud with noise, and even she herself  
pitied them. She came near to me and said,

400

'Odysseus, you always find solutions.  
Go now to your swift ship beside the sea.  
First drag the ship to land, and bring your stores  
and all your gear inside the caves. Then come  
back with your loyal men.'

My heart agreed;

I went down to my swift ship on the shore.  
I found my loyal men beside the ship,  
weeping and shedding floods of tears. As when  
a herd of cows is coming back from pasture  
into the yard; and all the little heifers

410

jump from their pens to skip and run towards  
their mothers, and they cluster round them, mooing;  
just so my men, as soon as they saw me,  
began to weep, and in their minds it seemed  
as if they had arrived in their own home,  
the land of rugged Ithaca, where they  
were born and raised. Still sobbing, they cried out,

'Oh, Master! We are glad to see you back!  
It is as if we had come home ourselves,  
to Ithaca, our fatherland. But tell us

420

about how all our other friends were killed.'

I reassured them, saying, 'First we must  
draw in the ship to land, and put the stores

and all our gear inside the caves; then hurry,  
all of you, come with me, and see your friends  
inside the goddess Circe's holy house,  
eating and drinking; they have food enough  
to last forever.'

They believed my story,  
with the exception of Eurylochus,  
who warned them,

430

'Fools! Why would you go up there?  
Why would you choose to take on so much danger,  
to enter Circe's house, where she will turn us  
to pigs or wolves or lions, all of us,  
forced to protect her mighty house for her?  
Remember what the Cyclops did? Our friends  
went to his home with this rash lord of ours.  
Because of his bad choices, they all died.'

At that, I thought of drawing my long sword  
from by my sturdy thigh, to cut his head off  
and let it fall down to the ground—although  
he was close family. My men restrained me,  
saying to me, 'No, king, please let him go!  
Let him stay here and guard the ship, and we  
will follow you to Circe's holy house.'

440

So they went up, away from ship and shore.  
Eurylochus did not stay there; he came,  
fearing my angry scolding.

Meanwhile Circe

had freed the other men, and in her house  
she gently bathed them with oil.



She had them dressed in woolen cloaks and tunics.  
We found them feasting in the hall. The men,  
seeing each other face-to-face again,  
began to weep; their sobbing filled the hall.  
The goddess stood beside me and said,

'King,

clever Odysseus, Laertes' son,  
now stop encouraging this lamentation.

I know you and your men have suffered greatly,  
out on the fish-filled sea, and on dry land  
from hostile men. But it is time to eat  
and drink some wine. You must get back the drive  
you had when you set out from Ithaca.  
You are worn down and brokenhearted, always  
dwelling on pain and wandering. You never  
feel joy at heart. You have endured too much.'

460

We did as she had said. Then every day  
for a whole year we feasted there on meat  
and sweet strong wine. But when the year was over,  
when months had waned and seasons turned, and each  
long day had passed its course, my loyal men  
called me and said,

470

'Be guided by the gods.

Now it is time to think of our own country,  
if you are fated to survive and reach  
your high-roofed house and your forefathers' land.'

My warrior soul agreed. So all day long  
till sunset we kept sitting at the feast  
of meat and sweet strong wine. But when the sun

to Circe's splendid bed, and touched her knees  
in supplication, and the goddess listened.

'Circe,' I said, 'Fulfill the vow you made  
to send me home. My heart now longs to go.  
My men are also desperate to leave.  
Whenever you are absent, they exhaust me  
with constant lamentation.'

And she answered,

'Laertes' son, great King Odysseus,  
master of every challenge, you need not  
remain here in my house against your will.  
But first you must complete another journey.  
Go to the house of Hades and the dreadful  
Persephone, and ask the Theban prophet,  
the blind Tiresias, for his advice.  
Persephone has given him alone  
full understanding, even now in death.  
The other spirits flit around as shadows.'

That broke my heart, and sitting on the bed  
I wept, and lost all will to live and see  
the shining sun. When I was done with sobbing  
and rolling round in grief, I said to her,

'But Circe, who can guide us on this journey?  
No one before has ever sailed to Hades  
by ship.'

And right away the goddess answered,  
'You are resourceful, King Odysseus.

You need not worry that you have no pilot

to steer your ship. Set out now.

will blow the ship. When you have crossed the stream of Ocean, you will reach the shore, where willows let fall their dying fruit, and towering poplars grow in the forest of Persephone.

510

Tie up your ship in the deep-eddy of Ocean, and go into the spacious home of Hades.

The Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, a tributary of the Styx, both run

into the Acheron. The flowing water

resounds beside the rock. Brave man, go there, and dig a hole a cubit wide and long,

and round it pour libations for the dead:

first honey-mix, then sweet wine, and the third of water. Sprinkle barley and beseech

520

the spirits of the dead. Vow if you reach the barren land of Ithaca, to kill

a heifer in your halls, the best you have,

uncalved, and you will heap the fire with meat,

and offer to Tiresias alone

a ram, pure black, the best of all your flock.

When you have prayed to all the famous dead,

slaughter one ram and one black ewe, directing the animals to Erebus, but turn

530

yourself away, towards the gushing river.

Many will come. Then tell your men to skin

the sheep that lie there killed by ruthless bronze,

and burn them, with a prayer to mighty Hades

and terrible Persephone. Then draw

your sword and sit. Do not let them come near

the blood, until you hear Tiresias.

The prophet will soon come, and he will tell you about your journey, measured out across

the fish-filled sea, and how you will get home.'

540

Dawn on her golden throne began to shine, and Circe dressed me in my cloak and tunic. The goddess wore a long white dress, of fine and delicate fabric, with a golden belt, and on her head, a veil. Then I walked round, all through the house, and called my men. I stood beside each one, and roused them with my words.

'Wake up! Now no more dozing in sweet sleep. We have to go. The goddess gave instructions.'

They did as I had said. But even then I could not lead my men away unharmed.

The youngest one—Elpenor was his name—

not very brave in war, nor very smart,

was lying high up in the home of Circe,

apart from his companions, seeking coolness

since he was drunk. He heard the noise and bustle,

the movements of his friends, and jumped up quickly, forgetting to climb down the lofty ladder.

He fell down crashing headlong from the roof,

and broke his neck, right at the spine. His spirit

went down to Hades.

56

Then I told the others, 'Perhaps you think that you are going home. But Circe says we have to go towards the house of Hades and Persephone, to meet Tiresias, the Theban spirit.'

At that, their hearts were broken. They sat down right there and wept and tore their clothes. But all their lamentation did no good. We went down to our sneedy ship *haskida thara*

despite our grief. We shed abundant tears.  
 Then Circe came and tied up one black ewe  
 and one ram by the ship, and slipped away,  
 easily; who can see the gods go by  
 unless they wish to show themselves to us?"

570

## BOOK 1



## The Dea

"We reached the sea and first of all we launched  
 the ship into the sparkling salty water,  
 set up the mast and sails, and brought the sheep  
 on board with us. We were still grieving, weeping,  
 in floods of tears. But beautiful, dread Circe,  
 the goddess who can speak in human tongues,  
 sent us a wind to fill our sails, fair wind  
 befriending us behind the dark blue prow.  
 We made our tackle shipshape, then sat down.  
 The wind and pilot guided straight our course.  
 The sun set. It was dark in all directions.

We reached the limits of deep-flowing Ocean,  
 where the Cimmerians live and have their city.  
 Their land is covered up in mist and cloud;  
 the shining Sun God never looks on them  
 with his bright beams—not when he rises up  
 into the starry sky, nor when he turns  
 back from the heavens to earth. Destructive night  
 blankets the world for all poor mortals there.

