

80 That nightmare cannot die, being eternal
evil itself—horror, and pain, and chaos;
there is no fighting her, no power can fight her,
all that avails is flight.

Lose headway there

along that rockface while you break out arms,
and she'll swoop over you, I fear, once more,
85 taking one man again for every gullet.

No, no, put all your backs into it, row on;
invoke Blind Force, that bore this scourge of men,
to keep her from a second strike against you.

90 Then you will coast Thrinacia, the island
where Helios' cattle graze, fine herds, and flocks
of goodly sheep. The herds and flocks are seven,
with fifty beasts in each.

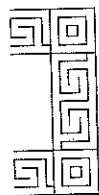
No lambs are dropped,

or calves, and these fat cattle never die.
Immortal, too, their cowherds are—their shepherds—
95 Phaethusa and Lampetia, sweetly braided
nymphs that divine Neaera bore
to the overlord of high noon, Helios.
These nymphs their gentle mother bred and placed
upon Thrinacia, the distant land,
100 in care of flocks and cattle for their father.

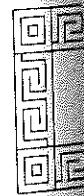
Now give those kine a wide berth, keep your thoughts
intent upon your course for home,
and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaca.
But if you raid the beeves, I see destruction
105 for ship and crew.

Rough years then lie between

you and your homecoming, alone and old,
the one survivor, all companions lost.”



AT DAWN, Odysseus and his men continue their journey. Odysseus decides to tell the men only of Circe's warnings about the Sirens, whom they will soon encounter. He is fairly sure that they can survive this peril if he keeps their spirits up. Suddenly, the wind stops.



82 all . . . flight: all you can do is flee.

87 invoke . . . men: pray to the goddess of blind force, who gave birth to Scylla.

89 coast: sail along the coast of.

95-96 Phaethusa (fā'ē-thōō'sē) . . .
Lampetia (lām-pē'shē) . . . Neaera
(nē-ē're).

101-105 Circe warns Odysseus not to steal Helios' fine cattle (also called kine and beeves) because Helios will take revenge.

“The crew were on their feet
 briskly, to furl the sail, and stow it; then,
 110 each in place, they poised the smooth oar blades
 and sent the white foam scudding by. I carved
 a massive cake of beeswax into bits
 and rolled them in my hands until they softened—
 no long task, for a burning heat came down
 115 from Helios, lord of high noon. Going forward
 I carried wax along the line, and laid it
 thick on their ears. They tied me up, then, plumb
 amidships, back to the mast, lashed to the mast,
 and took themselves again to rowing. Soon,
 120 as we came smartly within hailing distance,
 the two Sirens, noting our fast ship
 off their point, made ready, and they sang.



The lovely voices in ardor appealing over the water
 made me crave to listen, and I tried to say
 125 ‘Untie me!’ to the crew, jerking my brows;
 but they bent steady to the oars. Then Perimedes
 got to his feet, he and Eurylochus,
 and passed more line about, to hold me still.
 So all rowed on, until the Sirens
 130 dropped under the sea rim, and their singing
 dwindled away.

My faithful company
 rested on their oars now, peeling off
 the wax that I had laid thick on their ears;
 then set me free.

But scarcely had that island
 135 faded in blue air than I saw smoke
 and white water, with sound of waves in tumult—
 a sound the men heard, and it terrified them.
 Oars flew from their hands; the blades went knocking
 wild alongside till the ship lost way,
 140 with no oarblades to drive her through the water.

Well, I walked up and down from bow to stern,
 trying to put heart into them, standing over
 every oarsman, saying gently,

117–118 **plumb amidships**: exactly
 in the center of the ship.

123 **ardor**: passion.

126 **Perimedes** (pĕr’ĭ-mē’dēz).



134–159 The men panic when they
 hear the thundering surf. How
 does Odysseus help them overcome
 their fear and thus regain control
 of the ship?

WORDS
 TO **dwindle** (dwĭn’dl) v. to become gradually less; diminish
 KNOW



'Friends,

have we never been in danger before this?
145 More fearsome, is it now, than when the Cyclops
penned us in his cave? What power he had!
Did I not keep my nerve, and use my wits
to find a way out for us?

Now I say

by hook or crook this peril too shall be
150 something that we remember.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

peril (pĕr'əl) *n.* danger; risk