

## The Suitors

*Still disguised as a beggar, Odysseus enters his home. He is confronted by the haughty<sup>7</sup> suitor Antinous.<sup>8</sup>*

But here Antinous broke in, shouting:

“God!

1210 What evil wind blew in this pest?

Get over,

stand in the passage! Nudge my table, will you?  
Egyptian whips are sweet  
to what you’ll come to here, you nosing rat,  
making your pitch to everyone!

1215 These men have bread to throw away on you  
because it is not theirs. Who cares? Who spares  
another’s food, when he has more than plenty?”

With guile Odysseus drew away, then said:

1220 “A pity that you have more looks than heart.  
You’d grudge a pinch of salt from your own larder  
to your own handyman. You sit here, fat  
on others’ meat, and cannot bring yourself  
to rummage out a crust of bread for me!”

1225 Then anger made Antinous’ heart beat hard,  
and, glowering under his brows, he answered:

“Now!

You think you’ll shuffle off and get away  
after that impudence?<sup>9</sup> Oh, no you don’t!”

1230 The stool he let fly hit the man’s right shoulder  
on the packed muscle under the shoulder blade—  
like solid rock, for all the effect one saw.  
Odysseus only shook his head, containing  
thoughts of bloody work, as he walked on,  
then sat, and dropped his loaded bag again  
upon the door sill. Facing the whole crowd  
1235 he said, and eyed them all:

“One word only,

my lords, and suitors of the famous queen.  
One thing I have to say.  
There is no pain, no burden for the heart  
when blows come to a man, and he defending  
1240 his own cattle—his own cows and lambs.

### NOTES

7. **haughty** (HAWT ee) *adj.*  
arrogant.

8. **Antinous** (an TIHN  
oh uhs)

9. **impudence** (IHM pyoo  
duhs) *n.* quality of  
being shamelessly bold;  
disrespectfulness

NOTES

**10. Furies** (FYUR eez) *n.*  
three terrible female  
spirits who punish the  
doers of unavenged  
crimes.

**guise** (gyz) *n.* outward  
appearance

**CLOSE READ**

**ANNOTATE:** In lines  
1261–1270, mark the  
noun that appears three  
times. Then, mark its  
synonym, which appears  
twice.

**QUESTION:** What does this  
repetition emphasize?

**CONCLUDE:** How does  
deliberate use of repetition  
help reveal the feelings of  
Odysseus' son and wife?

**11. Eurynome** (yoo RIHN  
uhm ee)

Here it was otherwise. Antinous  
hit me for being driven on by hunger—  
how many bitter seas men cross for hunger!  
If beggars interest the gods, if there are Furies<sup>10</sup>  
1245 pent in the dark to avenge a poor man's wrong, then may  
Antinous meet his death before his wedding day!"  
Then said Eupheithes's son, Antinous:

"Enough.  
Eat and be quiet where you are, or shamle elsewhere,  
unless you want these lads to stop your mouth  
1250 pulling you by the heels, or hands and feet,  
over the whole floor, till your back is peeled!"

But now the rest were mortified, and someone  
spoke from the crowd of young bucks to rebuke him:

"A poor show, that—hitting this famished tramp—  
1255 bad business, if he happened to be a god.  
You know they go in foreign *guise*, the gods do,  
looking like strangers, turning up  
in towns and settlements to keep an eye  
on manners, good or bad."

But at this notion

1260 Antinous only shrugged.  
Telemachus,  
after the blow his father bore, sat still  
without a tear, though his heart felt the blow.  
Slowly he shook his head from side to side,  
containing murderous thoughts.

Penelope

1265 on the higher level of her room had heard  
the blow, and knew who gave it. Now she murmured:

"Would god you could be hit yourself, Antinous—  
hit by Apollo's bowshot!"

And Eurynome<sup>11</sup>

her housekeeper, put in:

"He and no other?"

1270 If all we pray for came to pass, not one  
would live till dawn!"

Her gentle mistress said:  
"Oh, Nan, they are a bad lot; they intend  
ruin for all of us; but Antinous

appears a blacker-hearted hound than any.

1275 Here is a poor man come, a wanderer,  
driven by want to beg his bread, and everyone  
in hall gave bits, to cram his bag—only  
Antinous threw a stool, and banged his shoulder!”

So she described it, sitting in her chamber  
1280 among her maids—while her true lord was eating.  
Then she called in the forester and said:

“Go to that man on my behalf, Eumaeus,  
and send him here, so I can greet and question him.  
Abroad in the great world, he may have heard  
1285 rumors about Odysseus—may have known him!”

NOTES