We bore down on the ship at the sea's edge
and launched her on the salt immortal sea,
stepping our mast and spar in the black ship;
embarked the ram and ewe and went aboard
in tears, with bitter and sore dread upon us.
But now a breeze came up for us astern—
a canvas-bellying landbreeze, hale shipmate
sent by the singing nymph with sun-bright hair;
so we made fast the braces, took our thwarts,
and let the wind and steersman work the ship
with full sail spread all day above our coursing,
till the sun dipped, and all the ways grew dark
upon the fathomless unresting sea.

By night

our ship ran onward toward the Ocean's bourne,
the realm and region of the Men of Winter,
hidden in mist and cloud. Never the flaming
eye of Hēlios lights on those men
at morning, when he climbs the sky of stars,
nor in descending earthward out of heaven;
ruinous night being rove over those wretches.
We made the land, put ram and ewe ashore,
and took our way along the Ocean stream
to find the place foretold for us by Kirkē.
There Perimēdēs and Eurylokhos
pinioned the sacred beasts. With my drawn blade
I spaded up the votive pit, and poured
libations round it to the unnumbered dead:
sweet milk and honey, then sweet wine, and last
clear water; and I scattered barley down.
Then I addressed the blurred and breathless dead,
vowing to slaughter my best heifer for them
before she calved, at home in Ithaka,
and burn the choice bits on the altar fire;
as for Teiresias, I swore to sacrifice
a black lamb, handsomest of all our flock.
Thus to assuage the nations of the dead
I pledged these rites, then slashed the lamb and ewe,
letting their black blood stream into the well pit.
Now the souls gathered, stirring out of Erebus,
brides and young men, and men grown old in pain,
tender girls whose hearts were new to
grief;
many were there, too, torn
by
brazen lanceheads,
battle-slain, bearing still their bloody gear.
From every side they came and sought the pit
with rustling cries; and I grew sick with fear.
But presently I gave command to my officers
to flay those sheep the bronze cut down, and make
burnt offerings of flesh to the gods below—to
sovereign Death, to pale Persephone.
Meanwhile I crouched with my drawn sword to keep
the surging phantoms from the bloody pit
till I should know the presence of Teiresias.

One shade came first—Elpenor, of our company,
who lay unburied still on the wide earth
as we had left him—dead in Kirke’s hall,
untouched, unmourned, when other cares compelled us.
Now when I saw him there I wept for pity
and called out to him:

‘How is this, Elpenor,
how could you journey to the western gloom
swifter afoot than I in the black lugger?’

He sighed, and answered:

‘Son of great Laërtès,
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
bad luck shadowed me, and no kindly power;
ignoble death I drank with so much wine.
I slept on Kirke’s roof, then could not see
the long steep backward ladder, coming down,
and fell that height. My neck bone, buckled under,
napped, and my spirit found this well of dark.
Now hear the grace I pray for, in the name
of those back in the world, not here—your wife
and father, he who gave you bread in childhood,
and your own child, your only son, Telémakhos,
long ago left at home.

When you make sail
and put these lodgings of dim Death behind,
you will moor ship, I know, upon Aiaia Island;
there, O my lord, remember me, I pray,
do not abandon me unwept, unburied,
to tempt the gods’ wrath, while you sail for home;
but fire my corpse, and all the gear I had,
and build a cairn for me above the breakers—an
unknown sailor’s mark for men to come.
Heap up the mound there, and implant upon it
the oar I pulled in life with my companions.’

He ceased, and I replied:

‘Unhappy spirit,
I promise you the barrow and the burial.’

So we conversed, and grimly, at a distance,
with my long sword between, guarding the blood,
while the faint image of the lad spoke on.
Now came the soul of Antikléia, dead,
my mother, daughter of Autólýkos,
dead now, though living still when I took ship
for holy Troy. Seeing this ghost I grieved,
but held her off, through pang on pang of tears,
till I should know the presence of Teiresias. Soon from the dark that prince of Thebes came forward bearing a golden staff; and he addressed me:

'Son of Laertes and the gods of old, Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways, why leave the blazing Sun, O man of woe, to see the cold dead and the joyless region? Stand clear, put up your sword; let me but taste of blood, I shall speak true.'

At this I stepped aside, and in the scabbard let my long sword ring home to the pommel silver, as he bent down to the sombre blood. Then spoke the prince of those with gift of speech:

'a fair wind and the honey lights of home are all you seek. But anguish lies ahead; the god who thunders on the land prepares it, not to be shaken from your track, implacable, in rancor for the son whose eye you blinded. One narrow strait may take you through his blows: denial of yourself, restraint of shipmates. When you make landfall on Thrinakia first and quit the violet sea, dark on the land you'll find the grazing herds of Helios by whom all things are seen, all speech is known. Avoid those kine, hold fast to your intent, and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaka. But if you raid the beeves, I see destruction for ship and crew. Though you survive alone, bereft of all companions, lost for years, under strange sail shall you come home, to find your own house filled with trouble: insolent men eating your livestock as they court your lady. Aye, you shall make those men atone in blood! But after you have dealt out death—in open combat or by stealth—to all the suitors, go overland on foot, and take an oar, until one day you come where men have lived

with meat unsalted, never known the sea, nor seen seagoing ships, with crimson bows and oars that fledge light hulls for dipping flight. The spot will soon be plain to you, and I can tell you how: some passerby will say, "What winnowing fan is that upon your shoulder?" Halt, and implant your smooth oar in the turf and make fair sacrifice to Lord Poseidon: a ram, a bull, a great buck boar; turn back, and carry out pure hekatombs at home to all wide heaven's lords, the undying gods, to each in order. Then a seaborne death soft as this hand of mist will come upon you when you are wearied out with rich old age, your country folk in blessed peace around you. And all this shall be just as I foretell.'

When he had done, I said at once,

'Teiresias, my life runs on then as the gods have spun it. But come, now, tell me this; make this thing clear: I see my mother's ghost among the dead sitting in silence near the blood. Not once has she glanced this way toward her son, nor spoken. Tell me, my lord, may she in some way come to know my presence?'

To this he answered:

'I shall make it clear in a few words and simply. Any dead man whom you allow to enter where the blood is will speak to you, and speak the truth; but those deprived will grow remote again and fade.'

When he had prophesied, Teiresias' shade retired lordly to the halls of Death; but I stood fast until my mother stirred,
moving to sip the black blood; then she knew me
and called out sorrowfully to me:

'Child,

how could you cross alive into this gloom
at the world's end?—No sight for living eyes;
great currents run between, desolate waters,
the Ocean first, where no man goes a journey
without ship's timber under him.

'Say, now,

is it from Troy, still wandering, after years,
that you come here with ship and company?
Have you not gone at all to Ithaka?
Have you not seen your lady in your hall?'

She put these questions, and I answered her:

'Mother, I came here, driven to the land of death
in want of prophecy from Tēirēsias' shade;
nor have I yet coasted Akhaia's hills
nor touched my own land, but have had hard roving
since first I joined Lord Agamēnnon's host
by sea for Ilion, the wild horse country,
to fight the men of Troy.

But come now, tell me this, and tell me clearly,
what was the bane that pinned you down in Death?
Some ravaging long illness, or mild arrows
a-flying down one day from Artemis?
Tell me of Father, tell me of the son
I left behind me; have they still my place,
my honors, or have other men assumed them?
Do they not say that I shall come no more?
And tell me of my wife: how runs her thought,
still with her child, still keeping our domains,
or bride again to the best of the Akhaians?

To this my noble mother quickly answered:

'Still with her child indeed she is, poor heart,
still in your palace hall. Forlorn her nights
and days go by, her life used up in weeping.
But no man takes your honored place. Telēmakhos
has care of all your garden plots and fields,
and holds the public honor of a magistrate,
feasting and being feasted. But your father
is country bound and comes to town no more.
He owns no bedding, rugs, or fleecy mantles,
but lies down, winter nights, among the slaves,
rolled in old cloaks for cover, near the embers.
Or when the heat comes at the end of summer,
the fallen leaves, all round his vineyard plot,
heaped into windrows, make his lowly bed.
He lies now even so, with aching heart,
and longs for your return, while age comes on him.

So I, too, pined away, so doom befell me,
not that the keen-eyed huntress with her shafts
had marked me down and shot to kill me; not
that illness overtook me—not true illness
wasting the body to undo the spirit;
only my loneliness for you, Odysseus,
for your kind heart and counsel, gentle Odysseus,
took my own life away.'

I bit my lip,

rising perplexed, with longing to embrace her,
and tried three times, putting my arms around her,
but she went sifting through my hands, impalpable
as shadows are, and wavering like a dream.

Now this embittered all the pain I bore,
and I cried in the darkness:

'O my mother,
will you not stay, be still, here in my arms,
may we not, in this place of Death, as well,
hold one another, touch with love, and taste
salt tears' relief, the twinge of welling tears?
Or is this all hallucination, sent
against me by the iron queen, Persēphonē,
to make me groan again?'
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My noble mother answered quickly:

'O my child—alas, most sorely tried of men—great Zeus's daughter, Perséphonê, knits no illusion for you. All mortals meet this judgment when they die. No flesh and bone are here, none bound by sinew, since the bright-hearted pyre consumed them down—the white bones long exanimate—to ash; dreamlike the soul flies, insubstantial.

You must crave sunlight soon. Note all things strange seen here, to tell your lady in after days.'

So went our talk; then other shadows came, ladies in company, sent by Perséphonê—consorts or daughters of illustrious men—crowding about the black blood.

I took thought how best to separate and question them, and saw no help for it, but drew once more the long bright edge of broadsword from my hip, that none should sip the blood in company but one by one, in order; so it fell that each declared her lineage and name.

Here was great loveliness of ghosts! I saw before them all, that princess of great ladies, Tyro, Salmoneus' daughter, as she told me, and queen to Krêtheus, a son of Aiolos.

She had gone daft for the river Enipeus, most graceful of all running streams, and ranged all day by Enipeus' limpid side, whose form the foaming girdler of the islands, the god who makes earth tremble, took and so lay down with her where he went flooding seaward, their bower a purple billow, arching round to hide them in a sea-vale, god and lady.

A GATHERING OF SHADES

Now when his pleasure was complete, the god spoke to her softly, holding fast her hand:

'Dear mortal, go in joy! At the turn of seasons, winter to summer, you shall bear me sons; no lovemaking of gods can be in vain. Nurse our sweet children tenderly, and rear them. Home with you now, and hold your tongue, and tell no one your lover's name—though I am yours, Poseidon, lord of surf that makes earth tremble.'

He plunged away into the deep sea swell, and she grew big with Pelias and Neleus, powerful vassals, in their time, of Zeus. Pelias lived on broad Iolkos seaboard rich in flocks, and Neleus at Pylos. As for the sons borne by that queen of women to Krêtheus, their names were Aison, Pherês, and Amytháon, expert charioteer.

Next after her I saw Antiopê, daughter of Æsopos. She too could boast a god for lover, having lain with Zeus and borne two sons to him: Amphion and Zêthos, who founded Thebes, the upper city, and built the ancient citadel. They sheltered no life upon that plain, for all their power, without a fortress wall.

And next I saw Amphitrition's true wife, Alkmêné, mother, as all men know, of lionish Heraklês, conceived when she lay close in Zeus's arms; and Megarê, high-hearted Kreon's daughter, wife of Amphitrition's unwearying son.

I saw the mother of Oidipous, Epikastê, whose great unwitting deed it was to marry her own son. He took that prize from a slain father; presently the gods brought all to light that made the famous story.
But by their fearsome wills he kept his throne in dearest Thebes, all through his evil days, while she descended to the place of Death, god of the locked and iron door. Steep down from a high rafter, throttled in her noose, she swung, carried away by pain, and left him endless agony from a mother's Furies.

And I saw Khloris, that most lovely lady, whom for her beauty in the olden time Neleus wooed with countless gifts, and married. She was the youngest daughter of Amphion, son of Lasos. In those days he held power at Orkhomenos, over the Minyai. At Pylos then as queen she bore her children—Nestor, Khromios, Periklymenos, and Æro, too, who turned the heads of men with her magnificence. A host of princes from nearby lands came courting her; but Neleus would hear of no one, not unless the suitor could drive the steers of giant Êphiklos from Phylakê—longhorns, broad in the brow, so fierce that one man only, a diviner, offered to round them up. But bitter fate saw him bound hand and foot by savage herdsmen. Then days and months grew full and waned, the year went wheeling round, the seasons came again, before at last the power of Êphiklos, relenting, freed the prisoner, who foretold all things to him. So Zeus's will was done.

And I saw Lëda, wife of Tyndareus, upon whom Tyndareus had sired twins indomitable: Kastor, tamer of horses, and Polydeukê, best in the boxing ring. Those two live still, though life-creating earth embraces them: even in the underworld honored as gods by Zeus, each day in turn one comes alive, the other dies again.
the queen with ivory pale arms, Arêthê, spoke,
saying to all the silent men:

"Phaiákians,
how does he stand, now, in your eyes, this captain, 
the look and bulk of him, the inward poise?
He is my guest, but each one shares that honor.
Be in no haste to send him on his way
or scant your bounty in his need. Remember
how rich, by heaven's will, your possessions are."

Then Ekhenêos, the old soldier, eldest
of all Phaiákians, added his word:

"Friends, here was nothing but our own thought spoken,
the mark hit square. Our duties to her majesty.
For what is to be said and done,
we wait upon Alkínoös' command."

At this the king's voice rang:

"I so command—

as sure as it is I who, while I live,
rule the sea rovers of Phaiákia. Our friend
longs to put out for home, but let him be
content to rest here one more day, until
I see all gifts bestowed. And every man
will take thought for his launching and his voyage,
I most of all, for I am master here."

Odysseus, the great tactician, answered:

"Alkínoös, king and admiration of men,
even a year's delay, if you should urge it,
in loading gifts and furnishing for sea—
I too could wish it; better far that I
return with some largesse of wealth about me—
I shall be thought more worthy of love and courtesy
by every man who greets me home in Ithaka."

The king said:

"As to that, one word, Odysseus:
from all we see, we take you for no swindler—
though the dark earth be patient of so many,
scattered everywhere, baiting their traps with lies
of old times and of places no one knows.
You speak with art, but your intent is honest.
The Argive troubles, and your own troubles,
you told as a poet would, a man who knows the world.
But now come tell me this: among the dead
did you meet any of your peers, companions
who sailed with you and met their doom at Troy?
Here's a long night—an endless night—before us,
and no time yet for sleep, not in this hall.
Recall the past deeds and the strange adventures.
I could stay up until the sacred Dawn
as long as you might wish to tell your story."

Odysseus the great tactician answered:

"Alkínoös, king and admiration of men,
there is a time for story telling; there is
also a time for sleep. But even so,
if, indeed, listening be still your pleasure,
I must not grudge my part. Other and sadder
tales there are to tell, of my companions,
of some who came through all the Trojan spears,
clangor and groan of war,
only to find a brutal death at home—
and a bad wife behind it.

After Persephonē,
icy and pale, dispersed the shades of women,
the soul of Agamémnon, son of Atreus,
came before me, sombre in the gloom,
and others gathered round, all who were with him
when death and doom struck in Aegísitos' hall.
Sipping the black blood, the tall shade perceived me,
and cried out sharply, breaking into tears;
then tried to stretch his hands toward me, but could not,
being bereft of all the reach and power
he once felt in the great torque of his arms.
Gazing at him, and stirred, I wept for pity,
and spoke across to him:

'O son of Atreus,
illustrious Lord Marshal, Agamémnon,
what was the doom that brought you low in death?
Were you at sea, aboard ship, and Poseidon
blew up a wicked squall to send you under,
or were you cattle-raiding on the mainland
or in a fight for some strongpoint, or women,
when the foe hit you to your mortal hurt?'

But he replied at once:

'Son of Laërtès,
Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways,
neither did I go down with some good ship
in any gale Poseidon blew, nor die
upon the mainland, hurt by foes in battle.
It was Aigisthos who designed my death,
he and my heartless wife, and killed me, after
feeding me, like an ox felled at the trough.
That was my miserable end—and with me
my fellows butchered, like so many swine
killed for some troop, or feast, or wedding banquet
in a great landholder's household. In your day
you have seen men, and hundreds, die in war,
in the bloody press, or downed in single combat,
but these were murders you would catch your breath at:
think of us fallen, all our throats cut, winebowl
brimming, tables laden on every side,
while blood ran smoking over the whole floor.
In my extremity I heard Cassandra,
Priam's daughter, piteously crying
as the traitress Klytaimnêstra made to kill her
along with me. I heaved up from the ground
and got my hands around the blade, but she
eluded me, that whore. Nor would she close
my two eyes as my soul swam to the underworld

or shut my lips. There is no being more fell,
more bestial than a wife in such an action,
and what an action that one planned!
The murder of her husband and her lord.
Great god, I thought my children and my slaves
at least would give me welcome. But that woman,
plotting a thing so low, defiled herself
and all her sex, all women yet to come,
even those few who may be virtuous.'

He paused then, and I answered:

'Foul and dreadful.
That was the way that Zeus who views the wide world
vented his hatred on the sons of Atreus—
intrigues of women, even from the start.
Myriads
died by Helen's fault, and Klytaimnêstra
plotted against you half the world away.'

And he at once said:

'Let it be a warning
even to you. Indulge a woman never,
and never tell her all you know. Some things
a man may tell, some he should cover up.
Not that I see a risk for you, Odysseus,
of death at your wife's hands. She is too wise,
too clear-eyed, sees alternatives too well,
Penelope, Ikários' daughter—
that young bride whom we left behind—think of it!—
when we sailed off to war. The baby boy
still cradled at her breast—now he must be
a grown man, and a lucky one. By heaven,
you'll see him yet, and he'll embrace his father
with old fashioned respect, and rightly.

My own
lady never let me glut my eyes
on my own son, but bled me to death first.
One thing I will advise, on second thought;
stow it away and ponder it.
in secret on your island; give no warning. The day of faithful wives is gone forever.

But tell me, have you any word at all about my son's life? Gone to Orkhómenos or sandy Pylos, can he be? Or waiting with Meneláos in the plain of Sparta? Death on earth has not yet taken Orestès.

But I could only answer:

'Son of Atreus,
why do you ask these questions of me? Neither news of home have I, nor news of him, alive or dead. And empty words are evil.'

So we exchanged our speech, in bitterness, weighed down by grief, and tears welled in our eyes, when there appeared the spirit of Akhilleus, son of Peleus; then Patróklos' shade, and then Antílokhos, and then Aias, first among all the Danaans in strength and bodily beauty, next to prince Akhilleus. Now that great funner, grandson of Aiakhos, recognized me and called across to me:

'Son of Laërtès and the gods of old, Odysseus, master mariner and soldier, old knife, what next? What greater feat remains for you to put your mind on, after this? How did you find your way down to the dark where these dimwitted dead are camped forever, the after images of used-up men?'

I answered:

'Akhilleus, Peleus' son, strongest of all among the Akhaians, I had need of foresight such as Tēiresias alone could give to help me, homeward bound for the crags of Ithaka.'

I have not yet coasted Akhaia, not yet touched my land; my life is all adversity. But was there ever a man more blest by fortune than you, Akhilleus? Can there ever be? We ranked you with immortals in your lifetime, we Argives did, and here your power is royal among the dead men's shades. Think, then, Akhilleus: you need not be so pained by death.'

To this he answered swiftly:

'Let me hear no smooth talk of death from you, Odysseus, light of councils. Better, I say, to break sod as a farm hand for some poor country man, on iron rations, than lord it over all the exhausted dead. Tell me, what news of the prince my son: did he come after me to make a name in battle or could it be he did not? Do you know if rank and honor still belong to Peleus in the towns of the Myrmidons? Or now, may be, Hellas and Phthia spurn him, seeing old age fetters him, hand and foot. I cannot help him under the sun's rays, cannot be that man I was on Troy's wide seaboard, in those days when I made bastion for the Argives and put an army's best men in the dust. Were I but whole again, could I go now to my father's house, one hour would do to make my passion and my hands no man could hold hateful to any who should him aside.'

Now when he paused I answered:

'Of all that—of Peleus' life, that is—I know nothing; but happily I can tell you the whole story of Neoptolemos, as you require. In my own ship I brought him out from Skyros to join the Akhaians under arms.'
And I can tell you,
in every council before Troy thereafter
your son spoke first and always to the point;
no one but Nestor and I could out-debate him.
And when we formed against the Trojan line
he never hung back in the mass, but ranged
far forward of his troops—no man could touch him
for gallantry. Aye, scores went down before him
in hard fights man to man. I shall not tell
all about each, or name them all—the long
roster of enemies he put out of action,
taking the shock of charges on the Argives.
But what a champion his lance ran through
in Eurypulos the son of Telephos! Keteians
in throngs around that captain also died—all
because Priam’s gifts had won his mother
to send the lad to battle; and I thought
Memnon alone in splendor ever outshone him.

But one fact more: while our picked Argive crew
still rode that hollow horse Epeios built,
and when the whole thing lay with me, to open
the trapdoor of the ambuscade or not,
at that point our Danaan lords and soldiers
wiped their eyes, and their knees began to quake,
all but Neoptolemos. I never saw
his tanned cheek change color or his hand
brush one tear away. Rather he prayed me,
hand on hilt, to sortie, and he gripped
his tough spear, bent on havoc for the Trojans.
And when we had pierced and sacked
Priam’s tall city
he loaded his choice plunder and embarked
with no scar on him; not a spear had grazed him
nor the sword’s edge in close work—common wounds
one gets in war. Arès in his mad fits
knows no favorites.’

But I said no more,
for he had gone off striding the field of asphodel,

the ghost of our great runner, Akhilleus Aiákidês,
glorying in what I told him of his son.

Now other souls of mournful dead stood by,
each with his troubled questioning, but one
remained alone, apart: the son of Télamon,
Aías, it was—the great shade burning still—
because I had won favor on the beachhead
in rivalry over Akhilleus’ arms.
The Lady Thetis, mother of Akhilleus,
laid out for us the dead man’s battle gear,
and Trojan children, with Athena,
named the Danaan fittest to own them. Would
god I had not borne the palm that day!
For earth took Aías then to hold forever,
the handsomest and, in all feats of war,
noblest of the Danans after Akhilleus.
Gently therefore I called across to him:

‘Aías, dear son of royal Télamon,
you would not then forget, even in death,
your fury with me over those accurst
calamitous arms?—and so they were, a bane
sent by the gods upon the Argive host.
For when you died by your own hand we lost
a tower, formidable in war. All we Akhaians
mourn you forever, as we do Akhilleus;
and no one bears the blame but Zeus.
He fixed that doom for you because he frowned
on the whole expedition of our spearmen.
My lord, come nearer, listen to our story!
Conquer your indignation and your pride.’

But he gave no reply, and turned away,
following other ghosts toward Erebos.
Who knows if in that darkness he might still
have spoken, and I answered?

But my heart
longed, after this, to see the dead elsewhere.
And now there came before my eyes Minos, the son of Zeus, enthroned, holding a golden staff, dealing out justice among ghostly pleaders arrayed about the broad doorways of Death.

And then I glimpsed Orion, the huge hunter, gripping his club, studded with bronze, unbreakable, with wild beasts he had overpowered in life on lonely mountainsides, now brought to bay on fields of asphodel.

And I saw Tityos, the son of Gaia, lying abandoned over nine square rods of plain. Vultures, hunched above him, left and right, rifting his belly, stabbed into the liver, and he could never push them off. This hulk

had once committed rape of Zeus's mistress, Léto, in her glory, when she crossed the open grass of Panopeus toward Pytho.

Then I saw Tántalos put to the torture: in a cool pond he stood, lapped round by water clear to the chin, and being athirst he burned to slake his dry weasand with drink, though drink he would not ever again. For when the old man put his lips down to the sheet of water it vanished round his feet, gulped underground, and black mud baked there in a wind from hell. Boughs, too, drooped low above him, big with fruit, pear trees, pomegranates, brilliant apples, luscious figs, and olives ripe and dark; but if he stretched his hand for one, the wind under the dark sky tossed the bough beyond him.

Then Sisyphos in torment I beheld being roustabout to a tremendous boulder. Leaning with both arms braced and legs driving, he heaved it toward a height, and almost over,

but then a Power spun him round and sent the cruel boulder bounding again to the plain. Whereon the man bent down again to toil, dripping sweat, and the dust rose overhead. Next I saw manifest the power of Heraklès—a phantom, this, for he himself has gone feasting amid the gods, reclining soft with Hēbè of the ravishing pale ankles, daughter of Zeus and Héra, shod in gold. But, in my vision, all the dead around him cried like affrighted birds; like Night itself he loomed with naked bow and nocked arrow and glances terrible as continual archery. My hackles rose at the gold sword belt he wore sweeping across him: gorgeous intaglio of savage bears, boars, lions with wildfire eyes, swordfights, battle, slaughter, and sudden death—the smith who had that belt in him, I hope he never made, and never will make, another. The eyes of the vast figure rested on me, and of a sudden he said in kindly tones:

'Son of Lárrès and the gods of old, Odysseus, master mariner and soldier, under a cloud, you too? Destined to grinding labors like my own in the sunny world? Son of Kronión Zeus or not, how many days I sweated out, being bound in servitude to a man far worse than I, a rough master! He made me hunt this place one time to get the watchdog of the dead: no more perilous task, he thought, could be; but I brought back that beast, up from the underworld; Hermès and grey-eyed Athena showed the way.'
but first came shades in thousands, rustling in a pandemonium of whispers, blown together, and the horror took me that Persephone had brought from darker hell some saurian death's head. I whirled then, made for the ship, shouted to crewmen to get aboard and cast off the stern hawsers, an order soon obeyed. They took their thwarts, and the ship went leaping toward the stream of Ocean first under oars, then with a following wind.