Grey-eyed Athena had no childhood.

She stepped out of the old god’s terrible skull a grown young goddess and began her apprenticeship: running sex-driven cults among the hunters and gatherers, collecting snakes and owls, her aegis looming behind the altars, over her priestesses, prophetic crones and breathless temple prostitutes, sacrificed animals bleeding and burnt ears of grain.

She gained a reputation: she liked clever men, not that way, no, but she did them favors, paid attention to their deeds and needs and risks and wounds and wants. Her admiration was something a clever man could count on; she would give protection, opportunities, good luck. There was a catch, of course: you had to be clever again, you had to keep impressing the grey-eyed one, and so men lasted a while but couldn’t keep it up, and fell, and well, she forgot them. She was busy.

But Odysseus: He was another kind. One stratagem after another, he built up so much credit that she saved him even when he disgraced himself one time or another. (Olympus might have disapproved if they’d noticed, but she had walked far away from that rabble of archetypes, totems, fertilities, boogeymen and witch-mothers, nightwalkers, netherdwellers, sexpots and satyrs. She owned her firmament.) Odysseus was something new to her in his little flick of mortality.
So when she stood alone in Penelope’s bedchamber watching the reunion, the circling dance of man and woman step by step negotiating what they knew after so many years their carefulness like oil on water, leveling out the fresh reek of murder from the great hall below them the suitors’ teeth driven into the earthen floor Odysseus striped with their blood Penelope before her loom, many-stringed weapon of her own warfare

weaving each other in that long rite of recognition:
Her grey eyes saw words forming and fading unsaid As they circled in the salt red sunset Ionian air.

And saw the end of her story with Odysseus; goddess and all, it took away her breath.
In the end she had this much to show for her years with this clever man:
He came home from the war alive, with all his teeth.