
The House Of Odysseus

BARRY B. POWELL

MY TEENAGE SON and I were living in an apartment in Athens in the Ilissia district. The blazing heat of the Athens night settled in the small bedroom where I tried to sleep. The heat stifled every thought in my mind. In the hall outside the room an ancient American fan, plugged into a clumsy transformer at the back of the counter in the tiny kitchen, banged the frame on every turn. I had tried to fix the fan but it was useless.

By morning I had not slept. The morning light came in off the bedroom balcony. I dragged myself from the sweat-soaked sheets, down the hall to the front room. My son was asleep on the couch, his lanky legs half covered by a sheet, his head hung over the end of the couch, his mouth agape.

"Get up, Horatio, you sonofabitch," I belted him and pushed him with my foot. "It's another day."

He groaned and rolled over on his side while I pulled open the drapes with a clatter. The brilliant sun flooded into the room, glinting from the highly polished baby grand piano in the corner and the old leather books in the shelves.

"What do you say we blow this joint, boy? Get the hell out of here."

"Where we going?" he groaned, rubbing his eyes.

"Going home. Home at last."

"Home?" he gasped, sitting bolt upright.

"I mean Ithaki. What do you say?"

"Is that the isle of Odysseus?"

"Sure."

My son rubbed his eyes with the backs of his hands. He was good looking. He reminded me of my brother Seth. The

TWA airline stewardess thought we were brothers.

"Where is Ithaki?"

"It's a long way off, boy, a long way off."

"Are you Odysseus?"

He looked at me sleepy, as if dumfounded. His posture was bad, especially in the morning.

"Sure. Now get your shit together, 'cause we're getting out of here—fast."

WE KEPT TO THE steep streets around Likavitos above Kolonaki, then dropped down, zigzagging to a side street off Omonia Square. Even at this early hour the clouds of bitter gray automobile exhaust choked us. We waited in the terminal kiosk and caught a bus to Kefissiou station.

At Kefissiou we crossed the open disordered room surrounded by ticket booths up to the sign that said PATRAS. We bought our tickets and went through the wide open doors to the bus park and sat down at the back of the station cafe and waited, out of the way. I sent Horatio to the counter to buy some baklava and yogurt. He returned with two Coke Classics, his walkman plugged into his ears.

"All they had, huh? Hey why do you listen to that fucking walkman all the time anyway? It drives me crazy. Being with you is like being alone," I shouted.

"What?"

"What you listening to, anyway?"

"Pink Floyd." He adjusted the earphone.

"Pretty good?"

"Yeah."

"Might as well be on the moon."

"What?"

A half hour later I pulled him out of the chair and led the way toward the bus. Greeks were gathered by the gate, shouldering their bags. We crowded onto the bus and managed to get a seat near the middle where the springs wouldn't be so bad.

Exhaling clouds of black smoke, the bus roared out of the

stall into the congested city. An hour later we were on open road headed south toward the Megarid. The ragged Gerania cliffs loomed on our right. Beneath, at the bottom of the cliff, was the great NATO naval base at Salamis. Hot, blinding sun filled the bus, making it uncomfortably warm.

The bus pulled high around the village of Megara, which lay in an indentation of the crag. We were headed toward the isthmus. We crossed the ancient canal cut deep into the rock shelf. The bus stopped at a rest stand where we bought honeyed shredded wheat and yogurt. The john downstairs had no doors. The toilets were splattered with shit and there was no paper.

Back on the road, we came beneath Acrocorinth, shrouded in mists, then headed west along the Corinthian Gulf, turned off the road briefly to descend into Sikyon for passengers, then back on the main road. To the right shimmered the blue gulf, boats plying the water. To our left rose the highlands of Akhaia, a sun-fried, scarred terrain.

In late afternoon we came to the outskirts of bustling Patras. The bus pulled into a station near the harbor. We dragged our packs off the bus and set off down the street. After some searching, we found the ferry line, bought tickets, and hoofed our way back along the quay to a little restaurant where we bought a couple of Coke Classics and some weenie dog “toast,” a sort of sandwich squished in a hot plate.

“Heading to big Ithaki, hey Horatio?” I couldn’t help remark, filled with enthusiasm.

“Yeah, that’s really a trip, when I think about it,” he said.

I watched his thin ruminating face, a trace of acne at the temples. He was very tall. His soft hair flared out straight from the top and at the sides. His eyes were hollowed and dark, as if he were on drugs. When he spoke he furrowed his brow into intense rows, showing in his thin neck a prominent Adam’s apple. His profile reminded me of my father. His thinness and oblique intensity belied that he was a trained fighter with many years of ring experience in sport

Tae Kwon Do. He was a great kicker who could flick a cigarette out of a man's mouth with a front hook kick you never saw coming.

"It's a pisser getting there, though," I ragged.

"Yeah."

"I guess that's the way Odysseus would want it. How's the toast?"

"Great."

"Hey remember that chicken we had on Skyros?"

"Yeah . . . Skyros . . . that was great chicken."

On the remote island of Skyros my son and I had stayed in a private house, a white-washed small room with a fireplace and local ceramic ware hung on the walls. One night we devoured several whole chickens in a local dive, cooked over a wood fire. The food was so good that we sat there for hours, splintering the bones and sucking the marrow and drinking retsina wine. I told him about the First World War because on that day we had visited the tomb of Rupert Brooke, who was buried on Skyros.

WHEN THE TIME came, we hastened toward the ferry and clanged up the steel steps to the lounge. We checked out the front and upper decks and the rear deck, then settled down on the front deck, pulling together two plastic-webbed deck chairs and setting our bags between. There were few passengers aboard and no other Americans or other tourists, except for a Swedish family.

The great wind rose off the prow as we pulled out of the Patras harbor into the gulf. The ferry steamed between the promontories of Kryoneri and Kalogria. Dolphins ran off starboard, racing the boat.

I returned from the prow and sat down next to Horatio. He was plugged into his walkman while reading a Steven King novel. I got up again and went into the cabin. Greeks were gathered in groups in different corners of the cabin. An old woman had a green Amazon parrot in one cage and two finches in another. The Greeks loved their caged birds.

I went back outside. Horatio was stretched out on the plank bench, his shirt off, eyes closed, still listening to his walkman. To the right, just on the horizon, the headland of Mesolongion, where Byron died, came into view. There flowed the Akheloos, river of the underworld. The sky hung cloudless above high whitecaps under a driving wind as the great ferry pitched and turned and headed into open sea.

AFTER MANY HOURS the island appeared in the distance, lying brown and lumpish, like a shield on the horizon. Passengers idled up to the railing. The captain held the headland to portside. We cruised by empty hills covered with gray bush. Here and there was an occasional white house, isolated in the bush.

"Is that Ithaki?" asked Horatio, coming up beside me.

"Not yet, boy—that's Kephallenia. We put in to Kephallenia first."

The ferry rounded a headland, heading due west, then cut sharp into the port of Sami on Kephallenia. The colored houses of the small town stretched along the beachfront. Drivers in the hold revved up their engines, anxious to disembark. The iron planks fell, the cars roared away, and new passengers poured onto the cement landing. Across the strait lay our goal, high, precipitous—Ithaki, the home of many-minded Odysseus.

Night fell as the ferry crept along Ithaki's southern coast, then turned sharply north, past tiny island Asteris into the gulf of Sarakenikou, then west to the gulf of Aitos. On our right rose the high peak of Neriton, swathed in clouds. Off the gulf, through a narrow passage, the ferry turned southwest past the small quarantine station and into the harbor of Vathi, which Homer called the deep harbor of Phorkys.

The boat cut the engines and drifted. Around the deep harbor, which had no beach but ended sheer against the land, was built the town of Vathi in a semicircle. Vathi means "the deep." Dock workers fixed huge hawsers from the ferry to the cement lading dock. The metal gang was

thrown across, but there were fewer passengers on board than I thought. Only a dozen filed onto the cement platform. My son and I shouldered our loads and followed them.

“Now for a place to stay, hey?”

“Will we find a hotel?”

“Are you out of your mind, boy?”

One hundred feet down the quay we entered a shop with a small sign scrawled, ROOMS TO LET. It was a seamstress’s shop. At the front two elderly women picked at cloth while at the back a tired looking woman, probably in her early thirties with bedraggled blond hair, smoked a cigarette. I haggled with her in Greek about the room.

She led us along the quay, then inland up sloping streets. We entered through a narrow passage in a cement wall into a narrow stair that wound through a rough garden. The woman took us to a room in her house. The room, in the front, opened onto a garden. It seemed that the woman lived alone, though pictures of young children hung from the white-washed bedroom wall.

THE NEXT MORNING we sat in the garden and ate some yogurt. I smoked a cigarette.

“What’s down there?” Horatio said, meaning the southern part of the island to our right, beyond the garden.

“How should I know? Oh, yeah. That’s where Telemakhos was supposed to come in at night, see, to find his dad. He’d been over to Pylos—that’s way in hell and gone across the waters—to ask King Nestor if Nestor knew anything about his old man, Odysseus. In the meanwhile the suitors are lying for him, see, so when he comes back from Pylos, they can knock him off. Their big idea is to take over the island and fuck Penelope.”

“Oh yeah, I remember. That’s his mother.”

“You read the *Odyssey* in school?”

“Sure.”

“Yeah—great stuff. Well anyway, you want to go down there and check it out? I mean the end of the island. There’s

some kind of a bay there or something. I saw it on a map. Also, a bunch of ruins, supposed to be the hut of Eumaios the swineherd. See, Odysseus went up to the hut of Eumaios to kind of hang out for awhile before going up to the palace to kill the suitors."

"Yeah."

"You remember?"

"Sure."

We got up, descended the stair, and walked into town where we bought some oranges and a tourist map. Using the crude map, we walked south outside of the town on a gravel road. The road dipped into a ravine, then came up the other side into an orange grove. Though still early in the day, the sun was already hot overhead. I had overdressed in long pants and a heavy shirt.

We headed upland out of the orchard. On either side the land began to rise steeply, covered in thistles and low bush. The air throbbed with the drone of cicadas. Through the cloudless sky a raven flew, silent.

The ground edged ever upward. From a series of switch-backs, the ground broke suddenly steeply to our left, tumbling down to the sea. I was sweating profusely. The walk didn't seem far on the map, but we must already have walked for miles.

"We should have brought something to drink," Horatio said, putting away his walkman.

"You said it, boy. That was a real dumb move. We must have been out of our fucking minds. Heading off into the bush without anything to drink! Who do we think we are? At least we got them oranges."

"We can suck the juice."

We walked on in silence. He plugged back in his walkman.

"Who you got on the walkman now?"

"Keith Richards."

"He pretty good?"

"He's pretty good."

BY MIDDAY WE came to a sign at the head of a path that led off down the steep slope toward the sea, far below TO THE FOUNTAIN OF ARETHUSA.

"Wow, the fountain of Arethusa," Horatio said.

"Yeah."

"What's that?"

"I don't know. Some fountain. Maybe that's where Eumaios the swineherd, the guy who hid out Odysseus, was supposed to water his pigs. Looks like a long way down. Wanna go?"

"Why not?"

"Hey look up there—that steep bluff ..." I pointed to a sheer white face ahead. "See those crows flying around up there? That must be Crow's Rock. It's in the *Odyssey* some place. Eumaios hangs out at Crow's Rock."

"Wow. That's intense. You mean this really happened?"

"Yeah, well don't worry about it. It's all bullshit."

"You don't think there ever was an Odysseus?"

"How should I know?"

We headed down the path that was little used and badly overgrown in the thick bush. It was hard to see where the path was going. There appeared to be a cove far below at the bottom. We kept on struggling downward, but eventually the path disappeared completely. Suddenly we were stranded on the side of the hill in the middle of rough bush far from help and without water.

"Goddamit, boy, this don't look good," I complained. "I think we better take our bearings before we get lost even more."

Far above us, etched along the cliff, we could make out a gravel road. We were still a long way up from the sea. A hot wind blew over us.

"You think some idiot turned the sign around to point down here when really it's supposed to point down the same road we were already on or something like that?" I wondered aloud.

"You think so?"

“How should I know? Anyway, it’s a long way down there still, and when we get there we got to come back. What’s there anyway except this so-called Fountain of Arethusa? If you believe that, you can believe anything.”

“Think we should head back?”

“Definitely.”

“But we’ve lost the path.”

“Well, we’ll scramble. Just pick a point on the road up there, and let’s go for it.”

We tried to step from boulder to boulder as they protruded from the bush. From every small crevasse between the boulders grew sharp-spiked low bush that tore at our boots and pants. After a long time we regained the road and headed on down it, edging along the face of Crow’s Rock. After awhile the country flattened out. An hour’s hard walk later, the road dead-ended on a high promontory beside a ruined monastery. There was no trace of present habitation anywhere.

We sat beneath a low tree and broke out the oranges, devouring them greedily, gnawing the skins, craving every trace of moisture. The bitter truth was that we were violently thirsty, scratched, covered in dust, and burning with heat. The sun was high overhead. Sweat ran in runnels through the dust on my son’s thin face.

“You know it occurs to me, boy, that we might be in some real danger out here.”

“Really? Could we die?”

“Possible. We’re pretty hot, like real hot. We don’t got no water and there’s no way of getting any. We need to cool down all right. We could get heat exhaustion out here or sunstroke.”

“That’s really heavy.”

“Just my point. Now there’s supposed to be some ruins out here, I don’t know, like Eumaios’ hut or the like, but I’m gonna bet they’re just some Bronze Age crap. My advice is that we blow off the ruins and get the fuck out of here while we still can.”

The surheated wind, racing through the belfry of the

monastery, made an eerie sound. The droning of the cicadas came and went, throbbing in the thick air scented with sage.

"Well you're the boss, Dad."

WHEN WE DRAGGED into town, my son's lips were swollen and his eyes glazed. We staggered into the first grocery we could find, a small, dark room, dusty and filled with miscellaneous commodities. Brushing past a heavy middle-aged man standing by the counter and engaged in heated conversation with the proprietor, I asked in a rasping voice for two Coke Classics.

"Sorry. Not have Coke Classic."

"*An ekheis limonada ke portokolada?*" I suggested alternatively.

"You Amerikano?" the heavy man broke in while the proprietor fumbled in a cold box for his *portokoladas*.

"Sure."

"This your boy here?"

"Yeah."

"He's a fine boy. He looks real good. He would be good to work on a ship."

"Can you get him a job?"

"O Ho! Well I am captain on a big steamer for many years! I work for Aristotle Onassis you know for forty years. I been in every part of the world. I knew Onassis very well."

"Yeah? What you do now?"

"I retired—here in Ithaki. I do not mean to say anything against your country, but Jackie—she was a little bitch. Onassis was very unhappy in his last days, because of her. She try to take him for everything he had."

"*Anoige i soda, parakalo,*" I urged the proprietor, who was still scrambling around. Horatio stood back against a counter, his large hands on his hips.

"Yeah, well that's too bad about Aristotle."

"Yes, he very unhappy because of that woman. But you have fine boy. Here—let's have a look. Turn around, please." He went up to Horatio and touched him on the shoulder, to

spin him around. But Horatio faced him off, staring like an animal at bay, his cracked lips parted. Rudely he shook away the man's thick hand.

"Whatsa matter? Here turn around—turn around. I want to see you from behind." The man tried to touch him again on the shoulder but Horatio reared violently backward. "What's the matter with your boy? I don't mean him no harm."

"For Chrissake Horatio, turn around and show the man your back, if it's such a big deal. Then maybe we can get our pop and get the fuck out of here. All right?"

Horatio jerked his head toward the sodas, now standing open on the counter. He hissed in a low voice, "Don't touch me again."

The big man looked confused.

"Don't worry about it," I assured him. "My son—he's a punk. He don't mean nothing. We're just thirsty, that's all."

"He's a fine boy, I think. If he exercise like this all his life—" the man raised his bent arms and swung them from side to side—" he never get old. Like me. Aristotle show me that."

"Can we go now?" Horatio asked with an air of cold contempt.

WE SAT IN THE garden and devoured feta, olives, bread, and sloshed it down with beer. We were beginning to feel a little better.

"Well that wasn't such a great expedition, eh? Still, you take the good with the bad."

"I didn't like that guy in the grocery."

"Oh yeah, I noticed. But look, you should have turned around for the old fart. He didn't mean no harm. He's just an old Greek fart. He wasn't going to hurt you. Hey, when in Rome—. He was just trying to be friendly."

Just then up the steps came a young couple in bathing suits, speaking Italian, our proprietress behind them. The woman was stunningly beautiful. She wore a bathing suit

with a towel over her shoulders. Her male companion was great looking too, like a movie star.

"They come this morning," the proprietress said to us. "From Firenze."

"*Ciao*," I greeted as they went into the house. "Pretty nice, eh?" I winked at Horatio.

"Yeah."

"Look buddy, what do you say we check out the northern part of the island, now that we've done the southern part. I hear that up in the northern part—you got to go across a real small peninsula to get to the northern part—that's where Odysseus' house was. I mean there's some ruins there or something. Just think about it. Penelope has been waiting twenty years and here comes this old beggar. She doesn't know *what* is going on. She's going to marry one of the suitors, see, and then the beggar throws off his rags, grabs this bow, and shoots the suitors in cold blood. It's Odysseus! They're a hundred of these suitors! There he is, Odysseus and his son Telemakhos, side by side, killing them all. It's great. When they're finished, the fucking house is running with blood, see, and down comes Penelope from upstairs—she's been having a little snooze. She sees all this crap and says, 'Who the hell are you?' And the beggar says, 'Why, I'm your loving husband, returned.' She doesn't believe a word of it. She wants proof! Women are like that, boy. But I guess you're going to find out soon enough."

"Yeah, right."

"You're fucking-A right. Anyway, what do you say we check it out?"

"You mean the house of Odysseus?"

"You want to?"

WE PARKED OUR rented scooters against a tree in the main square of the tiny village of Stavros at the northern end of the island and bought some lunch in the restaurant across the street. Odysseus' house was supposed to be some place around here. We were the only customers in the restaurant

except for an English couple, a robust sun-reddened elderly man and his wife, who sat twenty feet away. A powerful wind swept across the otherwise deserted square. Dry debris ran before the wind. After awhile the English woman left.

I shouted to the man. "Say buddy, you have any idea where Odysseus' house is?"

"Odysseus—" he blared, incredulous, "as if there ever was an Odysseus!"

We went over to the man's table and sat down.

"So you don't think there ever was an Odysseus, huh?"

"It's a bloody goddam bit of rubbish. I've been coming to this island for twenty years, and I've never seen any sign of him. I think the whole thing's a lot of rot," he said.

My son was looking disappointed.

"Still," I said, "don't you think there might be something or other to it, some way or other?"

The strong wind was like a blast furnace, drying our skin.

"Of course you can always believe anything you want," he said. "But to me, it's all rubbish." The man wore swimming trunks, sandals, and a loose open shirt with a loud Hawaiian pattern. "Hell, my wife and I been coming here to Stavros for twenty years—we swim every day down in Polis—just outside town. You must have seen it when you came in. One day my wife and me were sitting on the beach, you see, and up comes this bloody yacht. Next thing we know there's a bloody life raft. Out jumps these bloody Germans. They want to know where the *cave* is, they say. 'What cave?' I say. 'The cave where they found the tripods,' they say. 'What bloody tripods are you talking about?' I say. 'The tripods with Odysseus' name on them.' For Christ's sake! I tell you there *is* no bloody cave, there are *no* bloody tripods, and there ain't no bloody Odysseus either."

He took a long drink of Amstel beer.

"Still, you'd think there'd be *something* to it," I insisted after a suitable pause. "Or do you think that Homer just made up the whole thing?"

"How the bloody hell should I know? And what makes

you think there even *was* a bloody Homer? The way I see it, the whole thing's a lot of crap and that's that."

Actually the man was quite friendly, in spite of his strong views.

"Still," I pressed on, "at least there's got to be some place, you know, that people *say* was Odysseus' house, even if it isn't really. I even hear that it's supposed to be around here someplace—some place quite near. I don't know what it really is, probably just some ruins, but you know people *say* it is Odysseus' house. See what I mean?"

"No. I don't bloody see what you mean. I've never heard of any ruins around here. But look—you seem like good chaps—there's a little museum just outside of town here. You take that road over there. Maybe they know something. Trouble is as far as I know it's never been open. Ha!" he laughed.

We thanked the man, got on our scooters and headed out of town in the direction he pointed. We passed a row of modern houses, then headed down into a sharp fold of the hills. Certainly there was no level ground anywhere on Ithaki. But we saw no sign of a museum. After going a mile, we turned around and headed back. We pulled up beside a man working in a garden and I asked him if he knew about some museum that was supposed to be around here. He said, Yes, there was a Museo, three hundred meters back down the road, around a bend.

We found a narrow alley up a steep hill and turned up it, gunning our scooters. The alley led through vineyards until we came to a small building on top of the hill surrounded by stacks of ancient amphoras lying in heaps of grass behind a rusted fence, a padlock on the gate.

"Hey we found it," I said to my son, trying to be cheerful. "Too bad it's locked."

"Yeah," my son said. "Do you think Odysseus' house is really somewhere around here?"

We turned the scooters at right angles up a second alley in front of the museum. Right next door was a small house of

packed earth. A little girl in rags stood beside the drooping wooden door, sucking her finger.

"Ksereis pou einai to oikos tou Odysseou?" I said.

The girl stared at us, uncomprehending. Suddenly the door opened wide. A woman stepped out of the dank interior into the sun wearing a sack dress, her hair unkempt, one eye half-shut, evidently blind. Her face was streaked with dust. She was barefoot, and she looked hungry.

"Can I help?" she groaned in a vaguely English accent.

"Oh, you speak English," I said.

"Well, I lived in Sydney for twenty years. There are many Greeks in Sydney, many from Ithaki. Now I am home with my little girl." She did not look at us, but at some point away, off in distant space. Behind her in the darkness of the cold house was another woman, old, in black, a crone.

"Ah, I see, yes, well, we are looking for the house of Odysseus, you see. We heard it was around here. Unfortunately we can't see any sign of it."

"The house of Odysseus," she said in a low voice and rubbed her chin, "—one moment, please, yes, according to Homer—according to Homer, from Odysseus' house you can see the sea in three places . . ." Slowly she came down the short step onto the cobbled alley. We were on pretty high ground here, a saddle. I followed her pointing finger—first here, then there, then there. In fact you could see the sea in three places. "So, yes, maybe you are right—perhaps his house is near here, perhaps it is . . ."

"But can you say where exactly?" I protested, becoming impatient. "Have you never heard about this before in your whole life?"

Suddenly her good eye rolled back into her head. She sort of lunged forward, her chest first, and she began to fall to the ground. I rushed in to catch her. I held her in my arms. Though slight, she was so heavy I thought I could not go on. Then she began to regain consciousness and to straighten up. I stood back, letting her go.

"My God, woman, what's the matter?" I asked, catching

my son's eye. "Are you going to be all right?"

"Oh, it's just the sun, you know, just the sun. It's nothing. Don't be concerned." She brushed a strand of dirty hair from her good eye. "What were we talking about?"

"The house of Odysseus, woman, the house of Odysseus."

"Yes. You go up this path, you go up this path. You find. You find.

"This way? You mean up this way?"

She went back into the house, taking the little girl with her, and shut the door.

My son and I left our scooters against a fence and walked up the rugged alley, really just a scar through some vineyards. A hundred yards further the road disappeared in front of an unfinished housing project, a four-apartment complex, apparently abandoned. A cement mixer lay upturned in the bush. Piles of gravel were thrown here and there, overgrown with grass.

"You think it's around here?" my son wondered.

I tried to encourage him. "Could be," I said. "It's always hard to say in cases like these. We might as well check out the other side of this housing project, what do you say?"

We rounded the building to the back and found a deep ditch through a small orchard. It was hard to tell whether this was an archaeologists' trench or whether it had something to do with the plumbing in the apartment complex. There seemed to be part of a stone wall at the bottom of the trench, unless they were random blocks.

"I don't think that woman knows a goddam thing about the house of Odysseus," I said at last. "What do you think, son?"

My son stood at the top of the ditch. He shielded his deep eyes with his hand and scanned the horizon. Then he put his hands on his hips.

We walked all over the high ground. In the middle of a vineyard we found some buried stones. Perhaps they were the ruins of Odysseus' house, though it didn't seem very likely.

"I don't think we're ever going to find it," my son said fi-

nally. "What do you say we get the hell out of here."

"Yeah," I agreed. "You said it."

We found the alley, picked up our scooters, and with motors silent rolled past the woman's house and the locked museum, turned right and bounced through vineyards until we came to the asphalt road.

A black Mercedes Benz taxi slammed to a halt in front of us, nearly knocking us over. A good-looking woman dressed to kill and her younger boyfriend jumped out of the back seat.

"Quick—Can you help us?" the woman asked, out of breath. "Do you speak English—Oh thank God! Our boat leaves in fifteen minutes. We have barely time to see anything. Can you tell us how to find the house of Odysseus? I'm told it is right around here."

I was going to say something but, "Oh no problem," Horatio put in, tossing back a lock of his too-long blondish hair. "It's just up this road."

"Yeah," I seconded, "you can't miss it."

"Oh thank you so much," she said with genuine gratitude. "I'd hate to come all the way to Ithaka and miss the most important thing of all."

"Well you're in good luck, aren't you," I congratulated them and started my machine. My son and I stormed back up the asphalt road at full throttle, glad to have done our duty and also had our way.