

# Book 9

## The Cyclops

*Paragraphs 31-39*



31. 'The Cyclops took the wine and drank it up. And the delicious drink gave him such **exquisite** pleasure that he asked me for another bowlful. "Give me more, please, and tell me your name, here and now - I would like to make you a gift that will please you. We Cyclopes have wine of our own made from the grapes that our rich soil and rains from Zeus produce. But this **vintage** of yours is a drop of the real **nectar** and **ambrosia**."
32. 'So said the Cyclops, and I handed him another bowlful of the sparkling wine. Three times I filled it for him; and three times the fool drained the bowl to the **dregs**. At last, when the wine had **fuddled** his wits, I addressed him with soothing words.
33. "'Cyclops," I said, "you ask me my name. I'll tell it to you; and in return give me the gift you promised me. My name is Nobody. That is what I am called by my mother and father and by all my friends."
34. 'The Cyclops answered me from his cruel heart. "Of all his company I will eat Nobody last, and the rest before him. That shall be your gift."
35. 'He had hardly spoken before he **toppled** over and fell face upwards on the floor, where he lay with his great neck twisted to one side, and **all-compelling** sleep overpowered him. In his drunken **stupor** he **vomited**, and a stream of wine mixed with **morsels** of men's flesh poured from his throat. I went at once and thrust our pole deep under the ashes of the fire to make it hot, and meanwhile gave a word of encouragement to all my men, to make sure that no one would hang back through fear. When the fierce glow from the olive stake warned me that it was about to catch alight in the flames, green as it was, I withdrew it from the fire and my men gathered round. A god now **inspired** them with **tremendous** courage. Seizing the olive pole, they drove its sharpened end into the Cyclops' eye, while I used my weight from above to twist it home, like a man **boring** a ship's timber with a drill which his mates below him twirl with a strap they hold at either end, so that it spins continuously. In much the same way we handled our pole with its red-hot point and twisted it in his eye till the blood boiled up round the burning wood. The scorching heat singed his lids and brow all round, while his eyeball blazed and the very roots crackled in the flame. The

Cyclops' eye hissed round the olive stake in the same way that an axe or **adze** hisses when a smith plunges it into cold water to **quench** and strengthen the iron. He gave a dreadful **shriek**, which echoed round the rocky walls, and we backed away from him in terror, while he pulled the stake from his eye, streaming with blood. Then he hurled it away from him with **frenzied** hands and raised a great shout to the other Cyclopes who lived in neighbouring caves along the windy heights. Hearing his screams they came up from every quarter, and gathering outside the cave asked him what the matter was.

36. “What on earth is wrong with you, Polyphemus? Why must you disturb the peaceful night and spoil our sleep with all this shouting? Is a robber driving off your sheep, or is somebody trying by **treachery** or violence to kill you?”
37. ‘Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus’ voice in reply: “O my friends, it’s Nobody’s treachery, not violence, that is doing me to death.”
38. “Well then,” came the immediate reply, “if you are alone and nobody is assaulting you, you must be sick and sickness comes from almighty Zeus and cannot be helped. All you can do is to pray to your father, the Lord Poseidon.”
39. ‘And off they went, while I laughed to myself at the way in which my **cunning notion** of a false name had taken them in. The Cyclops, still moaning in **agonies** of pain, **groped** about with his hands and pushed the rock away from the mouth of the cave. Then he sat himself down in the doorway and stretched out both arms in the hope of catching us in the act of slipping out among the sheep. What a fool he must have thought me! Meanwhile I was **cudgelling** my brains for the best possible course, trying to hit on some way of saving my friends as well as myself. I thought up plan after plan, scheme after scheme. It was a matter of life or death: we were in **mortal peril**.

## Glossary

**adze**—tool used for cutting and shaping wood

**agonies**—sufferings

**all-compelling**—irresistible

**ambrosia**—food of the gods

**boring**—drilling

**cudgelling**—beating

**cunning**—slyly intelligent

**dregs**—solid remains found in the bottom of some drinks

**exquisite**—intense

**frenzied**—wildly excited

**fuddled**—confused

**groped**—felt blindly

**inspired**—excited

**morsels**—bits of food

**mortal**—deadly

**nectar**—drink of the gods

**notion**—idea

**peril**—danger

**quench**—cool hot metal

**shriek**—high-pitched cry

**stupor**—confused state

**toppled**—fell

**treachery**—betrayal through trickiness

**tremendous**—extraordinary

**vintage**—wine

**vomited**—threw up