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Bhima Richards

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Fulfilling the Journey: Hidden Gems in the Odyssey

by Bhima Richards

What are hidden gems? I think that Hidden gems are little details in literature that take the story to the next level. When someone reads a hidden gem, it makes the story feel so much more real and puts the reader in the world of the book, painting such a clear picture for their imagination. It also makes the reader enjoy the book more when they find this easily overlooked detail.

In this scene, Odysseus has made it home at last, but he is in disguise. As he walks toward his home, he sees his beloved dog, who used to be a mighty hunting dog. But now after 20 years of neglect without his master, he is weak and barely holding on to life.

There the dog Argos lay in the dung, all covered with dog ticks.

Now, as he perceived that Odysseus had come close to him,
he wagged his tail, and laid both his ears back; only
he now no longer had the strength to move any closer
to his master, who, watching him from a distance, without
Eumaeus noticing, secretly wiped a tear away.

XVI, 300-305.

I actually cried a bit reading this part because it reminded me of my dog who had died very recently and anything that had to do with death, especially dog death, was making me feel emotional at this time. My dog was very old, loyal, and loving, a lot like Argos.

He had a good long life, and was with us till the end, even though he was very weak and tired. He even took his very last breath looking into me and my mom's eyes, just as Argos did with his beloved master, fulfilling his journey. I have read this page in many different translations, trying to find its true meaning, and all the translations seem to see it as a beautiful thing: a loyal dog, hanging on until he can finally be reunited with his master. Then, after seeing him at last, Argos lets go and dies peacefully. It's amazing that something written over 2,000 years ago in another language could touch me and feel so relatable like this.

Once Odysseus in disguise meets the suitors, Antinous, the leader of the suitors, is partying as always, hoping that he will complete a challenge and take Penelope, Odysseus's wife's hand in marriage. But Homer hints that Antinous is destined to die soon.

So he spoke, but the spirit inside his heart was hopeful
that he would be able to string the bow and shoot through
the iron; but he was to be the first to get a taste of the arrow
from the hands of blameless odysseys.

XXI, 96-100

I love this foreshadowing hidden gem, and this entire chapter of the book, as it is all just foreshadowing for Odysseus to destroy the suitors, and this is the first detail hinting that Antinous shall be the first to die and will be killed by the arrow. Now the reader's attention is more focused on Antinous. Antinous does not know that these are his last moments alive, and soon he shall get his karma, along with all the other suitors, but the reader does. "Taste" is a great word because he has been eating all of this food that doesn't belong. He has also been using his mouth to speak as a jerk. The reader can now focus on him.

It's the small details like this that make The Odyssey such an adventure to read, the foreshadowing suspense, the heart touching moments, and the thrilling stories told.

