

# Philoktetes

John Jesurun

## LISTEN TO ME

PHILOKTETES Listen to me, I'm telling you something.  
So that you'll learn the value of suffering, the joy of sacrifice and patience, murder and manslaughter.  
So that you'll learn to speak the language of the dead.  
Once again its time for you to shut up.  
Belly up to the buzzsaw.  
Gravitational collapse, Blackleg, Yankee pot roast.  
Stop crying. You should be happy.  
Listen to me, I'm telling you something.  
You tell someone else and they'll tell someone else.  
This is what Philoktetes told me.  
This is his suicide note, his poison-pen letter.  
First, I'll give the clue, then the story, then the real story.  
First what they saw, then what was seen, then what was.  
The cadaver will direct the autopsy, a talking corpse narrating, a dead horse talking, a dead foot walking.  
Philoktetes is dead. I was looking at him outside.  
He had one fly on him. But that fly was tiny, triumphant.

ODYSSEUS You have been found neither guilty nor innocent but you have been found.

PHILOKTETES Stop crying.

NEOPTOLEMUS What's that dripping?

PHILOKTETES Blood, urine, pieces of marijuana, carbon monoxide.

I'm sorry that he's dead, all right?  
Once again it's time for you to shut up.

NEOPTOLEMUS What's that moving?

PHILOKTETES A salamander come to eat the turnips.  
I had wanted to tell you about my deep and unrelenting and unequivocal disbelief and unbelief in everything.  
But now I've changed my mind. Do you understand that?

NEOPTOLEMUS What's that dripping?

PHILOKTETES Crocodile tears. I'd like to read a nice book now and then with a story in the middle that goes nowhere.  
Don't you understand?  
He's been murdered, killed.  
His head hit a bullet.  
Habeas corpus, a talking corpse.

NEOPTOLEMUS You were lost but now you're found. I found you.

PHILOKTETES He's pulverized, a smoke signal, a cat dream, a molly maguire.

NEOPTOLEMUS I don't hear anything.

PHILOKTETES You're fuckin' brain dead, that's why.  
A pack of flies is riding around in his head. That fly was tiny, triumphant. I promise.

This is my island. It's beautiful. It's always beautiful.  
I love it.  
At night it gets so dark you don't know where  
you are.  
In the day it's hell, but at night, when everything  
else is asleep, it's heaven.

NEOPTOLEMUS I don't want to stay here.

PHILOKTETES Yes, you do.  
I'll leave the bow here with you.  
You can use it if you want.  
But wait for one night and you won't want to use it.  
In the day you'll feel like using it  
but at night you won't.  
Philoktetes loved it here.  
Mushrooms grow here at night and you can eat  
them.  
You'll see so many things on this island, you won't  
want to leave it.  
You'll be married to it.  
You won't be able to tell where the island begins  
and you end.  
Let me see your hand. It's afraid.  
Don't you like it here?

NEOPTOLEMUS What's that smell?

PHILOKTETES Sour mash, camphor, apple rotting,  
bull blood.  
Why are you here?

NEOPTOLEMUS To find Philoktetes.

PHILOKTETES Why don't you get out of here.  
Philoktetes is not here.  
Let me tell you honestly, he isn't here.  
He's dead, I told you.  
But I have a bow and we can share it.

NEOPTOLEMUS I don't want to.

PHILOKTETES Share the bow.  
You take it and keep it.

ODYSSEUS Take it.

PHILOKTETES Stop arguing. What are you waiting  
for? Can you see the bow?  
You can only see it from one point on the island.  
Who can see it? Whoever can see it can have it.  
Who can see it? No one?  
One person can see the bow. No?  
So I built a house of cards to keep warm and I got  
inside my house of cards and burnt it.  
And it kept me warm for a while.  
A good long while.  
I found that if I kept talking and kept very still,  
I'd stay warm.

But then it got very lonely in that house.  
But people shouldn't be alone.  
And I thought, I have these mushrooms  
and if I can share them  
maybe it won't be so lonely.  
So I tried to share them with the birds,  
but no one wanted to share them.  
So I threw them into a river. And what did you do?

NEOPTOLEMUS Maybe you can help us.

PHILOKTETES What can I do for you?

ODYSSEUS I was under the impression that  
Philoktetes was here on this island where we left  
him.

PHILOKTETES No Philoktetes here. He's dead.  
Very hard to find.  
So what did you do while he sat here rotting?  
What did you do?  
Don't just sit there breathing, Neoptolemus.  
You should be having the time of your life.

## PHILOKTETES AS GODDESS

NEOPTOLEMUS Who are you?

PHILOKTETES I am the goddess of the island.

NEOPTOLEMUS This island has no goddess.  
What is your name?

PHILOKTETES There are no inhabitants on this  
island to call me anything.  
So I need no name.

NEOPTOLEMUS Doesn't Philoktetes live on this  
island?

PHILOKTETES Who would live on this ridiculous  
rock?  
No human have I ever seen before you arrived.

NEOPTOLEMUS What are you?

PHILOKTETES I am self-born.

NEOPTOLEMUS No husband, no lover?

PHILOKTETES My first-born son was my lover.  
Born of me and only me.

NEOPTOLEMUS Why doesn't he appear with you?

PHILOKTETES My lover-son wanted children born  
of both of us.  
These I gave him, but he grew jealous.  
Overwhelmed by their ugliness,  
he cast them into the underworld  
to live as goon squad.  
One quiet night I called on my youngest son,  
my most beautiful, to help me.







I said:  
 "My son, if you do my bidding,  
 we shall revenge your father's crime,  
 for it was he who invented shameful acts."  
 His father came to make love to me.  
 And from his hiding place, my loyal son reached  
     toward his father  
 and grasped him in his left hand, while holding in  
     his right an enormous sickle.  
 He swung it sharply and cut off the members of  
     his own father.  
 He threw them into the air,  
     where they splattered in a mist.  
 Perhaps that's what you smell.  
 I inhaled the bloody mist,  
     the drops fell to the Earth  
 and released my children from the underworld.  
 A pygmy phalanx of furies and a race of tall giants  
 shining in their armor and holding spears  
     in their hands.  
 I mistook your party for them.

NEOPTOLEMUS We are only men searching for  
 Philoktetes.

PHILOKTETES From the foam of the sea  
     where the genitals had been thrown  
 sprang my daughter. This Philoktetes, is he a god?

NEOPTOLEMUS Less than a god, less than a man.

PHILOKTETES What does he look like?

NEOPTOLEMUS He is said to resemble a rotting  
 aubergine covered in red garlic sauce.

PHILOKTETES And how did he become this?

NEOPTOLEMUS Years ago, on another island, he sud-  
 denly was inflicted upon and began to fester a burn-  
 ing spot so putrefied that he was abandoned here.

PHILOKTETES By whom?

NEOPTOLEMUS His friends, his army.

PHILOKTETES Blood of his own blood?

NEOPTOLEMUS Spun out of control after years of  
 futile fighting in the Indochimney.

PHILOKTETES I had heard about the devastations.  
 Did he displease a god?

NEOPTOLEMUS A goddess, Chryse.

PHILOKTETES My daughter. Yeah, well, she is a  
     sort of a bitch.  
 How was she displeased?

NEOPTOLEMUS I thought you could tell me.  
 What about your first son?

PHILOKTETES At one time he lay around the  
     island longing for love,  
 but he has removed himself  
 to the fourth quadrant of a distant heaven,  
 abstracted and disengaged.  
 With no one to worship him.  
 Who would worship a man so incomplete?  
 So void of the agent of his will?  
 I mistook your leader, Odysseus, for him.  
 Does he have all his parts?

NEOPTOLEMUS Yes.

PHILOKTETES Check again.

NEOPTOLEMUS Are you sure you haven't seen  
 Philoktetes?

PHILOKTETES Do you think I would allow such a  
     stinking thing on my island?  
 Leave me before I become displeased with you.  
 I have no taste for aubergine.

NEOPTOLEMUS And your worshipers?

PHILOKTETES I am self-born and self-  
     perpetuating. I have no need for worshipers.  
 Now, get the fuck out of here before I castrate  
 you and cover you in garlic sauce.  
 Aubergine, my foot!

## MOONSTRUCK

PHILOKTETES One day, soon after I had landed  
     here, a bird came to me.

It said:

"Seeing that you are in such pain and practically  
     obsolete, we share your grief.  
 We see your broken teeth and the bites  
     on your lips."

I answered:

"It's from eating snakes and opening oysters  
     with my bare teeth."

The bird said:

"We, the creatures of the island, have decided on  
     a future for you. A way out.  
 Would you like to bleed without pain?  
 Drink milk instead of stagnant water?  
 We see how the phases of the planets disrupt  
     the blood tides in your foot.

A woman holds the moon in her body.  
 What other animal has a twenty-eight-day cycle?  
 None.

A woman can hold life in her body,  
 and produce from it not only women but men.  
 A woman can bleed painlessly.  
 A woman can produce milk.

I see you changing in your suffering.  
Take your knife to the tundra, and plant.  
I believe you are soon to become a woman."  
"Me?" I said. "I beg your pardon, honey?  
I don't think so."  
Several weeks later I began menstruating.

## PRAYER FRAGMENT

PHILOKTETES Shall we pray?

ODYSSEUS Don't say it.

NEOPTOLEMUS Say it.

PHILOKTETES Every day I wake up and say it.  
It used to take me all day to spit out  
each and every one of the twenty thousand  
bloody dominoes into the sky.  
But I learned.

NEOPTOLEMUS Say it.

ODYSSEUS Don't say it.

PHILOKTETES First I dance around on my bad  
foot a little bit like this.  
It sends a fibrillating spinal tap of bloodshot  
straight through my tongue.

ODYSSEUS Don't say it.

PHILOKTETES You know every word.

NEOPTOLEMUS Listen to what the cripple creek  
fairy say.

PHILOKTETES And he say:  
"I am the instrument of God the Creator.  
To try and succeed where he failed.  
I can see everything.  
What I can see, I can touch.  
What I cannot touch, I can see.  
What I cannot see, I can imagine.  
What I can imagine is mine to keep.  
What I cannot imagine is not mine  
and will crush me eventually."  
So I crush all thought about what I cannot imagine.  
Then I let the bird choir sing and the God  
speaks back.  
And it say:  
"I made you out of nothing.  
And now you are nothing.  
I made you and I can unmake you.  
I can make you into something else.  
I can make something beautiful  
and something ugly.  
I will crush you. I will eat you.

And after I eat you, I will spit you out  
upon the waves.  
For the fish and lowest of animals to eat.  
Because you are the lowest of all animals.  
I made you that way.  
Lower than low, darker than dark.  
Blacker than black.  
I made you that way to give glory to me.  
And you will give glory to me even in your lowest  
form of misery because I made you that way.  
And you will rejoice in it because you have  
no other choice.  
And you will be happy with what I have done  
because I am the Lord your Creator.  
And I made you to suffer and worship me in joy.  
If I give you a brain full of black blood,  
you will rejoice and thank me for it.  
If I give you a three-headed son,  
you will jump for joy.  
If I give you testicles of salt, you will rejoice.  
If I rain thalidomide on your people,  
you will rejoice and thank me.  
If I give you a cocksucking son who will bear  
no issue and be the end of your family's line,  
you will rejoice in it  
and thank me for what I have given you.  
If I burn your city, you will rejoice.  
If I send you to burn a city, you will also rejoice.  
If I cause you to build a great army,  
you will rejoice.  
If I cause your teeth to be ripped from the roots  
and run riot over the countryside,  
you will rejoice.  
This is what I have given unto you, Philoktetes.  
And you will give me all your joy when you thank  
me for it.  
You will dance for me on one foot if necessary.  
You will eat blood cakes if necessary.  
You will rape your sister if necessary.  
You will swallow your own flesh if necessary,  
because that is how I have made you.  
If I give you strength, you will cherish it.  
If I give you weakness, you will cherish it.  
If I give you a stump for a face,  
you will rejoice in it.  
For it is what I gave you.  
You will find beauty in it.  
For there is beauty in the center of all ugliness.  
Remember that I am in everything.  
Even in the ugliest thing,  
which is what I made you.  
And I made you to discover that.  
And in discovering that, you will rejoice at your  
good fortune to be made by me as anything  
I will want to make you.



And when you beg me for an answer,  
I will say, what are you looking at?  
And if I give you a rhino clit bitch for a wife,  
you will rejoice  
and breed seven rhino daughters in honor of me.”  
That is what the God says to me.  
And if I say no, he will slap me down again until  
I cry uncle and enjoy the beauty of my suffering.  
That’s how I have survived ten years  
in a club-footed memory dance.  
Can you dig all that?

ODYSSEUS I’m afraid I don’t know that one.

PHILOKTETES Yes, you do.  
You recite it over every body of every  
beautiful boy you bury.  
You’re here because you couldn’t heave up  
another word to save your life.

NEOPTOLEMUS You couldn’t chuck another spear  
to save your life.

PHILOKTETES A battalion of hydra-headed  
epileptics couldn’t have stopped you  
from coming back for the bow.  
Am I right or am I wrong?

ODYSSEUS Wrong.

PHILOKTETES Am I right or am I wrong?  
They sure was right when they said my brains was  
in my feet. So feast on the meal  
I’ve prepared for you.  
And take the bow back to Troy and win the battle  
for the empire.  
Pile the bodies high,  
and when you’re done with that,  
prepare the next pile.

Because the thought that brought you here  
demands ten times ten skyscrapers full.

NEOPTOLEMUS Full of what?

PHILOKTETES Full of beautiful boys in screaming  
sad sacks.

Oh, you pretty things.  
Then, and only then, will the God be satisfied.  
For I am the instrument of the God above.  
And we’ll eat the meal we’ve prepared together.  
And it will taste good.  
Then we’ll spit it out and start all over again.

NEOPTOLEMUS Oh, you pretty things.

PHILOKTETES All to glorify our own stupid selves.  
Have another blood and honey sandwich,  
Odysseus,  
and contemplate your future under the boot.

## AND TROY?

PHILOKTETES And Troy?

ODYSSEUS Still undefeated.

PHILOKTETES Just can’t burn that mother down,  
can you? Haven’t you fought hard enough?

ODYSSEUS It is said the city will burn seven times  
until it will be ash.

PHILOKTETES I burned seven times myself  
and I am ash.

ODYSSEUS Still defeated.

PHILOKTETES You’ve come so far, covered so little  
ground.

ODYSSEUS And really, what does ash feel like?

PHILOKTETES The sting of the Ishmaelite.

ODYSSEUS Angel dust?

PHILOKTETES Fuck you and the horse you rode in on.

Why have you come back?

It's said that you've come back here to regain your honor, your dignity,

to be worthy of the victory over Troy.

To make it slightly less hollow.

To make some sense of your obsessive attempts to penetrate her interior.

To find your balls again.

Is that really you?

ODYSSEUS Yes, it's me.

Odysseus, the evil one, trickster, seducer, the perverted one, baby killer, betrayer.

PHILOKTETES Always in search of something lower than yourself.

Look at me and tell me if you've found it.

ODYSSEUS If I swallow my pride, why can't you?

PHILOKTETES Not only have I swallowed my pride but I am swallowed by it.

Imagine that.

ODYSSEUS That sounds like fun. What were you doing on the temple grounds, anyway?

PHILOKTETES Same thing you were. Looking for a whorehouse, taking a fucking walk.

NEOPTOLEMUS You must have done something that would have caused this foot to fester.

PHILOKTETES It could have been any number of things.

Most of which you yourself have done.

ODYSSEUS It's hideous here. So muggy. The air is like chocolate.

How did you find this horrible hotel?

We left you on the other side of the island.

PHILOKTETES This was more secluded. My foot prefers it. More sugar water?

ODYSSEUS No.

PHILOKTETES So, anyway, you're back because no matter how hard you try you just can't turn Troy into a disco inferno. It's no surprise to me.

ODYSSEUS And that's why we've come back, and you know it.

PHILOKTETES Oh, now I know it, do I?

I seem to know everything.

Unfortunately, the information you want is stuck in my throat and nothing can retrieve it. And where did you get that aide-de-camp?

ODYSSEUS What did he tell you?

PHILOKTETES Nothing.

But he is such a fag.

ODYSSEUS He is not.

PHILOKTETES Did you ask him?

ODYSSEUS No.

PHILOKTETES Then he never told you.

ODYSSEUS What does that have to do with anything?

PHILOKTETES Nothing. I just thought I'd notice it.

ODYSSEUS What are you reading?

PHILOKTETES "An Intimate History of Nothingness."

ODYSSEUS Never heard of it.

PHILOKTETES Neither had I. Have another marguerita.

ODYSSEUS No, thanks.

PHILOKTETES Neoptolemus?

NEOPTOLEMUS No, thanks.

PHILOKTETES Who's going to know?

I soak my leg in it sometimes.

Then they kicked me out of the cripple wing because I was making too much trouble.

Can you imagine? Me, a war hero, making trouble.

They said I was beyond crippled, and I wasn't going to stay in the nut wing so they put me here in this hotel, alone.

The doctor visits once a week.

We have a few drinks together and he stumbles home.

How are things in the Pantygon, Odysseus?

NEOPTOLEMUS Why is it so hot in here?

ODYSSEUS Neoptolemus, stay away from this impure, evil-smelling, unclean Philoktetes.

Upon whom god has inflicted curse and malediction,

contempt and abasement, infamy, ire, and degradation

as upon no other person.

NEOPTOLEMUS Don't take it to heart, Philoktetes.

PHILOKTETES Not only did I take it to heart,  
it became my heart, pumping a mutilating self-  
contempt through every vein in my brain.  
More noxious than the vinaigrette  
that eats my body.

ODYSSEUS And what is eating your body? Did they  
ever find out?

PHILOKTETES (*sarcastically*) Oh, and what is  
eating your body? Did they ever find out?  
You know they didn't.  
If they had I wouldn't be here and neither would  
you.  
We'd probably both be dead half a mile outside of  
Troy. Thank you for bringing the flowers.

ODYSSEUS I thought you were dead.

PHILOKTETES I thought you were dead.

ODYSSEUS I thought you were dead.

PHILOKTETES Which isn't to say you wished I was  
dead.

Which isn't to say that I'm not halfway there.  
Be that as it may, the whores here can't put up  
with me, either. I don't blame them.

I just can't get it up no more.

Cry like a woman for what you couldn't get like a  
man.

Right, Neoptolemus?

NEOPTOLEMUS Shut the fuck up.

PHILOKTETES Nasty little grunge-bunny.

ODYSSEUS Who's that?

PHILOKTETES The maid.

As she spied my groaning groin,  
her eyes engulfed me in a Gordian knot.  
Too late, my brothers.

But never mind, all my troubles, lord, will soon  
be over.

Now, get out of my room before I call the front  
desk.

I've had enough and so, I'm sure, have you.

ODYSSEUS Do we have a deal?

PHILOKTETES No deal.

NEOPTOLEMUS We'll come back again tomorrow.

PHILOKTETES Please don't.

By the way, Odysseus, if our paths cross again,  
if we happen to see each other,  
though I doubt we would recognize one another,  
as we are now so well-hidden  
by our individual sicknesses,

I must warn you to stay away from me,  
as I from you.

For you and I may very well be the  
impure, evil-smelling, unclean people  
upon whom god has inflicted curse and  
malediction,

contempt and abasement, infamy, ire,  
and degradation  
as upon no other people.

So if you see me, walk on by.

ODYSSEUS Why do you include me in your  
degradation?

PHILOKTETES Would you like another drink?  
We may be discovered and revealed if we are seen  
too close together. You do understand?

ODYSSEUS Why do you include me?

PHILOKTETES Because you're the snake that bit me  
and sent me here.

ODYSSEUS Spare me your moaning lecture.  
It's a bunch of bullshit.

PHILOKTETES And you wear it well.  
The shit-faced smile smeared all over your face.

ODYSSEUS Spare me the lecture.  
Write it down and mail it to me care of the  
battleship.

PHILOKTETES Why?

ODYSSEUS Because I am the one in this body  
and you are the one in that body.

And I am the one who says what I say  
and you are the one who says what he says.  
It's physical, logical. No reason.

So don't bother to ask why.

I am the one because I am the one.

I am the one who put you here and I'm the one  
who will take you out.

PHILOKTETES You in that body have failed.  
I am the one who can keep you a failure  
and I'm the one who can take you out of it.  
I am the one.

Me in this body.  
Here.

What could you possibly want from me?  
You'd eat your own shit to succeed.

ODYSSEUS Me in this body who would eat my own  
children,  
sleep with my mother, rape my sister,  
kill my father, give birth to my own brother,  
destroy my own family to preserve  
what's left of it.

If that's what I have to do.  
And what will you do to get off this island?

PHILOKTETES None of the above.  
If I had done any of those things, I could  
understand what happened to me  
and I would do them again to undo it.  
Who bit me? What bit me?

ODYSSEUS No answer.

PHILOKTETES Who left me here?  
And why did you leave me here?

ODYSSEUS I was afraid.

PHILOKTETES How brave of you to admit it.  
How courageous of you to wait so long to tell me.

ODYSSEUS You were so ugly.  
And you wouldn't stop screaming.

PHILOKTETES Why have you come back then?

ODYSSEUS Because I'm afraid.

PHILOKTETES Afraid the fuck of what?

ODYSSEUS Of losing. Of not knowing what you've  
learned being here.

PHILOKTETES And what the hell could you use  
that knowledge for?  
It's not exactly an equation for a new bomb.

ODYSSEUS And what have you learned being here?

PHILOKTETES I haven't learned anything except  
that every word that comes  
out of your mouth is a lie.  
I'd love to share the pain with you but it's not  
possible.

You see, I've become very greedy with it.  
What have you learned since you left me here?

ODYSSEUS That I am your only salvation.  
And what have you learned since you've been  
here?

PHILOKTETES That I am my only salvation.  
By the way, I'm also your only salvation.

ODYSSEUS Then if we can persuade each other.

PHILOKTETES Victory to the victim.  
The vengeance of the crucified.

ODYSSEUS Get off your cross.

PHILOKTETES If you put away your hammer and  
nails.

(*Into telephone*) Hello, I'd like to order two orders  
of Mushu pork, five egg rolls,  
and a one-ton tomato. You know what room!

(*Slams phone down*) Why don't we meet tomorrow  
for lunch by the pool for round two?  
Now, get out of my room. Good night.

## PHILOKTETES DANCES

PHILOKTETES *is dancing.*

ODYSSEUS Stop, please.

NEOPTOLEMUS Don't mind him. He's a  
practitioner of Yogic flying.

ODYSSEUS I won't have that pagan sorcery in my  
presence.

NEOPTOLEMUS It's nothing. He rarely gets a  
centimeter off the ground.

ODYSSEUS Keep the windows closed in case he gets  
any higher, and tie his foot to a string.

I don't want him to escape.

See that he gets all the honey sandwiches he  
wants.

That's enough.

PHILOKTETES *stops dancing.*

PHILOKTETES Don't you like it?

ODYSSEUS No, dear.

PHILOKTETES Oh, yes, dear.

After I was bitten, my first mistake was learning  
to crawl on one knee.

I thought it was impossible, but I did learn.

My second mistake was learning to dance  
on one foot.

I thought it was impossible, but I did learn.

ODYSSEUS What does it represent?

PHILOKTETES It's an interpretation of a hungry fly  
after a meal of blood.

ODYSSEUS Oh, no, dear.

PHILOKTETES Oh, yes, dear.

NEOPTOLEMUS It isn't that, really, is it?

PHILOKTETES Yes, it is.

ODYSSEUS Where do you get such perversions?

PHILOKTETES When I see my reflection in your  
eyes.

ODYSSEUS Is that really what you see?

PHILOKTETES Oh, yes. Poor thing.

What a horrible world you must live in.

ODYSSEUS You live in it, too.

PHILOKTETES I don't live in it, I live under it.  
Go figure. Imagine that.



ODYSSEUS Don't complain. You could have been born a hunchback.

PHILOKTETES Every day I pray to the gods to make me into water.

ODYSSEUS The gods got us into this, but I doubt they can get us out.

PHILOKTETES Hera, make me into water. But I am mostly water already, aren't I?

ODYSSEUS Red water.

PHILOKTETES Jesus, make me into clear water. Can't you see I'm covered in white powder, a toppled minaret, armless and close to starvation, lost in a sea of ventriloquy, the lithium at the end of the tunnel. I don't even speak my own language and I don't even know who I am or ever was.

ODYSSEUS Sometimes it's better not to know who you are.

I don't know who you are either but there is no question as to what you aren't.

PHILOKTETES Then what am I?

ODYSSEUS Whatever I am, you are not, and whatever you aren't, I am.

PHILOKTETES That being so, would you kill me if I asked you to?

ODYSSEUS No.

PHILOKTETES Why? Would you like to kill me?

ODYSSEUS Yes.

PHILOKTETES Then why don't you?

ODYSSEUS Your request somehow muffles the joy of it.

Under those circumstances, I couldn't.

PHILOKTETES Well, then, wait until other circumstances arise, and feel free to do it. I won't mind.



I dare you. My life is worth more to you than it is to me.

I hate myself more than I hate you.  
I am the vomit of my former error.

ODYSSEUS What a horrible world you must live in if you have to ask someone to kill you.  
Can't you do it yourself?

PHILOKTETES The pleasure of having you do it is too hard to resist.

To watch the thinking war machine as it churns through its motions.

We Greeks are so beautiful when we kill.

Odysseus, make me into clear water.

That's right, watch me cry like a woman for what I couldn't face like a man.

Poor things. What a horrible world you must live in.

ODYSSEUS I don't live in the world, either. I also live under it.

Very close to where you live. We're neighbors.

PHILOKTETES Fat chance.

ODYSSEUS I walk by your house every day.  
Somewhere near the bottom of the world.  
It's left a scar on my brain that can't be erased.

PHILOKTETES How could you live on the bottom of the world?

I've never seen you down here.

ODYSSEUS You don't notice me, but I'm here.

PHILOKTETES You're digging around in my heart, tricking me.

ODYSSEUS Give me the bow and I'll kill you.

PHILOKTETES Kill me and I'll give you the bow.

ODYSSEUS No.

PHILOKTETES Neoptolemus, you do it.

NEOPTOLEMUS Not so fast. How will I do it?

PHILOKTETES Whatever way you want.

NEOPTOLEMUS But why?

PHILOKTETES Why not?  
One quiet night I had a dream.  
I dreamed I could fly.

We Malians are always accused of flying.

But I was flying in my dream.

As I flew through the temple of Chryse,

I was a pigbat, spitting blood and wine, dreaming of Troy.

Floating over the bones of the lovely boys who followed me into failure.

I was as they saw me. I woke up.

Since then when I look in the mirror I can't see myself as anything else but that.

NEOPTOLEMUS What an ugly dream.

PHILOKTETES It's more than a dream, and so as I can't see myself as anything else,  
I'd rather not see myself at all.

ODYSSEUS Then don't look.

PHILOKTETES Living is looking and I don't want to look anymore.

What do you see?

ODYSSEUS I can't see myself at all.

PHILOKTETES You must see something. Take off your mask.

ODYSSEUS I'm not wearing a mask.

PHILOKTETES Show me the mind in the middle of the mask.

ODYSSEUS No, nothing at all. Blank.

PHILOKTETES What do you see when you look at me?

ODYSSEUS Certainly not a pigbat.

PHILOKTETES Yes, you do. Will you do it?

ODYSSEUS Maybe.

PHILOKTETES Kill the pigbat. Do this in memory of me.

It's the last thing on earth anyone would want to be.

NEOPTOLEMUS Who made you?

PHILOKTETES The gods made me.

NEOPTOLEMUS They made you as a pigbat?

PHILOKTETES No, not originally, but somehow I was transformed.

NEOPTOLEMUS How?

PHILOKTETES Ask Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS Were you transformed, or did you do it yourself?

NEOPTOLEMUS Can't you transform yourself back to your original form?

PHILOKTETES I don't think so. I don't have the energy.  
If you kill me, hopefully I will revert.

ODYSSEUS And live in hell, like the oracle says.

PHILOKTETES That oracle was written by some horny, monkey-fucking monk and you know it.

ODYSSEUS We know it. But I'd rather live in hell as myself than in heaven as a pigbat.

NEOPTOLEMUS I didn't think they were allowed in heaven.

PHILOKTETES Haven't you gotten it yet, you little faggot?  
There is no heaven.

NEOPTOLEMUS You don't believe that.  
Can you worship God and be a pigbat at the same time?

PHILOKTETES I worship myself now.

ODYSSEUS Then you are in hell already.

PHILOKTETES Correct. Can you tell me why?

ODYSSEUS Yes, anyone who lives in hell worships himself. That's why he's there.

PHILOKTETES And where are you?

ODYSSEUS Dead center.

PHILOKTETES Will you do it, Neoptolemus?

NEOPTOLEMUS No.

PHILOKTETES Odysseus?

ODYSSEUS Next Friday.

PHILOKTETES Could you make that Thursday?

ODYSSEUS All right.

PHILOKTETES You never answered my question.  
What am I?

ODYSSEUS I'll tell you on Thursday.

## THE FIRST DAY

PHILOKTETES The first day on this island, I sat rotting on a rock.

Minute after minute, the day and I suffered together.

Making secret plots to escape the next minute.  
I thought it was unendurable  
but unfortunately I discovered  
that it was endurable.

It was endurable unfortunately.  
I thought I would die of it  
but I discovered I wouldn't die of it  
until I had suffered completely the suffering  
it required of me.

Till I had paid the bill  
completely.

So I endured completely.

One day I came upon a bird.

The very bird who had offered me the qualities  
of a woman to ease my pain.

She was weeping.

I asked her why she was weeping.

"I weep because I am barren.

My husband, my friends have left me.

I, who proclaimed the glory of woman.

I bleed but bear no children,

and I have become useless to my family.

I can create nothing, so I am nothing.

How will I endure my uselessness?

My wound is incurable, yet I thought  
that if I made light of it I could bear it.

I used to love my beautiful little body,  
my shape, mine and only mine.

But now it's mine and only mine and I hate it.

It's mine and I don't want it.

Even my shame is useless."

I said:

"Rejoice, oh you barren,

You that do not bear children

break forth and shout.

You who do not give birth.

For the children of the desolate one are many  
surpassing those of her that has a husband.

Have no fear because you are put to shame.

Do not stand in awe because you were reproached.

For you shall forget your old confusion and shall  
not remember the reproach

of your widowed state' (Isaiah 54).

Your value is not that you can create,

but that you were created.

Even our adversaries will be compelled to  
understand in spite of themselves."

We sang, we bled together awhile.

She flew away.

I later found her body in a nest she'd made of  
barbed wire.

I bled again.

I used to love my beautiful little body,  
my smell, my skin, mine and only mine.

If no one else will love it then I will love it  
because it's mine and only mine.

My skin, my smell, my blood, my body.

Mine and only mine because it's mine and it's  
beautiful

because it can endure even its own ugliness.  
Mine and only mine.  
Mine by right of conquest.

## WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

ODYSSEUS Where have you been?

PHILOKTETES Taking a shit, dear one.

ODYSSEUS Oh, no, dear.

PHILOKTETES Oh, yes, dear. First I shit in the  
ocean, then I shit on the altar  
to the crucified, then I shit in the temple,  
then I shit on words that tell me nothing.  
That's where I've been.

ODYSSEUS One quiet night, we all found ourselves  
in the same restaurant.

Take your pick from the menu.  
One appetizer may be slightly better than another,  
but all the food is rotten.

PHILOKTETES Our common brutal biology.

ODYSSEUS Can you dig that?

PHILOKTETES What about me?

ODYSSEUS God cannot return the skin that man  
has torn asunder.

PHILOKTETES Winners always lose, all losers know  
that.

ODYSSEUS I cried because I had no shoes until I  
met a man who had no feet.

PHILOKTETES And that man cried because he had  
no feet  
until he met a man who had no balls.

ODYSSEUS The horrors of a half-known life.

PHILOKTETES In the underworld.  
Where the night comes before the day.  
The wound before the bite.  
Go and repair your army.

ODYSSEUS I'll leave it smashed and broken and  
starving.  
Spasmodically knocking at your door for a cookie.

PHILOKTETES What would you know?

ODYSSEUS We all know. We, the ones who are left  
to carry around bowls of ashes.  
It's a fixation.



PHILOKTETES A meditation on an empty moon  
but lemon blossoms still bloom.

ODYSSEUS The ones who clean up the shit and the  
vomit of the ones who went before. My stomach  
is shivering.

PHILOKTETES A great shudder has gone through  
the family.

Finally, at last. A filthy, poison breath breathed  
among us.

Under the soles of our feet.  
Into our toenails, even. But orange blossoms  
still bloom.

ODYSSEUS It lifted us here. A blubbering, choking  
armadillo.

Its nose all twisted around in an empty anthill but  
orange blossoms still bloom.

PHILOKTETES What an insulting insult.

ODYSSEUS No one has to know.

PHILOKTETES Everyone has to know by now.

ODYSSEUS And how.

PHILOKTETES Everyone has to know by now.  
The underworld forever stays  
but orange blossoms still bloom under the  
underworld.

## SWEETNESS

PHILOKTETES Sweet Neoptolemus,  
I want you to tell me...

NEOPTOLEMUS No, you tell me.

PHILOKTETES What?

NEOPTOLEMUS Tell me, what god's asshole have  
you climbed out of  
to have ended up in this toilet?  
Who excreted you, who vomited you up?  
What jackal-headed god's spleen hurled you into  
my orbit?

What faghag goddess gave birth to you,  
and why?

PHILOKTETES What neurotic soul dreamed you  
into my galaxy of pain?

NEOPTOLEMUS Why, and what meaning do you  
have?

Or have you given birth to yourself?  
What steaming pustule erupted you?  
Or have you come here on your own power?

PHILOKTETES And what god's fart blew you here  
to disturb my peace and quiet?

To interrupt my pain?  
Who could have done it?

NEOPTOLEMUS What satyr ejaculated you into  
my sphere?  
What impotent ant spit you out in a fit of disgust?

PHILOKTETES Who could have done it?

NEOPTOLEMUS What dying man exhaled you?  
What reeking hyena bitch rejected you?  
What is this thing in front of us?  
What cell mutated you into existence?  
Who or what could have done it?

PHILOKTETES And why?

NEOPTOLEMUS If I could force myself into your  
head with a shovel and figure it out.

PHILOKTETES If I could force myself out of my  
head, I would.

NEOPTOLEMUS And why do we have to sit here  
and breathe his stink day after day?

PHILOKTETES The night air has gotten to you.  
You've begun to stink, yourself.  
Get out of the sun.  
You're becoming rancid, so manly and aggressive.

NEOPTOLEMUS Have another scotch and shut up.

PHILOKTETES Empty-headed, dizzy, delirious.  
I don't recognize you.  
Your sweet little body,  
It's afraid, shivering, preoccupied, incoherent.

NEOPTOLEMUS Full of bull's breath,  
a pig-necked daddy pulsing with adrenaline.

PHILOKTETES And ready to kill.  
Your diaper has fallen off.  
How nice to know you don't need it anymore.  
You're a body that could go far,  
especially dressed the way you are.  
He's beginning to see the picture now.

NEOPTOLEMUS Aren't you dead yet?

PHILOKTETES What?

NEOPTOLEMUS I said, aren't you fucking dead yet?

PHILOKTETES No.

NEOPTOLEMUS Then pick up your brain and  
answer me.

PHILOKTETES (to ODYSSEUS) Why did you bring  
him here?  
As if his sweetness could seduce me  
where your logic failed.  
What unworthy catamite have you brought into  
my presence?

ODYSSEUS The son of his dead father.  
As if his pappy could have known he'd produce a  
fruit so bitter, so sweet.  
He would have had you umbilically strangulated.

PHILOKTETES Smothered you in your own  
swaddling clothes.

NEOPTOLEMUS Then curse the egg that hatched  
me. The snake that bit you.

PHILOKTETES I was hoping for some sweet logic  
to ooze out of you.  
But your gangrene is spreading in the moonlight.  
Intoxicated, lustrous, asphyxiating, amniotic.  
It's melted its name into the snow.

ODYSSEUS It's your pathological bloody  
brotherhood of cells united in  
hatred against all comers that's infected us.

PHILOKTETES Oh, no, dear,  
you brought it with you.  
He's beginning to get the picture now.  
I was hoping for some sweet logic to ooze out of  
you.

Some thought to rescue me.  
But, alas, the putrifaction continues.  
He's beginning to get the picture.

ODYSSEUS And what does he see in the picture?

PHILOKTETES I'll tell you what I see.  
Correct me if I'm wrong.  
I see a body and two idiots talking to it.  
Trying to get answers out of it.  
They believe it's alive and can tell them  
something.  
The body knows the answer,  
but the other two don't know the question.  
So they rant and hurl insults at it.  
One is young, one is old, and one is dead.  
They're a triangle, visible and indivisible.  
All are defeated.  
But the body says nothing  
so they fill in the blanks.  
Convinced that their enemy is the dead body.  
Instead of screaming at each other, they scream at  
the body.  
Instead of insulting each other, they insult  
the body.  
They sit and wait for it to speak.  
As if the dead keep on talking.  
A family of birds sits on a branch and rolls  
their eyes.

NEOPTOLEMUS Does it have anything to do  
with love?

PHILOKTETES I would hope so.  
But now the picture changes.  
I see two cadavers screaming at each other.

NEOPTOLEMUS While a breathing man sips  
heroin.

PHILOKTETES Yes, can you see it?

ODYSSEUS What is this bullshit?  
Change the picture.

NEOPTOLEMUS No, leave it. I want to see it.  
I can see my body.

PHILOKTETES You are your body and you can see it.

ODYSSEUS I am not my body.

PHILOKTETES You are your body and if you watch  
long enough, I will bury you.

NEOPTOLEMUS Does it have anything to do  
with love?

PHILOKTETES Look at it.

ODYSSEUS What hideous thing have you done?  
What false god have you prayed to?  
Who's wife have you slept with?  
What ideology have you rejected?

NEOPTOLEMUS More heroin?

ODYSSEUS What god have you spurned?  
Answer me.

PHILOKTETES Sure.

ODYSSEUS Where's that aspirin?  
I want you to recite from beginning to end so we  
can hear what you've done  
to bring this down upon us.  
What treason have you performed?  
What version of what perversion?

NEOPTOLEMUS Does it have anything to do with  
love?

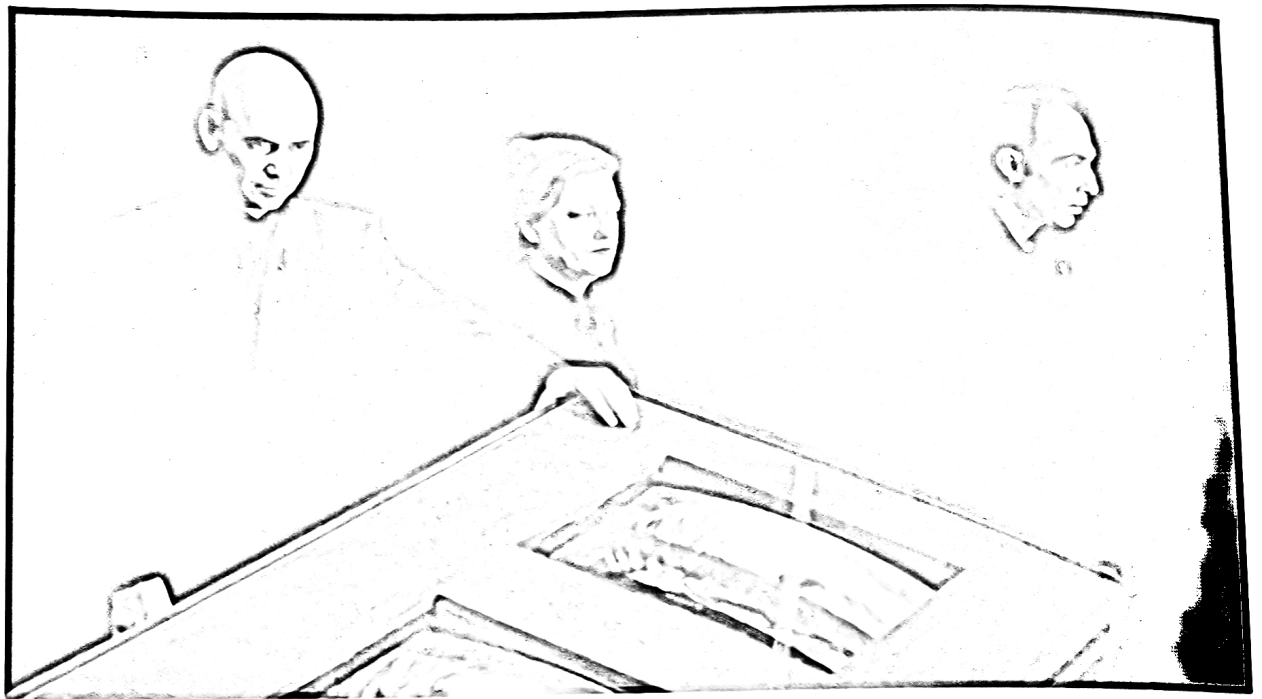
ODYSSEUS Stop asking me that.

PHILOKTETES You're drooling, what can satisfy  
you?  
Would it satisfy you if I told you I killed  
John Lennon or JFK?  
Smothered Judy Garland or Bessie Smith?  
What answer will ease your pain?

NEOPTOLEMUS Would you like an aspirin?

ODYSSEUS What law did you break?

NEOPTOLEMUS Does anyone have an aspirin?



ODYSSEUS Hold the room still, will you?  
What law did you break?

PHILOKTETES There is no law here on this island.  
And where there is no law there is no  
transgression.  
And leave your bags of logic and order packed.  
They don't mean a thing here in the vicinity of  
my putrid leg.  
So leave the bags packed.  
And get your sweating eye away from me.

ODYSSEUS What are you looking at?

NEOPTOLEMUS His leg.

ODYSSEUS Start at the beginning.

PHILOKTETES And I am blessed among women.

ODYSSEUS How did you get here?

PHILOKTETES You brought me here.

ODYSSEUS Why?

PHILOKTETES My leg, the smell, the pain, the howl.  
My toe, my foot, my leg, my legacy.

ODYSSEUS What happened to your leg?

NEOPTOLEMUS Bitten by a snake.

ODYSSEUS Why?

PHILOKTETES Don't know.

ODYSSEUS Yes, you do.

NEOPTOLEMUS Where?

PHILOKTETES The Island of Chryse.

ODYSSEUS What were you doing there?

PHILOKTETES We were on our way to beat the  
fuckin' shit out of the Trojans.

ODYSSEUS Who sent us?

PHILOKTETES The Nation of Haters sent the Army  
of Lovers because they  
thought they could never be defeated.

ODYSSEUS Skip that question.  
What were your orders?

PHILOKTETES To ram my battalion into their  
battalion.  
To destroy their sweetness.

ODYSSEUS What were you?

PHILOKTETES Like you, a general.

ODYSSEUS Tell me about the snake.

PHILOKTETES Give me a drink.

NEOPTOLEMUS Bartender.

ODYSSEUS No.

PHILOKTETES I thirst.

ODYSSEUS For what?

NEOPTOLEMUS Does it have anything to do  
with love?

PHILOKTETES For sweetness.

ODYSSEUS The snake. Tell us about the snake.

PHILOKTETES On the temple ground.

ODYSSEUS Why did you go there?

PHILOKTETES I didn't know it was the temple.

ODYSSEUS Yes, you did.  
Were you alone?

PHILOKTETES Yes.

ODYSSEUS No, you weren't.

PHILOKTETES A walk in the dark.

ODYSSEUS What were you doing there?

PHILOKTETES We were searching for the moisture,  
the sweetness in the night air.

NEOPTOLEMUS All animals seek it.

ODYSSEUS And this sweetness, what was it in the  
form of?

PHILOKTETES It was in the form of sweetness.

ODYSSEUS You heard me. What was it in the form of?

PHILOKTETES In the form of sweetness.

NEOPTOLEMUS It has only one form. You know  
that.

ODYSSEUS Why were you and only you bitten by  
the snake?

PHILOKTETES It was also searching for sweetness.  
All animals seek it.

ODYSSEUS I was there. Why wasn't I bitten?

PHILOKTETES I was the sweetest.

NEOPTOLEMUS Leave the body alone. Can't you  
see it's dead?

ODYSSEUS It is not dead and I won't leave it alone.  
Why am I bleeding?

NEOPTOLEMUS Have another drink.

ODYSSEUS Say it, I transgressed and was punished.  
And brought defeat and shame to my people.

PHILOKTETES No.

ODYSSEUS Say it.

PHILOKTETES (*laughing*) I transgressed and was  
punished  
and brought defeat and shame to my people.

ODYSSEUS And because of that I forced you to  
suffer ten years of backbreaking failure.  
Backbreaking, say it.

PHILOKTETES No.

ODYSSEUS What god did you offend?

PHILOKTETES The same god that incubated the  
thought to leave me here.  
Why did you come back?

NEOPTOLEMUS There was no god that told him  
to come back  
because he doesn't believe in gods.

PHILOKTETES You came back because you want  
me to wipe the disgrace off your face.

ODYSSEUS Am I bleeding?

PHILOKTETES My foot may be rotting but you are  
the rot.

We're a triangle, invisible and indivisible,  
one nation under an absent god,  
and you broke the triangle  
and now you've come to put it back together.  
I'm the stinking missing link  
you've been searching for these ten years.  
So put the pieces of the cadaver together again if  
you can.

Your cardboard box of logic,  
it's melting away,  
it's abandoned you.

NEOPTOLEMUS You're bleeding, Odysseus,  
you've become barren, yellow-bellied,  
pantywaisted.

PHILOKTETES Desperately searching for an enemy.

NEOPTOLEMUS Does it have anything to do  
with love?  
Somebody tell me please?!

PHILOKTETES What can I do for you? Poor thing.  
But rejoice, oh you barren.  
You who do not bear fruit.  
You who have given up because  
they can't figure it out no more.  
Have no fear because you are put to shame.  
For you shall forget your old confusion and shall  
not remember the reproach  
of your widowed state.  
Even I will be compelled to understand in spite of  
myself.

NEOPTOLEMUS Does it have anything to do  
with love?  
Will somebody please tell me?!

PHILOKTETES Shut him up.

ODYSSEUS I would hope so.

NEOPTOLEMUS Who's that sitting there?

PHILOKTETES A virgin man on the verge of  
surrender.

Perplexed,  
Lovelorn and loveless.  
Moving backwards from the light  
and forward into the darkness.  
Shall we force a truce on ourselves?  
Consume and consummate ourselves?  
Float like heroin  
on the tip of the needle?  
Me blessed among women,  
you damned among men.

ODYSSEUS Sink the needle and put my logic out of  
its misery.

PHILOKTETES It's as naked as a fetus in its sixth  
week.  
It can't stand up on its own legs.

NEOPTOLEMUS Give it a break and put it back into  
the womb.

PHILOKTETES Leave it alone,  
I want it as whole as the day it was conceived.  
Before you made it into this deformed adventure.  
Get out of its way.

NEOPTOLEMUS Look at it.  
It wants it all and it wants it now.

PHILOKTETES Leave me this little body.  
Maybe I can revive it.  
Take the bow and cast your bread on the waters.  
After a long time you may find it again,  
for all is vanity and a chase after the wind.

NEOPTOLEMUS Is it a boy or a girl?

ODYSSEUS Hopefully, it's both.  
Look at it. See how its mouth searches  
for a drop of something sweet.

NEOPTOLEMUS Who does it look like?

PHILOKTETES At this stage, it looks like all of us.  
It's ours.  
Ours by right of conquest.

ODYSSEUS What will you call it?

PHILOKTETES Certainly not Jesus.  
"As many shall be amazed at it  
so shall its appearance be without glory from men  
and its glory dishonored by men.  
It is a root in a thirsty land.  
It has no beauty or glory as we see it.  
And it has no beauty or comeliness  
but its form was ignoble and inferior  
to that of all men.

It was a thing struck down by misfortune,  
who knows how to bear its infirmity."  
The limitless possibilities of impossibility.  
Deliver the sweating child into its mothers' arms.  
Backward from the darkness  
and forward into the light.  
For we are blessed among women.

## INSIDE OUT

PHILOKTETES I've worked so long on this haunting.  
Make him go away.

NEOPTOLEMUS So what do I care?

PHILOKTETES This is my place. My body.

ODYSSEUS And we want it, dead or alive.

PHILOKTETES Seeing that it's neither.  
You can't have it.

NEOPTOLEMUS How will you fight the hunger?  
The memory pain?

PHILOKTETES Not hungry, not eating.  
What use is my body to you?

NEOPTOLEMUS I can't make him go.  
Why are you doing this?

PHILOKTETES Why does a ghost do anything?  
The dead keep talking.  
What's happened to you, Odysseus?  
You've become strange and ugly,  
desiccated, decayed.  
Cremated before your time.

ODYSSEUS I was just thinking the same thing  
about you.

PHILOKTETES And Troy?

ODYSSEUS Burn that mother down.

NEOPTOLEMUS Such bad luck?

PHILOKTETES I told you that war was a bad luck  
thing.

NEOPTOLEMUS But why for you? For why?  
For what?

You're going to wander around haunting  
this island for the rest of your life?

PHILOKTETES I enjoy the silence.

NEOPTOLEMUS You're worse than Odysseus.

PHILOKTETES You'll be stuck together. I wouldn't  
advise that because he kicks much butt.  
You may haunt Troy together someday.





NEOPTOLEMUS Why don't you quit this ghost job  
and come with us?  
No one has to know, you'll be my own private  
ghost.

PHILOKTETES For why? For what? I'm not a ghost.

NEOPTOLEMUS How did you become this?

PHILOKTETES For the last time, I told you I was  
kissed by a snake,  
in a private, hungry moment.

NEOPTOLEMUS Who did it?

PHILOKTETES It could have been anyone,  
anything.  
Anywhere, I don't care who or where.  
After I had spent all that time on the battlefield,  
burning and burying all those bodies.  
No one to pick me up and bury me.  
They left me here.  
When I woke up I was as black as burned wine.  
My bones were blue.

I walked all over the island.  
But no one would talk to me.  
I was standing outside the world.  
That's when I knew what was what.

NEOPTOLEMUS And what was that?

PHILOKTETES I had gone from the outside to the  
inside. I was inside out.

NEOPTOLEMUS I'm leaving.

PHILOKTETES Is there anything else you want to  
say to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS Aren't you even going to kiss me  
goodbye?

PHILOKTETES For what? For why?  
He who drinks from my mouth will be as I am.

NEOPTOLEMUS Kiss me.

PHILOKTETES He who drinks from my mouth will  
be as I am.

NEOPTOLEMUS I don't care.

PHILOKTETES No.

NEOPTOLEMUS And Troy?

PHILOKTETES Burn that motherfucker down.

NEOPTOLEMUS You want to stay here on this rock  
like a cold piece of meat  
and wait for the grumbling empty-bellied dog on  
a chain?

PHILOKTETES Odysseus? Harmless. A broken  
spider web.

NEOPTOLEMUS I'm asleep.  
I made you out of nothing and now you are  
nothing.  
When I open my eyes we'll be inside out, with or  
without you.  
Come with us.

PHILOKTETES No.

NEOPTOLEMUS Anything else you want to say to me?

PHILOKTETES Aren't you even going to kiss me  
goodbye?

NEOPTOLEMUS For why? For what? Why not?  
He who drinks from my mouth will be as I am.

PHILOKTETES Not reversible. Impossible.  
I'm asleep. I made you out of nothing and now  
you are nothing.

When I open my eyes we'll be inside out.  
With or without you.

NEOPTOLEMUS Don't stay.

PHILOKTETES Anything else you want to say to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS Aren't you even going to kiss me  
goodbye?

*They kiss.*

## WAITING FOR A BOAT

NEOPTOLEMUS I found him on the beach, faintly  
suckling on a piece of rice.

ODYSSEUS What was he doing on the beach?

NEOPTOLEMUS He said he was waiting for a boat.

ODYSSEUS What boat?

NEOPTOLEMUS He was to meet a boat on its way  
to throw sodium on  
the Trojan Empire and put its eye out.

ODYSSEUS A boat won't come by here for another  
six months.

NEOPTOLEMUS He said he would wait.

ODYSSEUS And our battalion?

NEOPTOLEMUS I saw them hiding behind a dune,  
nibbling on a chicken wing  
and roasting a can of cocktail weenies.  
Philoktetes crawled several miles up the beach  
but he fainted, unable to endure the pain.  
Seeing that it was near the end,  
his soldiers pushed an anchor through his chest.  
He layed down and smelled God for the first time.

ODYSSEUS What did it smell like?

NEOPTOLEMUS Clear water.

ODYSSEUS Oh, no.

NEOPTOLEMUS Oh, yes. He begged for a tea of  
jasmine flower flakes  
but after I boiled it he wouldn't drink it.  
I gave him an antacid and a dinner of broiled  
salmon.

But this he also refused.  
We tried to raise anchor but it wouldn't move.  
He asked me to send him a sign if there was a life  
beyond.

He said,  
"Send me anything, a sugared skull, a golden calf.  
Anything, but send me a message."

I said,  
"But you are the one who is dying.  
You send me a message.  
Forget the sugared skull, a groundhog will do."  
He was oscillating, severe and pixilated.

ODYSSEUS That's nice, dear.

NEOPTOLEMUS I put my wooden hands to my  
wooden cheekbones and my  
sugared skull and felt myself melt.  
I cried wooden tears, and I did melt.  
Thus it is written and thus I will say it.  
I melted. I did melt.  
He blinked once and gave up the ghost.

ODYSSEUS Any message?

NEOPTOLEMUS The underworld is forever empty  
but orange trees still  
blossom under the underworld.

ODYSSEUS And under that?

NEOPTOLEMUS Nothing.  
But scrambled eggs and white rice,  
codfish, bananas, and sand.

## WHO ARE YOU?

NEOPTOLEMUS Who are you?

PHILOKTETES No one.

NEOPTOLEMUS I recognize you by your foot, they told me your foot...

PHILOKTETES My foot is dead, kid. I was looking at it outside.

It had one fly on it.

Fuck my foot kid, I'm nobody.

Who am I? No one.

As for myself, I was taken here and made prisoner once.

And I was taken here and put here and stayed here.

And made to stay here.

And I don't know why but I stayed here.

And I stayed in here and I stayed here for a very long time.

And it was a very long time, a very, very long time.

And it seemed like it was forever.

And it probably was almost forever, almost.

But then one day the door opened beautifully and I was let out.

But not miraculously.

And I was let out and I went out.

And I wanted to get out and get let out.

And when I had gotten out, I didn't want to go anywhere.

I wanted to stay here.

I mean, not in here, but just here, around here.

And not go home to where I had come from.

And I couldn't even remember where I had come from.

Or, I could eventually remember.

But I realized that I had been here so long that all the people that I could remember were dead.

Or if they were alive, they probably were

so old that they couldn't remember me,

but could remember me probably with sadness.

But there was no way I could ever get back,

because you see, in time, the geography between here and there

had gotten farther and farther apart.

And so we were too far away from each other to make any difference.

It wouldn't do any good.

So I realized I just had to stay here and live with it.

And so I'm staying here and I'm happy to stay here.

One day that door opened and it filled up with light.

And I went outside where everyone else was.

And everything else just became a memory.

And so that's it.

Good night.