

And forthwith on the sandy beach he plaited sandals
 80 of wicker-work, wondrous things of unimaginable skill,
 mingling tamarisk and twigs of myrtle.
 He made a bundle of fresh-grown seasonable branches
 and snugly tied them to be sandals for his feet,
 leaves and all, just as glorious Argeiphontes
 85 had plucked them from Pieria to lighten the toil of walking
 by making his own device, as one does on an urgent long journey.
 But an old man working on his flowering vineyard saw him,
 as he pressed on toward the plain through grassy-bedded Onchestos.
 The son of glorious Maia was first to address him:
 90 "Old man digging round your vines with bent shoulders,
 no doubt you shall have plenty of wine when all these bear fruit.
 Be blind to what you saw and deaf to what you heard,
 and silent too when no harm is done to what is your own."
 This much said, the precious cattle he drove on,
 95 and glorious Hermes led them through many shaded mountains,
 ravines loud-echoing with blustering winds, and flowering plains.
 Most of the wondrous night, his sable accomplice, had passed,
 and dawn was soon to come and send people to work.
 And the shining Selene, daughter of lord Pallas,
 100 son of Megamedes, had just mounted her watch-post,
 when the doughty son of Zeus drove the wide-browed
 cattle of Phoibos Apollon to the river Alpheios.
 Still not broken-in the cattle came to a high-roofed barn
 and watering-troughs close to a remarkable meadow.
 105 Then when he had grazed well the loud-lowing cattle in the pasture,
 he herded them together and drove them into the barn
 while they were chewing lotus and dewy galingale,
 and intent on the skill of making fire he fetched much wood.
 A fine branch of laurel he took and peeled with his knife

 110 tight-fitted in his palm, and up went the heated smoke.
 For Hermes was the first to give us fire from fire-sticks.
 He gathered many dry sticks and made a thick
 and sturdy pile in a sunken pit; and the flame shone afar,
 giving off a blast, as the fire burnt high.
 115 While the power of glorious Hephaistos kindled the fire,
 he dragged out to the door close by the fire
 two curved-horned bellowing cows; for great was his strength.

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They puffed as he cast them both on their backs,
and bending their necks he rolled them over and pierced their spines.
120 Task upon task he carried out and hacked the fattened meat.
He pierced with wooden spits and roasted
meat and the prized chine and dark blood,
all wrapped in guts; all this lay on the spot.
The skins he stretched on a hard and dry rock
125 and up to this day and after all these years they are there,
an endlessly long time after those events; and then
cheerful Hermes dragged the sumptuous meal
onto a smooth slab and chopped it into twelve portions
given by lot and to each he assigned perfect honor.
130 Then glorious Hermes craved for the sacred meat
because the sweet savor weakened his resolve, immortal though
he was. But not even so was his manly soul prevailed upon,
although his holy gullet greatly hankered for the meat.
But he stowed fat with much of the meat away
135 in the high-roofed barn and swiftly hung it up
as a token of his recent theft; then dry wood he gathered
and let the fire's breath consume the shaggy feet and heads.
And after the god accomplished everything in proper order,
he threw his sandals into the deep-eddying Alpheios;
140 he let the glowing embers die down and on the black ashes
strewn sand all night, as fair shone the light of Selene.
Then speedily he came back to Kyllene's shining peaks
at dawn, and no one met him on his long journey,
neither blessed god nor mortal man,
145 and no dog barked. And Hermes, the son of Zeus,
slipped through the keyhole of the dwelling sideways,
like autumnal breeze in outer form, or airy mist.
He made straight for the cave and reached its copious fane,
walking softly on his feet, not pounding as one might upon the ground.
150 Then glorious Hermes came to his cradle in haste,
and wrapped his swaddling clothes about his shoulders, like an infant
child, and lay there playing with the covers with palms
and thighs and keeping his sweet lyre on the left.
The god did not remain unnoticed by his divine mother who said:
155 "What is this, you weaver of schemes? Whence in the dead of night
are you coming, clothed in shamelessness? I surely think
that either Leto's son will shackle your arms about your ribs

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