

The Adventures of Ulysses

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Ships and Men

After Troy was burned, Ulysses sailed for home with three ships holding fifty men each.

Three thousand years ago ships were very different: through the years they have changed much more than the men who sail them.

These beaked warships used by the pirate kingdoms of the Middle Sea were like no vessels you have ever seen. Imagine a very long, narrow rowboat with twenty oars on each side. The timbers of the bow curve sharply to a prow, and this prow grows longer and sharper, becomes in fact a long polished shaft tipped by a knife-edged, brass spearhead. This was called the ram, the chief weapon of ancient warships.

In battle, the opposing ships spun about each other, swooping forward, twirling on their beams, darting backward, their narrow hulls allowing them to backwater very swiftly. The object was to ram the enemy before he rammed you. And to ram first was the only defense, for the brass beak of the ramming ship sheared easily through the timbers of its victim, knocking a huge hole the hull and sinking it before its men could jump overboard.

These warships were also equipped with sail and mast—used only for

always at the mercy of the weather, and were often blown off course. Another thing that made them unfit for long voyages was the lack of cargo space. Only a few days' supply of food and water could be carried, leaving space for no other cargo. That is why these fighting ships tried to hug the coast and avoid the open sea.

Ulysses' problem was made worse by victory. When Troy was sacked, he and his men captured a huge booty—gold and jewels, silks, furs—and, after ten years of war the men refuse to leave any loot behind. This meant that each of his ships could carry food and water for a very few days.

This greed for treasure caused many of his troubles at first. But then troubles came so thick and fast that no one could tell what caused them: hardships were simply called bad luck, or the anger of the gods.

But bad luck makes good stories.xx

voyaging, never in battle—a square sail, and a short mast, held fast by oxhide stays. The sail was raised only for a fair wind, or could be tilted slightly for a quartering wind, but was useless against headwinds.

This meant that these ships were almost

The Ciconians

The voyage began peacefully. A fair north wind blew, filling the sails of the little ship and pushing it steadily homeward. The wind freshened at night, and the three ships glided along joyfully under a fat moon. On the morning of the second day Ulysses saw a blue haze of smoke and a glint of white stone. He put in toward shore and saw a beautiful little town. The men stared in amazement at this city without walls, rich green parks and grazing cattle, its people strolling about in white tunics. Ten years of war had made Ulysses' men as savage as thieves. Everyone not a shipmate was an enemy. To meet was to fight; property belonged to the winner.

Ulysses stood in the bow, shading his eyes with his hand, gazing at the city. A tough, crafty old warrior named Eurylochus stood beside him.

"We attack, do we not?" he asked. "The city lies there defenseless. We can take it without losing a man."

"Yes, it looks tempting," said Ulysses, but the wind blows fair, and good fortune befriends us. Perhaps it will spoil our luck to stop."

"But this fat little city has been thrown

They landed on the beach. The townsfolk fled before them into the hills. Ulysses did not allow his men to pursue them, for there was no room on the ship for slaves. From house to house the armed men went, helping themselves to whatever they wanted. Afterward they piled the booty in great heaps upon the beach.

Then Ulysses had them round up a herd of the plump, swaying, crook-horned cattle, and offer ten bulls in sacrifice to the gods. Later they built huge bonfires on the beach, roasted the cattle, and had a great feast.

But while the looting and feasting was going on the men of the city had withdrawn into the hills and called together their kinsmen of the villages, the Ciconians, and began preparing for battle. They were skillful fighters, these men of the hills. They drove brass war chariots that had long blades attached to the wheels, and these blades whirled swiftly as the wheels turned, scything down the foe.

They gathered by the thousands, an overwhelming force, and stormed down out of the hills onto the beach. Ulysses' men were full of food and wine, unready to fight, but he had posted sentries, who raised a shout when they saw the Ciconians coming down from the hills in the moonlight. Ulysses raged among his

into our laps by the gods, too," said Eurylochus, "and they grow angry when men refuse their gifts. It would be bad luck *not* to attack."

Ulysses heard the fierce murmur of his men behind him, and felt their greed burning in his veins. He hailed the other ships and gave orders, and the three black-hulled vessels swerved toward shore and nosed into the harbor, swooping down upon the white city like wolves upon a sheepfold.

timber, high enough to shoot his arrows over the heads of his men. He was the most skillful archer since Heracles. He aimed only at the chariot horses, and aimed not to kill, but to cripple, so that the horses fell in their traces, and their furious flailing and kicking broke the enemy's advance. Thus the Hellenes were able to reach their ships and roll them into the water, leap into the rower's benches, and row away. But eighteen men were left dead on the beach— six from each ship—and there was scarcely a man unwounded.

Eurylochus threw himself on his knees before Ulysses and said, "I advised you badly, O Chief. We have angered the gods. Perhaps, if you kill me, they will be appeased.

"Eighteen dead are enough for one night," said Ulysses. "Our luck has changed, but what has changed can change again. Rise, and go about your duties."

The ships had been handled roughly in the swift retreat from the Ciconian beach. Their hulls had been battered by

men, slapping them with the flat of his sword, driving the fumes of wine out of their heads. His great racketing battle cry roused those he could not whip with his sword.

The men closed ranks and met the Ciconians at spearpoint. The Hellenes retreated slowly, leaving their treasure where it was heaped upon the beach and, keeping their line unbroken, made for their ships. Ulysses chose two of his strongest men and bade them lift a thick timber upon their shoulders. He sat astride this

water nymphs—were drawn by the flash of the jewels. They dived after the bright baubles and swam alongside the ships, calling to the men, singing, tweaking the oars out of their hands, for they were sleek mischievous creatures who loved jewels and strangers. Some of them came riding dolphins, and in the splashing silver veils of spray the men thought they saw beautiful girls with fish tails. This is probably how the first report of mermaids arose.

Poseidon, God of the Sea, was wakened from the sleep by the sound of this laughter. When he saw what was happening, his green beard bristled with rage, and he said to himself, "Can it be? Are these the warriors whom I helped in their siege of Troy? Is this their gratitude, trying to steal my naiads from me? I'll teach them manners."

He whistled across the horizon to his son, Aeolus, keeper of the winds, who twirled his staff and sent a northeast gale skipping across the sea. It pounced upon

axes and flung spears, and they had sprung small leaks. The wind had faded to a whisper, and the men were forced to row with water sloshing around their ankles. Ulysses saw that his ships were foundering, and that he would have to empty the holds. Food could not be spared, nor water; the only thing that could go was the treasure taken from Troy. The men groaned and tore at their beards as they saw the gold and jewels and bales of fur and silk being dropped overboard. But Ulysses cast over his own share of the treasure first—and his was the largest share—so the men had to bite back their rage and keep on rowing.

As the necklaces, bracelets, rings, and brooches sank slowly, winding their jewels like drowned fires, a strange thing happened. A shoal of naiads—beautiful

the little fleet and scattered the ships like twigs. Ulysses clung to the helm, trying to hold to the kicking tiller, trying to shout over the wind. There was nothing to do but ship the mast and let the wind take them.

And the wind, in one huge gust of fury drove them around Cythera, the southernmost of their home islands, into the open waters of the southwest quarter of the Middle Sea, toward the hump of Africa called Libya.xx

The Lotus Eaters

Now, at this time, the shore of Libya was known as “the land where Morpheus plays.”

Who was Morpheus? He was a young god, son of Hyphos, God of Sleep, and nephew of Hades. It was his task to fly around the world, from nightfall to dawn scattering sleep. His father, Hypnos, mixed the colors of sleep for him, making them dark and thick and sad.

“For,” he said, “it is a little death you lay upon man each night, my son, to prepare for the kingdom of death.”

like sleep, with one petal of fire-red for dreams. We will call it lotus.”

Morpheus took the flower and planted it in Libya, where it is always summer. The

flower grew in clusters and smelled deliciously of honey. The people ate nothing else. They slept all the time, except when they were gathering flowers. Morpheus watched over them, reading their dreams.

It was toward Lotusland that Ulysses and his men were blown by the gale. The wind fell while they were still offshore. The sky cleared, the sea calmed, a hot sun beat down. To Ulysses, dizzy with fatigue, weak with hunger, the sky and the water and the air

But his aunt, Persphone, sewed him a secret pocket, full of bright things, and said: "It is not death you scatter, but repose. Hang the walls of sleep with bright pictures, so that man may not know death before he dies."

These bright pictures were called dreams. And Morpheus became fascinated by the way a little corner of man's mind remained awake in sleep, and played with the colors he had hung, mixing them, pulling them apart, making new pictures. It seemed to him that these fantastic colored shadows the sleepers painted were the most beautiful, most puzzling things he had ever seen. And he wanted to know more about how they came to be.

He went to Persephone, and said, "I need a flower that makes sleep. It must be purple and black. But there should be one petal streaked with fire-red, the petal to make dreams."

Persephone smiled and moved her long, white hand in the air. Between her fingers a flower blossomed. She gave it to him.

"Here it is, Morpheus. Black and purple

And he mixed them some cool green and silver dreams of home. The nightmares faded. Wounded Trojans stopped screaming. Troy stopped burning; they saw their wives smile, heard their children laugh, saw the green wheat growing in their own fields. They dreamed of home, awoke and were hungry, ate the honeyed lotus flowers and fell into a deeper sleep.

between seemed to flow together in one hot blueness.

He shook his head, trying to shake away the hot blue haze, and growled to his men to unship the oars, and row toward land. The exhausted men bent to the oars, and the ships crawled over the fire-blue water. With their last strength they pulled the ships up on the beach, past the high-tide mark, and then lay down and went to sleep.

As they slept, the Lotus-eaters came out of the forest. Their arms here heaped with flowers, which they piled about the sleeping men in great blue and purple bouquets, so that they might have flowers to eat when they awoke, for these people were very gentle and hospitable.

The men awoke and smelled the warm honey smell of the flowers, and ate them in great handfuls—like honeycomb—and fell asleep again. Morpheus hovered over the sleeping men and read their dreams.

"These men have done terrible things," the god whispered to himself. "Their dreams are full of gold and blood and fire. Such sleep will not rest them. and felt an overpowering hunger. He too took some of the flowers and raised them to his mouth. As their fragrance grew stronger, he felt his eyelids drooping, and his arms grew heavy, and he thought, "It is these flowers that are making us sleep. Their scent alone brings sleep. I must not eat them."

But he could not put them down; his hand would not obey him. Exerting all the

Then Morpheus came to Ulysses who was stretched on the sand, a little apart from the rest. He studied his face—the wide grooved brow, the sunken eyes, the red hair, the jutting chin. And he said to himself, “This man is a hero. Terrible are his needs, sudden his deeds, and his dreams must be his own. I cannot help him.”

So Morpheus mixed no colors for Ulysses’ sleep, but let him dream his own dreams, and read them as they came. He hovered above the sleeping king and could not leave.

“What monsters he makes,” he said to himself. “Look at that giant with the single eye in the middle of his forehead. And that terrible spider-woman with all those legs....Ah, the things he dreams, this angry sleeper. What bloody mouths, what masts falling, sails ripping, what rocks and reefs, what shipwrecks...how many deaths?”

Ulysses awoke, choking, out of a terrible nightmare. It seemed to him that in his sleep he had seen the whole voyage laid out before him, had seen his ships sinking, his men drowning. Monsters had crowded about him, clutching, writhing. He sat up and looked about. His men lay asleep among heaped flowers. As he watched, one opened his eyes, raised himself on an elbow, took a handful of flowers, stuffed them into his mouth, and immediately fell asleep again.

Ulysses smelled the honey sweetness. The men began to awake from their dreams of home, and found themselves

weak force of his will, he grasped his right hand with his left—as if it belonged to someone else—and one by one forced open his fingers and let the flowers fall.

Then he dragged himself to his feet and walked slowly into the sea. He went under and arose snorting. His head had cleared. But when he went up on the beach, the sweet fragrance rose like an ether and made him dizzy again.

“I must work swiftly,” he said.

One by one he carried the sleeping men to the ships, and propped them on their benches. His strength was going. The honey smell was invading him, making him droop with sleep. He took his knife and cutting sharp splinters of wood to prop open his eyelids, staggered back among the men. He worked furiously now, lifting them on his shoulders, and carrying them two at a time, throwing them into the ships.

Finally, the beach was cleared. The men rolled sleeping on the benches. Then, all by himself, using his last strength, he pushed the ships into the water. When the ships were afloat in the shallow water, he lashed one to another with rawhide line, his own ship in front. Then he raised his sail and took the helm.

The wind was blowing from the southwest. It filled his sail. The line grew taut; the line of ships moved away from Lotusland.

upon the empty sea again. But the long sleep had rested them, and they took up their tasks with new strength.

Ulysses kept the helm, grim and unsmiling. For he knew that what he had seen painted on the walls of his sleep was meant to come true and that he was sailing straight into a nightmare.xx

The Cyclops's Cave

After he had rescued his crew from Lotusland, Ulysses found that he was running from one trouble into another. They were still at sea, and there was no food for the fleet. The men were hungry and getting dangerous. Ulysses heard them grumbling: "He should have left us there in Lotusland. At least when you're asleep you don't know you're hungry. Why did he have to come and wake us up?" He knew that unless he found food for them very soon he would be facing a mutiny.

That part of the Aegean Sea was dotted with islands. On every one of them was a different kind of enemy. The last thing Ulysses wanted to do was to go ashore, but there was no other way of getting food. He made a landfall on a small mountainous island. He was very careful: he had the ships of the fleet moor offshore and selected twelve of his bravest men as a landing party.

They beached their skiff and struck inland. It was a wild, hilly place, full of

hill. He was too far off to see what they were, but he thought they must be goats since the hill was so steep. And if they were goats they had to be caught. So the men headed downhill, meaning to cross the valley and climb the slope.

Ulysses had no way of knowing it, but this was the very worst island in the entire sea on which the small party could have landed. For here lived the Cyclopes, huge, savage creatures, tall as trees, each with one eye in the middle of his forehead. Once, long ago, they had lived in the bowels of Olympus, forging thunderbolts for Zeus. But he had punished them for some fault, exiling them to this island where they had forgotten their smithcraft and did nothing but fight with each other for the herds of wild goats, trying to find enough food to fill their huge bellies. Best of all, they liked storms; storms meant shipwrecks. Shipwrecks meant sailors struggling in the sea, who could be plucked out and eaten raw; and the thing they loved best in the

boulders, with very few trees. It seemed deserted. Then Ulysses glimpsed something moving across the valley, on the slope of a

constant vigil on his mountain, fair weather or foul. If he spotted a ship, and there was no storm to help, he would dive into the sea and swim underwater, coming up underneath the ship and overturning it. Then he would swim off with his pockets full of sailors.

On this day he could not believe his luck when he saw a boat actually landing on the beach, and thirteen meaty-looking sailors disembark, and begin to march toward his cave. But here they were, climbing out of the valley now, up the slope of the hill, right toward the cave. He realized the must be hunting his goats.

The door of the cave was an enormous slab of stone. He shoved this aside so that the cave stood invitingly open, casting a faint glow of firelight upon the dusk. Over the fire, on a great spit, eight goats were turning and roasting. The delicious savors of the cooking drifted from the cave. Polyphemus lay down behind a huge boulder and waited.

The men were halfway up the slope of the hill when they smelled the meat roasting. They broke into a run. Ulysses tried to restrain them, but they paid no heed—they were too hungry. They raced to the mouth of the cave and dashed in. Ulysses drew his sword and hurried after them. When he saw the huge fireplace and the eight goats spitted like sparrows

world was human flesh. The largest and the fiercest and the hungriest of all the Cyclopes on the island was one named Polyphemus. He kept

He saw that the door had been closed. The far end of the cavern was too dark to see anything, but then—amazed, aghast—he saw what looked like a huge red lantern far above, coming closer. Then he saw the great shadow of a nose under it, and the gleam of teeth. He realized that the lantern was a great, flaming eye. Then he saw the whole giant, tall as a tree, with huge fingers reaching out of the shadows, fingers bigger than baling hooks. They closed around two sailors and hauled them screaming into the air.

As Ulysses and his horrified men watched, the great hand bore the struggling little men to the giant's mouth. He ate them, still wriggling, the way a cat eats a grasshopper; he ate them clothes and all, growling over their raw bones.

The men had fallen to their knees and were whimpering like terrified children, but Ulysses stood there, sword in hand, his agile brain working more swiftly than it ever had.

"Greetings," he called. "May I know to whom we are indebted for such hospitality?"

The giant belched and spat buttons. "I am Polyphemus," he growled. "This is my home, my mountain, and everything that comes here is mine. I do hope you can all come to dinner. There are just enough of you to make a meal. Ho, ho..." And he laughed a great, choking,

his heart sank because he knew that they had come into reach of something much larger than themselves. However, the men were giving no thought to anything but food:

they flung themselves on the spit, and tore into the goat meat, smearing their hands and faces with sizzling fat, too hungry to feel pain as they crammed the hot meat into their mouths.

There was a loud rumbling sound: the cave darkened. Ulysses whirled around.

"Wine? What is wine?"

"It is a drink. Made from pressed grapes. You've never drunk it?"

"We drink nothing but ox blood and buttermilk here."

"Ah, you do not know what you have missed, gentle Polyphemus. Meat-eaters, in particular, love wine. Here, try it for yourself."

Ulysses unslung from his belt a full flask of unwatered wine. He gave it to the giant, who put it to his lips and gulped. He coughed violently, and stuck the sailor in a little niche high up in the cave wall, then leaned his great slab of a face toward Ulysses and said: "What did you say this drink was?"

"Wine. A gift of the gods to man, to make women look better and food taste better. And now it is my gift to you."

"It's good, very good." He put the bottle to his lips and swallowed again. "You are very polite. What's your name?"

"My name? Why I am—nobody."

"Nobody....Well, Nobody, I like you.

phlegmy laugh, swiftly lunged, and caught another sailor, whom he lifted into the air and held before his face.

"Wait!" cried Ulysses.

"What for?"

"You won't enjoy him that way. He is from Attica, where olives grow. He was raised on olives and has a very delicate, oily flavor. But to appreciate it, you must taste some wine of the country."

The great body crashed full-length on the cave floor, making the very walls of the mountain shake. Polyphemus lay on his back, snoring like a powersaw. The sailors were still on the floor, almost dead from fear.

"Up!" cried Ulysses. "Stand up like men! Do what must be done! Or you will be devoured like chickens."

He got them to their feet and drew them about him as he explained his plan.

"Listen now, and listen well, for we have no time. I made him drunk, but we cannot tell how long it will last."

Ulysses thrust his sword into the fire; they saw it glow white-hot.

"There are ten of us," he said. "Two of us have been eaten, and one of our friends is still unconscious up there on his shelf of rock. You four get on one side of his head, and the rest on the other side. When I give the word, lay hold of the ear on your side, each of you. And hang on, no matter how he thrashes, for I am going to put out his eye. And if I am to be sure of my stroke you must hold his head still. One stroke is all I will be allowed."

You're a good fellow. And do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to save you till last. Yes, I'll eat all your friends first, and give you extra time, that's what I'm going to do."

Ulysses looked up into the great eye and saw that it was redder than ever. It was all a swimming redness. He had given the monster, who had never drunk spirits before undiluted wine. Surely it must make him sleepy. But was a gallon enough for that great gullet? Enough to put him to sleep—or would he want to eat again first?

"Eat 'em all up, Nobody—save you till later. Sleep a little first. Shall I? Won't you try to run away, will you? No—you can't, can't open the door—too heavy, ha, ha....You take a nap too, Nobody. I'll wake you for breakfast. Breakfast...."

hole now from which the brown blood jelled. He moaned and gibbered and bellowed in frightful pain; his groping had found the sailor in the wall, and he tore him to pieces between his fingers. Ulysses could not even hear the man scream because the giant was bellowing so.

Now Ulysses saw that the Cyclops's wild stampeding was giving place to a plan. For now he was stamping on the floor in a regular pattern, trying to find and crush them beneath his feet. He stopped moaning and listened. The sudden silence dazed the men with fear. They held their breath and tried to muffle the sound of their beating hearts; all the giant heard was the breathing of the

Then Ulysses rolled a boulder next to the giant's head and climbed on it, so that he was looking down into the eye. It was lidless and misted with sleep—big as a furnace door and glowing softly like a banked fire. Ulysses looked at his men. They had done what he said, broken into two parties, one group at each ear. He lifted his white-hot sword.

"Now!" he cried.

Driving down with both hands, and all the strength of his back and shoulders, and all his rage and all his fear, Ulysses stabbed the glowing spike into the giant's eye. His sword jerked out of his hand as the head flailed upward, men pelted to the ground as they lost their hold. A huge, screeching, curdling bellow split the air.

"This way!" shouted Ulysses.

He motioned to his men, and they crawled on their bellies toward the far end of the cave where the herd of goats was tethered. They slipped into the herd and lay among the goats as the giant stomped about the cave, slapping the walls with great blows of his hands, picking up boulders and cracking them together in agony, splitting them to splinters, clutching his eye, a scorched

where the goats had been tethered, and stamped, searched, and roared through the whole cave again, bellowing with fury when he did not find them. The herd grazed on the slope of the hill beneath the cave. There was a full moon; it was almost as bright as day.

"Stay where you are," Ulysses

goats. Then Ulysses saw him go to the mouth of the cave, and swing the great slab aside, and stand there. He realized just in time that the goats would rush outside, which is what the giant wanted, for then he could search the whole cave.

Ulysses whispered. "Quickly, swing under the bellies of the rams. Hurry, hurry!"

Luckily, they were giant goats and thus able to carry the men who had swung themselves under their bellies and were clinging to the wiry wool. Ulysses himself chose the largest ram. They moved toward the mouth of the cave, and crowded through. The Cyclops's hands came down and brushed across the goats' backs feeling for the men, but the animals were huddled too closely together for him to reach between and search under their bellies. So he let them pass through.

Now, the Cyclops rushed to the corner
fleet.

Polyphemus heard the dip of the oars and the groaning of the oarlocks, and aiming at the sound, hurled huge boulders after them. They fell around the ship, but did not hit. The skiff reached Ulysses' ship and the sailors climbed aboard.

"Haul anchor, and away!" cried Ulysses. And then called to the Cyclops. "Poor fool! Poor blinded drunken gluttonous fool—if anyone else asks you, it is not Nobody, but Ulysses who has done this to you."

whispered.

He heard a crashing, peered out, and saw great, shadowy figures converging on the cave. He knew that the other Cyclopes of the island must have heard the noise and come to see. He heard the giant bellow.

The others called to him: "Who has done it? Who has blinded you?"

"Nobody. Nobody did it. Nobody blinded me."

"Ah, you have done it yourself. What a tragic accident."

And they went back to their own caves.

"Now!" said Ulysses. "Follow me!"

He swung himself out from under the belly of the ram, and raced down the hill. The others raced after him. They were half-way across the valley when they heard great footsteps rushing after them, and Polyphemus bellowing nearer and nearer.

"He's coming!" cried Ulysses, "Run for your lives!"

They ran as they had never run before, but the giant could cover fifty yards at a stride. It was only because he could not see and kept bumping into trees and rocks that they were able to reach the skiff and push out onto the beach. They bent to the oars, and the boat scudded toward the

But he was to regret this final taunt.
The gods honor courage, but punish
pride.

Polyphemus, wild with rage, waded
out chest-deep and hurled a last boulder,
which hit mid-deck, almost sunk the ship,
and killed most of the crew—among them
seven of the nine men who had just
escaped.

And Polyphemus prayed to Poseidon,
“God of the Sea, I beg you, punish
Ulysses for this. Visit him with storm and
shipwreck before he reaches home, and
when he gets there let him find himself
forgotten, unwanted, a stranger.”

Poseidon heard this prayer, and made
it all happen just that way.xx

Vocabulary Context Dictionary

Good writing and effective storytelling may often be one and the same thing, and one way to tell a story effectively—to make it come alive for the reader—is to use vivid language.

- A. The Cyclopes removed struggling sailors from the sea and ate them raw.
- B. The Cyclopes plucked floundering sailors from the sea and devoured them raw.

Which sentence uses a verb that makes the Cyclopes seem hungrier, more cannibal-like in their eating habits? Which sentence do you think uses more vivid action words?

Below are some words suggesting specific actions. If you are unfamiliar with any words, look up their meanings in the dictionary. Then rewrite each of the following sentences to make them more vivid. Substitute one or more of the words from the list for one or more words in each sentence.

pelted
founder

stampeded
drooped

scudded
tweaked

1. As the prisoner and his guard pushed through the crowd, the people near the prisoner twisted his ears and those at a distance hit him with handfuls of small stones.
2. Blown by the northeast wind, the clouds moved across the sky above the plain where the frightened cattle ran.
3. When the man stopped rowing and leaned with exhaustion over the oars, the boat began to sink.

Keeper of the Winds

Now the black ships beat their way northward from the land of the Cyclopes. And Ulysses, ignorant of the mighty curse that the blind giant had fastened upon him, was beginning to hope that they might have fair sailing the rest of the way home. So impatient was he that he took the helm himself and kept it night and day although his sailors pleaded with him to take some rest. But he was wild with eagerness to get home to his wife, Penelope, to his young son, Telemachus, and to the dear land of Ithaca that he had not seen for more than ten years now.

At the end of the third night, just as the first light was staining the sky, he saw something very strange—a wall of bronze, tall and wide, floating on the sea and blocking their way. At first he thought it was a trick of the light, and he rubbed his eyes and looked again. But there it was, a towering, bright wall of beaten bronze.

"Well," he thought to himself, "it cannot stretch across the sea. There must be a way around it."

He began to sail along the wall as though it were the shore of an island, trying to find his way around. Finally, he came to a huge gate, and even as he gazed upon it in amazement, the gate swung open and the wind changed abruptly. The shrouds snapped, the sails bulged, the masts groaned, and all three

out like a candle. Darkness fell upon the waters. Ulysses felt the deck leap beneath him as the ship was lifted halfway out of the water by the ferocious gust and hurled through the blackness. He tried to shout, but the breath was torn from his mouth and he lost consciousness.

Ulysses had no way of knowing this, but the mischievous Poseidon had guided his ships to the island fortress of Aeolus, Keeper of the Winds. Ages before, when the world was very new, the gods had become fearful of the terrible strength of the winds, and had decided to tame them. So Zeus and Poseidon, working together, had floated an island upon the sea, and girdled it about with a mighty bronze wall. Then they set a mountain upon the island and hollowed out that mountain until it was a huge stone dungeon. Into this hollow mountain they stuffed the struggling winds, and appointed Aeolus as their jailer. And there the winds were held captive. Whenever the gods wanted to stir up a storm and needed a particular wind, they sent a message to Aeolus, who would draw his sword and stab the side of the mountain, making a hole big enough for the wind to fly through. If the north wind were wanted, he stabbed the north side of the mountain, its east slope for the east wind, and so on. When the storm was done, he would whistle the wind home, and the huge, brawling gale, broken by its imprisonment, would crawl back whimpering to its hole.

Aeolus was an enormously fat

ships of the fleet were blown through the gate, which immediately clanged shut behind them. Once within the wall, the wind fell off and Ulysses found his ship drifting toward a beautiful hilly island. Suddenly there was a great howling of wind. The sun was blown the world, managing the weather for each month.

And it was in the great castle of Aeolus that Ulysses and his men found themselves when they awoke from their enchanted sleep. Invisible hands held torches for them, guided them to the baths, anointed them with oil, and gave them fresh clothing. Then the floating torches led them to the dining hall, where they were greeted by Aeolus and his twelve handsome children. A mighty banquet was laid before them, and they ate like starved men.

Then Aeolus said, "Strangers, you are my guests—uninvited—but guests all the same. By the look of you, you have had adventures and should have fine stories to tell. Yes, I love a tale full of fighting and blood and tricks, and if you have such to tell, then I shall entertain you royally. But if you are such men as sit dumb, glowering, unwilling to please, using your mouths only to stuff food into—then—well, then you are apt to find things less pleasant. You, Captain!" he roared, pointing at Ulysses. "You, sir—I take you for the leader of this somewhat motley crew. Do you have a story to tell?"

"For those who know how to listen, I have a tale to tell," said Ulysses.

"Your name?"

demigod with a long wind-tangled beard and a red wind-beaten face. He loved to eat and drink, and fight, play games, and hear stories. Twelve children he had, six boys and six girls. He sent them out one by one, riding the back of the wind around

courage when this bronze wall and this island, and you and yours have vanished under the sea and have been forgotten for a thousand years. I am Ulysses. My companions before Troy were Achilles, Menelaus, Agamemnon, mighty heroes all, and, in modesty, I was not the least among them."

"Yes-s-s...." said Aeolus. "You are bold enough. Too bold for your own good perhaps. But you have caught my attention, Captain. I am listening. Tell on...."

Then Ulysses told of the Trojan War; of the abduction of Helen, and the chaos, and the great battles; the attacks, the retreats, the separate duels. He spoke of Achilles fighting Hector, and killing him with a spear thrust, of Paris ambushing Achilles; and, finally, how he himself had made a great hollow wooden horse and had the Greek armies pretend to leave, only to sneak back and hide in the belly of the horse. He told how the Trojans had dragged the horse within their gates, and how the Greek warriors had crept out at night and taken the city and slaughtered their enemies.

Aeolus shouted with laughter. His face blazed and his belly shook. "Ah, that's a trick after my own heart!" he cried. "You're a sharp one, you are....I

"Ulysses—of Ithaca."

"Mmm—yes," said Aeolus. "I seem to recognize that name—I believe I heard it on Olympus while my uncles and aunts up there were quarreling about some little skirmish they had interested themselves in. Near Troy I think it was....Yes-s-s....Were you there?"

"I was there," said Ulysses. "I was there for ten years, dear host, and indeed took part in some of that petty skirmishing that will be spoken of by men who love especially pleased because he had always hated Polyphemus. He had no way of know way of knowing, of course, that the blinded Cyclops had prayed to his father and had laid a curse on Ulysses, and that he, Aeolus, was being made the instrument of that curse. He did not know this, for the gods move in mysterious ways. And so he roared with laughter, and shouted. "You have pleased me, Ulysses. You have told me a brave tale, a tale full of blood and tricks....And now I shall grant you any favor within my power. Speak out, Ulysses. Ask what you will."

"But one thing I seek, generous Aeolus," said Ulysses, "your help. I need your help in getting home. For it has been a long, weary time since we saw our homes and our families. Our hearts thirst for the sight of Ithaca."

"No one can help you better than I," said Aeolus. "You sail on ships, and I am Keeper of the Winds. Come with me."

He led Ulysses out into the night. A hot, orange moon rode low in the sky, and they could see without torches.

knew you had a foxy look about you. Wooden horse—ho ho. Tell more! Tell more!"

Then Ulysses told of his wandering after the fall of Troy, of his adventure in Lotusland, and what had happened in the Cyclops's cave. And when Aeolus heard how he had outwitted Polyphemus and blinded his single eye, he struck the table with a mighty blow of his fist, and shouted "Marvelous! A master stroke! By the gods you are the bravest, craftiest warrior that has ever drunk my wine."

He was wind, the south wind, and the east wind. You must keep them prisoner. But if you wish to change course—if a pirate should chase you say, or a sea monster, or if an adventure beckons, then you open the bag very carefully—you and you alone, Captain—and whistle up the wind you wish, let just a breath of it out, close the bag quickly again and tie it tight. For winds grow swiftly—that is their secret—and so they must be carefully guarded."

"I shall not change course," said Ulysses. "No matter what enemy threatens or what adventure beckons, I sail straight for Ithaca. I shall not open your bag of winds."

"Good," said Aeolus. "Then bind it to your mast, and guard it yourself, sword in hand; let none of your men approach, lest they open it unwittingly. In the meantime, I will send the gentle west wind to follow your ship and fill your sails and take you home."

"Thank you, great Aeolus, thank you, kindly keeper of the winds. I know now

Aeolus led him to the mountain, carrying his sword in

one hand and a great leather bag in the other. He stabbed the side of the mountain. There was a rushing, sobbing sound; he clapped his leather bag over the hole, and Ulysses, amazed, saw the great bag flutter and fill. Aeolus held its neck closed, strode to the east face of the mountain, and stabbed again. As the east wind rushed out, he caught it in his sack. Then he stomped to the south slope and stabbed again, and caught the south wind in the sack. Now, very carefully, he wound a silver wire about the neck of the sack. It was full now, swollen, tugging at his arm like a huge leather balloon, trying to fly away.

He said, "In this bag are the north mast, guarding the sack.

"Up anchor!" he cried.

The west wind rolled off the mountain and filled their sails. The black ships slipped out of the harbor. Away from the island they sailed, away from the mountain and the castle, toward the wall of bronze. When they reached the wall, the great gate swung open and the sailed eastward over water oily with moonlight. Eastward they sailed for nine days and nine nights. In perfect weather they skimmed along, the west wind hovering behind them, keeping their sails full, pushing them steadily home.

And for nine nights and nine days, Ulysses did not sleep; he did not close his eyes or sheath his sword. He kept his station under the mast—food and drink

that the gods have answered my prayers, and I shall be able to cease this weary heartbreaking drifting over the face of the sea, having my men killed and eaten, my ships destroyed, and my hopes shattered. I will never cease thanking you, Aeolus, till the day I die."

"May that sad occasion be far off," said Aeolus politely. "Now, sir, much as I like your company, you had better gather your men and go. I shall be uneasy now until my winds return to me again and I can shut them in the mountain again."

Ulysses returned to the castle and called together his men. Gladly they trooped down to the ships and went aboard. Ulysses bound the great leather sack to the mast and warned his crew that no man must touch it on pain of death. Then he himself stood with naked sword under the

Two of the men, standing in the bow, saw him slump at the foot of the mast, fast asleep. Their eyes traveled up the mast to the great leather bag, plump as a balloon, straining against its bonds as the impatient winds wrestled inside. Then Poseidon, swimming invisibly alongside, clinked his golden armlets. The men heard the clinking and thought it came from the bag.

One man said to the other: "Do you hear that? Those are coins, heavy golden coins, clinking against each other. There must be a fortune in that sack."

The other man said, "Yes, a fortune that should belong to all of us by rights. We shared the danger and should share

were brought to him there—and never for an instant stopped guarding the sack.

Then, finally, on the morning of the ninth day, he heard the lookout cry, “Land ho!” and strained his eyes to see. What he saw made his heart swell. Tears coursed down his face, but they were tears of joy. For he saw the dear familiar hills of home. He saw the brown fields of Ithaca, the twisted olive trees, and, as he watched, he saw them even more clearly, saw the white marble columns of his own castle on the cliff. And his men, watching, saw the smoke rising from their own chimneys.

When Ulysses saw the white columns of his palace, he knew that unless the west wind failed, they would be home in an hour, but the friendly wind blew steadily as ever.

Ulysses heaved a great sigh. The terrible tension that had kept him awake for nine days and nights eased its grip. He raised his arms and yawned. Then he leaned against the mast and closed his eyes, just for a minute.

the loot.”

“It is true,” said the first, “that he has always been generous. He shared the spoils of Troy.”

“Yes, but that was then. Why does he not divide this great sack of treasure? Aeolus gave it to him, and we know how rich he is. Aeolus gave it to him as a guest gift, and he should share it with us.”

“He never will. Whatever is in that bag, he does not mean for us to see it. Did you not observe how he has been guarding it all these nights and all these days, standing there always, eating and drinking where he stands, never sheathing his sword?”

“It is in his sheath now,” said the second sailor. “And his eyes are closed. Look—he sleeps like a babe. I doubt that anything would wake him.”

“What are you doing? What are you going to do with that knife? Are you out of your mind?”

“Yes—out of my mind with curiosity, out of my mind with gold fever, if you must know. Ulysses lies asleep. His sword

sleeps in its sheath. And I mean to see what is in that bag."

"Wait. I'll help you. But you must give me half." "Come then...."

Swiftly and silently the two barefooted sailors padded to the mast, slashed the rope that bound the bag to the spar, and bore it away.

"Hurry—open it!"

"I can't. This wire's twisted in a strange knot. Perhaps a magic knot. It won't come out."

"Then we'll do it this way!" cried the sailor with the knife, and struck at the leather bag, slashing it open. He was immediately lifted off his feet and blown like a leaf off the deck and into the sea as the winds rushed howling out of the bag and began to chase each other around the ship. The winds screamed and jeered and laughed, growing, leaping, reveling in their freedom, roaring and squabbling, screeching around and around the ship. They fell on their gentle brother, the west wind, and cuffed him mercilessly until he fled: then they chased each other around the ship again, spinning it like a cork in a whirlpool.

Then, as they heard the far summoning whistle of the Keeper of the Winds—far, far to the west on the Aeolian Island—they snarled with rage and roared boisterously homeward, snatching the ships along with them, ripping their sails to shreds, snapping their masts like twigs, and hurling the splintered hulls westward over the boiling sea.

Ulysses awoke from his sleep to find the blue sky black with clouds and his

was awake or asleep—whether this was some nightmare of loss, or whether he was awake now and had slept before, dreaming a fair dream of home.

Whichever it was,

he began to understand that he was being made the plaything of great powers.

With the unleashed winds screaming behind him at gale force the trip back to where they had started took them only two days. And once again the black ships were hurled onto the island of the winds. Ulysses left his crew on the beach and went to the castle. He found Aeolus in his throne room, and stood before him, bruised, bloody, clothes torn, eyes like ashes.

"What happened?" cried Aeolus.

"Why have you come back?"

"I was betrayed," said Ulysses.

"Betrayed by sleep—the most cruel sleep of my life—and then by a wicked foolish greedy crew who released the winds from the sack and let us be snatched back from happiness even as we saw the smoke rising from our own chimneys."

"I warned you," said Aeolus, "I warned you not to let anyone touch that bag."

"And you were right, a thousand times right!" cried Ulysses. "Be generous once again. You can heal my woes, you alone. Renew your gift. Lend me the west wind to bear me home again, and I swear to you that this time I shall do everything you bid."

"I can't help you," said Aeolus. "Whom

home island dropping far astern, out of sight. He saw his crew flung about the deck like dolls, and the tattered sails and the broken spars, and he did not know whether he

the gods detest, no one can help. And they detest you, man—they hate you. What you call bad luck is their hatred, turning gifts into punishment, fair hopes into nightmares. And bad luck is very catching. So please go. Get on your ship and sail away from this island, and never return.”

“Farewell,” said Ulysses, and strode away.

He gathered his weary men and made them board again. The winds were pent in their mountain. The sea was sluggish. A heavy calm lay over the harbor. They had to row on their broken stumps of oars, crawling like beetles over the gray water. They rowed away from the island, through the bronze gate, and out upon the sullen sea.

And Ulysses, heartbroken, almost

dead of grief, tried to hide his feeling
from the men; he stood on deck, barking
orders, making them mend sail, patch
hull, rig new spars, and keep rowing. He
took the helm himself and swung the tiller,
pointing the bow eastward toward home,
which once again, lay at the other end of
the sea.xx

Circe

Of the three crews, but one was left.
Ulysses found himself with only forty-five
men. He was determined to bring these
men home safely, or die himself.

his way carefully toward the smoke,
trying to make as little noise as possible.
He came to a stand of
mighty trees—oak trees, thick and tall with

They were sailing northward again, and on the third day came in sight of land, low lying, heavily wooded, with a good sheltering harbor. Although they had met terrible treatment everywhere they had landed since leaving Troy, they were out of food, water was running low, and once again they would have to risk the perils of the land. Ulysses was very cautious. He moored the ship off shore, and said to the crew:

"I shall go ashore myself—alone—to see what there is to see, and make sure there are no terrible hosts, giants, man-eating ogres, or secret sorceries. If I am not back by night-fall, Eurylochus will act as captain. Then he will decide whether to seek food and water here, or sail onward. Farewell."

He lowered a small boat and rowed toward the island, all alone. He beached his skiff and struck inland. The first thing he wanted to do was find out whether he was on an island, or the spur of a mainland. He climbed a low hill; then climbed to the top of a tree that grew on the hill. He was high enough now for a clear view, and he turned slowly, marking the flash of the sea on all sides. He knew that once again they had landed on an island and that the ship was their only means of escape if danger should strike.

Something caught his eye. He squinted thoughtfully at what looked like a feather of smoke rising from a grove of trees. The trees were too thick for him to see through. He climbed down and picked
was as strong as a ship's line. Then he

glossy leaves.

Glimmering through the trees he saw what looked like a small castle made from polished gray stone. He did not dare go near, for he heard strange howling sounds, a pack of dogs, perhaps, but different from any dogs he had ever heard. So he left the grove and made his way back toward the beach, thinking hard, trying to decide whether to sail away immediately or take a chance on the inhabitants being friendly. He did not like the sound of that howling. There was something in it that froze his marrow. He decided that he would not risk his men on the island, but that he would return to the ship, raise anchor, and sail away to seek food elsewhere.

Just then a tall white deer with mighty antlers stepped across his path. The stag had a bearing proud as a king, and did not deign to run, but walked on haughtily as if he knew no one would dare to attack him.

Unfortunately for the stag, however, Ulysses was too hungry to be impressed by any animal's own opinion of himself. The warrior raised his bronze spear and flung it with all the power of his knotted arm. It sang through the air, pierced the stag's body, and nailed him to a tree. The stag died standing up, still in his pride. He was a huge animal, so large that Ulysses feared he could not carry him back to the ship unaided. But then he remembered how hungry his men were, and he decided to try.

He picked up weeds and wove a rope which he twisted and twisted again until it

bound the stag's legs together, swung the great carcass up unto his back, and staggered off using his spear as a cane.

He was at the end of his strength when he reached the beach, and let the deer slip to the sand. He signaled to his men, who left the ship moored and came ashore on five small boats. They raised a mighty shout of joy when they saw the dead stag. All hands fell to. In a twinkling the deer was skinned and cut up. Fires were lighted, and the delicious smell of roasting meat drew the gulls to the beach, screaming and dipping, begging for scraps.

The men gorged themselves; then lay on the sand to sleep. Ulysses, himself, kept guard. All that night he stood watch, leaning on his spear, looking at the moon which hung in the sky like an orange, and paled as it climbed. As he watched, he turned things over in his mind, trying to decide what to do. While he was still bothered by the eerie howling of the mysterious animals at the castle, now, with his belly full, he felt less gloomy. The more he thought about it the wiser it seemed to explore the island thoroughly and try to determine whether it was a friendly place or not. For never before had he seen a deer so large. If there was one, there must be more; and with game like that the ship could be provisioned in a few days. Also the island was full of streams from which they could fill their dry casks with pure water.

"Yes," he said to himself, "perhaps our luck has changed. Perhaps the god that was playing with us so spitefully has

said to Eurylochus, "There is a castle on this island. We must find out who lives there. If he be friendly, or not too strong a foe, we will stay here and hunt and lay in water until the hold be full; then we will depart. Now choose, Eurylochus. Would you rather stay here with your men and guard the ship while I visit the castle—or would you rather I keep the beach? Choose."

"O Ulysses," Eurylochus said, "I am sick of the sight of the sea. Even as my belly hungers for food, so do my eyes hunger for leaves and trees which might recall our dear Ithaca. And my foot longs to tread something more solid than a deck—a floor that does not pitch and toss and roll. Pray, gentle Ulysses, let me and my men try the castle."

"Go," said Ulysses. "May the gods go with you."

So Eurylochus and twenty-two men set out, while Ulysses guarded the ship. As the band of warriors approached the castle, they too heard a strange howling. Some of them drew their swords. Others notched arrows to their bowstrings. They pressed on, preparing to fight. They passed through the grove of oak trees, and came to where the trees thinned. Here the howling grew louder and wilder. Then, as they passed the last screen of trees and came to the courtyard of the shining gray castle, they saw an extraordinary sight—a pack of wolves and lions running together like dogs—racing about the courtyard, howling.

When they caught sight of the men, the animals turned and flung themselves

found other amusements. Yes, we will explore this island, and see what there is to see." Next morning he awakened his men and divided them into two groups, one led by himself, the other by Eurylochus. He whines. Eurylochus, who stood half-embracing a huge, tawny lion, said, "Men, it is most strange. For these fearsome beasts greet us as though we were lost

friends. They seem to be trying to speak to us. And look—look—at their eyes! How intelligently the gleam, how sadly they gaze. Not like beasts' eyes at all."

"It is true," said one of the men. "But perhaps there is nothing to fear. Perhaps there is reason to take heart. For if wild beasts are so tame and friendly, then perhaps the master of the castle, whoever he is or whatever he is, will be friendly too, and welcome us, and give us good cheer."

"Come," said Eurylochus.

When they reached the castle gate, they stopped and listened. For they heard a woman singing in a lovely deep, full-throated voice, so that without seeing the woman they knew she was beautiful.

Eurylochus said, "Men, you go into the castle and see what is to be seen. I will stay here, and make sure you are not surprised."

"What do you men? You come with us. Listen to that. There can be no danger where there is such a song."

"Yes, everything seems peaceful,"

upon the strangers, so swiftly that no man had time to use his weapon. The great beasts stood on their hind legs and put their forepaws on the men's shoulders, and

fawned on them, and licked their faces. They voiced low, muttering growling a huge loom, larger than they had ever seen, and wove a gorgeous tapestry. As she wove, she sang. The bright flax leaped

through her fingers as if it were dancing to

the music of her voice. The men stood and stared. The sun seemed to be trapped in her hair, so bright it was; she wore it long, falling to her waist. Her dress was as blue as the summer sky, matching her eyes. Her long white arms were bare to the shoulders. She stood up and greeted them. She was very tall. And the men, looking at her, and listening to her speak, began to believe that they were in the presence of a goddess.

She seemed to read thoughts too, for she said, "No, I am not a goddess. But I am descended from the Immortals. I am Circe, granddaughter of Helios, a sun-god, who married Perse, daughter of Oceanus. So what am I—wood nymph, sea nymph, something of both? Or something more? I can do simple magic and prophecy, weave certain homely enchantments and read dreams. But let us not speak of me, but of you, strangers. You are adventurers, I see, men of the sword, men of the black-prowed ships, the hawks of the sea. And you have

said Eurylochus. "The wild animals are friendly. Instead of the clank of weapons, we hear a woman singing. And it may be peaceful. But something says to me, be careful, take heed. Go you, then. I stay on guard. If I am attacked, and you are unharmed, come to my aid. If anything happens to you, then I shall take word back to Ulysses.

So Eurylochus stood watch at the castle gate—sword in one hand, dagger in the other, bow slung across his back—and the rest of the men entered the castle. They followed the sound of singing through the rooms and out onto a sunny terrace.

There sat a woman weaving. She sat at before. And as each man ate he felt himself sinking into his hunger, *becoming* his hunger—lapping, panting, grunting, snuffling. Circe passed among them, smiling, filling the bowls again and again. And the men, waiting for their bowls to be filled, looking about, seeing each other's face smeared with food, thought, "How strange. We're eating like pigs."

Even as the thought came, it became more true. For as Circe passed among them now she touched each one on the shoulder with a wand, saying: "Glut and swink, eat and drink, gobble food and guzzle wine. Too rude, I think, for humankind, quite right, I think for swine!"

As she said these words in her lovely, laughing voice, the men dwindled. Their noses grew wide and long, became snouts. Their hair hardened into bristles; their hands and feet became hooves, and

come through sore, sad times, and seek a haven here on this western isle. So be it. I welcome you. For the sweetest spell Circe weaves is one called hospitality. I will have baths drawn for you, clean garments laid out. And when you are refreshed, you shall come and dine. For I love brave men and the tales they tell."

When the men had bathed and changed, Circe gave them each a red bowl. And into each bowl she put yellow food—a kind of porridge made of cheese, barley, honey, and wine plus a few secret things known only to herself. The odor that rose from the red bowls was more delicious than anything they had ever smelled same enchanting voice he had heard before. But of his men he saw nothing. Nor did he hear their voices. A great fear seized him. He raced off as fast as he could, hoping against hope that the beasts would not howl. The wolves and lions stood like statues, walked like shadows. Their eyes glittered with cold moonlight, but none of them uttered a sound.

He ran until the breath strangled in his throat, until his heart tried to crack out of his ribs, but he kept running, stumbling over roots, slipping on stones. He ran and ran until he reached the beach and fell swooning in Ulysses' arms. Then with his last breath he gasped out the story, told Ulysses of the lions and wolves, of the woman singing in the castle, and how the men had gone in and not come out. And then he slipped into blackness.

Ulysses said to his men. "You hear

they ran about on all fours, sobbing and snuffling, searching the floor for bones and crumbs. But all the time they cried real tears from their little red eyes, for they were pigs only in form: their minds remained unchanged, and they knew what was happening to them.

Circe kicked them away from the table. "To the sties!" she cried. She struck them with her wand, herding them out of the castle into a large sty. And there she flung them acorns and chestnuts and red berries and watched them grubbing in the mud for the food she threw. She laughed a wild, hard, bright laugh, and went back into the castle.

While all this was happening Eurylochus was waiting at the gate. When the men did not return he crept up to a bow slit in the castle wall and looked in. It was dark now. He saw the glimmer of torchlight, and the dim shape of a woman at a loom, weaving. He heard a voice singing, the mighty warrior. You should not kneel."

"Ah, pardon," cried Ulysses. "I have sharp eyes for some things. Behind your youth—so fair—I see time itself stretching to the beginning of things. Behind your slenderness I sense the power of a god. Sweet youth, beautiful lad, I know you. You are Hermes, the swift one, the messenger god. I pray you have come with good tidings for me because I fear that I have offended the gods, or one of them anyway, and he has vowed vengeance upon me."

"It is true," said Hermes. "Somebody up there doesn't like you. Can't say who,

the story Eurylochus tells. I must go to the castle and see what has happened to your companions. But there is no need for you to risk yourselves. You stay here. And if I do not return by sunfall tomorrow, then you must board the ship and sail away, for you will know that I am dead."

The men wept and pleaded with him not to go, but he said, "I have sworn an oath that I will never leave another man behind if there is any way I can prevent it. Farewell, dear friends."

It was dawn by the time he found himself among the oak trees near the castle. He heard the first faint howling of the animals in the courtyard. And as he walked through the rose and gray light, a figure started up before him—a slender youth in golden breastplates and golden hat with wings on it, holding a golden staff. Ulysses fell to his knees.

"Why do you kneel, venerable sir?" said the youth. "You are older than I, and a peculiar feeders."

"Thunder and lightning!" cried Ulysses. "What can I do?"

"Listen and learn," said Hermes. "I have come to help you. Poseidon's wrath does not please all of us, you know. We gods have our moods, and they're not always kind, but somehow we must keep things balanced. And so I have come to help you. You must do exactly as I say, or nothing can help you. Now listen closely. First, take this."

He snapped his fingers and a flower appeared between them. It was white

not ethical, you know. But if you *should* suspect that he may have something to do with the management of sea matters, well, you're a good guesser, that's all."

"Poseidon...I have offended Poseidon," muttered Ulysses, "the terrible one, the earth-shaker."

"Well," said Hermes, "what do you expect? That unpleasant Cyclops whom you first blinded, then taunted is Poseidon's son, you know. Not a son to be proud of, but blood is thicker than water, as they say, even in the god of the sea. So Polyphemus tattled to his father, and asked him to do dreadful things to you, which, I'm afraid, he's been doing. Now, this castle you're going to is Circe's and she is a very dangerous person to meet—a sorceress, a doer of magical mischief. And she is waiting for you, Ulysses. She sits at her loom, weaving, waiting for you. She has already entertained your shipmates. Fed them. Watched them making pigs of themselves. And, finally, helped them in their way a bit. In brief, they are now in a sty, being fattened. And one day they will make a most excellent meal for someone not too fussy. Among Circe's guests are many god, or imagined him, but then he saw that

he was still holding the curious flower, and he knew that Hermes had indeed been there. So he marched on toward the castle, through the pack of lions and wolves, who leaped about him, fawning, looking at him with their great intelligent eyes, and trying to warn him in their snarling, growling voices. He stroked

and heavily scented, with a black and yellow spot. He gave it to Ulysses.

"It is called *moly*," he said. "It is magical. So long as you carry it, Circe's drugs will not work. You will go to the castle. She will greet you and feed you. You will eat the food which, to her amazement, will leave you unharmed. Then you will draw your sword and advance upon her as though you meant to kill her. Then she will see that you have certain powers, and will begin to plead with you. She will unveil enchantments more powerful than any she has yet used. Resist them you cannot, nor can any man, or any god. Nor is there any counterspell that will work against such beauty. But if you wish to see your home again, if you wish to rescue your shipmates from the sty, you must resist her long enough to make her fear the great oath of the immortals—that she will not do you any harm al song as you are her guest. That is all I can do for you. From now on, it is up to you. We shall be watching you with interest. Farewell."

The golden youth disappeared just as a ray of sunlight does when a cloud crosses the face of the sun. Ulysses shook his head, wondering whether he had really seen the

"Gladly," said Ulysses. "We have much to speak of, you and I. I'm something of a farmer myself. I breed cattle on my own little island of Ithaca, where I'm king—when I'm home. Won't you show me your livestock?"

"Livestock? I keep no cattle here."

their heads, and passed among them, and went into the castle.

And here, he found Circe, sitting at her loom, weaving and singing. She wore a white tunic now and a flame-colored scarf, and was as beautiful as the dawn. She stood up and greeted him, saying, "Welcome, stranger. I live here alone, and seldom see anyone, and almost never have guests. So you are triply welcome, great sea-stained warrior, for I know that you have seen battle and adventure and have tales to tell."

She drew him a warm perfumed bath, and her servants bathed and anointed him, and gave him clean garments to wear. When he came to her, she gave him a red bowl full of yellow food, and said, "Eat." The food smelled delicious; its fragrance was intoxicating. Ulysses felt that he wanted to plunge his face into it and grub it up like a pig, but he held the flower tightly, kept control of himself, and ate slowly. He did not quite finish the food.

"Delicious," he said. "Your own recipe?"

"Yes," she said. "Will you not finish?"

"I am not quite so hungry as I thought."

"Then drink. Here's wine."

She turned her back to him as she poured the wine, and he knew that she was casting a powder in it. He smiled to himself and drank of the wine, then said: "Delicious. Your own grapes?"

"You look weary, stranger," she said. "Sit and talk with me."

Her great blue eyes looked into his. She

"Oh, do you not? I fancied I heard pigs squealing out there. Must have been mistaken."

"Yes," said Circe. "Badly mistaken."

"But you do have interesting animals. I was much struck by the wolves and lions who course in a pack like dogs—very friendly for such savage beasts."

"I have taught them to be friendly," said Circe. "I am friendly myself, you see, and I like all the members of my household to share my goodwill."

"Their eyes," said Ulysses. "I was struck by their eyes—so big and sad and clever. You know, as I think of it, they looked like...human eyes."

"Did they?" said Circe, "Well—the eyes go last."

She came to him swiftly, raised her wand, touched him on the shoulder, and said: "Change, change, change! Turn, turn, turn!"

Nothing happened. Her eyes widened when she saw him sitting there, unchanged, sniffing at the flower he had taken from his tunic. He took the wand from her gently, and snapped it in two. Then drawing his sword he seized her by her long golden hair and forced her to her knees, pulling her head until her white throat was offered the blade of the sword. Then he said, "You have not asked me my name. It is Ulysses. I am an unlucky man, but not altogether helpless. You have changed my men into pigs. Now I will change you into a corpse."

She did not flinch before the blade. "Welcome, my friends. You have gone a

took the sharp blade in her hand, stroked it gently, and said, "It is almost worth dying to be overcome by so mighty a warrior. But I think living might be interesting too, now that I have met you."

He tried to turn his head, but sank deeper into the blueness of her eyes.

"Yes, I am a sorceress," she murmured, "a wicked woman. But you are a sorcerer too, are you not? Changing me more than I have changed your men, for I changed their bodies and you have changed my soul. It is no longer a wicked plotting soul, but soft and tender, full of love for you."

Her voice throbbed. He raised her to her feet, and said, "You are beautiful enough to turn any man into an animal. I will love you. But even before I am a man, I am a leader. My men are my responsibility. I must avow you to swear the great oath that you will not harm me when I am defenseless, that you will not wound me and suck away my blood as witches do, but will treat me honestly. And that, first of all, you will restore my men to their own forms, and let me take them with me when I am ready to leave."

"I will try to see that you are not ready," said Circe softly.

Circe kept her promise. The next morning she took Ulysses out to the sty and called the pigs. They came trotting up, snuffling and grunting. As they streamed past her, rushing to Ulysses, she touched each one on the shoulder with her wand. As she did so, each pig stood up, his hind legs grew longer, front hooves became hands, his eyes grew,

short but ugly voyage to the animal state. And while you have returned—looking very well—it is clear that we are in a place of sorceries and must conduct ourselves with great care. Our enchanting hostess, Circe, has become so fond of our company that she insists we stay awhile. This, indeed, is the time of your release from hogdom. So you must now go down to your shipmates on the beach, and tell them what has happened. Tell them to secure the ship and then return here with you to the castle. It is another delay in our journey, but it is far better than what might have been. Go, then."

The men trooped happily down to the harbor and told the others what had happened. At first, Eurylochus protested. "How do I know," he said, "that you are not still under enchantment? How do I know that this is not some new trick of the sorceress to get us all into her power, turn us all to pigs, and keep us in the sty forever?"

But the other men paid no heed to his warning. They were eager to see the castle and the beautiful witch, to taste the delicious food, and enjoy all the luxuries their friends had described. So they obeyed Ulysses' commands. They dragged the ship up on the beach, beyond the reach of the tide, unstepped the mast, then marched off laughing and trudging toward the castle, carrying mast and oars and folded sail. Eurylochus followed, but he was afraid.

For some time, things went well. The men were treated as welcome guests.

nose shrank, his quills softened into hair, he was his human self once more, only grown taller and younger.

The men crowded around Ulysses, grunting and laughing. He said to them: hunted wild boar, threw the discus, had archery and spear-throwing contests, raced, jumped, and wrestled. Then as dusk drew in they returned to the castle for their warm perfumed baths and bowls of hot wine before feasting began again.

As for Ulysses he found himself falling deeper under Circe's spell every day. Thoughts of home were dim now. He barely remembered his wife's face. Sometimes he would think of days gone by and wonder when he could shake off this enchantment and resume his voyage. Then she would look at him. And her eyes, like blue flame, burned these pictures out of his head. Then he could not rest until he was

within the scent of her hair, the touch of her hand. And he would whimper impatiently like a dog dreaming, shake his head, and go to her.

"It is most curious," she said. "But I love you more than all my other husbands."

"In the name of heaven how many have you had?" he cried.

"Ah, don't say it like that. Not so many, when you consider. I have been a frequent widow, it is true. But, please understand, I am god-descended on both sides. I am immortal and cannot die. I have lived since the beginning of things."

"How many husbands have you

They feasted for hours each night in the great dining hall. And as they ate, they were entertained by minstrels singing, by acrobats, dancing bears, and dancing girls. During the day they swam in the ocean, in the courtyard, I suppose."

"Ah, they are only the best, the cream, the mightiest warriors of ages gone. But I have had lesser husbands. They are now rabbits, squirrels, boars, cats, spiders, frogs, and monkeys. That little fellow there...." She pointed to a silvery little ape who was prancing and gibbering on top of the bedpost. "...he who pelts you with walnut shells every night. He was very jealous, very busy and jealous, and still is. I picked their forms, you see, to match their dispositions. Is it not thoughtful of me?"

"Tell me," said Ulysses, "when I am used up, will I be good enough to join your select band of wolves and lions, or will I be something less? A toad, perhaps, or a snail?"

"A fox, undoubtedly," she said. "With your swiftness, and your cunning ways—oh yes, a fox. A king of foxes." She stroked his beard. "But you are the only man who ever withstood my spells," she said. "You

are a conqueror, a unique hero. It is not your fate to stay with me. It is not my happy fate to arrange your last hours."

"Is it not?" said Ulysses.

"No," she said. "Unless you can wipe out of your mind all thoughts of home. Unless you can erase all dreams

buried, dear widow?"

"Buried? Why, none."

"I see. You cremate them."

"I do not let them die. I cannot bear dead things. Especially if they are things I have loved. Of all nature's transformations, death seems to me the most stupid. No, I do not let them die. I change them into animals, and they roam this beautiful island forevermore. And I see them every day and feed them with my own hand."

"That explains those wolves and lions against your will. If you choose, you can remain here with me and make this island a paradise of pleasure. If not, you must resume your voyage, and encounter dangers more dreadful than any you have seen yet. You will watch friends dying before your eyes, have your own life imperiled a hundred times, be battered, bruised, torn, ware-tosses, all this, if you leave me. But it is for you to decide.

Ulysses stood up and strode to the edge of the terrace. From where he stood he could see the light dancing in a million hot needles on the blue water. In the courtyard he saw the wolves and the lions. Beyond the courtyard, at the edge of the wood, he saw his men, happy looking, healthy, tanned; some were wrestling, some flinging spears, others drawing the bow. Circe had crossed to her loom and was weaving, weaving and singing. He remembered his wife. She also, at home in Ithaca, would sit and weave. But how different she looked. Her hair was no fleece of burning gold,

of battle and voyage, unless you can forget your men and release me from my oath, and let them become animals, contented animals, then and then only, can you remain with me as husband forever. And I will give you of my immortality. Yes, that can be arranged. I know how. You will share my immortality and live days of sport and idleness and nights of love. And we will live together always, knowing no other, and we will never grow old."

"Can such a thing be?"

"Yes. But the decision is yours. I have sworn an oath, and cannot keep you

"The Land of the Dead, dark Tartarus, the realm of torment from which no mortal returns. Must I go there?"

"Unless you stay with me here, in peace, in luxury, in every pleasure but that of adventure."

"It cannot be," said Ulysses. "As you, beautiful sorceress, choose a form for your lovers that matches their natures, and which they must wear when they are no longer men, so the Fates, with their shears, have cut out my destiny. It is danger, toil, battle, uncertainty. And, though I stop and refresh myself now and again, still must I resume my voyage, for that is my nature. And to fit my nature has fate cut the pattern of my days."

"Go quickly," said Circe. "Call your men and depart. For if you stay here any longer, I shall forget all duty. I shall break my oath and keep you here by force and never let you go. Quickly then,

but black. She was much smaller than Circe, and she could not sing.

"I have decided," he said. "I must go."

"Must you?"

"Yes."

"First let me tell you what the gods have decreed. If you sail away from this island, you cannot head for home. First you must go to the Land of the Dead."

"The Land of the Dead?" cried Ulysses. "No! No! It cannot be!"

"To the Land of the Dead. To Tartarus.

This is the decree. You must go there with all your men. And there you must consult certain ghosts, of whom you will be told, and they will prophesy for you, and plan your homeward journey. And theirs is the route you must follow if you wish to see Ithaca again."

The Land of the Dead

In those days men knew that the Ocean Stream was a huge river girdling the earth. Hades' kingdom, dark Tartarus, was presumed to be on the farther shore, over the edge of the visible world. But no one could be certain, for those who went there did not return.

Now it had been foretold by Circe that Ulysses would have to visit the Land of the Dead, and be advised by wise ghosts before he could resume his journey and find his way back to Ithaca. So he turned his bow westward; and a strong east wind caught his white sails and sent the ship skimming toward waters

brave one, quickly!"

Ulysses summoned his men and led them down to the beach. They stopped the mast, rigged the sails, and sailed away. They caught a northwest puff. The sails filled and the black ship ran out of the harbor. Ulysses' face was wet with Circe's last tears and his heart was very heavy. But then spray dashed into his face with the old remembered bright shock, and he laughed.

The last sound the men heard as the ship threaded through the mouth of the harbor and ran for the open sea, was the howling of the lions and wolves who had followed them

down to the beach. They stood now breast-deep in the surf, gazing after the white sail, crying their loneliness.xx

helm. For he had heard that the westward rim of the world was always fog-girt, and was studded by murderously rocky islets where dwelt the Cimmerians, who waited quietly in the fog for ships to crack upon their shores and deliver to them their natural food, shipwrecked sailors.

Finally, Ulysses knew he could not keep awake any longer; yet he knew too that to give over the helm to anyone else meant almost certain death for them all. So he sent a sailor named Elpenor to climb the mast and try to see some

no ship had sailed before.

Night tumbled from the sky and set its blackness on the sea and would not lift. The ship sailed blindly. The men were clamped in a nameless grief. They could hardly bear the wound of their own voices, but spoke to each other in whispers. The night wore on and did not give way to dawn. There were no stars, no moon. They sailed westward and waited for dawn, but no crack of light appeared in the sky. The darkness would not lift.

Once again Ulysses lashed himself to the tiller, and stuck splinters of wood in his eye

sockets to prop the weary lids. And, finally, after a week of night, a feeble light did curdle the sky—not a regular dawn, no joyous burst of sun, but a grudging milky grayness that floated down and thickened into fog. Still Ulysses did not dare to sleep, for day was no better than night: no man could see in the dense, woolly folds of fog.

Still the east wind blew, pushing them westward through the curdling mist, and still Ulysses did not dare give over the helm

whispered to each other, “as he will murder us all to gain his ends.”

But they did not dare say it loud enough to awaken Ulysses.

All day long they sailed, following the white flash of the gull, and when night came there were no stars and no moon, nothing but choking blackness. Ulysses took the helm again. But now the bow

distance ahead. No sooner had Elpenor reached the top of the mast than the ship yawed sharply. Ulysses lost his footing and stumbled against the mast.

No one saw Elpenor fall. The fog was too thick. But they heard his terrible scream turned into a choking gurgle. And they knew that he had been shaken from the mast and had fallen into the sea and been drowned. No sooner had his voice gone still than the fog thinned. They could see from one end of the ship to the other—the wet sails, the shining spar, each other’s wasted faces. A white gull rose screaming and flew ahead of them.

“Follow that gull,” said Ulysses. “He will lead us where we must go.”

Then he stretched himself on the deck and went to sleep. Whereupon the crew began to whisper among themselves that the gull was the spirit of their shipmate, Elpenor, and that Ulysses had shaken him from the mast purposely, as you shake fruit from a tree, so that he might fall in the water and be drowned, giving them the white flight of his spirit to follow to Tartarus.

“He has murdered our shipmate,” they

grass. He drew his sword and scraped out a shallow trench, then had his men cut the throats of two black goats and hold them over the trench until it was filled with blood. For it was ghosts he had come to counsel with, and ghosts, he knew, came only where they could find fresh blood to drink, hoping always to fill their dry veins.

tipped forward and the stern arose, and the ship slipped through the water with a rushing, rustling speed as if it were sailing downhill. The men clung to the shrouds, and wept and groaned, and pleaded with Ulysses to change course. But he answered them not at all. He planted his feet and gripped the tiller with all his strength, as the deck tilted and the ship slipped down, down...

"Who has ever heard of the sea sloping?" he said to himself. "Truly this must be the waterway to the underworld, and we are the first keel to cut these fathoms. May the gods grant we cross them again going the other way."

There was a roaring of the waters. The deck leveled. They wailed out of darkness as through a curtain, and found themselves in a strange place. The sea had narrowed to a river, the water was black, and the sky was black, curving downward like the inside of a bowl; the light was gray. Tall trees grew along the bank of the river—black poplars and white birches. And Ulysses knew that the black river was the Styx, and that he had sailed his ship into the Kingdom of the Dead.

There was no wind, but the sails remained strangely taut, and the ship floated easily into harbor, as if some invisible hand had taken the helm. Ulysses bade his men disembark. He led them past a fringe of trees to a great meadow where black goats cropped black
When you leave this place, you will sail past an island where you will hear the

The meadow was still. No birds sang. There was no shrill of insects; the goats did not bleat. The men were too frightened to breathe. Ulysses waited, leaning on his sword, gloomily watching the trench of blood. Then he heard a rustling and saw the air thicken into spouts of steam. Steamy shapes separated, heads and shoulders of mist leaning over the trench to drink, growing more solid as they drank.

One raised its head and looked at him. He shuddered. It was his mother, Anticleia.

"Greetings, Mother. How do you fare?"

"Poorly, son. I am dead, dead, dead. I kept telling you I would die one day, but you never believed me. Now you see. But do you see? Say you see."

But then, striding across the meadow came certain ghosts in armor. Ulysses bowed low.

"Welcome, O Fox of War," cried the ghost of Achilles. "Tell me, do men remember me in Arcadia?"

"The gods have not allowed me to set foot upon our dear islands," said Ulysses. "But on whatever savage shore I am thrown there are those who know the name of great Achilles. Your fame outshines all warriors who have ever handled weapons. And your son, Neoptolemus, is a hero too."

"Thank you, Ulysses," said the ghost of Achilles. "Your words are fair and courteous, as always. Now, heed this:
not I...."

voices of maidens singing. And the sound of their singing will be sweeter than memories of home, and when your men hear them, their wits will be scattered, and they will wish to dive overboard and swim to shore. If they do, they will perish. For these maidens are a band of witch sisters—music-mad sisters—who lure sailors to the rocks so that they may flay them, and make drums of their skin and flutes of their bones. They are the Siren sisters. When you pass their shore, steer clear, steer clear.”

“Thank you, great Achilles.”

Next to Achilles stood a huge ghost staring at Ulysses out of empty eye sockets. He was a giant skeleton. He wore a cloak of stiffened blood and a red plume upon his skull. His spear and sword were made of bone too. He was Ajax.

“You tricked me, Ulysses,” he said. “When great Achilles here fell on the field of battle, you claimed his golden armor by craft, when I should have had it. I...I...You took the golden armor that my heart desired and drove me mad with rage, so that I butchered cattle and captives and then killed myself. I hate you, sly one, and I have this bad news for you: If you ever do reach Ithaca, you will find your wife being courted by other men, your son a captive in your own castle, your substance devoured. This is my word to you, Ulysses. So you had simply better fall on your sword now where you stand, and save another trip to Hades.”

“Thank you, great Ajax,” said

“Thank you, Mother,” said Ulysses.

Then came a ghost so new that his flesh had not quite turned to mist, but quivered on his bones like a pale jelly. Hew was Elpenor, who had fallen from the mast and had led them to Tartarus. When Ulysses saw who it was, he was taken by a great dread and cried, “I did not push you, Elpenor. You fell. It was an accident, I swear.”

“Nevertheless,” said Elpenor, “my ghost will trouble you until you make my grave.”

“How will I do that?”

“The first land you come to, build me a barrow and set thereon my oar. If you forget, I shall scratch at your windows and howl down your chimney and dance in your sleep.”

“I will build your grave with my own hands,” said Ulysses. “Have you any counsel for me?”

“Yes. Death has cleared my eyes, and I see things I would not have known. I see your ship now sailing in a narrow place between two huge rocks. Beneath the starboard rock is a cave, and in that cave squats Scylla, and unpleasant lady with twelve legs and six heads who cries with the voice of a new-born puppy. If you sail too near the rock, she will seize six sailors to feed her six mouths—”

“Then I will steer away from Scylla—toward the other rock.”

“Ah, but under the other rock lurks a strange thirsty monster named Charybdis, whose habit it is to drink up a whole tide of water in one gulp, and then spit it out

Ulysses. "I will remember what you have told me."

"I knew that Penelope was being wooed by other men in your absence," said Ulysses' mother. "I knew it well, but I would not speak evil of your wife, not I,

"You must keep to the middle way. But if you cannot—and indeed it will be very difficult, for you will be tacking against headwinds—then choose the right-hand rock where hungry Scylla squats. For it is better to lose six men than your ship and your entire crew."

"Thank you, courteous Elpenor," said Ulysses. "I will heed your words."

A thin tittering arose from the ghosts, and they spoke in steamy whispers.

"What are you doing here, man? You're still alive. Go and die properly and come back, and we will welcome you."

"Silence!" cried Ulysses. "I come for better counsel than this. I must find my way back to Ithaca past the mighty wrath of a god who reaches his strong hand and swirls the sea as a child does a mud puddle, dashing my poor twig of a ship from peril to grim peril. I need good counsel to get home. Where is the sage, Teiresias? Why is he not here to greet me?"

"Coming—coming—He is blind but he smells blood as far as any."

"Do not drink it all. Save some for him."

And Ulysses smote the ghosts with his sword, driving them back, whimpering from the trench of blood.

again, making a whirlpool of such terrible sucking force that nay ship within its swirl must be destroyed."

"Monster to the right and monster to the left," cried Ulysses. "What can I do then?"

was empty and the misty bladder of his body was faintly pink.

"You honor me by your visit, Ulysses," he said. "Many men sought my counsel when I was alive, but you are the first client to make his way down here. You have heard these others tell you of certain petty dangers which you will do well to avoid, but I have a mighty thing to tell."

"Tell."

"Your next landfall will be Thrinacia, a large island which men shall one day call Sicily. Here the Sun Titan, Hyperion, pastures his herds of golden cattle. Your store will have been eaten when you reach this place, and your men will be savage with hunger. But no matter how desperate for food they are, you must prevent them from stealing even one beef. If they do, they shall never see home again."

"I myself will guard the herds of the Sun Titan," said Ulysses, "and not one beef shall be taken. Thank you, wise Teiresias."

"Go now. Take your men aboard the ship, and go. Sail up the black rover toward the upper air."

"But now that I am here and have come such a long and weary way to get here, may I not see some of the famous

Then the air grew vaporous as the mob of ghosts shifted and swayed, making way for one who cleaved forward toward the trench of blood, and Ulysses recognized the one he was most eager to see, the blind woman-shaped ghost of Teiresias, sage of Thebes, expert at disasters, master of prophesy.

"Hail, venerable Teiresias," he cried, "all honor to you. I have journeyed far to make your acquaintance.

Teiresias came silently to the trench, knelt, and drank. He drank until the trench

sights? May I not see Orion hunting, Minos judging? May I not dance with the heroes in the Fields of Asphodel? May I not see Tantalus thirsting, or my own grandfather, Sisyphus, rolling his eternal stone up the hill?"

No," said Teiresias. "It is better that you go. "You have been here too long already, I fear; too long exposed to these bone-bleaching airs. You may already be tainted with death, you and your men, making your fates too heavy for any ship to hold. Embark then. Sail up the black river. Do

not look back. Remember our advice and forget our reproaches, and do not return until you are properly dead."

Ulysses ordered his men aboard. He put down the helm. There was still not wind. But the sails stretched taut, and the ship pushed upriver. Heeding the last words of the old sage, he did not look back, but he heard the voice of his mother calling. "Good-bye...good-bye..." until it grew faint as his own breath. XX

The Sirens

In the first light of morning Ulysses awoke and called his crew about him.

"Men," he said. "Listen well, for your lives today hang upon what I am about to tell you. That large island to the west is Thrinacia, where we must make a landfall, for our provisions run low. But to get to the island we must pass through a narrow strait. At the head of this strait is a rocky islet where dwell two sisters called Sirens, whose voices you must not hear. Now I shall guard you against their singing which would lure you to shipwreck, but first you must bind me to the mast. Tie me tightly, as though I were a dangerous captive. And no matter how I struggle, no matter what signals I make to you, *do not release me*, lest I follow their voices to destruction, taking you with me."

Thereupon Ulysses took a large lump of the beeswax which was used by the sail mender to slick his heavy thread, and kneaded it in his powerful hands until it became soft. Then he went to each man of the crew and plugged his ears with soft wax; he caulked their ears so tightly that they could hear nothing but the thin pulsing of their own blood.

Then he stood himself against the mast, and the men bound him about with rawhide, winding it tightly around his body, lashing him to the thick mast.

They had lowered the wail because ships cannot sail through a narrow strait unless there is a following wind, and now

each man of the crew took his place at the great oars. The polished blades whipped the sea into a froth of white water and the ship nosed toward the strait.

Ulysses had left his own ears unplugged because he had to remain in command of the ship and had need of his hearing. Every wound means something upon the sea. But when they drew near the rocky islet and he heard the first faint strains of the Sirens'

singing, then he wished he had stopped his own ears too with wax. All his strength suddenly surged toward the wound of those magical voices. The very hair of his head seemed to be tugging at his scalp, trying to fly away. His eyeballs started out of his head.

For in those voices were the sounds that men love:

Happy sounds like bird railing, sleet hailing, milk pailing...

Sad sounds like rain leaking, tree creaking, wind seeking...

Autumn sounds like leaf tapping, fire sapping, river lapping...

Quiet sounds like snow flaking, spider waking, heart breaking...

It seemed to him then that the sun was burning him to a cinder as he stood. And the voices of the Sirens purled in a cool crystal pool upon their rock past the blue-hot flatness of the sea and its lacings of white-hot spume. It seemed to him he could actually see their voices deepening into a silvery cool pool, and that he must plunge into that pool or die a flaming

could not break the thick anchor line. He strained against it until he bled, but the line held.

The men bent to their oars and rowed more swiftly, for they saw the mast bending like a tall tree in a heavy wind, and they feared that Ulysses, in his fury, might snap it off short and dive, mast and all, into the water to get at the Sirens.

Now they were passing the rock, and Ulysses could see the singers. There were two of them. They sat on a heap of white bones—the bones of shipwrecked sailors—and sang more beautifully than senses could bear. But their appearance did not match their voices, for they were shaped like birds, huge birds, larger than eagles. They had feathers instead of hair, and their hands and feet were claws. But their faces were the faces of young girls.

When Ulysses saw them he was able to forget the sweetness of their voices because their look was so fearsome. He closed his eyes against the terrible sight of these bird-women perched on their heap of bones. But when he closed his

death.

He was filled with such fury of desire that he swelled his mighty muscles, burst the rawhide bonds like thread, and dashed for the rail.

But he had warned two of his strongest men—Perimedes and Eurylochus—to guard him close. They seized him before he could plunge into the water. He swept them aside as if they had been children. But they had held him long enough to give the crew time to swarm about him. He was overpowered—crushed by their numbers—and dragged back to the mast. This time he was bound with the mighty hawser that held the anchor.

The men returned to their rowing seats, unable to hear the voices because of the wax corking their ears. The ship swung about and headed for the strait again.

Louder now, and clearer, the tormenting voices came to Ulysses. Again he was aflame with a fury of desire. But try as he might he

eyes and could not see their ugliness, then their voices maddened him once again, and he felt himself straining against the bloody ropes. He forced himself to open his eyes and look upon the monsters, so that the terror of their bodies would blot the beauty of their voices.

But the men, who could only see, not hear the Sirens, were so appalled by their aspect that they swept their oars faster and faster, and the black ship scuttled past the rock. The Siren's voices sounded fainter and fainter and finally died away.

When Perimedes and Eurylochus saw their captain's face lose its madness, they unbound him, and he signaled to the men to unstop their ears. For now he heard the whistling gurgle of a whirlpool, and he knew that they were approaching the narrow part of the strait, and must pass between Scylla and Charybdis. xx

Scylla and Charybdis

Ulysses had been told in Tartarus of these two monsters that guard the narrow waterway leading to Thrinacia. Each of them hid beneath its own rock, which stood side by side and were separated only by the width of the strait at its

or god ever fled from!"

Thereupon she changed Scylla into something that looked like a huge fleshy spider with twelve legs and six heads. She also implanted in her an insatiable hunger, a wild greed for human flesh. When any ship came within reach of her long tentacles, she would sweep the deck of sailors, and eat them.

narrowest point.

Charybdis dwelt in a cave beneath the left-hand rock. Once she had been a superbly beautiful naiad, daughter of Poseidon, and very loyal to her father in his endless feud with Zeus, Lord of Earth and Sky. She it was who rode the hungry tides after Poseidon had stirred up a storm, and led them onto the beaches, gobbling up whole villages, submerging fields, drowning forests, claiming them for the sea. She won so much land for her father's kingdom that Zeus became enraged and changed her into a monster, a huge bladder of a creature whose face was all mouth and whose arms and legs were flippers. And he penned her in the cave beneath the rock, saying, "Your hunger shall become thirst. As you once devoured land belonging to me, now you shall drink the tide thrice a day—swallow it and spit it forth again—and your name will be a curse to sailors forever."

And so it was. Thrice a day she burned with a terrible thirst, and stuck her head out of the cave and drank down the sea, shrinking the waters to shallow stream, and then spat the water out again in a tremendous torrent, making a whirlpool near her rock in which no ship could live.

This was Charybdis. As for Scylla, who lived under the right-hand rock, she too had once been a beautiful naiad. Poseidon himself spied her swimming one day, and fell in love with her, and so provoked the jealousy of his wife, Amphitrite, that she cried, "I will make her the most hideous female

Ulysses stood in the bow as the ship nosed slowly up the strait. The roaring of the waters grew louder and louder, and now he saw wild feathers of spume flying as Charybdis sucked down the tide and spat it back. He looked at the other rock. Scylla was not in sight. But he knew she was lurking underneath, ready to spring. He squinted, trying to measure distances. The only chance to come through unharmed, he saw, was to strike the middle way between the two rocks, just beyond the suction of the whirlpool, and just out of Scylla's reach. But to do this meant that the ship must not be allowed to swerve a foot from its exact course, for middle way was no wider than the ship itself.

He took the helm, and bade his men keep a perfectly regular stroke. Then, considering further, he turned the helm over to Eurylochus, and put on his armor. Grasping sword and spear, he posted himself at the starboard rail.

"For," he said to himself, "there is no contending with the whirlpool. If we veer off our course it must be toward the other monster. I can fight any enemy I can see."

The men rowed very carefully, very skillfully. Eurylochus chanted the stroke, and the black ship cut through the waters of the strait, keeping exactly to the middle way.

They were passing between the rocks now. They watched in amazement as the water fell away to their left, showing a shuddering flash of sea bed and gasping fish, and then roared back

that man

They felt their ship tremble.

"Well done!" cried Ulysses. "A few more strokes and we are through. Keep the way—the middle way!"

But, when measuring distance, he had been unable to reckon upon one thing. The ship was being rowed, and the great sweep oars projected far beyond the width of the hull. And Scylla, lurking underwater, seized two of the oars, and dragged the ship toward her.

Dumbfounded, Ulysses saw the polished shafts of the oars which had been dipping and flashing so regularly suddenly snap like twigs, and before he knew what was happening, the deck tilted violently. He was thrown against the rail and almost fell overboard.

He lay on the deck, scrambling for his sword. He saw tentacles arching over him; they were like the arms of an octopus, but ending in enormous human hands.

He found his sword, rose to his knees, and hacked at the tentacles. Too late. The hands

again with such force that the water was beaten into white froth.

had grasped six sailors, snatched them screaming through the air, and into the sea.

Ulysses had no time for fear. He had to do a number of things immediately. He roared to the crew to keep the ship on course lest it be swept into the whirlpool then he seized an oar himself and rowed on the starboard side where the oars had been broken.

From where he sat he could see Scylla's rock, could see her squatting at the door of her cave. He saw her plainly, stuffing the men into her six bloody mouths. He heard the shrieks of his men as they felt themselves being eaten alive.

He did not have time to weep, for he had to keep his crew rowing and tell the helmsman how to steer past the whirlpool.

They passed through the strait into open water. Full ahead lay Thrinacia with its wooded hills and long white beaches, the Island of the Sun Titan, their next landfall. xx

Vocabulary Structure Dictionary

Some compound words can be easily understood when you examine the words that make up the compound. *Heartbreak* can be divided into *heart* and *break*, and you understand the meaning. However, many compound words are not so easily

1. During the rain the hill behind our house washed away, causing a *landfall* that left two inches of mud in our den.
2. Ira declared that his devotion to

analyzed. You can look at the parts of *sheepfold* and still not be certain of the meaning. Or the parts of a compound may prove misleading: a *swineherd* is not a herd of pigs, but a person who herds pigs. When you are unsure whether the meaning suggested by the structure is the correct one, you must go to a dictionary.

Each of the sentences in the next column contains an italicized compound. Number your paper from one to four, and beside each number write (—) if you think the compound is used correctly and (0) if it is not. Be prepared to explain your choices.

The Cattle of the Sun

Instead of landing on Thrinacia, as the crew expected, Ulysses dropped anchor and summoned his two underchiefs, Eurylochos and Perimedes, to take counsel.

He said, "You heard the warning of old Teiresias down in Tartaus. You heard him say that this island belongs to Hyperion, the Sun Titan, who uses it as a grazing land for his flocks. The warning was most dire: Whosoever of our crew harms these cattle in any way will bring swift doom upon himself, and will never see his home again."

"We all heard the warning," said Eurylochos, "and everyone will heed it."

"How can you be so sure?" said Ulysses. "If this voyage has taught you nothing else, it should have proved to you that there is no thing in the world so uncertain as man's intentions, especially

Terry began when she was his *shipmate* on a shrimp boat cruising the ocean.

3. Stan's test score showed the professor that Stan was *dumbfounded* and should quite school.
4. Mother served the chicken on *breastplates* of antique china.

wood was pressed a fragrant black sap, which was boiled in a big iron pot. Then he had the men tar the ship from stern to stern, caulking each crack.

The hunting party returned, downhearted. There seemed to be no game on the island, they told Ulysses, only a few wild pigs, which they had shot, but no deer, no bear, no rabbits, no game birds. Just the pigs, and great herds of golden cattle.

The water party returned triumphantly, barrels full.

The men were so weary that Ulysses stood guard himself that night. Wrapped in his cloak, naked sword across his knees, he sat hunched near the driftwood fire, brooding into the flames.

"I cannot let them rest here," he said to himself. "If game is so scarce, they will

his good ones. No, fair sirs, what I propose is that we change our plans about landing here and seek another island, one where death does not pasture."

"It will never do," said Eurylochus. "The men are exhausted. There is a south wind blowing now, which means we would have to row. We simply do not have the strength to hold the oars."

"Our stores are exhausted too," said Perimedes. "The food that Circe gave us is almost gone. The water kegs are empty. We must land here and let the men rest, and lay in fresh provisions."

"Very well," said Ulysses. "If it must be, it must be. But I am holding you two directly responsible for the safety of the sun-cattle. Post guards at night, and kill any man who goes near these fatal herds."

Thereupon the anchor was raised, and the ship put into harbor. Ulysses did not moor the ship offshore, but had the men drag it up on the beach. He sent one party out in search of game, another to fill the water kegs, and a third to chop down pine trees. From the

sea lilies, fish heads, sand crabs—vile broth. But most days they had nothing else. And they grew hungrier and hungrier.

For thirty days the strong south wind blew, keeping them beached. Finally, one night when Ulysses was asleep, Eurylochus secretly called the men together, and said, "Death comes to men in all sorts of ways. And however it

be tempted to take the cattle. For hungry men the only law is hunger. No, we must put out again tomorrow and try to find another island."

The next morning he routed out the men. They grumbled terribly, but did not dare to disobey. However, they were not fated to embark. A strong south wind blew up, almost gale strength, blowing directly into the harbor. There was no sailing into the teeth of it, and it was much too strong to row against.

"Very well," said Ulysses, "scour the island for game again. We must wait until the wind drops."

He had thought it must blow itself out in a day or so, but it was not to be. For thirty days and thirty nights the south wind blew, and they could not leave the island. All the wild pigs had been killed. The men were desperately hungry. Ulysses used all his cunning to find food. He had the men fish in the sea, dig the beaches for shellfish and turtle eggs, search the woods for edible roots and berries. They tore the clinging limpets off rocks and shot gulls. A huge pot was kept boiling over driftwood fire, and in it the men threw anything remotely edible—sea polyps,

and that the smell of roasting meat was real. He lifted his face to the sky, and said. "O, mighty ones, it was unkind to let me fall into sleep. For now my men have done what they have been told they must not do."

He drew his sword and rushed off to the light of the fire.

comes, it is never welcome. But the worst of all deaths is to die of starvation. And to be forced to starve among herds of fat beef is a hellish torture that the gods reserve for the greatest criminals. So I say to you men that we must disregard the warning of that meddlesome ghost, Teiresias, and help ourselves to this cattle. We can do it now while Ulysses sleeps. And if indeed the Sun Titan is angered and seeks vengeance—well at least we shall have had one more feast before dying.”

It was agreed. They went immediately into the meadow. Now, Hyperion’s cattle were the finest ever seen on earth. They were enormous, sleek, broad-backed, with crooked golden horns, and hides of beautiful dappled gold and white. And when the men came among them with their axes, they were not afraid, for no one had ever offered them any harm. They looked at the men with their great plum-colored eyes, whisked their tails, and continued grazing.

The axes rose and fell. Six fine cows were slaughtered. Because they knew they were committing an offense against the gods, the men were very careful to offer sacrifice. Upon a makeshift altar they placed the fat thighbones and burned them as offerings. They had no wine to pour upon the blazing meat as a libation, so they used water instead, chanting prayers as they watched the meat burn.

But the smell of the roasting flesh overcame their piety. They leaped upon

But just then Zeus was hearing a more powerful plea. For the Sun Titan had been informed immediately by the quick spies that serve the gods, and now he was raging upon Olympus.

“O, Father Zeus, he cried, “I demand vengeance upon the comrades of Ulysses who have slaughtered my golden kine. If they are spared, I will withdraw my chariot from the sky. No longer will I warm the treacherous earth, but will go to Hades and shine among the dead.”

“I hear you, cousin,” said Zeus, “and promise vengeance.”

Ulysses dashed among the feasting crew ready to cut them down even as they squatted there, eating.

“Wait,” cried Eurylochus. “Hold your hand. These are not the Sun God’s cattle, but six stags we found on the other side of the island.”

“Stags?” roared Ulysses. “What kind of monstrous lie is this? You know there are no stags on this island.”

“They were there,” said Eurylochus. And now they are here. Perhaps the gods relented, and sent them as food. Come, eat, dear friend, and do not invent misdeeds where none exist.”

Ulysses allowed himself to be persuaded, and sat down among the men, and began to eat with ravenous speed.

But then a strange thing happened. The spitted carcasses turning over the fire began to low and moo as though they were alive, one of the flayed hides crawled over the sand to Ulysses, and he saw that it was dappled gold and white,

the carcasses like wild beasts, ripped them apart with their hands, stuck the flesh on spits, and plunged them into the open fire.

Ulysses awoke from a dream of food. He sniffed the air and realized it was no dream

"Wait!" cried Eurylochus. "Do not blame me. We have not offended the gods by our trickery. For the south wind has fallen—see? The wind blows from the north now, and we can sail away. If the gods were angry, Ulysses, would they send us a fair wind?"

"To the ship!" shouted Ulysses. "We sail immediately."

The men gathered up the meat that was left, and followed Ulysses to the beached ship. They put logs under it and rolled it down to the sea. Here they unfurled the sail, and slid out of the harbor.

Night ran out and the fires of dawn burned the sky. The men hurried about their tasks, delighted to be well fed and sailing again, after the starving month on Thrinacia.

But then Ulysses, observing the sky, saw a strange sight. The sun seemed to be frowning. He saw that black clouds had massed in front of it. He heard a rustling noise, and looked off westward, where he saw the water ruffling darkly.

"Down sail!" he shouted. "Ship the mast!"

Too late. A wild west wind came hurtling across the water and pounced on the ship. There was no time to do anything. Both forestays snapped. The

and knew he had been tricked.

Once again he seized his sword and dashed toward Eurylochus.

He looked about, trying to find someone to pull aboard. There was no one. He had no way of steering the raft, but had to go where the wind blew him. And now, to his dismay, he found the wind shifting again. It blew from the south, which meant that he would be pushed back toward the terrible strait.

All day he drifted, and all night. When dawn came, it brought with it a roaring sucking sound, and he saw that he was being drawn between Scylla and Charybdis. He felt the raft being pulled toward the whirlpool. It was the very moment when Charybdis took her first drink of the day. She swallowed the tide, and held it in her great bladder of a belly. The raft spun like a leaf in the outer eddies of the huge suction, and Ulysses knew that when he reached the vortex of the whirlpool, he and the raft would be drawn to the bottom, and that he must drown.

He kept his footing on the raft until the very last moment, and just as it was pulled into the vortex, he leaped as high as he could upon the naked face of the rock, scrambling for a handhold. He caught a clump of lichen and clung with all his strength. He could climb no higher on the rock; it was too slippery for a foothold. All he could do was cling to the moss and pray that his strength would not give out. He was waiting for Charybdis to spit forth the tide again.

The long hours passed. His shoulders

mast split and fell, laying its white sail like a shroud over the whip. A lightning bolt flared from the blue sky and struck midship. Great billows of choking yellow smoke arose. The heat was unbearable. Ulysses saw his men diving off the deck, garments and hair ablaze and hissing like cinders when they hit the water. He was still shouting commands, trying to chop the sail free and fighting against the gale and fire. But he was all alone. Not one man was aboard. The ship fell apart beneath him. The ribs were torn from the keel. The ship was nothing but a mass of flaming timbers, and Ulysses swam among them. He held on to the mast, which had not burned. Pushing it before him, he swam out of the blazing wreckage. He found the keel floating free. The oxhide backstay was still tied to the head of the mast; with it he hashed mast and keel together into a kind of raft. splinter from the timbers, and shaped it into a lance for spearing fish. He did not find any. Then he lay on his back, pretending to be dead, and gulls came to peck out his eyes. He caught them and wrung their necks. He ate their flesh and drank their blood, and stayed alive.

felt as though they were being torn apart by red-hot pincers. Finally he heard a great tumult of waters and saw it frothing out of the cave. The waves leaped toward his feet. And then he saw what he was waiting for; his raft came shooting up like a cork.

He dropped upon the timbers. Now he would have some hours of quiet water, he knew, before Charybdis drank again. So he kept to that side of the strait, holding as far from Scylla as he could, for he well remembered the terrible reach of her arms.

He passed safely beyond the rocks and out of the strait. For nine days he drifted under the burning sun, nine nights under the indifferent moon. With his knife he cut a long

On the tenth day he found himself approaching another island.

He was very weak. The island grew dark as he looked at it. A black mist hid the land, which was odd because the sun was shining. Then the sky tilted, and the black mist covered him. xx

Calypso

When Ulysses awoke he found himself lying on a bed of sweet-smelling grass. The sun shone hotly, but he was in a pool

dream. He was strong enough now to sit up and look around. He was in a great grove hemmed by trees—alder and poplar and cypress. Across this meadow four streams ran, crossing each other, making a sound like soft laughter. The

of delicious cool shade under a poplar tree. He was still dizzy. The trees were swaying, and bright flowers danced upon the meadow. He closed his eyes, thinking, "I am dead then. The god that hunts me took pity and shortened my hard life, and I am now in the Elysian Fields."

A voice answered, "You have not died. You are not in the Elysian Fields. You have come home."

He opened his eyes again. A woman was bending over him. She was so tall that he knew she was no mortal woman, but nymph or naiad or demigoddess. She was clad in a short tunic of yellow and purple. Her hair was yellow, and long and thick.

"You are here with me," she said. "You have come home."

"Home? Is this Ithaca? Are you Penelope?"

"This is Ogygia, and I am Calypso."

He tried to sit up. He was too weak. "But Ithaca is my home," he said. "And Penelope is my wife."

"Home is where you dwell. And now you belong to me, because this island and everything on it is mine."

Ulysses went back to sleep. For he believed he was dreaming, and did not wish to wake up again and find himself on the raft. But when he awoke, he was still in his

water and they are always hungry. As soon as I turned you into a fish, a gull stooped—and he would have had you—but I shot him with my arrow. Then I took my net and fished you out, restored you

meadow was a carpet of wild flowers, violets, parsley, bluebells, daffodils, and cat-faced pansies. His bed had been made in front of a grotto, he saw. Over it a wild grapevine had been trained to fall like a curtain.

The vine curtain was pushed aside, and Calypso came out.

"You are awake," she cried, "and just in time for your wedding feast. The stag is roasted. The wine has been poured. No, don't move. You're still too weak. Let me help you, little husband."

She stooped and lifted him in her great, white arms and carried him easily as though he were a child into the grotto, and set him before the hearth. A whole stag was spitted over the flame. The cave was carpeted with the skins of leopard and wolf and bear.

"Lovely and gracious goddess," said Ulysses, "tell me, please, how I came here. The last I remember I was on my raft, and then a blackness fell."

"I was watching for you," said Calypso. "I knew you would come, and I was waiting. Then your raft floated into sight. I saw you slump over and roll off the raft. And I changed you into a fish, for sharks live in this

saw a woman, weaving.

"She looks older," he said.

"You have been away a long time. Only the immortals do not age. I was 2,300 years old yesterday. Look at me. Do you see any wrinkles?"

"Poor Penelope," said Ulysses.

"Don't pity her too much. She has

to your proper shape, fed you a broth of herbs, and let you sleep. That was your arrival, O man I have drawn from the sea. As for your departure, that will never be. Now eat your meat and drink your wine, for I like my husbands well fed."

Ulysses ate and drank, and felt his strength return.

"After all," he thought, "things could be worse. In fact they have been much worse. This may turn out to be quite a pleasant interlude. She is certainly beautiful, this Calypso. Rather large for my taste, and inclined to be bossy, I'm afraid. But who's perfect?"

He turned to her, smiling, and said, "You say you were waiting for me, watching for my raft. How did you know I would be coming?"

"I am one of the Titan brood," said Calypso. "Daughter of the mighty Atlas, who stands upon the westward rim of the world bearing the sky upon his shoulders. We are the elder branch of the gods, we Titans. For us there is no before or after, only now, wherein all things are and always were and always will be. Time, you see, is a little arrangement man has made for himself to try to measure the immeasurable mystery of life. It does not really exist. So when we want to know anything that has happened in what you call 'before,' or what will happen in what you call 'after,' we simply shuffle the pictures and look at them."

"I don't think I understand."

"I have watched your whole voyage,

plenty of company. She is presumed to be a widow you know."

"Has she married again?"

"I weary of this picture. Would you like to see another?"

"My son, Telemachus."

She poked the fire again, and Ulysses saw the flickering image of a tall young man with red-gold hair. He held a spear in his hand and looked angry.

"How he has grown," murmured Ulysses. "He was a baby when I left. He is a young man now, and a fine one, is he not?"

"Looks like his father," said Calypso.

"He seems to be defying some enemy," said Ulysses. "What is happening?"

"He is trying to drive away his mother's suitors, who live in your castle now. She is quite popular—for an older woman. But then, of course, she has land and goods. A rich widow. You left her well provided (for a sailor). She has many suitors, and cannot decide among them. Or perhaps she enjoys their courtship too much to decide. But your son is very proud of his father, whom he does not remember, and seeks to drive the suitors from your castle."

"I had better go home and help him," said Ulysses.

"Put that out of your mind. It simply will not happen. Forget Ithaca, Ulysses. You are a mighty hero, and heroes have

Ulysses. All I have to do is poke the log in a certain way, and pictures form in the heart of the fire and burn there until I poke the log again. What would you like to see?"

"My wife, Penelope."

Calypso reached her long arm and poked the log. And in the heart of the flame Ulysses

above the great sleeping eye, preparing to stab it in. he saw himself wrestling with the leather bag of winds that Aeolus had given him; saw himself running with the wolves and lions who had been Circe's lovers in the dark courtyard of her castle. Then, sword in hand, he saw himself hacking at Scylla's tentacles as she reached across the tilting deck for his men. Going back he saw himself before his homeward voyage crouched in the black belly of the wooden horse he had made. Next, climbing out of that horse after it had been dragged into the city and racing with lifted sword to slaughter the sleeping Trojan warriors. And, as he watched and saw the old battles refought, the men who had been his friends, and the monstrous enemies he had overcome, his heart sang with pride, and a drunken warmth stronger than the fumes of wine rose to his head, drowning out all the pictures of home.

He stood up, and said, "Thank you for showing me myself, Calypso. I do seem to be a hero, don't I? And worthy to love a daughter of the Titans."

"Yes," said Calypso.

Now Calypso had amused herself

many homes, and the last is always the best. Look at this. See some of your exploits. Like many warriors, you were too busy fighting to know what really happened."

She poked the log again and again, and a stream of pictures flowed through the fire. Ulysses saw himself standing on a rock at the Cyclop's cave, holding the white-hot sword

said Ulysses. "You island goddesses are apt to be abrupt with your former friends. I've noticed this."

"It's a depressing topic, dear. Let's talk about me. Do you find me beautiful today?"

"More beautiful than yesterday, if that is possible. And no doubt will find you even lovelier tomorrow, since you have shown me the penalty of any inattention."

"Do not fear," said Calypso. "You are not like the others. You are bolder and have more imagination. You are a hero."

"Perhaps you could persuade your feathered friends to nest elsewhere? They make me nervous."

"Nothing easier. I shall simply tell them to depart. If they do not, I shall change them all to grasshoppers, all save one, who will eat the rest, and then die of overeating."

"Truly, you are wise and powerful, and fair beyond all women, mortal or immortal."

She smiled. "You have such and apt way of putting things," she said.

So Ulysses made himself at home on the island, and passes the time hunting

with shipwrecked sailors before. But she was hard to please, and none of them had lasted very long. When she was tired of someone she would throw him back into the sea. If she were feeling goodnatured she would change him to gull or fish first. Indeed, the trees of the grove were filled with nesting sea birds—gull and heron and osprey and sand owls—who called to her at night, reproaching her.

"What is the clamor of birds?" said Ulysses.

"Just birds."

"Why do they shriek so?"

"They are angry at me for loving you. They were men once, like yourself."

"How did they get to be birds?"

"Oh, well, it's no very difficult transformation, when you know how. I thought they would be much happier so."

"They don't sound very happy."

"They have jealous natures."

"You are not unlike Circe in some ways,"

"Yes," said the crow.

"Were you once a man?"

"Once...once...at the time of your grandfather, Sisiphus. I was a clever man and spy. That's why Calypso changed me into a crow when she grew weary of me, for of all creatures we are the best for spying and prying and tattling."

"Then you're the bird for me," cried Ulysses. "Listen, I wish you to fly to Ithaca. Go to my castle and see what is happening. Then come back and tell me."

game and fishing the sea, and reveling with the beautiful Calypso. He was happy. Thoughts of home grew dim. The nymph taught him how to poke the magic log upon her hearth so that it would cast up fire pictures. And he sat by the hour on the great hearth, reading the flickering tapestry of days gone by and days to come. But she had instructed the log never to show him scenes of Ithaca, for she wished him not to be reminded of his home in any way, lest he be tempted to depart. But Ulysses was as crafty as she was, and after he had poked the log many times, asking it to show him what was happening on his island, and the log had cast up pictures of other times, other places, he realized that Calypso had laid a magic veto upon the scenes of home. And this, instead of making him forget, made him more eager than ever to know what was happening to Telemachus and Penelope.

One day he went into the wood, snared a sea crow, and asked, "Can you speak?"

never finished. But the suitors grow impatient. They are demanding that she finish her weaving and choose a groom.

Your son opposes them. And they threaten to kill him unless he steps aside."

"Thank you, crow," said Ulysses.

"What will you do now—try to escape?"

"Escape? I do not consider myself a captive, good bird. I shall simply inform Calypso that I intend to leave, and ask her to furnish transportation."

"You make it sound easy," said the

"Why should I? What will you give me?"

"Your life."

"My life? I already have that."

"But not for long. Because if you refuse to do as I ask, I shall wring your neck."

"Hmmm," said the crow. "There is merit in your argument. Very well. I shall be your spy. Only don't let Calypso know. She catch me and feed me to the cat before I can report to you. I have a notion she'd like you to forget Ithaca."

"Fly away, little bird," said Ulysses, "and do what you have to do. I'll take care of things here."

The next day, at dusk, as he was returning from the hunt, he heard the crow calling from the depth of an oak tree.

"Greeting," said Ulysses. "Have you done what I asked?"

"I have flown to Ithaca," said the crow. A rough journey by sea, but not really so bad as the crow flies. I flew to your castle, and perched in an embrasure, and watched and watched. Briefly, your son is grieving, your wife is weaving, and your guests are *not* leaving."

"What does my wife weave?"

"Your shroud."

"She is faithful. But the suitors, who are brawling, ill-mannered young men, are pressing her to choose one of them for a husband. However, she refuses to choose until she finishes the shroud. And it has been three years aweaving, for each night she rips out the work she has

crow. "Good luck."

Ulysses went to Calypso in her grotto, and fell upon his knees before her, and said, "Fair and gracious friend, you have made me happier than any man has a right to be, especially an unlucky one. But now I must ask you one last great favor."

Calypso frowned. "I don't like the sound of that," she said. "What do you mean 'last'? Why should I not go on doing you favors?"

"I must go home."

"This is your home."

"No. My home is Ithaca. Penelope is my wife. Telemachus is my son. I have enemies. They live in my castle and steal my goods. They wish to kill my son and take my wife. I am a king. I cannot tolerate insults. I must go home."

"Suppose you do go home, what then?"

"I will contend with my enemies. I will kill them or they will kill me."

"You kill them, say—then what?"

"Then I live. I rule. I don't know. I cannot read the future."

"I can. Look."

She poked the magic log. Fire pictures flared. Ulysses saw himself sitting on his throne. He was an old man. Penelope was there. She was old woman. "You will grow old...old..." Calypso's voice murmured in his ear, unraveling its rough purring way like raw silk. "Old...old...You will live on memories. You will eat your heart out recalling old glories, old battles, old loves. Look...look into the fire."

done by day, so the shroud is

"Is that me?"

"That's you, humping along in your old age among your hills, grown dry and cruel."

She tapped the log and the fire died.

"Do you still want to go back to Ithaca?" she said.

"Will my future be different if I stay here?"

"Certainly. If you stay with me, it will be entirely different. You will no longer be a mortal man. I will make you my eternal consort, make you immortal. You will not die or grow old. This will be your home, not only this island, but wherever the Titans rule."

"Never die, never grow old. It seems impossible."

"You are a man to whom impossible things happen," said Calypso. "Haven't you learned that by now?"

"'Never'..." said Ulysses.

"'Always'....These are words I find hard to accept."

"Do not think you will be bored. I am expert at variety. I deal in transformations, you know."

"You are eloquent," said Ulysses.

"And you need no eloquence, for your beauty speaks more than any words. Still, I cannot be immortal, never to die, never to grow old. What use is courage then?"

Calypso smiled at him. "Enough discussion for one night. You have time to decide. Take five or ten years. We are in no hurry, you and I."

to island, battered by storms, swallowed by tides. My ships have been wrecked, my men killed. But you have granted me life. Now, I pray you, take back the gift. Let me join my men in Tartarus. For if I cannot return home, if I have to be kept here as a prisoner of Calypso while my kingdom is looted, my son slain, and my wife stolen, then I do not wish to live. Allow me to go home, or strike me dead on the spot."

His prayer was carried to Olympus. Athene heard it. She went to Zeus, and asked him to call the gods into council. They met in the huge throne-room. As it happened, Poseidon was absent. He had ridden a tidal wave into Africa, where he had never been, and was visiting the Ethiopians.

Athene said, "O father Zeus. O brother gods, I wish to speak in behalf of Ulysses, who of all the mighty warriors we sent to Troy shows the most respect for our power, and the most belief in our justice. Ten years after leaving the bloody beaches of Troy he has still not reached home. He is penned now on an island by Calypso, daughter of Atlas, who uses all her Titanic enticements to keep him prisoner. This man's plight challenges our Justice. Let us help him now."

Zeus said, "I do not care to be called unjust. I am forgetful sometimes, perhaps, but then I have much to think of, many affairs to manage. And remember, please, my daughter, that this man has been traveling the sea, which belongs to

"Five or ten years may seem little to an immortal," said Ulysses. "But I am still a man. It is a long time for me."

"That's just what I said," said Calypso. "It is better to be immortal. But, think it over."

Then next morning, instead of hunting, Ulysses went to the other side of the island and built an altar of rocks and sacrificed to the gods. He poured a libation of unwatered wine, and raised his voice:

"O, great gods upon Olympus—thunder-weilding Zeus and wise Athene, earthshaking Poseidon, whom I have offended, golden Apollo—hear my prayer. For ten years I fought in Troy, and for ten more years have wandered the sea, been hounded from island

"Very well," said Zeus. "It shall be as you advise."

Thereupon he dispatched Hermes, the messenger god, to Ogygia. Hermes found Calypso on the beach singing a wild sea song, imitating now the voice of the wind, now the lisping scraping sound of waves on a shallow shore, weaving in the cry of heron and gull and osprey, tide suck and drowned moons. Now Hermes had invented pipe and lyre, and loved music. When he heard Calypso singing her wild sea song, he stood upon the bright air, ankle wings whirring, entranced. He hovered there, listening to her sing. Dolphins were drawn by her voice. They stood in the surf and danced on their tails.

She finished her song. Hermes landed

my brother, Poseidon, whom he has offended. Poseidon holds a heavy grudge, as you know; he does not forgive injuries. Ulysses would have been home years ago if he had not chosen to blind Polyphemus, who happens to be Poseidon's son."

"He has paid for that eye over and over again," cried Athene. "Many times its worth, I vow. And the earth-shaker is not here, as it happens. He is off shaking the earth of Africa, which has been too dry and peaceable for his tastes. Let us take advantage of his absence, and allow Ulysses to resume his voyage."

"Fate...destiny...what are they but fancy words for the brutal decrees of Zeus. He is jealous, and that is the whole truth of it. He wants us all for himself. Don't deny it.

When Eos, Goddess of Dawn, chose Orion for her lover, Zeus had his daughter, Artemis, slay him with her arrows. When Demeter, harvest wife, met Jasion in the ploughed fields, Zeus himself flung his bolt crippling him. It is always the same. He allowed Ulysses to be shipwrecked time and again. When I found him he was riding the timbers of his lost ship and was about to drown. So I took him here with me, and cherished him, and offered to make him immortal. And now Zeus suddenly remembers, after twenty years, that he must go home immediately, because it is ordained."

"You can't fight Zeus," said Hermes gently. "Why try?"

"What do you want me to do?"

lightly beside her.

"A beautiful song," he said.

"A sad song."

"All beautiful songs are sad."

"Yes...."

"Why is that?"

"They are love songs. Women love men, and they go away. This is very sad."

"You know why I have come then?"

"Of course. What else would bring you here? The Olympians have looked down and seen me happy for a little while, and they have decreed that this must not be. They have sent you to take my love away."

"I am sorry, cousin. But it is fated that he find his way home."

"Permit Ulysses to make himself a raft. See that he has provisions. Then let him depart."

"So be it."

"Do not despair, sweet cousin. You are too beautiful for sorrow. There will be other storms, other shipwrecks, other sailors."

"Never another like him."

"Who knows?"

He kissed her on the cheek, and flew away. xx

English Borrowings from Greek

What is your <i>Achilles' heel</i> ? When Achilles was a baby, the story goes, his mother	Mount Olympus is an actual mountain in Greece, thought by the ancients to be the	Every time Tantalus wanted to eat or drink, however, the fruit and the water would
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<p>dipped him in the River Styx to make him safe from all mortal wounds. However, the heel she held him by was not touched by the magic waters, and so remained his one vulnerable spot. He was killed at Troy by being struck in that heel. And to this day, the band of tissue in your heel is known as your <i>Achilles' tendon</i>.</p> <p>The term <i>Trojan Horse</i> still means something that betrays and destroys from within; if you're caught <i>between Scylla and Charybdis</i>, you still face two possible dangers.</p> <p>Ulysses' adventures were first written down almost twenty-eight centuries ago, but the tales were being told or sung for unknown years before. In one form or another, they have excited listeners and readers for thousands of years.</p> <p>Poetry, drama, stories, and films have been based on these tales. Paintings and sculpture have interpreted them. Modern artists continue to use these familiar scenes and characters.</p> <p>Ancient Greece has influenced our culture greatly. About ten percent of our English words are borrowed from Greek or use Greek roots and affixes. But there are many more direct borrowings, such as saying "That's fate," when a</p>	<p>home of the gods. Nearby, contests in athletics, poetry, and music were held every four years in honor of Zeus. These Olympic Games were revived in modern times, with athletes from all over the world participating. The word <i>Olympian</i> means "majestic; like a god."</p> <p>Hypnos was the Greek god of sleep, so it is not surprising that <i>hypnotism</i> was named after him. Throughout history, it has been a great problem of medicine to get a patient to relax or sleep so that treatment could be administered. Then in 1805 a narcotic drug was found that was a powerful painkiller and anesthetic. And since Morpheus was the god of dreams, <i>morphine</i> was named after him.</p> <p>Atlas was one of the Titans—giants who ruled the earth before the gods of Olympus. (<i>Titanic</i> still means "gigantic; having great strength or power.") For his part in the War of the Gods, he was punished by having to support the heavens on his shoulders. A picture of Atlas was used in the 16th century for the cover of a collection of maps; such a book is still called an <i>atlas</i> today.</p> <p>King Tantalus, as punishment for revealing some of Zeus's secrets, was made to stand in the</p>	<p>recede. To <i>tantalize</i> means to torment a person with things that can't be obtained.</p> <p>Some names are still used in their original forms. Any handsome young man may be called an <i>Apollo</i>; any beautiful young woman, and <i>Aphrodite</i>; and any region of simple, quiet contentment, <i>Arcadia</i>. But some names are used in more general ways: <i>Spartan</i> means disciplined and brave, like the inhabitants of ancient Sparta; to <i>hector</i> is to bully someone, as Hector treated Achilles in the Trojan War; <i>herculean</i> describes the kind of strength and courage that Heracles had.</p> <p><i>Nymph</i> is sometimes applied to any graceful young woman, but it is used as well for certain insects in their stage of development between egg and adult form. And <i>siren</i>, besides meaning an attractive but dangerous woman, also means a loud, piercing whistle (usually a warning, unlike the Sirens' singing). No one is sure, however, how <i>Calypso</i> came to mean an improvised jazz song from the British West Indies.</p>
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situation cannot be helped.
Here are some others:

underworld in water up to his
chin, under branches laden
with fruit.

Ino's Veil

In her generous way, Calypso went beyond what the gods had ordered, and provided Ulysses not with a raft, but with a beautiful tight little vessel, sturdy enough for a long voyage, and small enough for one man to sail.

But he would have done just as well with a raft, for his bad luck held. He was seventeen days out of Ogygia, scudding along happily, when Poseidon, on his way back from Africa, happened to notice the little ship.

The sea god scowled, and said, "Can that be Ulysses? I thought I had drowned him long ago. One of my meddlesome relatives up there must be shielding him, and I have a good notion who. Well, I'll give my owlish niece a little work to do."

His scowl deepened, darkening the sun. He shook a storm out of his beard. The winds leaped, the water boiled. Ulysses felt the tiller being torn out of his hand. The boat spun like a chip. The sail ripped, the mast cracked, and Ulysses realized that his old enemy had found him again.

He clung to the splintered mast. Great waves broke over his head, and he swallowed the bitter water. He came up, gasping. The deck broke beneath him.

"Why am I fighting?" he thought.

"Why don't I let myself drown?"

But he kept himself fighting by instinct.

coughing. Then he saw that he was sharing his plank with a green-haired woman wearing a green veil.

"Welcome, beautiful Nereid," he said. "Are you she who serves Poseidon, ushering drowned men to those caverns beneath the sea where the white bones roll?"

"No, unhappy man," she said. "I am Ino...and I am no servant of the windy widowmaker. I would like to do him an injury by helping you. Take this veil. It cannot sink even in the stormiest sea. Strip you garments, wrap yourself in the veil, and swim toward those mountains. If you are bold, and understand that you cannot drown, then you will be able to swim to the coast where you will be safe. After you land, fling the veil back into the sea, and it will find its way to me."

She unwound the green veil from her body, and gave it to him. Then she dived into the sea.

"Can I believe her?" thought Ulysses. "Perhaps it's just a trick to make me leave the pitiful safety of this timber. Oh, well, if I must drown, let me do it boldly."

He pulled off his wet clothes and wrapped himself in the green veil and plunged into the sea.

It was very strange. When he had been on the raft, the water had seemed death-cold, heavy as iron, but now it seemed warm as a bath, and marvelously buoyant. He had been unable to knot the veil, but it clung closely to his body.

<p>He pulled himself up onto a broken plank and clung there. Each boiling whitecap created over him, and he was breathing more water than air. His arms grew too weak to hold the plank, and he knew that the next wave must surely take him under.</p> <p>However, there was a Nereid near, name Ino, who hated Poseidon for an injury he had done her long before, and now she resolved to balk his vengeance. She swam to Ulysses' timber, and climbed on.</p> <p>He was snorting and gasping and</p>	<p>When he began to swim, he found himself slipping through the water like a fish.</p> <p>"Forgive my suspicions, fair Ino," he cried. "Thank you...thank you...."</p> <p>For two days he swam, protected by Ino's veil, and on the morning of the third day he reached the coast of Phaeacia. But he could not find a place to come ashore, for it was a rocky coast, and the water swirled savagely among jagged boulders. So he was in great trouble again. While the veil could keep him from drowning, it could not prevent him from</p>
<p>being broken against the rocks.</p> <p>The current caught him and swept him in. With a mighty effort he grasped the first rock with both hands and clung there, groaning, as the rushing water tried to sweep him on. But he clung to the rock like a sea polyp, and the wave passed. Then the powerful backtow caught him and pulled him off the rock and out to sea. He had gained nothing. His arms and chest were bleeding where great patches of skin had been scraped off against the rock.</p> <p>He realized that the only thing he could do was try to swim along the coast until he found an open beach. So he swam and swam. The veil held him up, but he was dizzy from loss of blood. Nor had he eaten for two days. Finally, to his great joy, he saw a break in the reef. He swam toward it, and saw that it was the mouth of a river. Exerting his last strength, he swam into the river, struggled against the current, swimming past the</p>	<h2>Nausicaa</h2> <p>In those days, girls did not find their own husbands, especially princesses. Their marriages were arranged by their parents, and it all seemed to work out as well as any other way. But Nausicaa, sixteen-year-old daughter of the King and Queen of Phaeacia, was hard to please, and had been turning down suitors for two years now. Her father, Alcinous, and her mother, Arete, were becoming impatient. There were several hot-tempered kings and princes who had made offers—for Nausicaa was very lovely—and Alcinous knew that if he kept turning them down he might find himself fighting several wars at once. He was a fine warrior, and enjoyed leading his great fleet into battle. Still, he preferred his wars one at a time.</p> <p>He told the queen that Nausicaa would have to be forced to choose.</p>

<p>shore where the river flowed among trees. Then he had no more strength. He was exhausted.</p> <p>He staggered ashore, unwrapped the veil from his body, and cast it upon the river so that it would be borne back to Ino. When he tried to enter the wood, he could not take another step. He collapsed among the reeds. xx</p>	<p>"I was very difficult to please, too," said Arete, "but I think you'll admit I married well. Perhaps she too knows in her heart that if she bides her time the gods will send a mighty man to be her husband."</p> <p>The king smiled. Arete always knew the right thing to say to him. So the discussion ended for that day. Nevertheless, the queen knew that her husband was right, and that the girl would have to choose.</p> <p>That night Nausicaa was visited by a dream. It seemed to her that the goddess Athene stood over her bed, tall and gray-eyed, and spoke to her, saying, "How can you have wedding when all you clothes are dirty? Take them to the river tomorrow and wash them."</p> <p>The goddess faded slowly until all that was left was the picture on her shield—a snake-haired girl. And it seemed that the snakes writhed and hissed and tried to crawl off the shield to get at the dreamer. Nausicaa awoke, moaning. But she was a brave girl, and went right back to sleep and tried to</p>
<p>dream the same dream again, so that she could learn more about the wedding. But the goddess did not return.</p> <p>The next morning she went to her mother and told her of the dream.</p> <p>"I don't understand it," she said. "What wedding?"</p> <p>"Yours, perhaps," said Arete.</p> <p>"Mine? With whom?"</p> <p>"The gods speak in riddles. You know that. Especially when they visit us in dreams. So you must do the one clear</p>	<p>all day and night. It was impossible to sit still. She seized a leather ball from the cart, and flung it to one of her maids, who caught it and threw it back. Then the others joined in, and the girls frisked on the riverbank, tossing the ball back and forth.</p> <p>Ulysses awoke from a deep sleep. He was still dazed, and could barely remember how he had gotten among the reeds. He peered out, saw the girls playing, and then shrank back, for he did</p>

<p>thing she told you. Take your serving girls to the river, and wash your clothes. Perhaps, if you do that, the meaning will show itself."</p> <p>Thereupon Nausicaa told her serving girls to gather all the laundry in the castle, and pile it in the mule caret. She also took food, a goatskin bottle of wine, and a golden flask of oil so that they could bathe in the river. Then they set off in the red cart, and the harness bells jingled as the mules trotted down the steep streets toward the river.</p> <p>It was a sparkling morning. Nausicaa felt very happy as she drove the mules. They drove past the city walls, and down the hill, and along a road that ran through a wood until they came to the river.</p> <p>They dumped the clothes in the water, and stamped on them, dancing and trampling and treading them clean. Then they dragged the clothes out, and pounded them on flat stones, afterward spreading them to dry in the hot sun.</p> <p>They then flung off their garments and swam in the river, scrubbing each other and anointing themselves with oil.</p> <p>"Well, you look clean enough to get married," cried Nausicaa. "But it's easier to wash than to wed, isn't it, girls?"</p> <p>The maidens giggled wildly, and Nausicaa shouted with laughter. She was so drunk with sun and water that she felt she could run up the mountain and dance</p>	<p>not wish to be seen as he was, naked and bruised.</p> <p>But Nausicaa threw the ball so hard that it sailed over the heads of the girls and fell near the clump of reeds where Ulysses was hiding. A girl ran to pick it up, then shrank back, screaming.</p> <p>"A man!" she cried. "A man—all bloody and muddy."</p> <p>Ulysses reached out and plucked a spray of leaves from a fallen olive branch, and came out of the reeds.</p> <p>The girls saw a naked man holding a club. His shoulders were bleeding, his legs muddy, and his hair crusted with salt. They fled, screaming. But Nausicaa stood where she was, and waited for him.</p> <p>Is this why Athene sent me here? She thought. Is this my husband, come out of the river? Is this what I am to take after all the beautiful young men I have refused? "Come back, you silly geese," she shouted to the girls. "Haven't you ever seen a man before?"</p> <p>Then she turned to Ulysses, who had fallen to his knees before her.</p> <p>"Speak, grimy stranger," she said. "Who are you, and what do you want?"</p> <p>"Do not set your dogs upon me," said Ulysses. "I did not mean to surprise you in your glade."</p> <p>"What talk is this? Are you out of your head?"</p> <p>"Forgive me, but I know the fate of Actaeon, who came upon you in the woods. You turned him into a stag, and</p>
<p>had your hounds tear him to pieces."</p> <p>"Whom do you take me for?"</p> <p>"Why you are Artemis, of course.</p>	<p>improved. I can believe you're some kind of chieftain now. Are you married?"</p> <p>"Yes."</p>

Goddess of the Chase, maiden of the silver bow. I have heard poets praise your beauty, and know you by your white arms. By your hair and eyes, and the way you run—like light over water."

"Sorry to disappoint you, but I am not Artemis. I am Nausicaa. My father is king of this island. And I ask again—who are you?"

"An unlucky man."

"Where do you come from?"

"Strange places, princess. I am a sailor hunted by a god who sends storms against me, wrecks my ships, kills my men. I come now from Ogygiz, where I have been held captive by the Titaness, Calypso, who bound me with her spells. But as I was sailing away, a storm leaped out of the blue sky, smashing my boat. And I have been swimming in the sea for more than two days. I was dashed against the rocks of your coast, but managed to swim around it till I found this river. When I came ashore here, I had no strength to go farther, and fell where you found me."

"I suppose no one would look his best after spending two days in the sea and being beaten against rocks. You tell a good story, I'll say that for you. Why don't you bathe in the river now, and try to make yourself look human again. We can give you oil for anointment and clean garments belonging to my father. Then you can follow me to the castle and tell your story there."

"Thank you, sweet princess," said Ulysses.

He took the flask of oil, and went into

"Of course. You would have to be, at your age."

"I have not seen my wife for twenty years. She considers herself a widow."

"Has she remarried?"

"Perhaps. I do not know. Last I heard, she was being besieged by suitors."

"I am besieged by suitors too, but haven't found any I like well enough to marry."

As they spoke at the bank of the river, the serving girls had been piling the laundry in the mule cart.

"But I am thoughtless, keeping you here," said Nausicaa. "You need food and drink. You must come to the castle and finish your story there."

"The sight of your beauty is food and drink to me. And the sound of your voice makes me forget my weariness."

She laughed. "Are you courting me, stranger?"

"I am a homeless wanderer. I cannot court a princess. But I can praise her beauty."

"Come along to the castle. I want to introduce you to my father and mother. They are kind to strangers, very partial to brave men, and love to hear stories. And I want to hear more about you too."

Now, that day, as it happened, King Alcinous had consulted an oracle, who prophesied, saying, "I see danger. I see a mountain blocking your harbor, destroying your commerce. I sense the cold wrath of the god of the sea."

"But the earth-shaker has always favored us," said the king. "He has

the river and bathed and anointed himself. When he came out, he found clean garments waiting. The serving girls helped him dress, and combed out his tangled hair.

"Well," said Nausicaa, "you look much

Believe no tale, make no loan, suffer no harm."

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I. But there is no need to understand, only to obey."

The oracle departed, leaving the king very thoughtful.

Just at this time, Nausicaa was leading Ulysses into the courtyard of the castle. She bade her maids take him to the guest house.

"Wait till I send for you," she said. "Food will be brought, and wine."

She raced to her mother's chamber.

"Oh, Mother, Mother," she cried.

"I'm so glad I obeyed the dream and went to the river to wash our clothes. What do you think I found there? A man, hiding in the reeds, naked and wounded. I soon set him right and brought him here. Such an interesting man."

"Brought him here? Here to the castle? Paraded a naked beggar through the streets for the whole town to see? My dear child, haven't you given them enough to gossip about?"

"He's no beggar, Mother. He's a sailor or a pirate or something. Such stories he tells. Listen, he landed on an island once where men eat flowers that make them fall asleep and forget who they are. So they sleep all day and pick

showered blessings upon this island. Our fleets roam far, return laden. Why should he be angered now?"

"I do not know. It is not clear, it is not clear. But I say to you, O King, beware of strangers, shipwrecks, storytellers. with his wife. You can see he has suffered. You can see by his eyes."

"Where is he now?"

"In the guest house. Don't you think we should have a banquet for him tonight? He's a distinguished visitor, isn't he—all those things he did?"

"We don't quite know what he is, do we, dear? I think I had better meet him myself first. Your father's in a funny mood. Met with the oracle today, and something went wrong, I think."

"Yes, yes, I want you to meet him before Father does. I want to know what you think. Shall I fetch him?"

"I'll send a servant, child. You are not to see him again until I find out more about him. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, find out, find out! Tell me everything he says."

Queen Arete spoke with Ulysses, and then went to her husband, the king, and told him of their visitor. She was amazed to see his face grow black with rage.

"By the gods," he cried. "These are foul tidings you bring. Only today the oracle warned against strangers, shipwrecks, and storytellers. And now you tell me our daughter has picked up some nameless ruffian who combines all three—a shipwrecked stranger telling wild tales. Precisely what is needed to draw upon us the wrath of the sea god. I shall

flowers all night, and are very happy. This man's crew went ashore and ate the flowers, and forgot who they were and didn't want to go back to the ship, just sleep. But he dragged them back anyway. I'd like to try those flowers, wouldn't you?"

"Who is this man? What's his name?"

"I don't know. He didn't tell me. It's a secret or something."

"Do you believe everything he tells you?"

Oh, yes. He's not exactly handsome, but very strong-looking, you know. Too old though, much too old. And married, of course. But I don't think he gets along at reading the king's moods knew that he was displeased, and decided to advance themselves in his favor by killing the stranger, and making it seem like an accident.

"We will have games in the courtyard," said Euryalus, their leader. "We will hurl discus and javelin, shoot with the bow, wrestle, and challenge him to take part. And when he does, it may be that some unlucky throw of javelin, or misshot arrow, will rid us of his company. Or, perchance, if he wrestles, he will find his neck being broken. It looks to be a thick neck, but he has been long at sea and is unused to such exercises.

So the young men began to hold the contests in the courtyard. When Ulysses stopped to watch them, Euryalus stepped forth, and said, "There is good sport here stranger, if you care to play."

"No, thank you," said Ulysses. "I'll just watch."

sacrifice him to Poseidon, and there will be an end to it."

"You may not do that," said Arete.

"Who says 'may not' to me? I am king".

"Exactly why you may not. Because you are king. The man comes to you as a suppliant. He is under your protection. If you harm him, you will bring down upon yourself the wrath of all gods—not just one. That is the law of hospitality."

So the king ordered a great banquet that night to honor his guest. But certain young men of the court who were skilled far past where the discus had landed, and thudded against the inner wall of the courtyard, knocking a hole in it. He turned to the others, who were paralyzed with amazement.

"Poor throw," he said. "But then, as you say, I'm rather old for such sport. However, since we are gathered here in this friendly fashion, let us play more games. If any of you would like to try me with sword or spear or dagger, or even a simple cudgel, let him step forth. Or, perchance, there is one who would prefer to wrestle?"

"That was well-thrown, stranger," said Euryalus. "What is your name?"

"I do not choose to tell you my name, O athlete."

"You are not courteous."

"If you care to teach me manners, young sir, I offer again. Sword, spear, cudgel—any weapon you choose. Or no weapon at all except our hands."

"We are civilized here in Pahaecia," said Euryalus. "We do not fight with our

<p>"Yes, of course," said Euryalus. "The games are somewhat dangerous. And one can see that you are a man of prudence. But then, of course, you are rather old for such sports, aren't you?"</p> <p>He laughed sneeringly, picked up the heavy discus, whirled, and threw. It sailed through the air and landed with a clatter far away. All the young men laughed and cheered.</p> <p>"Where I come from," said Ulysses, "such little discs are given babies to teethe on. The grown men need a bit more to test them."</p> <p>He strode over to a battle chariot, and broke off one of its wheels at the axle. It was a very heavy wheel, of oak bound with brass.</p> <p>He hefted it, and said, "A little light, but it will do."</p> <p>For he was filled with the wild rage that makes a man ten times stronger than he really is. He cradled the great wheel, whirled, and threw. It flew through the air,</p>	<p>guests. But I cannot understand why you refuse to tell us your name."</p> <p>"A god hunts me. If I say my name, it may attract his notice."</p> <p>The young men nodded. For this is what was believed at that time. But Euryalus ran to tell the king.</p> <p>"I knew it," said Alcinous. "He carries a curse. He is the very man the oracle warned me against. I must get rid of him. But the law of hospitality forbids me to kill him under my roof. So tonight we entertain him at a banquet. But tomorrow he leaves this castle, and we shall find a way to see that he does not return."</p> <p>"He is no weakling, this old sailor," said Euryalus. "He throws the discus almost as well as I."</p> <p>Now all this time, Nausicaa had been thinking about the stranger, and weaving a plan, for she was determined to find out who he was. She visited the old bard who had taught her to play the lyre, and whose</p>
<p>task it was to sing for the guests at the royal feasts. She spoke and laughed with the old man and fed him undiluted wine until he lost his wits. Then she locked him in the stable, where he fell fast asleep on a bundle of straw, and she departed with his lyre.</p> <p>At the banquet that night, when the king called for the bard to sing his tales, Nausicaa said, "The old man is ill and cannot come. However, if you permit, I shall sing for your guests."</p> <p>The king frowned. But Ulysses said, "This illness is a blessing, King. I think I</p>	<p>night, they came out of the house, and how Ulysses led the charge. She sang of him fighting there by the light of the burning houses, knee-deep in blood, and how he was invincible that night and carried everything before him.</p> <p>And as she sang, she kept watching the stranger's face. She saw tears steal from between his clenched eyelids and roll down his cheeks. Amazed, the banqueters saw this hard-bitten sailor put his head in his hands and sob like a child.</p> <p>He raised his streaming face, and said, "Forgive me, gracious king. But the</p>

should rather hear your black-haired daughter sing than the best bard who ever plucked a lyre,"

The king nodded. Nausicaa smiled, and began to sing. She sang a tale of heroes. Of those who fought at Troy. She sang of fierce Achilles and mighty Ajax. Of Menelaus and his shattering war-cry. Of brave Diomedes, who fought with Ares himself when the war god came in his brazen chariot to help the Trojans.

She watched Ulysses narrowly as she sang. She saw his face soften, and his eye grow dreamy, and she knew that he had been there, and that she was singing of his companions. But she still did not know his name.

Then she began to sing of the master of strategy, the great trickster, Ulysses. She sang of the wooden horse, and how the warriors hid inside while the Trojans debated outside, deciding what to do. Some of them wanted to chop it to pieces; others wished to take it to a cliff and push it off; still others wanted to bring it within the city as an offering to the gods—which, of course, was what Ulysses wanted them to do. She told of the men hiding in the belly of the horse listening to their fate being debated, and the fierce joy that flamed in their hearts when they heard the Trojans decide to drag the horse within the walls. And of how in the blackness of the my wife waits, my enemies wait, my destiny waits."

Arete whispered to the king:

"Yes...yes...give him his ship tomorrow. I wish it could be tonight. See

wonderful voice of your daughter has touched my heart. For you must know that I am none other than Ulysses, of whom she sings."

A great uproar broke out. The young men cheered. The women wept. The king said, "My court is honored, Ulysses. Your deeds are known wherever men love courage. Now that I know who you are, I put all my power and goods at your disposal. Name any favor you wish, and it shall be yours."

Ulysses said, "O King, if I were the age I was twenty years ago when the ships were launched at Aulis, then the favor I would ask is your daughter's hand. For surely I have traveled the whole world over without seeing her like. I knew Helen whose beauty kindled me to that terrible war. I knew the beauties of the Trojan court whom we took captive and shared among us. And, during my wanderings I have had close acquaintance with certain enchantresses whose charms are more than human, namely Circe and Calypso. Yet never have I seen a girl so lovely, so witty, so courteous and kind as your young daughter. Alas, it cannot be. I am too old. I have a wife I must return to, and a kingdom, and there are sore trials I must undergo before I can win again what belongs to me. So all I ask of you, great king, is a ship to take me to Ithaca, where

how your daughter looks at him; she is smitten to the heart. She is sick with love. Let him sail tomorrow. And be sure to keep watch at the wharf lest she stow away."

"It shall be as you say, mighty Ulysses," said the king. "Your ship will sail tomorrow."

So Ulysses departed the next day on a splendid ship manned by a picked crew, laden with rich goods the kings had given him as hero gifts.

It is said that Athene drugged Poseidon's cup at the feast of the gods that night, so that he slept a heavy sleep and did not see that Ulysses was being borne to Ithaca. But Poseidon awoke in time to see the ship sailing back, and understood what had happened. In a rage he snatched Athene's Gorgonhead shield, the sight of which turns men to stone, and flashed it before the ship just as it was coming into port after having left Ulysses at his island. The ship and all its crew turned to stone, blocking the harbor, as the oracle had foretold.

It is said too that Nausicaa never accepted any of the young men who came awooing, announcing that she was wedded to song. She became the first woman bard, and traveled all the courts of the world singing her song of the heroes who fought at Troy, but especially of Ulysses and of his adventures among the terrible islands of the Middle Sea.

Some say that she finally came to the court of Ithaca to sing her song, and there she stayed. Others say that she fell in with a blind poet who took all her

<p>songs and wove them into one huge tapestry of song.</p> <p>But it all happened too long ago to know the truth of it. xx</p>	
<p>Every occupation that people have shared throughout history has developed its own vocabulary. Because of the variety of Ulysses' adventures, we find in the tale words from many different occupations—sailing, farming, fighting (warfare), and manufacturing. All of the words listed at the right are taken from the story, and each has its origins in one of the four occupations mentioned above. Head your paper with these four occupational categories. Look up each word in the dictionary; determine in which category it belongs, and write the</p>	<p>word under that column on your paper. Explain how you made your decisions.</p> <p>fortress armory guild launch dungeon smith sty moor keel besiege bales byre buoyant</p> <p>Then be prepared to answer in class the following questions and explain why you answered as you did.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would you be more likely to find bales or bullets in an armory? 2. If there was no breeze, would the skipper of a sailboat launch or moor his boat? 3. Would a ship more likely remain buoyant if it had a hole in its sail or in its keel? 4. Would an army be more likely to besiege a fortress or a byre? 5. Would a dungeon be a suitable place for a guild to hold a meeting? 6. Would a smith be of much use in a sty?

<h2 style="text-align: center;">The Return</h2> <p>Ulysses had landed on a lonely part of the shore. His enemies were in control of the island, and it was death to be seen.</p>	<p>His first care was to find a cave in the Cliffside, and there stow all his treasure. He moved swiftly now; he had planned his first moves on his homeward trip. It had helped him to keep his thoughts away from Nausicaa. He took off his rich cloak and helmet and breastplate, and</p>
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He stood on the empty beach and saw the Phaeacian ship depart. He was surrounded by wooden chests, leather bags, great bales—the treasure of gifts he had been given by Alcinous.

He looked about, at the beach and the cliff beyond, the wooded hills, the color of the sky. He was home after twenty years, but it did not seem like home. It seemed as strange and unfriendly as any of the perilous isles he had landed on during his long wanderings. And he knew that Ithaca would not be his again until he could know it as king, until he had slain his enemies and regained his throne. trampled earth. There were four lanky hounds who started from their sleep and barked as he came near.

A man came out of the hut, and silenced the dogs. Ulysses felt the tears well in his eyes. It was Eumaeus, but so old, so gray.

"What do you want?" said the swineherd.

"Food, good sir. Such scraps as you throw to the hogs. I am not proud, I am hungry."

"Are you a native of these parts?" said Eumaeus.

"No, I come from Crete."

"A long way for a beggar to come."

"I was not always a beggar. I was a sailor once...yes, and a captain of ships. I have seen better days."

"That's what all beggars say."

"Sometimes it's true. I once met a man from Ithaca, a mighty warrior, and the most generous man I have ever met.

hid them in the cave he had found, then laid his sword and spear beside them. He tore his tunic so that it hung in rags. He scooped up mud and smeared his face and arms and legs. Then he huddled his shoulders together and practiced a limping walk. Finally he was satisfied, and began to hump away along the cliff road, no longer a splendid warrior, but a feeble old beggar.

He made his way to the hut of his swineherd, Eumaeus, a man his own age who had served him all his life, and whom he trusted. Everything was the same here, he saw. The pigs were rooting in the
seen you before."

"No," said Ulysses. "You are mistaken. What shall I do now? Have I worn out my welcome, or may I sleep on your hearth tonight?"

"What will you do tomorrow?"

"Go to the castle and beg."

"You will not be welcome there."

"Why not? I will tell them how I met your king, and how kind he was to me. That should make them generous."

"It won't," said Eumaeus. "It will probably get you killed. Those who hold the castle now want to hear nothing about him—except sure news of his death."

"How is that?"

"They hate him, because they do him harm. There are more than a hundred of them—rude brawling young princes from neighboring islands and thievish young nobles of this island. They dwell in his castle as if they had taken it after a siege

He gave me a good opinion of Ithaca. It is a place, I know, where the hungry and helpless are not spurned."

"I suppose this man you met was named Ulysses."

"Why, yes. How did you guess?"

"Because I have heard that tale so many times. Do you think you're the first beggar to come slinking around, pretending to have news of our king? Everyone knows that he vanished on his journey home from Troy. Beggars swarm all over us trying to get some supper by telling lies."

"Then you will give me no food?"

"I didn't say that. Even liars have to eat. Ulysses never turned a beggar away, and neither will I."

The swineherd fed Ulysses, and then let him rest by the fire. Ulysses pretended to sleep, but watched his host through half-closed eyes, and saw that the man was staring at him. He stretched and yawned.

"Are you sure you're a stranger to this island?" said Eumaeus. "Seems to me I've

"They are like wild beasts. But you cannot keep a fool from his folly. Go, if you must. In the meantime, sleep."

Now upon this night Telemachus was at sea, sailing toward Ithaca. he had found no news of his father and was coming home with a very heavy heart. He would have been even more distressed had he known that a party of wicked suitors was lying in wait for him aboard a swift ship full of fighting men. The ship was hidden in a cove, and the

and seek to marry his wife, Penelope, refusing to leave until she accepts one of them. They drink his wine, devour his stores, roister all night, and sleep all day. Do you know how many hogs I have to bring them? Fifty a day. That is how gluttonous they are. My herds are shrinking fast, but they say they will kill me the first day I fail to bring them fifty hogs."

"I heard he had a grown son. Why does he not defend his father's goods?"

"He's helpless. There are too many of them."

"Is he at the castle now?"

"No one knows where he is. He slipped away one night. Just as well. They were planning to kill him. The rumor is that he took ship and crew and went to seek his father. I hope he stays away. They will surely kill him if he returns."

"I go there tomorrow," said Ulysses. "It sounds like splendid begging. Such fiery young men are frequently generous, especially with other people's goods."

"You don't know them," said Eumaeus. pleasure.

"It is my young master," cried Eumaeus, springing up. "Glory to the gods—he has come safely home."

Telemachus strode in. He was flushed from his walk. His face and arms were wet with the night fog, and his red-gold hair was webbed with tiny drops. To Ulysses he looked all aglitter, fledged by firelight, a golden lad. And Ulysses felt a shaft of wild joy pierce him like a spear,

suitors meant to pounce upon him as he put into port.

But Athene saw this and made a plan. She went to Poseidon, and said, "I know you are angry with me, Uncle, for helping Ulysses. But now I wish to make it up to you. See, down there is a ship from Ithaca." She pointed to the suitors' vessel. "No doubt it holds friends of Ulysses, sailing out to meet their king. Why not do them mischief?"

"Why not?" growled Poseidon.

"And he wound a thick black mist about the suitors' ship so that it was impossible for the helmsman to see.

"Nevertheless," he said to Athene. "I still owe Ulysses himself a great mischief. I have not forgotten. In the meantime, let his friends suffer a bit."

The suitors' ship lay helpless in the mist, and Telemachus sailing past them, ignorant of danger, put into port and disembarked.

Athene then changed herself into a young swineherd, and hailed Telemachus on the beach:

"Greetings, my lord. I am sent by your servant, Eumaeus, to beg you to come to his hut before you go to the castle. He was important news to tell."

The lad set off, and Telemachus followed him toward the swineherd's hut.

Ulysses, dozing by the fire, heard a wild clamor of hounds outside, then a ringing young voice calling to them. He listened while the snarls turned to yaps of

Nor could the honest old swine-herd say anything: his throat was choked with tears too. Ulysses went to Eumaeus and

and for the first time he realized that he had come home.

But Telemachus was displeased to see the old beggar by the fire, for he wished to speak to Eumaeus privately to ask him how matters stood at the castle and whether it was safe for him to return.

"I do not wish to be discourteous, old man," he said, "but would you mind very much sleeping in the pig byre? You can keep quite warm there, and there are secret matters I wish to discuss."

"Be not wroth, my lord, that I have given this man hospitality," said Eumaeus. "He claims to have met your father once. A pitiful beggar's tale, no doubt, but it earned him a meal and a bed."

"Met my father? Where? When? Speak!"

But at the word "father," Ulysses could not endure it any longer. The voice of the young man saying that word destroyed his strategies. The amazed Eumaeus saw the old beggar leap from his stool, lose his feebleness, grow wider, taller, and open his arms and draw the young man to him in a great bear hug.

"Dearest son," said the stranger, his voice broken with tears. "I am your father, Ulysses."

Telemachus thought he was being attacked, and tensed his muscles, ready to battle for his life. But when he heard these words and felt the old man's tears burning against his face, then his marrow melted, and he laid his head on his father's shoulder and wept. first."

Telemachus knelt in the firelight, and

embraced him, saying, "Faithful old friend, you have served me well. And if tomorrow brings victory, you will be well rewarded."

Then he turned to his son and said, "The goddess herself must have led you here tonight. Now I can complete my plan. Tomorrow we strike our enemies."

"Tomorrow? Two men against a hundred? These are heavy odds, even for Ulysses."

"Not two men—four. There is Eumaeus here, who wields a good cudgel. There is the neatherd whom we can count on. And, no doubt, at the castle itself we will find a few more faithful servants. But it is not a question of numbers. We shall have surprise on our side. They think I am dead, remember, and that you are helpless. Now, this is the plan. You must go there in the morning, Telemachus, pretending great woe. Tell them you have learned on your journey that I am indeed dead, and that now you must advise your mother to take one of them in marriage. This will keep them from attacking you—for a while anyway—and will give us the time we need. I shall come at dusk, just before the feasting begins."

"What of my mother? Shall I tell her that you are alive?"

"By no means."

"It is cruel not to."

"It will prove a kindness later. Bid her dress in her finest garments, and anoint herself, and be as pleasant as she can to the suitors, for this will help disarm them. Understand?"

said, "Sire, I shall do as you bid. I don't see how we can overcome a hundred strong men, but to die fighting at your side will be a greater glory than anything a long life can bestow. Thank you, Father, for giving me this chance to share your fortune."

"You are my true son," said Ulysses embracing the boy tenderly. "The words you have just spoken make up for the twenty years of you I have missed."

Eumaeus banked the fire, and they all lay down to sleep.

Ulysses came to the castle at dusk the next day and followed Eumaeus into the great banquet hall which was thronged with suitors. He humped along behind the swineherd, huddling his shoulders, and limping. The first thing he saw was a dog lying near a bench. By its curious golden brown color he recognized it as his own favorite hunting hound, Argo. It was twenty-one years old, incredibly old for a dog, and it was crippled and blind and full of fleas. But Telemachus had not allowed it to be killed because it had been his father's.

As Ulysses approached, the dog's raw stump of a tail began to thump joyously upon the floor. The tattered old ears raised. The hound staggered to his feet, let out one wild bark of welcome and leaped toward the beggar. Ulysses caught him in his arms. The dog licked his face, shivered, and died. Ulysses stood there holding the dead dog.

Then Antinous, one of the most arrogant of the suitors, who fancied himself a great jokester, strode up and

"I understand."

"Now mark this well. You will see me being insulted, humiliated, beaten perhaps. Do not lose your temper and be drawn into a quarrel before we are ready to fight. For I must provoke the suitors to test their mettle, and see where we should strike Crete, and—"

"Shut up!" said Antinous. "Don't tell me any sad stories. Now take that thing out and bury it."

"Yes, gracious sir. And I hope I have the honor of performing a like service for you one day."

"Oho," cried Antinous. "The churl has a tongue in his head. Well, well...."

He seized a footstool and smashed it over Ulysses' back. Telemachus sprang forward, blazing with anger, but Eumaeus caught his arm.

"No," he whispered. "Hold your peace."

Ulysses bowed to Antinous, and said, "Forgive me, master, I meant but a jest. I go to bury the dog."

As soon as he left the room, they forgot all about him. They were agog with excitement about the news told by Telemachus, that Ulysses' death had been confirmed, and that Penelope would now choose one of them to wed. They crowded about Telemachus, shouting questions.

He said, "Gently, friends, gently. My mother will announce her choice during the course of the night. But first she desires that you feast and make merry."

The young men raised a great shout

said, "What are you going to do with that dead dog, man, eat him? Things aren't that bad. We have a few scraps to spare, even for a scurvy old wretch like you."

Ulysses said, "Thank you, master. I am grateful for your courtesy. I come from

I'll do it. I, Iros"

He raised his huge meaty fist and slammed it down toward Ulysses' head. But Ulysses, without thinking, butted the man in the stomach, knocking him back against the wall.

"Look at that," cried Eurymachus. "The old souse has a head like a goat. For sham, Iros, you ought to be able to squash him with your thumb."

"Exactly what I intend to do," said Iros, advancing on Ulysses.

"A fight! A fight!" cried the suitors. "A beggar-bout. Good sport."

They crowded around the beggars, leaving just enough space for them to move.

Ulysses thought quickly. He could not risk revealing himself for what he was, yet he had to get rid of the fellow. So he shrank into his rags, as though fearful, allowing Iros to approach. Then, as the great hands were reaching for him and the suitors were cheering and jeering, he swung his right arm, trying to measure the force of the blow exactly. His fist landed on the smith's chin. The suitors heard a dry cracking sound, as when you snap a chicken bone between your fingers, and they knew that their man's jaw was broken. He fell to the floor, unconscious,

<p>of joy, and the feasting began. Ulysses returned and went the round of the suitors, begging scraps of food. Finally he squatted near Eurymachus, a fierce young fellow whom he recognized to be their leader. Eurymachus scowled at him, but said nothing.</p> <p>Into the banquet hall strode another beggar—a giant shaggy man. He was a former smith who had decided that it was easier to beg than to work at the forge. He was well liked by the suitors because he wheedled and flattered them, and ran their errands. He swaggered over to Ulysses and grasped him by the throat.</p> <p>“Get out of here, you miserable cur,” he said. “Any begging around here to do,</p>	<p>blood streaming from mouth and nose. Ulysses stooped and hoisted him over his shoulder and marched out of the banquet room, saying, “I’d better let him bleed outside. It will be less unpleasant for you gentlemen.”</p> <p>He draped the big man over a stile, and came back.</p> <p>“Well struck, old bones,” said Eurymachus. “You fight well for a beggar.”</p> <p>“A beggar?” said Ulysses. “What is a beggar, after all? One who asks for what he has not earned, who eats others’ food, uses their goods? Is this not true? If so, young sir, I think you could become a member of our guild tomorrow.”</p> <p>Eurymachus carefully wiped the knife</p>
<p>which he had been using to cut his meat, and held the point to Ulysses’ throat.</p> <p>“Your victory over that other piece of vermin seems to have given you big ideas,” he said. “Let me warn you, old fool, if you say one word more to me that I find unfitting, I will cut you up into little pieces and feed you to the dogs. Do you understand?”</p> <p>“I understand, master,” said Ulysses. “I meant but a jest.”</p> <p>“The next jest will be your last,” growled Eurymachus.</p> <p>Telemachus stepped between them and said, “Beggar, come with me to my mother. She has heard that you are quite a voyager, and would question you about the places you have seen.”</p> <p>“What?” cried Eurymachus. “Take this stinking bundle of rags to your mother? She will have to burn incense</p>	<p>beggar, you are a guest,” said Penelope. “So take your comfort, please. Be at ease here with me, and tell me your tidings. I understand you met my husband Ulysses once upon your voyages.”</p> <p>“Beautiful queen,” said Ulysses, “I knew him well. Better than I have admitted. I am a Cretan. I was a soldier. When the war with Troy started I went as part of a freebooting band to sell our swords to the highest bidder. We took service with your husband, Ulysses, and I fought under his banner for many years. Now his deeds before Troy have become famous in the time that has passed since the city was destroyed. Bards sing them from court to court all over the lands of the Middle Sea. Let me tell you a little story, though, that has never been told.</p> <p>“I lay with him in that famous wooden</p>

for hours to remove the stench."

"You forget yourself, sir," said Telemachus. "You have not yet been accepted by my mother. She is still free to choose her own company."

Eurymachus played with his knife, glaring at Telemachus. He was angry enough to kill, but he did not wish to lose his chance with Penelope by stabbing her son. So he stepped aside, and let Telemachus lead the old beggar out of the hall.

"You have done well," whispered Ulysses. "Another second and I would have been at the cur's throat, and we would have been fighting before we were ready. Besides, it is time I spoke to your mother. She enters our plans now."

When he was standing alone with Penelope, he sat with his face lowered. He did not wish to look at her. For her presence set up a great shuddering tenderness inside him, and he knew that he had to keep himself hard and cruel for the work that lay ahead.

"In this chamber, you are not a mighty deeds that are sung, I like this one best."

Her face was wet with tears. She took a bracelet from her wrist and threw it to him, saying, "Here is a gift. Small payment for such a tale."

"Thank you, Queen," said Ulysses. "My path crossed your husband's once again. My ship sailed past the Island of the Dawn. We had run out of water and were suffering from thirst, and there we saw a marvelous thing: a fountain of water springing out of the sea, pluming

horse, you know. We crouched in the belly of the horse which was dragged into Troy and set before the altar as an offering to the gods. The Trojans were crowding around, looking at this marvelous wooden beast, wondering at it, for such a thing had never been seen. But Queen Helen knew the truth somehow and, being a mischief-loving lady always, tapped on the belly of the horse, imitating the voices of the heroes' wives. She did it so cunningly that they could have sworn they heard their own wives calling to them, and were about to leap out of the horse too soon, which would have been death."

"Now, Helen saved your voice till last. And when she imitated it, I heard Ulysses groan, felt him tremble. He alone was clever enough to know it was a trick, but your voice, even mimicked, struck him to the heart. And he had to mask his distress, and use all his force and authority to keep the others quiet. A tiny incident, madam, but it showed me how much he loved you."

Penelope said, "Truly, this is a story never told. And yet I think that of all the

"Disguise your intention. Tell them you cannot decide among such handsome charming suitors. And so you will let their own skill decide. They are to hold an archery contest, using the great bow of Ulysses, and he who shoots best to the mark will win you as wife. They cannot refuse such a challenge, their pride will not permit them to. Now, good night, lady. Thank you for your sweet company. I shall see you, perchance,

and curling upon itself. We tasted it, and it was fresh, and we filled our water barrels. When I told about this in the next port, I learned how such a wonder had come to be. The enchantress, Circe, most beautiful of the daughters of the gods, had loved your husband and sought to keep him with her. But he told her that he must return to his wife, Penelope. After he left, she wept such tears of love as burned the salt out of the sea and turned it into a fountain of pure water.

Penelope took a necklace from her neck, and said, "I liked the first story better, but this is lovely, too."

Ulysses said, "Thank you, Queen. I have one thing more to tell. Your husband and I were talking one time around the watch fire on a night between battles, and he spoke, as soldiers speak, of home. He said that by the odds of war, he would probably leave you a widow. And, since you were beautiful, you would have many suitors, and would be hard put to decide. Then he said, 'I wish I could send her this advice: Let her take a man who can bend my bow. For that man alone will be strong enough to serve her as husband, and Ithaca as king.'"

"Did he say that—truly?"

"Truly."

"How can I ask them to try the bow? They will jeer at me. They may feel offended, and do terrible things." arranged his rags over it so that he looked as he had before. Then he went out into the courtyard.

when the bow is bent."

"Good night, old wanderer," said Penelope. "I shall never forget the comfort you have brought me."

As Ulysses was making his way through the dark hallway, something clutched his arm and hissed at him.

"Ulysses...Ulysses....My master, my king...my baby...my lord...."

He bent his head and saw that it was an old woman, and recognized his nurse, Eurycleia, who had known him from the day he was born, and who had tended him through his childhood.

"Dear little king," she wept. "You're back...you're back. I knew you would come. I told them you would."

Very gently he put his hand over her mouth, and whispered, "Silence....No one must know, not even the queen. They will kill me if they find out. Silence...silence...."

She nodded quickly, smiling with her sunken mouth, and shuffled away.

Ulysses lurked outside the banquet hall until he heard a great roar from the suitors, and knew that Penelope had come among them. He listened outside and heard her announce that she would choose the man, who, using her husband's great bow, would shoot the best to the mark. He heard the young men break into wild cheers. Then he hid himself as Telemachus, leading the suitors into the courtyard, began to set out torches for the shooting. Then it was that he slipped unnoticed into the castle and went to the armory where the weapons were kept. He put on a breastplate, and

All was ready for the contest. An avenue of torches burned, making it bright as day. In the path of light stood a row of battle-axes driven into the earth, their rings aligned. Each archer would attempt to shoot through those rings. Until now only Ulysses himself had been able to send an arrow through all twelve axe-rings.

Now, Penelope, followed by her servants, came down the stone steps carrying the great bow. She handed it to Telemachus, saying, "You, son will see that the rules are observed." Then, standing tall and beautiful in the torchlight, she said, "I have given my word to choose as husband him who best shoots to the mark, using this bow. I shall retire to my chamber now, as is fitting, and my son will bring me the name of my next husband. Now, may the gods reward you according to your desserts."

She turned and went back into the castle. The noise fell. The young men grew very serious as they examined the great bow. It was larger than any they had ever seen, made of dark polished wood, stiffened by rhinoceros horn, and bound at the tips by golden wire. Its arrows were held in a bull-hide quiver; their shafts were of polished ash, their heads of copper, and they were tailed with hawk feathers.

Ulysses squatted in the shadows and watched the suitors as they crowded around Telemachus, who was speaking.

"Who goes first? Will you try, sir?"

Telemachus handed the bow to a prince of Samos, a tall, brawny man, and

and grasped the other end and put forth all his strength. His back muscles glistened like oil in the torchlight. The bow bent a bit under the enormous pressure, and a low sighing sound came from the crowd, but when he tugged on the cord, the bow twisted in his hand as if it were a serpent, and leaped free. He staggered, and almost fell. An uneasy laugh arose. He looked wildly about, then stomped away, weeping with rage.

Telemachus picked up the bow, and said, "Next."

One by one they came; one by one they fell back. Not one of them could bend the bow. Finally, all had tried but Antinous and Eurymachus. Now Antinous was holding the bow.

He shook his head, and said, "It is too stiff; it cannot be bent. It has not been used for twenty years. It must be rubbed with tallow, and set by the fire to soften."

"Very well," said Telemachus.

He bade a servant to rub the bow with tallow and set it near a fire. Ulysses kept out of sight. As they were waiting, Telemachus had a serving girl pass out horns of wine to the suitors. The men drank thirstily, but there was no laughter. They were sullen. Their hearts were ashen with hatred; they did not believe the bow could be softened. And Ulysses heard them muttering to each other that the whole thing was a trick.

Finally, Antinous called for the bow. He tried to string it. He could not.

"It cannot be done," he cried.

"No," said Eurymachus. "It cannot be done. I will not even try. This is a trick,

a skilled archer. He grasped the bow in his left hand and the dangling cord in his right, and tugged at the cord in the swift sure movement that is used to string a bow. But it did not bend. He could not make the cord reach from one end to the other. He put one end of the bow on the ground

Telemachus, hemming him in so tightly he could not draw his sword.

"Stop!" shouted Ulysses.

He cried it with all his force, in the great bellowing clanging battle voice that had rung over spear shock and clash or sword to reach the ears of his men on so many fields before Troy. His great shout quelled the clamor. The amazed suitors turned to see the old beggar stride out of the shadows into the torchlight. He came among them, and grasped the bow, and said, "I pray you, sirs, let me try."

Antinous howled like a wolf and sprang toward Ulysses with drawn sword. But Telemachus stepped between them, and shoved Antinous back.

"My mother watches from her chamber window," he said. "Shall she see you as cowards, afraid to let an old beggar try what you cannot do? Do you think she would take any of you then?"

"Yes, let him try," said Eurymachus. "Let the cur have one last moment in which he pretends to be a man. And when he fails, as fail he must, then we'll chop his arms off at the shoulders so that he will never again be tempted to draw bow with his betters."

"Stand back," cried Telemachus. "Let him try."

another miserable, deceitful trick. Shroud that is never wove, bow that cannot be bent, there is no end to this widow's cunning. I tell you she is making fools of us. She will not be taken unless she be taken by force."

A great shouting and clamor arose. The suitors pressed close about the arrow fly. The cord twanged, the arrow sang through the air, and passed through the axe-rings, all twelve of them.

Then, paralyzed by amazement, they saw him calmly sling the quiver over his shoulder, and straighten up so that his breastplate gleamed through the rags. He stood tall and, throwing back his head, spoke to the heavens:

"So the dread ordeal ends, and I come to claim my own. Apollo, dear lord of the silver bow, archer-god, help me now to hit a mark no man has hit before."

"It is he!" cried Antinous. "Ulysses!"

He died, shouting. For Ulysses had notched another arrow, and this one caught Antinous full in the throat. He fell, spouting blood.

No suitor moved. They looked at the twitching body that had been Antinous, and felt a heavy sick fear, as if Apollo himself had come to loose his silver shaft among them.

Eurymachus found his tongue, and cried, "Pardon us, great Ulysses. We could not know you had returned. If we have done you evil, we will repay you, but hold your hand."

"Too late," said Ulysses. "Your evil can be repaid only by death. Now fight, or flee."

The suitors fell back, their swords still drawn. Ulysses held the bow. He turned it lightly in his hands, delicately, tenderly, like a bard tuning his lyre. Then he took the cord and strung the bow with a quick turn of his wrist, and as the suitors watched, astounded, he held the bow from him and plucked the cord, making a deep vibrating harp note. Dumbfounded, they saw him reach into the quiver, draw forth an arrow, notch it, then bend the bow easily, powerfully, until the arrowhead rested in the circle of his fingers, just clearing the polished curve of the bow.

He stood there for a second, narrowing his eyes at the mark, then let Eumaeus, the swineherd, who had been protecting him with their shields. They ran into the dining hall and slammed the great portal, which immediately began to shake under the axe blows of the suitors.

"Overturn the benches," cried Ulysses. "Make a barricade."

The neatherd had joined them. And now Telemachus and the two men overturned the heavy wooden benches, making a barricade. They stood behind the wall of benches and watched the huge door splintering.

It fell. The suitors poured through. Now Ulysses shot the rest of his arrows so quickly that the dead bodies piled up in the doorway making a wall of flesh through which the suitors had to push their way.

His quiver was empty. Ulysses cast the bow aside, and took two javelins. But he did not throw. For the suitors were still

Then Eurymachus raised up his sword and called to the suitors, "Up, men! Rouse yourselves, or he will kill us all as we stand here. Let us kill him first."

And he rushed toward Ulysses, and fell immediately with an arrow through his chest. But he had roused them out of their torpor. They knew now that they must fight for their lives, and they charged across the yard toward Ulysses in a great half-circle.

Ulysses retreated slowly, filling the air with arrows, dropping a suitor with each shaft. But still they kept coming through the heaped dead. Now he darted backward suddenly, followed by Telemachus and draw back, tried to scatter. But Ulysses had hurled the slab. It fell among the suitors and crushed them like beetles in their frail armor.

Only four of the suitors were left alive. Now Ulysses and Telemachus and the two servants were upon them—one to each and each killed his man. Then Ulysses and Telemachus raised a wild exultant yell. Dappled with blood, they turned to each other, and Ulysses embraced his son.

"Well struck," he said. Then, to Eumaeus, "Thank you, good friend. Now go tell your queen, Penelope, that the contest has been decided, and the winner claims her had."

"Father," said Telemachus. "When I reach my full strength, shall I be able to bend the great bow?"

"Yes," said Ulysses. "I promise you. I will teach you everything you have to

too far away, and he had to be sure of killing each time he threw.

A suitor named Agelaus had taken charge now, and he motioned to his men, "Let fly your spears—first you, then you, then the rest. And after each cast of spear, let us move closer to the benches."

The long spears hurtled past the rampart. One grazed Telemachus' shoulder, drawing blood. And Ulysses, seeing the blood of his son, lost the battle-coldness for which he was famous among warriors. For the first time he felt the wild hot curdling rage rising in him like wine, casting a mist of blood before his eyes. Without making a decision to move, he felt his legs carrying him toward the great hearth. There he knelt, and grasped the ring of the firestone—a huge slab of rock, large enough for roasting an ox. The suitors, charging toward the wall of benches, saw him rise like a vision of the past, like some Titan in the War of the Gods holding an enormous slab of rock over his head.

They saw their danger and tried to

know. I have come home."

Penelope heard her son shouting. "Mother! Mother! It's Father! He's come home!"

Slowly she descended the great stairway and entered the throne-room. She looked at the man who had slain her suitors.

He arose and said, "I greet you, Penelope. I am Ulysses, your husband. xx