

## Hopelessly Expectant

The warm breeze found the chalky white beach of Ogygia, where the worn body of the lonely Odysseus sat. The rosy array of colors streaked the once blue sky, but to him the beauty was lost. His cunning mind was anywhere but on the soft sands of the island. He lost himself in a labyrinth of thoughts that whirled and twisted about his tired head.

'What is my wife doing? How is my son, Telemachos? Is he a man or a confused boy? Has the lovely Penelope forgotten me and remarried a more worthy man than me?' he pondered, asking himself many questions he could not answer.

A soft tear quickly plummeted off his loathing face as he wept. He hid his head in his sun-baked arms and cried. His sobs lingered in the air but did not echo, for the towering, luscious trees and mountains absorbed everything.

He passed day after day in the exact same spot on that beach, waiting for a sign that he was to return home. He had no crew, no ship, and the distance was far and dangerous. The Earthshaker, Poseidon, was determined to make the depressed Odysseus suffer. The never-ending seas remained dark as night, and as the winds wandered through they took tiny pieces of his hope with it.

Every night, once the sun had set, Calypso, a beautiful and charming immortal, fed poor Odysseus and gave him a home. He always appreciated everything, for he was a gentleman, but would not stray to the immortal lips that teased him so. If he did wish to be immortal, he could, but he would forget his old life. He wished to stay mortal and resume his old life, but deep in his swollen heart he knew it would never be the same. He had been gone for too long and he just wanted to go home.

These wishes were heard and respected by the gray-eyed goddess, Athena. She pleaded to King Zeus, with her flowing, golden hair and curving body, to ask him of a favor. When the name *Odysseus* sprang from her red lips, Zeus' stern face lifted, and his blue eyes lit up. He stood up from his golden throne, encased in sparkling gems, and placed his bulging arms around the fragile body of Athena.

"I think there's something we can work out," Zeus explained. "You see, my brother, Poseidon, is in a far off land accepting offerings. He is the one tearing Odysseus from his family. Send my messenger, Hermes, to

Calypso's island. She is to allow him to go home. She may not like the idea, but my word is the final word."

"Thank you Cloudgatherer. I will summon Hermes immediately."

Athena sprang from the room and located Hermes, with his curly brown hair, munching on grapes in the cubical courtyard filled with extravagant flowers and graceful songbirds. She informed him of the task set before him and he flew off into the lofty, pearl clouds, and descended the vacant, towering Mount Olympus.

When Hermes arrived, Calypso's delicate ears did not believe what they were hearing. She objected at once because she loved the burly Odysseus and she didn't want to be left alone once more. Hermes soon persuaded her to release him because the gods demanded it. Ogygia was not to be his home. She had no choice but to do as Zeus said.

Once Hermes departed, she strolled to the sandy beach where Odysseus sat. Indeed he still wept for the life he once had, full of riches, parties, guests, and feasts.

"Odysseus, my love, it is time. You must go now, for it is your only chance," she explained, placing her soft, milky hands on his muscular shoulder.

Odysseus' head slowly lifted and turned, exposing his tear-streaked face as he asked, "What do you mean? Why are you now letting me go? I have no crew or ship.

Am I to swim? How..."

"Sssshhhh. Let's go feast and offer to the gods, and when the sun rises, I will tell you how to leave this island and set sail for home."

In Calypso's cavern he ate rapidly. He didn't slow to enjoy the rich meal set before him. He nibbled the last morsels of bread and drank the last drops of wine and announced, "My dear lady, I must rest now, for my upcoming day will be harsh and full of labor. Good night."

He stood and walked to his bed near where Calypso slept. He lay down on his back, but he could not sleep. He was going home at last. His world spun around him as if he was in a drunken daze, but soon sleep overcame his body, for anxiety is a tiring emotion.

He slept soundly with a smile draped across his face. When dawn arrived, he leapt from his bed, received instructions, and headed to the dense forest on the other end of the island. He chose the tallest, strongest, and straightest trees to be chopped down. Birds and animals scattered as the lumber crashed to the forest floor. Once down, he stripped them of their branches and dragged them, one by one, back to the beach where he was to assemble his raft.

While the sweat of Odysseus drenched his body, Calypso busied herself, weaving a large sail to be strung on the center mast. It was elegant and sturdy. Only the harshest winds could tear it up. Each strand was carefully strung and combed for the smoothest texture and durability.

As the sun fell once again, Odysseus' body ached, but pain could not be felt because excitement overpowered everything. Calypso forced him to stop and continue tomorrow because the food was ready and his bed was made. To Odysseus, that meal never tasted so good, for he would depart tomorrow.

Calypso noticed the sparkle in his eyes and knew that what she did was the best thing for him. He only deserved the best.

By the following midday, Odysseus had completed his vessel and everything needed was packed for departure. Calypso bade him farewell and told him exactly where to go. He thanked her for her kindness and she sent him off with a strong steady wind.

When he set sail, he looked to the horizon, where the smooth skies meet the rough seas. At that moment the sea and sky met uniformly with bright oranges, reds, pinks, and purples that painted over the blues. It was the prettiest thing he had seen since his wife. After witnessing this sight, he cried, because now he could appreciate it and its beauty.

He was going home. He was finally going home. That night he didn't sleep, but only dreamt of the happiness his life would be filled with when his family knew he was alive, well, and home forever. He envisioned his wife and son's faces in surprise as he strolled into his home to make a happy ending out of a long story. He didn't know that the long story was only half over. Tragedy comes before happiness. The Trojan War may have been over, but his war has yet to come.