

"Never another like him."

"Who knows?"

He kissed her on the cheek, and flew away.

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 meddling relatives up there must be shielding him, and I have a good notion who. Well, I'll give my owlish niece⁶ 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 fighting by instinct. He pulled himself up onto a broken plank and clung there. Each boiling whitecap crested 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.

However, there was a nereid near, named 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.

He was snorting and gasping and 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 widow-maker. I would like to do him an injury by helping you. Take this veil. It cannot sink even in the stormiest sea. Strip off your 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."

6. *owlish niece*, a reference to Athene, goddess of wisdom, whose symbol was the owl.

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. When he began to swim he found himself slipping through the water like a fish.

"Forgive my suspicions, fair Ino," he cried. "Thank you . . . thank you. . . ."

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 being broken against the rocks.

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 back-tow 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.

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 shore where the river flowed among trees. Then he had no more strength. He was exhausted.

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.

NAUSICAA

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 fleet into battle. Still, he preferred his wars one at a time.

He told the queen that Nausicaa would have to be forced to choose.

"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."

The king smiled. Arete always knew the