

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

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.

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 a wedding when all your clothes are dirty? Take them to the river tomorrow and wash them."

The goddess faded slowly until all that was left was the picture on her shield—a snake-haired girl.⁷ 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 dream the same dream again, so that she could learn more about the wedding. But the goddess did not return.

The next morning she went to her mother and told her of the dream.

"I don't understand it," she said. "What wedding?"

"Yours, perhaps," said Arete.

"Mine? With whom?"

"The gods speak in riddles. You know that. Especially when they visit us in dreams. So you must do the one clear 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."

Thereupon Nausicaa told her serving girls to gather all the laundry in the castle, and pile it in the mule cart. She also took food, a goat-skin 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.

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.

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.

They then flung off their garments and swam in the river, scrubbing each other and anointing themselves with oil.

"Well, you look clean enough to get married," cried Nausicaa. "But it's easier to wash than to wed, isn't it, girls?"

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 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.

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 not wish to be seen as he was, naked and bruised.

7. *snake-haired girl*. The monsters called Gorgons had snakes in place of hair, and their look turned people to stone.

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.

"A man!" she cried. "A man—all bloody and muddy."

Ulysses reached out and plucked a spray of leaves from a fallen olive branch, and came out of the reeds.

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.

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?"

Then she turned to Ulysses, who had fallen to his knees before her.

"Speak, grimy stranger," she said. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Do not set your dogs upon me," said Ulysses. "I did not mean to surprise you in your glade."

"What talk is this? Are you out of your head?"

"Forgive me, but I know the fate of Actaeon, who came upon you in the wood. You turned him into a stag, and had your hounds tear him to pieces."

"Whom do you take me for?"

"Why you are Artemis, of course, Goddess of the Chase, maiden of the silver bow. I have heard poets praise your beauty, and I 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 Ogygia, 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 the 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 anointing, and clean garments belonging to my brother. 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 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 improved. I can believe you're some kind of chieftain now. Are you married?"

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Maiden washing. Attic red-figured pyxis by the vase-painter Aison of Athens. Last quarter of the fifth century B.C. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Photo by Erich Lessing.

“Yes.”

“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 into the mule cart.

“But I am thoughtless, keeping you here,” said Nausicaa. “You need food and rest. 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 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. 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 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 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 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 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 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 their 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."

"Yes, of course," said Euryalus. "These 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?"

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.

"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."

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.

He hefted it, and said, "A little light, but it will do."

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, 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 is 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 Phaeacia," said Euryalus. "We do not fight with our guests. But I cannot understand why you refuse to tell us your name."

"A god hunts me. If I say my name, it may attract his notice."

The young men nodded. For this is what was believed at that time. But Euryalus ran to tell the king.

"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."

"He is no weakling, this old sailor," said Euryalus. "He throws the discus almost as well as I."

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 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.

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."

The king frowned. But Ulysses said, "This illness is a blessing, King. I think I 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 eyes 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 that 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 of 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 night, they came out of the horse, 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.

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.

He raised his streaming face, and said, "Forgive me, gracious king. But the 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 men 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 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 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 king 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 love with a blind poet who took all her songs and wove them into one huge tapestry of song.

But it all happened too long ago to know the truth of it.

THINK AND DISCUSS

Understanding

1. What number on the map (pages 544–545) designates the island owned by Hyperion?
2. What argument does Eurylochus use to persuade Ulysses' men to kill the forbidden cattle?
3. How does Calypso rescue Ulysses?
4. Why and how does Ino help Ulysses?
5. By what means does Nausicaa get Ulysses to reveal his identity?

Analyzing

6. Explain what Ulysses means by telling Calypso, "I cannot be immortal, . . . What use is courage then?"
7. In what ways are Circe and Calypso alike?
8. In what ways are Circe and Calypso different?
9. Why do the attitudes of King Alcinous and Arete change toward Ulysses?

Extending

10. If, like Ulysses, you had the

opportunity to see into your own future, would you choose to do so? Why or why not?

REVIEWING: Imagery ~~HT~~ See Handbook of Literary Terms, p. 641.

Imagery consists of concrete words or details that appeal to the sense of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, or to internal feelings. It is language that causes a scene to flash before the reader's eye, or that summons up a sudden sound or smell or feeling, or that gives reality to a written work.

1. To which senses and feelings do the images in the third complete paragraph in the second column on page 594 appeal?
2. Are the images in the whole passage primarily appealing to sight or sound?
3. What sounds are presented or suggested?
4. What image evokes both the sense of smell and of taste?
5. What images evoke the sense of touch?