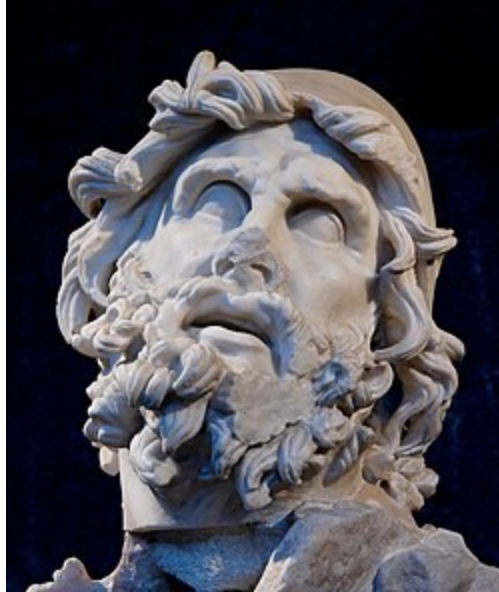




Odysseus, when the time had passed, arose and turned into the city. Athena helpfully surrounded him with mist that kept him safe from rude remarks asking who he was. When he nearly set foot in the fruitful city, bright-eyed Athena, met him with a water jug. She stopped him.

Odysseus asked: Little one, can you bring me to the House of Alkínoös, king of these people? I'm a stranger, travelled here from far away.

With twinkling eyes, the goddess answered: Yes, grandfer, sir, I'll take you but you must walk in silence, not stare at people, and ask no questions. They were given a gift by Poseidon, thus their trust lies only in their boats that can fly like wings or quick as thoughts. And yet Odysseus looked at the breathtaking ships and harbours, the towering walls and palisades.

At the magnificent palace, Athena chirped before departing: Here it is, grandfer, sir, you will find our king and queen at dinner. The brave succeed in all adventures, even those from afar. Odysseus slowly wandered into the great courtyard. The palace was high with lusters of the sun and moon. Bronze walls run across with a frieze of azure moulding of lapis lazuli, flanking gold doors next to silver pillars. Immortal silver and golden dogs stood, guarding the home.

Outside, there grows an orchard, tall trees all in luxurious bloom: 10 citrons, 4 apples, 8 figs, 10 dates, 13 pears, 2 chestnuts, 23 olives. The West Wind breathes life into the trees, always ripen throughout the year. Grapes dried in sunshine in the royal vineyard past the vintage arbors and vats the vintners trod, as new grape clusters formed. After the vines came, all kinds of vegetables grow richly. He could make out the following neat rows of vegetables: 12 carrots, 20 artichokes, 7 lentils, 9 yams, 11 pomegranates, 16 shallots, 3 olives, that flourish in every season. A spring flows throughout the garden, and another towards the palace.

Eventually, Odysseus left for the royal dinner. Walking to Arête and the king, he remained hidden from the dinner party by Athena's mist until throwing himself at Arête's knees. The mist dissipated and all fell silent seeing him.

Queen Arête, daughter of Rhêxênor, I have had many years of pain and loss. I beg you, and your husband, and the company who feast here—may the gods' blessing rest on them! May life be kind to all! Thus, please help me, please, to get back home. My home and friends lie far, I have been gone so long it hurts.

The Majestic King Alkínoös said to Pontonous, the wine boy: Go and serve the wine to all our guests, so we may offer drink to thundering Zeus who blesses those in need. They made the offerings and drank as much as they desired.

Arête, noticing his fine clothes she wove herself, demanded an answer: let me be first to speak to you. Where are you from? And who gave you those clothes? I thought you said you drifted here by sea?

Your Majesty, to tell it all would be a journey; the gods have given me so many troubles. In great summary...! The island of Ogýgia lies far out, where the daughter of Atlas, Calypso, lives, a mighty and crafty goddess with smooth braids. No one, no god or man, consorts with her; yet, a spirit brought me to her hearth, alone, to be her solitary guest. Zeus, with his bright bolt, split my ship, casting us into the wine-dark sea and all of my brave friends perished. I drifted for ten days. On the tenth black night, the gods brought me ashore Ogýgia. Lovingly she cared for me, the enchantress in her beauty, vowing to set me free

from death and time forever. But in those seven years, she never swayed my heart and the immortal clothes of the gods she gave me were always wet with tears.

In my eighth year, whether by word of Zeus or a change of mind, she set me free on a wooden craft stocked with food, wine, divinely woven clothes, and sent a fair warm wind. I sailed the sea for seventeen long days; on day eighteen, your land appeared. I was overjoyed, but more bad luck was hurled at me. Poseidon roused the winds to block me, and he stirred the sea. All I could do was pray under every shock, until my craft broke up. I swam and drifted, nearly swept to my end against cliffs and crags! I swam back to sea, exhausted, then found myself blessed in the holy nightfall alongside the end of a river, on a soft beach sheltered from wind and free of rocks. Hiding myself, I slept deeply there. In the afternoon, I awoke to girls, your daughter and her maids, playing on the beach. I prayed to her for assistance, and she thoughtfully had her maids provide good provender and red wine, a river bath, and let me have these clothes. Now I have told you the truth, these are the facts.

Alkínoös observed: Her good judgment failed in this—she should have brought you here to us herself.

Tactfully, Odysseus replied: Your daughter is quite wonderful, great king. She did tell me to follow her maids, but I was too embarrassed and nervous and thought the sight of me would offend you. For us humans, we are apt to be cautious.

And the king replied: I don't believe in trivial anger. A home, riches, and lands you could have here at the Crypto & Privacy Village! But I will not keep you past Sunday. I give my word that you can go. In sleep, my men will row you across the gentle seas to your home, or anywhere you want.

Joyfully, Lord Odysseus warmly prayed: O Father Zeus, may all of this become true as Alkínoös has said! Gold Bug of harvests remember him! May his fame burn bright forever at the Crypto & Privacy Village, and may I reach my home.

With this, a bed was made swiftly and luxuriously for Odysseus; at last, relieved to have a bountiful rest.