

The Journey to Phaeacia

John Paul Stevens

Held captive brave Odysseus was,
Ogygia was his prison guard,
For separating him from home
Was cold seawater and white foam.

Twas Hermes that the kind gods sent
To free him from Calypso's grip
And start his journey home again,
To see once more his faithful men.

Odysseus built a boat by hand,
And pushed off from his prison isle.
He sailed into the briny deep,
Half awake yet half asleep.

For even though he glided through
The ocean water, cold and dark,
His mind was far away from there,
At home beside his wife and heir.

But just as he was nearing land,
A storm broke down upon his head.
Poseidon's anger surged once more,
But brave Odysseus swam to shore.

And when he reached the island there,
He fell asleep beneath a bush,
But woke to an alarming sound,
And jumped up off the sandy ground.

It was a princess of the realm,
The daughter of Alcinous,
The king of great Phaeacia and
The best loved man throughout the land.

Odysseus, cloaked in pasty mud,
Was brought to king Alcinous,
Who gave him clothes and food to eat,
And slowly asked about his feats.

Odysseus started up his tale,
And as he spoke the fire dimmed,
And men throughout the room were still,
The brawny guest talked with great skill.

Beginning with the giant's cave,
He told of travels 'round the world
That he had taken long ago,
Through grassy fields and frosty snow.

He talked of how he'd ventured in
The one-eyed giant's lofty cave,
His men and he were trapped inside
But made a plan before they died.

So when the giant went to sleep,
They took a sharpened lance in hand,
And drove it through the Cyclops' eye,
Who let out a horrendous cry.

The monster stood and shook the earth,
But he was blind and could not see,
And so instead he felt around,
In search of burglars on the ground.

He snatched up men by twos and threes,
And stuffed them down his massive throat,
'Til but Odysseus stood alive,
Again he bolted, weaved and dived.

The giant could not find the man,
So shouted out, "What is your name?"

But brave Odysseus was prepared,
“My name is No One, from Nowhere.”

So when the giant called for help,
His friends outside did not respond,
For all they heard was, “Help! No One
Is in my cave and tries to run!”

When Dawn again approached the cave,
The monster opened up the door.
For weary of the chase was he,
And here Odysseus planned to flee.

Odysseus grasped some clumps of wool,
So that he hung under a goat.
And now the giant took the herd
Outside to hear the lovely birds.

Now up Odysseus sprang again,
And got out of the cave alive,
He ran back to his gilded boat,
Still with a lump inside his throat.

And so the story ended there,
For tired was Odysseus now,
Throughout the room the men were hushed,
Their earnest faces red and flushed.

The king was silent now until
The brave Odysseus made to leave,
The king then praised the fearless star,
By saying, “Quite the man you are!”