

95 where the divine Calypso placed before him
victuals and drink of men; then she sat down
facing Odysseus, while her serving maids
brought nectar and ambrosia to her side.
Then each one's hands went out on each one's feast
100 until they had had their pleasure; and she said:

“Son of Laertes,^o versatile Odysseus,
after these years with me, you still desire
your old home? Even so, I wish you well.
If you could see it all, before you go—
105 all the adversity you face at sea—
you would stay here, and guard this house, and be
immortal—though you wanted her forever,
that bride for whom you pine each day.
Can I be less desirable than she is?
110 Less interesting? Less beautiful? Can mortals
compare with goddesses in grace and form?”

To this the strategist Odysseus answered:

“My lady goddess, there is no cause for anger.
My quiet Penelope—how well I know—
115 would seem a shade before your majesty,
death and old age being unknown to you,
while she must die. Yet, it is true, each day
I long for home, long for the sight of home. . . .”

So Odysseus builds the raft and sets sail. But the sea god Poseidon is by no means ready to allow an easy passage over his watery domain. He raises a storm and destroys the raft. It is only with the help of Athena and a sea nymph that Odysseus arrives, broken and battered, on the island of Scheria (skē'rē · ə). There he hides himself in a pile of leaves and falls into a deep sleep.

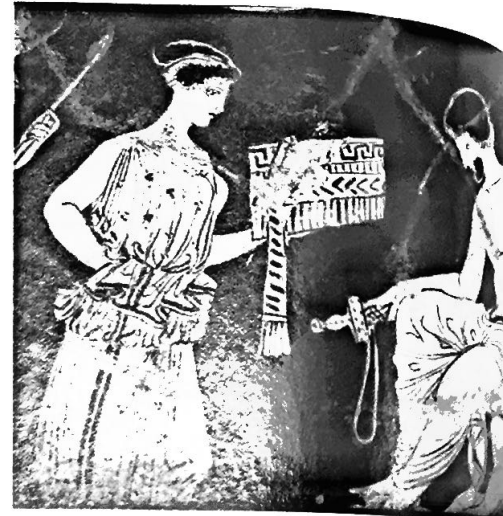
A man in a distant field, no hearth fires near,
120 will hide a fresh brand^o in his bed of embers
to keep a spark alive for the next day;
so in the leaves Odysseus hid himself,
while over him Athena showered sleep
that his distress should end, and soon, soon.
125 In quiet sleep she sealed his cherished eyes.

(from Book 5)


Vocabulary

adversity (ad·vur'sə·tē) *n.*: hardship; great misfortune.

101. Laertes (lā·ar'tēz').



Calypso and Odysseus. Detail from a red-figured vase (5th century B.C.).

 101–118. According to Calypso, what would Odysseus gain by staying with her? What does Odysseus's response tell you about his feelings for his wife? How has Odysseus managed to say no to Calypso and still not offend her?

120. fresh brand: burning stick.