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ENGL 313-001

Prof. Rizzuto

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“The Tales of Princess Nausicaa, Course-Rider¹”

O Muse! Please grace me with your golden tongue, so I may weave a true tale of enchantment. Grant your blind rhapsode the musical ability to charm and bewitch his grand audience, with his lyre hewn from an ash tree from his travels. Bless your humble servant, sweet Muse, with your regal air... For this is a story, that must be spoken with grandeur and silver splendour.² These tellings document the trials and tribulations a brave princess must endure, if she is to seek marital ascendancy.

Our tale begins within another tale, much as the norse serpent makes its unending circle³. Within the tale of the Odyssey, Odysseus finds solace on the green land of Phaeacia where he meets the heroine of our tale, the Princess Nausicaa. Staying true to her heritage⁴, she acted like any fair maiden princess, and bidden the nude Odysseus to join her in her father’s hall. Upon his arrival and at King Alkinoos bidding, the lonely hero began recounting his tale of misfortune⁵. Before too much was said, Nausicaa excused herself to retire.

Once she had drifted off to slumber, she slipped into a prophetic dream. She saw a dove fluttering in the sun-kissed clouds of dusk, and a stag on the borders of a mysterious and serene forest glistening like a green gem on the horizon. Amongst the sound of harps and tinkling bells,

¹ “Course-Rider” is Nausicaa’s heroic title, because she makes her own course in life as she rejects the traditional role of women in the ancient world.

² A bard tells this tale, and he begins with an invocation to the nine muses.

³ A reference to the Ouroboros; a norse serpent or dragon drawn in a circle, devouring its own tail.

⁴ A reference to Patria.

⁵ A reference to books six and seven of the Odyssey.

the dove⁶ spoke: “The man whom your father entertains is your only hope. Doom rides in from the west! An exiled vagabond returns laden with power, and will force you to acquiesce to his demands for a marital union. The marriage between the two of you will not be rich with jewels and prosperity, but with misery and contempt. You must convince the noble man downstairs to wed you, or else this harsh and contested union will be forced upon you.” Nausicaa woke as raging black clouds bellowed from the west.

Once she had donned her raiment, she rushed downstairs to find Odysseus recounting his tryst with Calypso. Whilst servers poured more mead, Nausicaa approached her father and knelt by his ear. “I believe the heavenly Aphrodite visited me in my sleep with an important message,” she whispered. Odysseus had just finished slaking his thirst when Nausicaa finished her retelling to her father. But all the king did was wave away his daughter⁷.

For the second time, Nausicaa attempted to fall asleep, but the dream haunted her. Soon the same scene began unraveling before her eyes, and once again the dove and the stag came before her. This time, the stag⁸ spoke: “A mockery your father makes of us! I am Artemis divine, pure and untamed by man! And beside me flies my sister, love incarnate, Aphrodite! Go down to your father and relay her message, but now add this warning! If you should tell Odysseus the truth, that if he refuses you you will be forced into a wicked marriage, he will have no choice but to remain with you. However! If he should decide to do so, the resulting union between you two would end in much sorrow and grief. If you do not tell him the truth, and he accepts, you two will live prosperously. Choose your choice carefully.” Nausicaa awoke to hear pounding at the West Gate.

⁶ A symbol of Aphrodite, which the goddess becomes in Nausicaa's dreams.

⁷ Nausicaa is forced to bow to the patriarchal authority of her father and king, as she lived in a time dominated by patriarchal rule.

⁸ A symbol of Artemis, which the goddess becomes in Nausicaa's dreams.

With dread chasing her heels like a dark raven, she once again rushed downstairs. As she came around the banister, she heard Odysseus conclude his tale. Racing to her father and mother, she bade them lean in as she told them about her most recent vision. Nausicaa pleaded with her father to ask Odysseus if he would wed her, but to not reveal to him the curse that would be fulfilled if the man should deny her. “I would rather commit myself to a hundred oppressive unions than live in a deceptive one,” she cried.

The good queen Arete laid her hand gently on the King’s arm, and King Alkinoos turned to the man beside him to broach the subject. “Stranger, not such is the heart in my breast, to be filled with wrath without a cause. Better is due measure in all things. I would, O father Zeus, and Athena and Apollo, that thou, so goodly a man, and like-minded with me, wouldst have my daughter to wife, and be called my son, and abide here.”⁹

But, because her father had honored her wish and neglected to mention the consequence of his choice, Odysseus had only one reply. “Gracious king, I cannot accept your proposal.” Turning to face her, he murmured, “Nausicaa of the beautiful robes¹⁰, your father honors me with his request. But I must return to my true duty, my wife Penelope, who suffers in my absence.”

When she saw her mother begin to rise in protest, Nausicaa quickly interjected. “I respect your choice. Your wife is a blessed lady.” There was nothing more Nausicaa could do that night, but stare into the dying embers of the cold hearth, and listen to the herald announce a visitor.

A few days later, the man who had later declared himself to be Odysseus, left Phaenicia. It was after the departure of that hero, that the visitor who had arrived several days before approached King Alcinous, declaring his intentions to wed Nausicaa. The suitor’s name was

⁹ This is a direct quote from the *Odyssey*; this quote came from book seven, card eight.

¹⁰ “Nausicaa of the beautiful robes” is a direct quote from the *Odyssey* used to describe Nausica; this quote came from book 6, card two.

Sandrious, and he had been a Phaeacian soldier before being exiled for his foulness. Now he had returned, backed by a powerful foreign king whom he had served as a mercenary for many years. The lowly soldier had returned with the prestige and wealth of a lord. But one can never disguise a bronze coin as gold, and thus no one could disguise this loathsome and inferior man with fanciful plumage. King Alcinous supported Nausicaa's refusal of Sandrious's proposal, but the suitor responded with a threat: "Once rosy-fingered dawn¹¹ crests the next horizon, I will assail my army upon you!" Sandrious did not take well to being escorted from the King's Hall.

That night, Nausicaa prayed to the gods for aid. When a silken slumber fell upon her, Aphrodite and Artemis heeded her prayer. Once again, the dove danced in the setting sunbeams amongst the golden clouds, and the stag stood majestically fierce on the bank of the forest's shadow. But this celestial dream was dominated by a creeping dark mist that seeped in from the horizon. The dove entreated Nausicaa to embrace the suit with love, in order to save her family from war. From the heavens floated down a red rose¹², its petals like velvet in Nausicaa's hand. "If you have Sandrious smell the wafting perfume of this rose, he will fall under your charms, lose all grasp of his manhood, and will love you till the day Hades lets him rest."

As she looked down at the delicate rose in her hand, Nausicaa carefully framed her reply. "I could never tolerate a union with a lesser man, which is what he would become if he became a puppet to my words. If I am to marry, I am to love. And I cannot love that man."

Pawing the ground, the stag spoke: "Not only are you blessed with my fair countenance¹³, but also with my virtuous strengths. If you shun marriage to undertake a noble and pure path, you must prove to your people your capacity for independence. The men will not let you remain

¹¹ "Rosy-fingered dawn" is a description used repeatedly throughout the *Odyssey*.

¹² Another symbol of Aphrodite; a symbol also associated with love and passion.

¹³ In the *Odyssey*, characters describe Nausicaa possessing the beauty of Artemis.

unwed, if you cannot demonstrate to them that you do not need a man. Undergo a series of trials and quests to prove this to them; that you are a shield maiden of Artemis. Send letters and trinkets home on your travels to ensure Phaenicia takes notice of your accomplishments.

However, the gods do not offer a chance like this without balancing the fates. If you should succeed your suitor will leave, and in another five years you will meet an honorable man who will give you the choice to be happily married or to remain a virgin true. If you should fail, you will be destined to be chased by ebony crows into the grey and silver sea.

Nausicaa pondered this for a moment before she replied. “If I am to prove myself, I must show that I am capable in the arts of men. I must prove my abilities in battle, in sport, in cleverness, in gold laden bounty, and in virtuous duties.”¹⁴

As the stag stepped forward, the dove flew off into the red sun. “Take this armor fashioned after my own raiment,” Artemis spoke as she laid them out at Nausicaa’s feet. “They will protect you on your journey.” Nausicaa knelt before the stag, and a leather tie fell in her lap. “Hide your sex whilst on your travels, or else it will not only be the trial trying to best you, but your fellow men.” Nausicaa awoke to the sound of the roosters crowing as they greeted the crisp dawn.

She looked over at her dresser, and saw the helmet, armored tunic, and leather band. In her shift, Nausicaa tiptoed to her parent’s chamber where she told them of her new vision. Grasping the knees of her father in supplication¹⁵, she begged her father to let her embark on this quest. Her parents reluctantly agreed, and began to rush to get her out of the house before the suitor woke. Nausicaa returned to her apartments, where she lit a candle and shed her night rail.

¹⁴ I listed some of the trials that Odysseus and Aeneas undertake. These great deeds were seen as heroic.

¹⁵ A reference to an ancient practice which occurs in the *Odyssey*, where supplicants demonstrated their fervor by grasping the knees of the person they were imploring aid from.

Heading to her closet, she pulled out a silk aegean¹⁶ blue grecian tunic, short at the mid thigh, with a scoped neckline and short sleeves. She then picked up Artemis's armor, the first being a grey leather jerkin made from the hide of wolves to wear on top of the silk under tunic. She then buckled on the shiny silver breastplate and shoulder guards made by Hephaestus himself; the breastplate effectively hid her generous bosom. On the breastplate was a crest of the moon, to represent the Goddess herself, and a depiction of a ship sailing on the ocean of that moon, to represent the Phaeacians' seaworthiness and their dedication to Poseidon¹⁷. She laced the heavy leather sandals that went up her entire calf, the front of which were covered by silver shin guards. She tightened the belt at her waist and knotted the laces on her wrist guards. Finally, she took the leather tie and bound her long auburn hair¹⁸ into a tight plait, and tucked it into the silver helmet. The helmet had silver plates in the shape of falcon wings to hide her cheekbones, so all one could see was her full blushed lips and her forest green eyes. Disguised now as a princely young man, she grabbed her bow and quiver and slipped out to the stables to mount her horse. As she was leading a mighty pure black stallion with a wild flowing mane and tail out of the stables, her mother approached. The queen told Nausicaa that her father gave her his blessing, and that he was currently telling the suitor to leave, since his presence was no longer required.

“Here,” Queen Arete said, passing Nausicaa a slender dagger with a bronze hilt. “This was part of my dowry to your father. It would have been a part of yours. Take it with you now on your quest. And promise me you will return safely!”

¹⁶ I used the description of “a silk *aegean* blue grecian tunic” because the Aegean sea lies off the eastern coast of Greece.

¹⁷ Within the *Odyssey*, the Phaeacians are characterized by their mastery of ships and their homage to Poseidon. It is because they escort Odysseus on one of their ships that Poseidon becomes enraged.

¹⁸ Artemis is usually depicted as a brunette with green eyes. I used these same features when describing Nausicaa.

“Yes mother,” Nausicaa sobbed as she embraced her.

The queen waved mournfully as she watched her daughter ride off into the moors.

Nausicaa travelled for three days and three nights¹⁹, not heading in any particular direction, but remaining alert for any trials she could undertake. While she was scouting the land, she spied a figure cloaked and huddled on a tree stump off the side of the road. As she got closer, she took note of the stitched embroidery depicting the heavens on his cloak, and that the man within it spouted a handkerchief out of his right trouser pocket²⁰. By the time she could see that his hands bore pearl rings, she could hear the soft tune he was humming. However it was not until she heard her name in his lyrics, that she gave him her utter attention.

The seer sang,

“Course-Rider, she was thus called,

The Phaeacian maiden,

Nausicaa, blessed by her virtuousness, the goddess Artemis.

What trials lay in wait? What dangers are in store?

First a mound of red gold,

Second, a writhing sea and a black ship,

Third, bewitching sea wenches,

Fourth, the Sickly Moon Inn on distant shores,

Fifth, Hyperion’s contests of Might.

The maiden fair, in blue and silver,

¹⁹ This literary device, of travelling for the same number of days and nights, is used frequently in the Odyssey.

²⁰ I based the seer’s description off of Professor Rizzuto. One day, he wore a glow-in-the dark shirt with constellations on it to class. He also constantly carries a bandana with him, which he hangs from his right pocket.

What will commands thee? What destiny

Dost thee flee from? Or what fate do thee run to?''²¹

The seer chuckled, and Nausicaa rode on until she heard him call out, “Follow this trail maiden, and then turn left at the fork in the road. Do not be tempted by the marital band!” Nausicaa halted her horse and turned, but the man had vanished.

Soon enough, Nausicaa found herself turning left at the fork, and it was not long before she came to a cave that was illuminated by a crimson glow. She peered into the cave nestled in the cliffside, and beheld gold on fire! Glistening red and orange coins, and jewels beyond compare. As she stared mesmerized at the mounds of gold, a fierce and fiery passion gripped her, and her eyes all of a sudden mirrored the red glow of the gold. She began filling her horse’s saddlebags with the gold, her smile gleaming as she realized she would never need a man’s financial support ever again. Coins dribbled between her fingers like raindrops as she carried load after load of gold to her horse. Once her four saddlebags were filled, she repurposed some of the satchels and chests within the cave to help her carry more of the gold. She spent two days hurrying back and forth from the cave to her horse, and eventually she had to build a cart for her horse to pull when the stallion could no longer bear the weight of all the gold. A few times she had grown suspicious; the gold seemed unending, trapping her with its unceasing enchantment. But no sooner would she have a doubt, then her attention would be grabbed by an exquisite emerald pendant on a gold chain, or a sapphire ring, or a solid gold figurine of Venus. As the owl hooted midnight on the second night, the silver moonbeams caught the glint of a simple and plain gold ring²². Wandering over to it, Nausicaa found that she could not wrest her gaze away

²¹ This poem is the equivalent of my thesis; it lists the trials she will encounter.

²² A reference to the cursed gold ring within *The Saga of the Volsungs*.

from it. In its pure surface, she could see glory in battle, infinite knowledge, and her riding home from her trials victorious. The ring showed her many glorious and splendid things, all more enticing than the last, and it promised these wonders to her. But whilst in this hypnotic trance, Nausicaa caught a glimpse of her wedding in the band's surface. She flung the ring away from her like it had scalded her, casting away its bewitchment. She then watched as all the gold around her slowly turned to shadow and mist, and she remembered the seer's warning about the marital band. By rejecting the ring, she had rejected the source of the cave's power, thus dissolving the spell that the gold had cast upon her. The golden mist flowed around her ankles as she left the cave and headed to her horse, where she found only her own four saddlebags full of gold. As mounted her horse, she turned around for the last time to gaze at the cave. All that she saw was a cold, barren cliffside. Urging her horse to move quickly, she directed him to head south towards the sea.

Nausicaa reached the port in the small seaside town, and was immediately relieved when no one saw through her disguise as a young man. Once she finished restocking her provisions, she went to send a letter to her home. Besides the letter, she also enclosed a handful of rubies the size of walnuts, to verify the completion of her first trial²³. The cost of the rubies alone would help outfit the extra soldiers recruited into the Phaeacian army in case Sandrious decided to attack.

Nausicaa guided her horse so she could gaze upon the sea as she pondered what to do next. It was then that she spotted a tall black ship docked further down the harbor. She led her horse to the gangplank of the ship, which was being guarded by the half man, half cyclops

²³ In the first trial Nausicaa accumulates immense wealth, just like Odysseus did on his travels. She also demonstrates that she is able to overcome greed in the face of such bounty.

Sarencles²⁴. Although he had two eyes, Sarencles had inherited seven feet of muscular bulk that had gotten him hired by the ship's crew as extra protection. Nausicaa knew she would have to use cleverness²⁵ if she wanted to get passage on board the ship without paying a fare to Sarencles. She was left to hope that he had also inherited the limited brightness of a cyclops.

She cleared her throat and strode up the gangplank, leading her horse behind her. She had only taken a few steps before she was halted by the mighty Sarencles.

“Announce yourself, and thy business,” Sarencles bellowed.

“My business is of a personal and private matter, a matter which I deem of no significance to you,” Nausicaa said haughtily. “As for your first query, it is of import to acknowledge my name, if only for the ensurement that my wishes will be carried out.” Nausicaa bent and gave a courtly bow. “I am renowned as Lord Florian the Daring, the Charming, the Lover, the Rogue.” She rose from her bow to see Sarencles standing mouth agape. Seeing this, she pressed her advantage. “It is traditional to follow an introduction with an announcement of one's own name, but one is not needed for yours. I suppose it was redundant of me to introduce myself to you, for if I am not equally as infamous as you mighty sir, I am more so. Therefore, I could have followed the logical path of assuming you recognized me on sight, just like several passerby in this town have. But I always deem it best to leave nothing to assumption. So while I may call you Sarencles, the mighty son of the maiden Lypha and the cyclops Monophemus²⁶, I implore your now to notify me if I call you wrongly.”²⁷

²⁴ Sarencles is an “Other” that Nausicaa encounters on her quest.

²⁵ Nausicaa will attempt to demonstrate that she has the heroic virtue of cleverness, which Odysseus is renowned for.

²⁶ A pun on the “Poly” in Polyphemus. Polyphemus was a cyclops that Odysseus encountered.

²⁷ A reference to Polytropos; both the *Odyssey* and the character of Odysseus are polytropic in nature. In order to trick Sarencles, Nausicaa deliberately assumes the persona of a well spoken, wealthy lord.

Sarencles snapped his mouth shut. “Aye. That is my name, lad.” Then realizing his mistake, stammered panicked wide-eyed, “I mean, my lord. My lord.” He cleared his throat. “Lord Florian, what has brought you to this ship today?”

“Well my mighty sir,” Nausicaa spoke, as she nonchalantly ran her hand down her horse’s flank. “You have found me in the middle of a little game between me and my compatriots. You see, me and my cousins are attempting to woo a certain young lady, a lady more fair than the nymph in the moon. However, our conquest²⁸ has asked us to bear no ill will towards one another, and so she has tasked us to retrieve a special bauble for her from across the sea.” Nausicaa paused, and peered through her helmet to see the cyclops enraptured by the story. “I have found in my vast experience, preemptiveness is key to victory. So naturally it is I who has first arrived at port.” Nausicaa paused again to bow, and to have Sarencles applause appreciatively. “Alas, while I take pride in calling preemptiveness my forte, preparedness is my Achilles’ Heel. Thus I find myself needing to barter passage on board a ship, whilst not depleting any of the money I require for purchasing a gift for my lady love.”²⁹

“Stop there, my lord,” Sarencles said holding up his hand. “You seem like you possess truly honorable qualities, but for the request I assume you are about make, I will have to refuse you. My employer expressly asked that I grant no passage to persons who cannot pay.”

“But mighty sir,” Nausicaa interjected. “Your employer does do you a great disservice! Look where you stand, strong Sarencles! You are no better than a doorman to a brothel, demanding money for entry.” She waited a pause for effect³⁰, before venturing an idea to

²⁸ Women were seen as objects to be bought and used, hence the use of the word “conquest” to refer to the woman Nausicaa and her supposed friends are fighting over.

²⁹ This is a reference to the long, grand lies Odysseus tells to the characters on his journey.

³⁰ Rhapsodes had to make sure their audience was entertained when they performed. I tried to emphasize in this scene the importance of not just having a good story, but a good storyteller.

Sarencles. “You know, it was your post on this gangplank that tricked my sight upon seeing you. For how could the mighty Sarencles, the Brave, the Strong, the Loyal, be a lowly guard dog?” Nausicaa stared intently at the top of Sarencles head, and said astonished “I do believe this position has had you lose a foot in stature!”

Sarencles hand shot to his head, which he began patting repeatedly.

“You will make yourself shorter doing that,” Nausicaa pointed out.

Sarencles stuffed his hand in his pocket and scuffed the floor. “I may be slower than most, which is why I am here presently, but I am quick on picking up character. This employer,” Sarencles gestured with his head to the ship, “is not the most honorable, while you I judge to be. So I would now relate the sad circumstances that amounted me to this moment. I have a love of chance, of luck. Someone took advantage, and I found myself in debt to him and unable to pay. He gave me a fortnight to bring him the coin, which this job, while dishonorable and humiliating, will give me by that allotted time. That is why your lordship finds me working for a man beneath me.”

“I see my comrade. Yours is a tricky predicament indeed. So I would propose a different solution, if I may?”

“Yes, do indeed my lord,” he said as he nodded his head eagerly.

“I will come up with one, once you tell me who is the man holding your debt.”

“He is the owner of the Sickly Moon Inn at the port across the sea.”

“Give me a moment to ponder a solution,” Nausicaa asked. “Perhaps whilst I think, you could tie my horse on board the ship? I think best with my hands unencumbered.”

“Of course,” Sarenacles replied, and he took the stallion on board and stabled him. When he returned, he found the young lord sitting on the railing. Before he could protest her presence on board the ship, she interrupted him.

“I have come up with a solution. It so happens that the inn you mention is in the port of my intended destination. It is also at that destination that I own a small house, where I keep several servants on call for any of my unexpected arrivals. Grant me free passage on board this ship to that port, and I will pay your debt for you. Sign it off to me, and I will send one of my maids to serve as a tavern wench until the debt is paid.”

Sarenacles mulled over this for a moment, before he smiled and took from his pocket the debt slip. “Let me show you to our guest quarters.”³¹

As night fell Nausicaa felt drowsiness overtake her, and she began to undress in the cabin. Thus far on her quest she had only slept outdoors exposed to the elements, and due to the possibility of passerby and cutthroats, she had slept in the armor bequeathed to her by the goddess Artemis. She now took great relish in taking them off, before she laid on the thin mattress in only the grecian tunic.

That night, she was visited once again by the ethereal goddesses Aphrodite and Artemis. In this dream, she was on board the black ship, looking at the receding shore. Under the moonlight on the distant white pearl sands of the beach, the delicate dove and stately stag stood as the sea painted with sapphires and emeralds swept in heart shaped arcs at their feet. The dove spoke: “My lovely Nausicaa, I applaud your valiant and victorious efforts thus far. In veneration of your triumphs, I will bless this voyage with a young lover for you.”

³¹ She has completed her second trial. She demonstrated the ability to outwit her opponents; to best them without violence.

The stag snorted, and replied: “Yes my virtuous Nausicaa, due to this one’s meddling you will find love on this journey by sea. However, I foresee that the night will come where in order to save yourself, you will have to surrender him to the embrace of Thanatos.”

This dream sent Nausicaa into a spiral of despair, and she let loose a cry of distress. It was then that a mate of the captain's barged into the room to investigate the feminine scream. The young man saw the womanly curves outlined by the fine silk, and Nausicaa was not too pleased to realize her disguise had failed. However, an inevitable development of closeness arose between the two of them, as it often does between two sharing a secret. A few days later, Nausicaa found herself helplessly in love with the kind sailor with blue eyes. One eve, Nausicaa and her sailor culminated their love in a kiss under the stars. That same night, tragedy struck. The intoxicated captain had sailed the ship too close to the island where two sirens lay in deathly anticipation. One of those sirens was named Mirena, and she possessed hair the color of a bright sunrise, and a blue fish tail made from sea foam and blue diamonds. Her sister Airlea had liquid gold and silver for hair, and her porcelain skin transformed at her hips into a sun-kissed tail of bronze. Soon, all the men on deck were enthralled by the siren’s sultry voices. Everyone, that was, except Nausicaa because of her sex. Hypnotized, the captain released the helm and Nausicaa realized she would have to save the crew, or she and the ship would crash into the waves. She raced to the door leading below deck, and locked it to trap the remaining sailors downstairs. She then grabbed a spare line and managed to corral all the men around the main mast, whereupon she bound them to it. As for the captain, she drew the dagger her mother had given to her, and knocked him unconscious with the blunt hilt.³² It was only after she had steered

³² She has completed the third trial. In this trial, she demonstrated the ability to think on her feet, as she bested strange and supernatural beings.

the ship away from the seductive voices of the sirens, that she realized her lover had been pulled into the sea by the siren Mirena. The crew, having been returned to themselves, let the sorrow stricken man wallow in his quarters below. Having sobbed herself to sleep, once again Nausicaa was visited by the goddess. The stag pawed the diamond and pearl encrusted shore framed by midnight waves, and spoke: “Cease your crying girl. Thou know it was not thy destiny to be with that man. Go forth, stride towards your next trial.”

She sailed for another nine days and nine nights³³, before she felt the ship dock at the new shore. As she lead her horse down the gangplank, Sarenacles thanked the young man again, and directed him to where the inn was located. When Nausicaa arrived at the Sickly Moon Inn, no doubt named for the depiction of a twisted and anguished crescent moon on the sign, her first impression was of the odious sort. The paint was peeling off the walls, the shingling on the roof looked like it most likely leaked, and the resin used on the railing for the front steps looked three quarters grease. The smell of stale booze wafted through the cracked windows, and she realized the inn also served as a bustling tavern. She flipped a small coin to the stable boy to house her steed in the paddocks behind the inn, before she strode inside. With only a few words, Nausicaa found herself face to face with the owner, explaining the turn of events.

After explaining the situation multiple times to the owner, a greasy man that reeked of mead and old sweat, the tavern owner finally nodded his assent to the change in payment.

“So, my good man!” Nausicaa said, slapping the back of the inn keeper. “I will send a maid to you within the next few hours. Now, if I may ask for an additional favor? A carriage is arriving to pick me up and take me to my house outside of town, but I would like to continue

³³ This literary device, of travelling for the same number of days and nights, is used frequently in the *Odyssey*.

stabling my horse here during my stay. With my new import of exotic spices and rare silks from my ships, I recently began expanding my estate. As such, I currently have no hospitable stable. I would pay you for this service, of course.”³⁴

At the mention of the princely man’s trade conquests the owner’s eyes widened, and he readily agreed to the idea of further payment by the young lord.

Nausicaa headed outside where she stood and waited, watching the entrance. After an hour of waiting, Nausicaa saw a serving girl leave the tavern carrying her laundry in a knapsack. When the girl saw the handsome, lordly warrior advance towards her, naturally her knees weakened. It only took Nausicaa a few smiles and a couple charming compliments to relieve the young woman of a ragged and threadbare dress.³⁵ She took the dress to the stall her horse was settled in, and removed the armor and leather jerkin before pulling the dress over the silk tunic. She stowed her helmet and armor in one of the saddlebags, before unbinding her hair. When she stepped out of the stall, gone was the young lord. Instead, a beautiful but disheveled woman in a coarse dress locked the paddock door behind her.

After a short introduction, whereupon she called herself Aella³⁶ to the innkeeper, she was handed a tray and several wooden mugs to deliver frothing ale to the most vulgar and repulsive men in the city. For another fortnight, Nausicaa was forced to serve these belligerent and rude scoundrels until her feet and hands developed bloody calluses. At night, she was left to find whatever solace she could on the itchy pallet of straw that she shared with one of the scullery maids.

³⁴ This is another reference to the long, grand lies Odysseus tells to the characters on his journey.

³⁵ Nausicaa displays more of her polytropic nature, as she has to now become a charming man to woo a maid.

³⁶ In Greek mythology, Aella is the name of an Amazonian warrior who was killed by Hercules.

On one occasion she was quite inclined to slip her mother's dagger, which she kept hidden in her apron, between the ribs of a particularly rude guest that had dared to paw at her. She prevented herself from doing so, upon seeing the innkeeper eyeing her from across the room. After that, whenever a guest was particularly rude or vulgar, she relied on the principles and foundations of hospitality her mother had tried to instill within her. Thus, even against the vilest of vagabonds, Nausicaa responded with tact and grace.

When she was finally released from the contract³⁷, she took great joy in shedding the old dress and donning the Goddess' armor. Using her dagger, she cut a small square from the apron before tossing it and the dress aside. Once again Lord Florian, she headed back inside the inn, where she purchased some parchment and wrote another letter to her parents, detailing her encounter with the sirens, how she outwitted the cyclops, and how she suffered honorably serving inferior men. Within the envelope she also placed Sarenclis' debt slip, the piece of fabric from the apron, and a pearl that had been left behind by the siren that had taken her lover. In her letter, she described these objects as artifacts that proved the validity of her completing these trials. She then headed to the owner of the inn to retrieve her horse, and to ask him to send off the letter for her. "Thank you for ensuring I was paid, my lord," the innkeeper said, bowing his head.

"You are most welcome, good sir," Nausicaa replied, as she tried not to grimace.

"In further gratitude for your supply of payment, I would pass on to you," the innkeeper whispered leaning in, "a rumor that is nothing more than a whisper on a cloud."

"And why would I be interested in such an understated murmur?" Nausicaa asked.

³⁷ She has completed the fourth trial. She demonstrated mastery of *xenia*, while being forced to serve the worst sort of guests.

“I would assume, being the young lordly warrior you seem to be, you yearn for ways to test your strength? Of this, word I bring to you. A series of feats, a perilous competition³⁸, will be hosted on the Sun’s isle, where the reward is nothing less than an ewe from the Sun God’s herd.”

“Do not be false! The God Hyperion would never part from one of his flock!” Nausicaa cried outraged.

“No truer words have passed these lips. Tis true Hyperion would not willingly part with a sheep from his herd. But rumor is Hyperion was bested by a mortal³⁹, and as penance for his shame, he has been ordained to host a series of competitions. Whoever successfully completes these trials without suffering serious maiming or death, will be given one ewe from the Sun God’s herd.”⁴⁰

Nausicaa praised the Gods, as she saw they had blessed her with a way to complete several trials all at once. Nausicaa rode for the next nine days and nine nights⁴¹, until she came to the strait between the land she was on and Hyperion’s island. During her travels, the furtive whisper of the contests had transformed into an open declaration. Thus, a ferry system was put in place to sail spectators, goods, and horses across the narrow sea passage. On the raft Nausicaa sailed on, she would spot three of her competitors amongst the excited crowd.

Upon reaching the island, Nausicaa was shown where to sign the contract to compete. When asked what her name was, she volunteered this story: “Upon this armor, engraved you will

³⁸ Games and contests were popular in the ancient world. In book eight of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus watches and participates in a series of games hosted by King Alkinoos.

³⁹ In class, we discussed how many small characters within the myths we read could have had their own myth, where they were the main protagonist. The “mortal” mentioned could similarly allude to another myth.

⁴⁰ Odysseus also visits Hyperion’s island in the *Odyssey*.

⁴¹ This literary device, of travelling for the same number of days and nights, is used frequently in the *Odyssey*.

see a fine ship sailing on the ocean of the moon. No further proof do you need, to see that I am a young man of Phaeacia, here to test my wits and strength against other such worthy opponents. Alas, I am only the fifth and youngest son in a family where I already have three nephews. My body is of no importance to them, and so I set out to test my person against unimaginable foes and harrowing quests. On one such adventure I met the hero Perseus, not long after he had broken the chains binding the sea-kissed Andromeda. It was while I served him, that I heard a rumor of the whisper regarding Hyperion's challenges. I excused myself with much familiarity from Perseus, and rode straight here to the God's isle."⁴² With much awe and skepticism, Nausicaa was shown to her tent and was told that the first contest would begin at noon the next day.

At noon, Nausicaa found herself surrounded by three dozen competitors on horseback, as she and the other warriors fiddled with their reins in anticipation. A priest from the Temple of Hyperion had been sent by his god to administer the contests, which he now began to do as he addressed the horsemen.

"When I speak, the words that pass these lips are not the words of any mortal. My god, Hyperion, whom I remain a devout servant to, is issuing forth these commands. Know that when you follow the rules I utter, you stand to win a game devised by a god. Know that when you break the rules I speak, you are directly violating Hyperion's exact commands." The intense stare of the priest made even the horses stand at complete attention; not even the wind dared blow a wisp of mane or tail.

⁴² This is another reference to the long, grand lies Odysseus tells to the characters on his journey.

“Below us is a majestic and expansive meadow, totaling ten thousand acres. This meadow is surrounded on all four sides by a ten foot cobblestone wall. Within this enclosure, runs a trapped centaur.”⁴³ The priest paused, before adding, “It may be helpful to know that he has access to a bow and two quivers, each holding forty arrows.”

The priest waited until the muttering ceased. “No one will be allowed to leave the meadow once they have entered, until someone defeats the centaur. The victor, and all the remaining survivors, will then proceed to the next trial. The entrance is right behind me,” he concluded, gesturing behind him.

Nausicaa and the other contestants charged into the grassy arena, and no one could suppress a shudder upon hearing the cold clanging of the entrance being locked. For a couple hours, she and the others rode scouting the land in search of the monstrosity. When several of the competitors finally found the centaur a couple miles from Nausicaa, she heard the exuberant war cries turn into guttural screams of terror. It was then that she decided to seek higher ground, to perhaps catch a strategic view of the beast.

Galloping up a grassy knoll, she caught sight of the centaur engaging some more of the contestants. It quickly became apparent to her, that the simple strategy of coming head on at the centaur was not going to work. The centaur’s four legs were faster than any horse’s, and he was easily outmaneuvering the competitors. Additionally, the centaur’s bowmanship was exceptional; he would shoot from his bow too quick for anyone return fire. As Nausicaa tried to come up with an ulterior strategy, she watched her competition deplete in droves as the centaur's

⁴³ Another example of “Otherness.” This time, unlike with Sarenacles, she will have to kill the Other.

arrows impaled their bodies. As she watched the arrows spearing through her competitors like a knife through soft butter, she came up with an idea for her trap.

She saw from her vantage point some of the contestants huddle together, as they came to the same realization she had earlier and they decided to come up with a strategy. She also saw the centaur spot them through the trees a mile away and start heading towards them. Nausicaa quickly made the decision to use her contestants as bait. Seeing the route the centaur would take to attack the murmuring competitors, she quickly galloped to a spot of soft earth on that path. Once there, she dug a pit where she placed several wooden poles upright; poles she had sharpened into spears with her dagger. She then covered the pit with dense foliage. Nausicaa watched from behind a copse of trees as the centaur galloped into the pit and impaled himself. She quickly rode to his side, and ended his suffering with a shot from her bow. Thus, she won the first challenge, and only twenty men of the thirty six remained alive.⁴⁴

The following day, the second trial was hosted. Once again the priest came before them and spoke the words of Hyperion. “The second contest will test your resourcefulness and your seamanship. You are to head to the seashore, and you are to build raft. With this raft you construct, you are then to race your other competitors once around the island. The first person to arrive back here after completing these two tasks will win this challenge, and all the remaining sailors who have not drowned will then proceed to the next trial.”

Nausicaa and the other contestants raced to the seaside. Immediately Nausicaa began gathering the necessary supplies, and she sent a quick thankful prayer to Artemis that the trial involved a skill she had developed since infancy. Even the daughters of kings learned to build

⁴⁴ She has completed the fifth trial. She demonstrated her mastery of battle strategy, and her potential ability to lead others in battle.

ships in a country renowned for its seaworthiness. Bent over double, Nausicaa cut the needed logs for the raft, and was for the first time severely tempted to take off her helmet, as she felt sweat bead on her brow. But glancing around, she assessed that the risk of being seen as a woman would be too great.

Nausicaa smirked when she saw, upon finishing her own raft, that all of the other contestants had not even begun assembling theirs yet. Seizing the opportunity her lead gave her, she did not set sail right away. Instead she hunted and roasted a wild boar, whereupon she sacrificed the fattiest piece of meat to the sea as she entreated Poseidon. “Hear me, Great God of the Sea. I sacrifice this offering to you as I seek your aid and protection on my voyage around this island. Bless me with a fair and stiff wind to fill my sails. And please grant my hopeful desire, to send treacherous waters in the way of my competition?” Nausicaa drew her mother’s dagger from the sheath, and sliced a shallow cut across her palm. Clenching her hand, she let the salty blood trickle into the vast sea. “Recognize the blood within these veins. See not the deceptive garment, but the true regality and lineage I hail from. Aid me, my country’s benefactor, Poseidon!”⁴⁵

Due to the time it took her to pray, fifteen of the men had already set sail around the island by the time she had finished. But their lead could not contend with Poseidon's will, and so Nausicaa easily won the race while ten more of the contestants drowned in sudden whirlpools. The third contest would be held at rosy-fingered dawn⁴⁶ the next day, and so Nausicaa and the remaining ten men awoke at the crack of dawn to stand before the priest for the final time.

⁴⁵ In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his men made multiple offerings to the gods in the form of meat, as they prayed for guidance or goodwill. Unlike Odysseus’ men however, Nausicaa is smart enough not to roast one of the Sun God’s cattle.

⁴⁶ “Rosy-fingered dawn” is a description used repeatedly throughout the *Odyssey*.

“Your final quest is set within a time limit. On this one day every year, a nymph that travels with the summer wind comes to rest in a grove on this island. While she rests, she transforms into her womanly form. However, once the sun sets she once again turns into wind and rejoins the summer breeze. This nymph in particular is a very lonely, thus your task is to charm her. If she feels wooed by your words or actions, she will give you the reward of a sacred ewe from Hyperion’s herd.”

Nausicaa listened to all the virile men chuckle and nudge one another in male camaraderie over the idea of conquering a woman. However, she and the men were soon to find that the nymph was not the easiest to be won. Once again Nausicaa found a vantage point, from which she watched the nymph bathing in a small pooled basin at the base of a waterfall. Nausicaa watched as the nymph turned down every word the men spoke, whether it be charming, roguish, humorous, seductive, or chivalrous. After all ten silver tongued men found their mouths turned to lead, they each branched off into seclusion to try to think of new ways to woo her. The now very irritated nymph went back to washing her long blond hair, and feeling her own slick hair laying on the back of her neck, Nausicaa got an idea.

Nausicaa rode around to the other side of the waterfall, where she could undress and enter the pool without the nymph seeing her. Thus, when the nymph first spotted Nausicaa swimming in the water, she saw her as the female she was.

“Who are you?” The nymph gasped.

Nausicaa pretended to be startled. “Oh! I am sorry! I was just trying to find some privacy away from everything. I am sorry, I did not see that you were bathing here.”

“Privacy from what?” The nymph once again settled beneath the water.

Nausicaa resumed bathing. “My name is Aikaterine. My father is a very wealthy landlord with several bountiful herds of sheep, so my family is visiting this island to pay homage to Hyperion. Lately, the conversation in my family revolves around my many suitors, and I have to say I cannot stand any of the boorish swine who have asked for my hand.”⁴⁷

“Me too,” the nymph exclaimed excitedly. “As a nymph cursed with only being able to maintain a mortal form for one day, I have lived a very lonely life. How I have wished for male companionship. Now alas, I seem to have too much of it. And if you call your suitors boorish swine, then these ten men who came to me were less than swine; they were deceitful rats.”

“I feel so blessed to have found such an understanding companion during this trial. If only my suitors would ask about my hobbies, why I like the rain more than the sun, or why I tuck my hair behind my ear when I am nervous.” Nausicaa sighed in despair. She then looked over at the nymph and asked, “If another man approached you, what would you like him to be like? What would you like to talk with him about?”

“Well,” the nymph said stunned. “I suppose I would want him to be...”

For the next few minutes, Nausicaa pretended to be politely interested as she quickly memorized everything the nymph was telling her. After listening to a long list questions that the nymph wanted asked of her, Nausicaa excused herself, claiming that she did not want her family searching for her. The nymph and Nausicaa said farewell, and Nausicaa once again donned her disguise. Approaching from another direction, the princely Nausicaa rode up to the pool.

The nymph stopped washing her nude body, and was astonished to find herself engaging in a lively and earnest conversation with a young man. Urging him to continue, the nymph

⁴⁷ This is another reference to the long, grand lies Odysseus tells to the characters on his journey.

beckoned Nausicaa to a sun drenched rock on the side of the water, where they lay together as they continued to converse. As dusk was painted over the blue sky, the nymph found herself in love with the young man. Having been charmed, the nymph went to collect the ewe from Hyperion. Upon seeing the ewe in the hands of a mortal, the god became enraged and began to shake the island horrifically. To save her mortal love, the nymph turned into the wind and bore Nausicaa away on it, carrying her safely across the sea with the ewe to Phaeacia.⁴⁸

Nausicaa bowed as the nymph was carried away to join the summer wind, before she headed towards her father's house leading the ewe behind her. She found the wise King Alcinous and the good Queen Arete hosting a grand feast in the receiving hall, for Nausicaa's letter from the Sickly Moon Inn had just arrived. In the corner stood her foul suitor, Sandrious, the only member of the party who looked sour over Nausicaa's triumphs. Nausicaa walked to the middle of the room, waited until she had everyone's attention, and then took off her helmet. The trusty leather tie that had helped conceal her feminine hair broke, and the plait unravelled to show her full long hair flowing down her back.

The king and queen were overjoyed, as were the loyal servants, lords, ladies, and vassals spread throughout the hall. However, the moment of joy was lessened as Nausicaa noticed the soldiers step in closer to protect her from where her suitor stood.

Breaking from the embrace of people, she turned toward Sandrious and spoke.

"I command you to leave this estate. You are a guest in this house due to a transparent betrothal between us. Thus it is I, and I alone, who can cast you out. You had no reason to remain once my father announced my departure. Even if I had failed my trials, which everyone

⁴⁸ She has completed the sixth trial. She used cleverness and guile to trick the nymph, demonstrating her ability to outmaneuver her opponent.

agrees I have not, the penalty for failing would not have resulted in me marrying you. Now I have returned, and I am now your equal in gender, and your superior in rank. I no longer require a man to provide coin for me; on my horse I carry four saddlebags heaped with precious gold and gems. I no longer need a man to speak for me; I was able to outwit the mighty Sarencles and the nymph. I no longer need a man to sail for me; I steered a ship safely away from sirens and sailed a raft around a god's island. I no longer need a man to be the host in my house; I proved capable of fending off guests, whilst remaining charming and gracious to them when I worked at the Sickly Moon Inn. And finally, I no longer need a man to fight for me! It was I who defeated the centaur that killed sixteen famed warriors. If you should press this suit against my wishes, it will be me you will face as the general on the battlefield. My father and brothers will be my loyal vassals, serving me with their brave soldiers. It is also I who you will be forced to live with, if I should lose the battle and we marry. I make the assumption that I do not meet your expectations in a mate; I am not biddable, amiable, or courteous. Do you want to risk your life, your wealth, and your men on a woman you now despise?"⁴⁹

Sandrious put up no protest as he was escorted from the grounds.

⁴⁹ Before completing these trials, Nausicaa lacked the authority and power of a man. Due to this, she could never assert or speak for herself in a male dominated world. Now that she has proven herself to be self sufficient, she can rule her own life and not have a man rule it for her.