

## *The adventures of fisherman Odysseus*

Once upon a time in a far-flung land lived a fisherman, called Odysseus, with his family. His wife, Erasmina loved animals and she liked spending her leisure time with them every day. They also had a bewitching, kind-hearted stepdaughter Calypso. The fisherman had found her abandoned on the beach as a baby.

A crisp October morning Odysseus had gone to his usual labour. All of a sudden a terrible thunderstorm broke out and the fisherman was lost at sea. Time flew and as Odysseus still hadn't returned home his family grew worried.

"Calypso, your father went fishing in this freak storm and he hasn't come back, yet. Stay here in case he returns and I'll go in search of him" said Erasmina.

"No, mother; you won't go alone. I'll come with you!" responded Calypso.

"No, my dear daughter! Just think that if he comes back and he finds neither of us here he will panic", exclaimed Erasmina.

Meanwhile the poor fisherman had lost consciousness and later on when he came to his senses he realized that he was at the sea bottom! Next to him were two dazzling mermaids taking care of him.

"Where am I? Who are you?" Odysseus asked.

"Don't worry; everything will be fine!" One of the mermaids assured him.

"Please, tell me what happened to me?" Odysseus asked again.

"A few hours earlier you had a terrible accident which almost cost your dear life!" they explained.

“I must go back home. My wife and daughter will be sick with worry!” said Odysseus with a trembling voice.

“Calm down and if you really want it there is a way to return to your family.” the mermaids pacified him.

“The only thing you have to do is go to the Prince of the Sea and he will tell you how you will be rejoined with your family.”

“If this needs to be done, it shall be done!” Odysseus answered determinedly.

“Beware though! The way to the Prince of the Sea is long and rough.” the mermaids warned him.

“You will walk for three days and nights; follow your heart and it will show you the way to the truth!” the mermaids said and swam away.

Not knowing what to do, Odysseus followed his heart and without losing his faith or courage for a single minute he kept wandering.

At some point he came across a turtle which was somewhat different from other turtles....it had a man’s voice.

On seeing Odysseus the turtle asked: “What are you doing here? Haven’t you been warned that it is dangerous to be here all alone?”

“Who is talking?” Odysseus asked mystified.

“Look behind you.” The turtle said.

On looking back Odysseus was stupefied. “By Poseidon...you can speak!” he stammered. Bringing himself together he asked: “My good turtle, do you know the way to the Dark Palace where the Prince of the Sea lives?”

“Do you know what you’re asking for? No one who went there ever came back.” the turtle answered in an awed whisper.

“I’m afraid of nothing! I’ll do whatever it takes to return to my family!” Odysseus snapped.

“I warned you! You should know, however, that nothing is as it seems to be. Take this and when the right time comes use it at will” the turtle confided putting in his hand a blue mussel and disappeared in the dark ocean.

Odysseus wondered for three days and three nights as the mermaids had said and then he came outside the Dark Palace which was guarded by three fearsome giants.

Just then he recalled the advice of the turtle and he figured out that the mussel was his only help. On eating the mussel his shadow disappeared; he had become invisible. This way he went through the gates of the palace unharmed and then he assumed his previous form. The first thing he discerned was a long, dark hall leading to a golden throne on which the Young Prince reposed.

“Come closer.” The Young Prince said.

“I want to go back to my family but I’ve lost my way and...”

“I know what you want.” the Young Prince cut in “but in order to fulfill your wish you must solve the following riddle or else you will lose everything.

*What is it that cracks but doesn’t break,*

*Hurts but doesn’t talk*

*And if it stops it doesn’t restart?*

I’ll give you the following clue: Just think what you’ve been through. The Young Prince said enigmatically.

Just then Odysseus recalled the words of the mermaids “*Follow your heart*” and whispered hesitantly “It’s the heart.”

All of a sudden a dazzling light blinded him and he lost consciousness.

Some time later Odysseus woke up in a dense forest having the form of a wounded snake and next to him was the Prince taking care of him. Shortly after, the Prince heard the rustle caused by somebody’s footsteps. He turned around and saw a beautiful, tall, golden-haired maiden with piercing blue eyes. The Prince was transfixed by her striking beauty and could not take his eyes off her.

The snake was taken aback by the maiden’s presence, as she was Calypso who was picking strawberries carefree. On seeing the wounded snake and the Prince, Calypso was startled and dropping her basket she rushed back home.

“Oh, mother you’ll never guess what happened to me!” she sobbed.

“While I was picking flowers in the forest I saw a huge snake and a man staring at me. I was so frightened.”

“Please, calm down. Let’s go back to the forest and show me,” Erasmina said softly.

“What are you talking about? It’s very dangerous!” answered Calypso.

“Come with me!” insisted Erasmina.

After a long trek they reached the forest.

All of a sudden, they were confronted with the wounded snake and the Prince. Unable to fight back her tears, Erasmina burst

out crying and when a tear dropped on the snake it was transformed into Odysseus. Thus Erasmia found her missing husband and Calypso her father.

A few days later the graceful maiden got married to the Prince, they had lots of children and lived happily ever after.