

EPISODE 5 – Bewitched

total running time: 9:25

Circe's charms (⊕ 5:14)

Poseidon, the god of the sea, the king of the tumbling foam, wanted us dead. How would we ever see our homes, our hearths, our fields, and farms and families again? As soon as we sighted land in any direction we made for it. We beached the ship, we dragged it up out of reach of even the fiercest wave. And then my men sat on the beach, weeping. They were so
5 full of despair they could do nothing. As for me, I decided to explore this island. Perhaps it would provide us with some means of placating or outwitting the sea god. And so I left my men on the beach. I climbed a hill. I looked out across the island and I saw that not far from where we'd beached the ship there was a forest. In the forest there was a clearing. In the clearing a white palace of strange design. The island was inhabited.

10 I made my way down the hill, to tell my men what I had seen. But when I reached the ship, it was deserted. I saw a path leading into a forest. I followed the path – it took me to the clearing I had seen from the hill. There was the white palace across the clearing from me but between me and it – lions, wolves. Cautiously I drew my sword. I stepped into the clearing towards the first of them. A lion it was, and as I approached it, it closed its eyes, flattened its ears and
15 began to purr. I found I could stroke the velvety fur between its eyes, it licked my hand. I stepped past it towards a wolf that rolled onto its back and showed me its belly to scratch. What kind of wild beasts were these? I picked my way between them until I was in front of the palace. I looked through the window and there were all my crew, sitting round a table, drinking, talking, laughing, singing. And then I saw the mistress of that place. Long-limbed she was,
20 pale-skinned, dark-haired and dark-eyed. She was bringing them cheese and wine and honey and barley meal. As they ate and drank I saw her take from somewhere a wand. She walked around the table, touching each man in turn, and as she did so the man she had touched dropped the goblet he was holding. He stared at his fingers as they clung to one another, his arms and legs shrank. His nose stretched out into a snout, his ears grew up and flopped down
25 over his eyes. Not men now, only pigs around that table.

They flopped from their stools and followed her into the shadows. I looked back into the clearing and I understood. Once, those lions and wolves had been human. I drew my sword, intending to rush in, but then, all the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. I knew this sensation. I knew this meant I was in the presence of one of the mighty gods or goddesses.
30 Sure enough behind me, shimmering in the guise of a beautiful young man, there was Hermes. I knew him by his winged sandals.

“Odysseus,” he said, “this is Circe. She is a witch of great knowledge and power. If you enter this place with no protection, you will suffer the same fate as all the others. But if you have the strength of character to follow the instructions I am about to give you, not only will your crew
35 be restored to you, but you may gain some of the knowledge you need to find a way home.”

The gods visit us in dreams and visions. Sometimes they tell us truth but sometimes not. Sometimes they tell us half-truths in order to betray us. I saw it happen at Troy. Hermes is the

messenger of the gods but he is also the god of trickery. But I had no choice. I could not sail my ship without a crew. And so I followed Hermes into the forest. He showed me a strange
40 plant, black of root it is, white of petal. He pulled it from the ground. 'Moly' is its name. He told me this would be my protection, against Circe's charms and potions. I put it inside my mouth. I kept it inside my mouth against my cheek. And then I bowed my head, I gave thanks to great Hermes and when I opened my eyes he was gone.

Trouble (☉ 4:11)

I was alone. I was trembling as I approached her palace. She welcomed me when I came to the door. I could not meet her eye. I knew if I looked into her eyes for even a moment, I would be under her spell. I sat at the table. She gave me cheese and wine and honey and barley meal, but all I tasted was the bitter root of moly against my tongue.

5 I felt something cool touch my neck. I looked up. She was standing over me, the wand in her hand. She was astonished to see her spell had had no effect. I stood. I struck the wand out of her hand with my sword. I showed her the sharp end of my blade and I said, "Promise me there will be no more tricks and restore my crew to their human form, or you will learn why they say my name means 'trouble'!"

10 "'Trouble'?" she said. "A hundred years ago, there was a prophecy. I was told that eventually a man would come who was worthy of the knowledge I bear. The prophecy said his name would mean 'trouble'. You are welcome here. Your name is Odysseus, Laertes' son. I promise you, I will give you only what you desire."

She picked up the wand. She led me into the shadows. She opened the door. Suddenly we
15 were out in the fierce sunlight again. Behind her palace and there before us, was a pigsty. She walked between the pigs, touching each in turn. As she did so the pig would become one of my crew, crawling on his hands and knees, guzzling acorns. At first they were terrified of her, but when I told them of the promise she had made me we returned to her palace, and that night she gave us a great feast. And at the end of the night when my men were asleep, she
20 took me to her bedroom, she whispered, "Odysseus, the sail of your ship is torn to shreds. The rest of the ship is in need of repair, your men are filled with despair and I have waited for you for one hundred years. Please don't go at once. Give me a month, a little month."

"A month," I said.

A year later a delegation came from the crew demanding that we now leave this island. And
25 so, reluctantly, I went to Circe and I told her the time had come for us to travel on. I asked her if she knew how we might placate or outwit the god of the sea. She shook her head. She said, "I know who would have an answer to your question: the blind prophet Tiresias."

"Where is he?" I said. "I will go to him. I will speak with him."

Her answer put a chill into my very soul: "Tiresias died long ago. If you want to speak with him
30 you must sail north, and north again, until you enter the realm of many guests, until you walk among the ghosts of the dead."