

Chapter 5

The land of the dead

Home was my only motive, home was my only goal, home was my greatest obsession and that was my deepest desire and pain. There is nothing worse for a tender heart than the binding tug of despair willing you to succumb to the overwhelming hopelessness of your impossible desires. How many more miles could I stand? Or would I forever scour the earth in a mindless search demented and half dead?

As I watched Circe's waving figure grow ever smaller, I realised how far we'd come: the many seas we had battled and the many islands we had discovered. Yet my thoughts reached an abrupt halt, I saw Circe reach behind her billowing skirt and produce... her wand...

The sky one a welcoming blue blanket overhead, now loomed over us threatening to swallow us whole, and as the clouds twisted and coiled, it was all I could do to piece together my suspicions; this was Circe's doing.

The seas swayed sickeningly, the foaming waters juddering in anticipation and as I watched in total awe and disbelief heard my voice, as if taking lead shout out across the deck, strewn with barrels and other assortments

"Stand firm," My voice, which was barely audible above the din, carried on the wind, "we must wait it out." Yet I knew the odds were slim. Waves now lashed at the deck tossing me and my crew across the deck. I fought for consciousness but as the world flashed in a chorus of deafening clap, I lost the battle; the world went black.

A voice punctured my min. I opened my eyes. I was home. Why was I home? Penelope peered over me, why was I home?

"My dear, wake up," her voice was soft, "wake up."

"I am awake," I laughed, "it was all a bad dream."

She frowned and as she frowned she faded; I knew; this was the dream. Brushing a single tear from my cheek I stood to greet, the land of the dead.

It was cold, very cold. It was eerie, hauntingly eerie. It was awful, overwhelmingly awful. The macabre display of the land was enough to make me vomit. Shadowed figures limped through the fog, forlorn etched into their faces, while ancient souls their bodies long since decayed, flew across the land, wailing and sobbing, sometimes crying for family or pining for the forgiving balm of eternal sleep.

Somewhere a girl sang, the ethereal tune ringing in my ears, a perfect symphony for the solemn stillness of this ghastly void, woven by the spiders of my mind into a funereal tapestry of despair; I wanted to wake up.

“There you are, Odysseus the trouble-maker,” A rasping voice paused my exploration,” you must be, you’re not dead.” He chortled. I turned around to discover...Tiresias.

“This realm has been cruel to me, don’t pretend, I scare myself sometimes.” Reminisced Tiresias sadly.

With ragged garments and cracked skin, blood oozed down his pale face, the only colour in sight upon his frail and brittle skeleton. This was the cost of mortality, the joy of eternal life, for the pain of eternal suffering. What was I to say?

“You have sought me out and I have waited,” he beat me to it, “do you seek power or knowledge?” I could see this was a test.

“I am Odysseus king of Ithaca and I search for a way to placate the sea god.” I spoke uncertainly; waiting for a response.

“I see,” he spoke thoughtfully, “the information you seek for your crew.” His lips curled into sly smile; I had been outmatched. Out from the fog, nine figures came into view, their joints restricted by thick tendrils of smoke, my crew struggled and squirmed. The sweat that trickled down their faces and their wide eyed expressions reflected my inner most panic, swelling inside me. I had a choice to make...