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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## Scylla and Charybdis

Once upon a time, in the ancient land of Greece, there lived a brave and clever hero named Odysseus. He was the king of a peaceful island called Ithaca and had been away fighting in the Trojan War. Now, he was on a long journey home across the vast, blue sea with his loyal crew.

Odysseus and his men had faced many adventures and challenges along the way. One day, they arrived at the island of the enchantress Circe, who was wise and knew much about the dangers of the world. Circe welcomed them kindly and, before they left, gave Odysseus important advice.

"Dear Odysseus," she said, "your journey ahead is filled with peril. Soon, you will come to a narrow strait of water. On one side lives Scylla, a terrible monster with six heads. On the other side lurks Charybdis, a massive whirlpool that swallows the sea three times a day. You must choose your path carefully."

Odysseus listened intently.

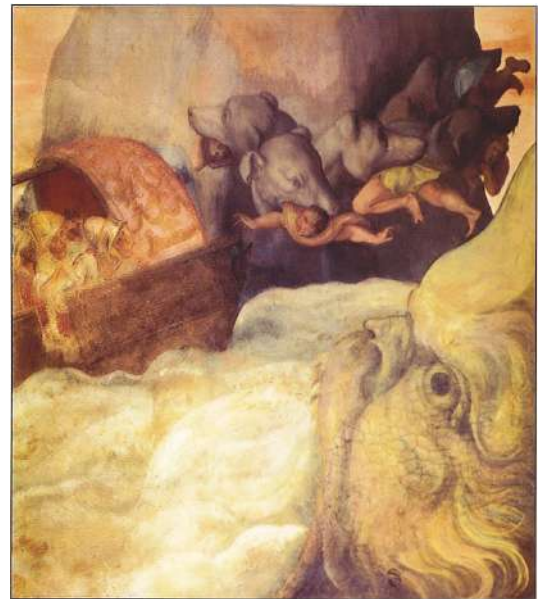
Circe continued, "If you sail too close to Scylla, she will snatch six of your men—one for each of her hungry heads. But if you steer toward Charybdis, she may swallow your entire ship, and everyone will be lost. It is better to lose a few men than your whole crew. Do not try to fight Scylla; she is invincible. Instead, sail swiftly past her."

Odysseus thanked Circe for her wisdom and set sail once more. As they approached the strait, he shared some of Circe's warnings with his crew but decided not to tell them about Scylla's deadly heads, fearing it would cause panic.

"Friends," he said, "we are coming to dangerous waters. Stay alert and keep the ship close to the cliff on the right. Row with all your might!"

The sea grew rough, and eerie mists swirled around them. Suddenly, they heard a terrifying sound—a mix of roaring waves and something else, like the yelping of giant dogs. Before they could react, Scylla reached down from her hidden cave high on the cliff.

With lightning speed, her six long necks darted toward the ship. Each monstrous head grabbed one sailor, lifting them into the air. The rest of the crew watched in horror as their friends were taken away, disappearing into Scylla's dark cave.



Odysseus was filled with sorrow but knew there was no time to lose. "Keep rowing!" he shouted. "We must get past this danger!"

They pushed forward with all their strength, and soon they were out of Scylla's reach. But they weren't safe yet. On the other side, the sea began to swirl violently.

It was Charybdis, the mighty whirlpool. The water spun and gurgled, threatening to pull them in.

Thanks to Odysseus's skillful steering and the crew's hard work, they managed to sail between the two dangers, escaping both Scylla and Charybdis.

Relieved but exhausted, they continued their journey and reached an island where the sun god Helios kept his sacred cattle. Before they set foot on land,

Odysseus warned his men, "We must not harm any of the cattle here. They belong to the mighty sun god, and touching them would bring terrible consequences. We have enough food; let us respect the gods and stay safe."

For a while, the crew obeyed. But as days passed, strong winds kept them stranded on the island, and their food supplies began to run out. Hungry and desperate, the men decided to ignore Odysseus's warning.

"Just this once," they said, "we'll take some cattle to eat. Surely the sun god will forgive us."

While Odysseus was away praying for guidance, the men took the cattle, cooked them, and ate their fill.

When Odysseus returned and discovered what they had done, he was dismayed.

"Oh no," he cried. "You have brought disaster upon us!" Indeed, Helios was furious when he saw that his sacred cattle had been harmed. He went to Zeus, the king of the gods, and demanded justice. Zeus agreed to punish the men for their wrongdoing.

As Odysseus and his crew set sail again, the sky darkened, and a fierce storm descended upon them.

Thunder boomed, and lightning struck their ship, shattering it to pieces. The men were tossed into the raging sea, and one by one, they disappeared beneath the waves.

Only Odysseus survived, clinging to a piece of broken wood. The storm pushed him back toward the deadly strait of Scylla and Charybdis. Exhausted but determined, he held on tight as he approached Charybdis, who was about to swallow the sea again. Thinking quickly, Odysseus spotted a tall fig tree growing from a rock above the whirlpool. With all his remaining strength, he leaped and grabbed onto its branches. He hung there, dangling over the swirling waters, while Charybdis swallowed the remains of his ship.

When the whirlpool finally spat out pieces of wreckage, Odysseus let go of the tree and swam to grab a floating plank. He climbed onto it and paddled away with his hands, putting as much distance as he could between himself and the dangers.

This time, the gods protected him from Scylla's gaze, and he drifted safely past. After days adrift at sea, Odysseus washed ashore on the mysterious island of Ogygia, where the kind nymph Calypso lived. She cared for him until it was time for him to continue his journey home.