

Ithaca

As you set out for Ithaca
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon - don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon - you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time,
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind -
as many sensual perfumes as you can,
and may you visit many egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaca always in mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.

Ithaca gave you the marvellous journey,
without her you would not have set it out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood what Ithaca means.

Konstantinos Kavafis