

ITHACA

*When you start on your way to Ithaca,
pray that the journey be long,
rich in adventure, rich in discovery.
Do not fear the Cyclops, the Laestrygonians
or the anger of Poseidon. You'll not encounter them
on your way if your thoughts remain high,
if a rare emotion possesses you body and soul.
You will not encounter the Cyclops,
the Laestrygonians or savage Poseidon
if you do not carry them in your own soul,
if your soul does not set them before you.*

*Pray that the journey be a long one,
that there be countless summer mornings
when, with what pleasure, what joy,
you drift into harbours never before seen;
that you make port in Phoenician markets
and purchase their lovely goods:
coral and mother of pearl, ebony and amber,
and every kind of delightful perfume.
Acquire all the voluptuous perfumes that you can,
Then sail to Egypt's many towns
To learn and learn from their scholars.*

*Always keep Ithaca fixed in your mind.
Arrival there is your destination.
Yet do not hurry the journey at all:
better that it lasts for many years
and you arrive an old man on the island,
rich from all you have gained along the way,
not counting on Ithaca for riches.
For Ithaca gave you the splendid voyage:
without her you would never have embarked.
She has nothing more to give you now.*

*And though you find her poor, she has not misled you;
you having grown so wise, so experienced from your travels,
by then you will have learned what Ithacas mean.*

Constantin Cavafy
(Translated by: Avi Sharon. Penguin edition, 2008)