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## Discussions with Dike

Phoebe Parker  
*College of DuPage*

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Discussions with Dike

by Phoebe Parker

(English 1159)

**S**UMMARY: Recent investigations have revealed some startling new details about the famed Odysseus's epic journey home. A survivor of his crew was discovered on the beaches of Pylos. The man, believed to be Eurylochus, told the city's king, Nestor, about the events that took place on the journey. His accounts of the events, however, reveal a side of Odysseus that may threaten his heroic title. Eurylochus has accused Odysseus of deceitful behavior, and of being the cause of his crewmen's death. We have invited Odysseus to our studios, so we may discover the truth behind these accusations.

DIKE: Welcome to Discussions with Dike. I am your host Dike, goddess of justice, and moral order ("Dike"). Tonight we have a very special guest. He is an acclaimed hero and beloved king, who served overseas for ten years during the Trojan War, but what he is most famous for, is his epic journey home. Please welcome our guest, Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS: Thank you for having me!

DIKE: Now Odysseus, I believe we are all very familiar with the tales of adventure and woe that you have shared, over the years, since your return. They have become quite popular throughout all of Greece, don't you agree?

ODYSSEUS: Yes, they seem to have spread like wildfire. I am proud to hear that my stories are being told in the many halls of great kingdoms. It is the legacy any man hopes to leave behind.

DIKE: There have been some questions raised that could discredit your legacy, does that concern you?

ODYSSEUS: No, absolutely not. I have revealed my tale, and I stand by my actions. I am prepared to defend my name at all costs. I am the great Odysseus.

DIKE: I would first like to discuss the message Circes, the nymph, shared with you before your departure. Her message carried many warnings did it not?

ODYSSEUS: Yes, Circe was very helpful. She shared with me the steps of my journey home, and how to survive the hardships to come.

DIKE: And you shared these with your crew?

ODYSSEUS: Yes, "I informed my shipmates point by point" (12.180). I said to my crew, "It's wrong for only one or two/ to know the revelations that lovely Circe/ made to me alone" (12.167-169). I wanted my crewmen to be informed of what was to come, so that we could be united in the fight against what awaited us.

DIKE: Your crewman, Eurylochus, recently came out and said that you did not fully disclose all that Circe had predicted. He claims you said, "She warns, we must steer clear of the Sirens, /... I

alone was to hear their voices” (12.172-174). You claim that Circe told you that you alone are to hear the Siren song. We know this not to be true.

Circe, in truth, told you not to listen unless you absolutely could not resist. You, Odysseus, singled yourself out. Why did you feel the need to alter the truth when discussing the Sirens with your crew?

ODYSSEUS: No one has heard the Sirens song and lived to tell the tale. I wanted to be the first. If I did not declare myself the chosen one, my crew would have fought over who should listen. I did not want to create conflict where it was not needed. I therefore, altered the truth to save the crewmen from a disagreement.

DIKE: Eurylochus also claims that you did not warn the crewmen about the crags.

There was a choice offered to you, by Circe, between which crag you should choose to face. Scylla, the six-headed monster, “an immortal devastation, / terrible, savage, wild” (12.128-129), or Charybdis, the whirlpool, who “not even the earthquake god could save you from” (12.118). Why did you make the decision to face Scylla without consulting with your crew?

ODYSSEUS: There was no other option. Circe told me that Scylla, the six-headed monster, was the crag to face. She said to me, “Better by far to lose six men, and keep your ship/ than lose your entire crew” (12.120-121). Scylla was the lesser of two evils. She would only cause the death of six crewmen. I made the decision for my crew, to save them. Telling them my options would have caused an argument, one that may never have been solved. We would have lost precious time. I stand by my decision. Everything I did was to save my crew, the best way I could.

DIKE: You and Eurylochus are the only survivors. Eurylochus blames you for the deaths of his fellow crewmen. Do you blame yourself?

ODYSSEUS: It brings me sorrow that my crew was unable to return home with me. I do not, however, blame myself for their deaths. My crewmen were a mutinous group, of ungrateful savages, who held no trust in me. When we cleared the crags and approached the island of Thrinacia, I warned my crewmen not to feast on the cattle of the sun. I said to them, “swear me a binding oath, all here, that if/ we come on a herd of cattle or fine flock of sheep, / not one man among us.../ will slaughter an ox or ram” (12.323- 326). Eurylochus and the crewmen chose to disobey my orders. They feasted on the cattle of the sun for days on end, and they paid the price for it. I was lucky to escape Zeus’s wrath with my life. May their tales serve as a lesson to all; the God’s are not to be trifled with. Any man who dares to test their commands will learn just how powerful they truly are.

DIKE: Indeed, your tale can serve as a lesson to all. Thank you for sharing your side of the story. I believe there is much else to be said about the truth behind Eurylochus’s accusations, but I think we all can side with you in knowing that you were not the cause of your crewmen’s untimely demise, due to the representation of character you so clearly recount. You have shared that your crew was quite disloyal and took any chance they had to undermine your authority. As we all know, a ship cannot run without its captain. I sympathize with your struggles and hope we can resolve this matter.

ODYSSEUS: Thank you Dike for allowing me to share my side of the story. I believe it is important to clear up these false accusations, so that my tales can live on, for they have so much to teach the world.

DIKE: Thank you, Odysseus, for joining us tonight. Tune in next week as I interview Eurylochus to get to the bottom of this story. This has been, Discussions with Dike. Have a goodnight.

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#### Works Cited

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