

THE WOOING OF HELEN OF THE FAIR HANDS

In "The Wooing of Helen of The Fair Hands," the narrative sets in an ancient time marked by the valor and quests of young princes aiming at marriage with prestigious ladies. Among these ladies, Helen, the daughter of King Tyndicus, stands peerless in beauty, attracting suitors from far and wide. Despite the considerable competition, Ulysses, hailing from a small kingdom, joins the contest for Helen's hand. Unlike his taller, wealthier opponents adorned in gold, Ulysses, a man of shorter stature with broad shoulders and long yellow hair, excels in wisdom, craftsmanship, and archery, yet lacks the resources and horses that could enhance his appeal. Nevertheless, he shares a profound friendship with Helen, an aspect pivotal to the unfolding story.

King Tyndicus, striving for a commitment to peace among the suitors, mandates an oath to support his chosen son-in-law, thereby selecting Menelaus, King of Lacedaemon, as Helen's husband. Menelaus stands out not for his sheer strength but his courage and royal stature, somehow less prestigious in combat prowess compared to other heroes like the gigantic Aias or Agamemnon, but destined to be Helen's partner. Meanwhile, the mightiest of warriors, Achilles, remains absent from this quest, concealed among girls to escape a foretold fate of glorious yet short-lived heroism at war, as devised by his mother, the sea goddess Thetis.

With Helen married to Menelaus, and the union of her twin sister Clytaemnestra to Agamemnon marking alliances among the princes, a brief era of harmony emerges. The narrative then shifts focus to Penelope, cousin to Helen, whose beauty, albeit outshone by Helen, captivates Ulysses. Recognizing Ulysses's virtues, Penelope's father, Icarius, blesses their union, laying the foundation of a deeply affectionate marriage. They retire to Ulysses's realm, Ithaca, possibly relieved to distance

themselves from Helen's overwhelming allure and the troubles it forebodes. Helen's past is touched upon, revealing a childhood abduction by Theseus and her rescue, hinting at her enchanting allure that transcends her beauty, fortified by gifts such as a mystical red jewel. This chapter weaves the initial fabric of relationships, alliances, and love triangles that define the saga, setting the stage for epic tales that follow.

