

Yeghishe Charents

(Translated by Samvel Mkrtchyan)

NAUSICAA

For Arpik, Arpik, Izabella
My most beautiful song
Y.Ch 21/09/1936

1

Like Naiads, like Naiads, like Naiads,
She is calling with the voice of my yearning,
Pledging a true love's incessant attraction,
Leaving pains of loss and heart's burning.

From childhood and days that are gone forever,
In the red sands full of affliction and glee,
I've been thinking that, clung to my longing,
My Nausicaa was waiting for me.

At first like a dream of an unfamiliar life,
In a ship sailing the blue translucent sea,
Like a tempting and delightful reflection
My Nausicaa was calling for me.

Then in a life of irrevocable years,
In the red sands again that scurry and flee,
I've been dreaming that, clung to my longing,
My Nausicaa was waiting for me.

Sometimes like a girl, looking so childish,
Sometimes like a coveted lady full-grown,
A Manon Lescaut, or a spotless virgin-
My Nausicaa would appear all alone;

Sometimes like a statue of snow-white marble,
Sometimes like an urn of Mycenaean clay,
Or turned to an Egyptian with an ebony body,
My Nausicaa would lure me away;

Sometimes with smooth hips of molten silver,
Sometimes like a snake of a spiteful intent,
Sometimes turned into a green eyed woman,
My Nausicaa would seem innocent;

Sometimes in softly rustling swishing shrouds,
Sometimes blanket-clad, in a lunar hood,
Sometimes stark naked, sometimes veiled or hidden-
My Nausicaa, in her womanhood;

Sometimes calling me with the voice of a flute,
Or with the lyre's sweet melodious moan,
Sometimes with new tunes, or with songs of yore-
My Nausicaa, in her precious tone;

In the highlands above, or in the valleys below,
On the golden sands of my heavenly state,
In the quiet of lakes and the tempest of seas,
My Nausicaa, I have heard your gate.

I have been waiting for you any second I lived,
Dreaming that you would dream of my ways,
In any place I've been, any minute I lived
My Nausicaa, phantasm and maze;

In ingenious songs and in dexterous books,
Or upon any canvas, by a genius drawn.
In the North, the West, the ancient Orient,
Or in the South, my Nausicaa, so warm;

On any twist and turn, with every single step,
In any evil scheme, or in any great event,
I have anticipated our meeting anywhere;
My Nausicaa, despite the years spent.

With every breaking day, or in any dream
That I've had at nights, full of hopes and threats,
Even when the wind breaks open a door,
My Nausicaa, I'm guarding your steps.

From my sweet childhood to the midday of life,
In my days elapsed like a dream, my mission
Has been looking out for you to appear,
Nausicaa. my daily apparition.

All my beleaguered books, all my deathless songs,
The flame of my thirst, the cure that I seek here-
Whatever I've done, whatever I'll do-
Were meant to find my Nausicaa.

Till my blackest day, when the world relapses,
When my flesh receives nothing from above,
I'll be seeking you in all lustrous pathways,
Nausicaa, my unreachable love!

I have coveted poet's reputation,
fame, blood-tasting songs, love and thrill,
Hoping constantly that my Nausicaa
Has been waiting for me, still;

That despite dead roses and my scythed years,
And my dreams dissolved in all mortal aisles,
At my journey's end, as a priceless gift,
My Nausicaa, I may see your smile.

Like Naiads, like Naiads, like Naiads,
She calling with the voice of my yearning,
edging a true love's incessant attraction,
Leaving only death and heart's burring.

2

In Memory of Aarpenik Charents, my wife

Like Naiads, like Naiads, like Naiads.
She called me one time with the voice of my yearning,
She promised true love's incessant attraction,
Leaving only death and heart's burning.

Surrounded by seven maids of her own,
Those maids of devotion and terrible pain,
As if sentenced to death on her own free will,
My Nausicaa accepted my name.

In the craving sea of my vanished isles,
You became my island, golden and true.
Yet my black love grew to be ruin and murder,
My Nausicaa, alas, for you.

Like crimson coral, tinted like roses,
Over the red sands, like a gentle tide,

Gliding you smiled, and sliding you vanished,
My Nausicaa, my deadly bride.

3

Like Naiads- now turned into naive creatures,
Like Naiads, with voices that flatter and woo,
Promising the Spring's pleasures and delight,
Who is it calling me? Who?

Like one Ulysses, succumbed to the mast
Of my desire and the Naiads' sweet wail,
Succumbed to the voice of my memories,
I approached those shores yet again.

Am I, as another Ulysses returning,
In an impossible dream of retention,
Visiting the isle where my Nausicaa
Met me with love and attention?

O the same Naiads with their enchanting songs,
Yet more profound and gladly converted;
The magical horizon is nearing at length,
But why does it seem deserted?

The shore is the same-the strolling girls-
And there's my Nausicaa like a vigorous gleam!

She stared without blinking-the irrevocable past
Flared in her eyes like a dream.

Going down, sinking deep, like crimson coral,
In the vain red sands of lifelong endeavor;
Like childhood she lapsed into delirium-
My Nausicaa departing forever.

4

Like Naiads, like Naiads, like Naiads,
They called me with the voice of my yearning,
Promising true love's incessant attraction,
Leaving death's grief-and heart's burning.

In the islands of my sea of adventures
So many Nausicaas have been sent from above-
Each one departed, clung to their longing
To a new Ulysses and a different love.

Clung to her fabulous and indigo shoreline,
A different Nausicaa belonging to others,
She was a princess now, guarding her Ulysses
Among the red sands of my longings and bothers.

Assumed as princesses, clung to my longing,

How many beautiful Nausicaas have drowned,
Cioing under and sinking like striking red corals,
Among the red sands of my craving unbound.

Clung to the islands of my sea of adventures,
In the ruby dream of my minutes and seconds.
Each Nausicaa I met would turn out to be
Someone's princess, as she would be reckoned.

Yet, crowned a princess in someone else's land,
Each Nausicaa I lost to disorderly throngs,
Happened to meet me again, as my lover-
Amid the ruby sands of my desperate songs.

Having dreamed of them in my infinite dreams,
Enthused with obsession amid my ruby sands,
I gathered whatever was left out of my poems,
To put them, my unloved one, in your feeble hands.

Clung to my longing elapsed through the years,
My only Nausicaa, my undreamed one. alas-
A'herever I was waiting, I lost them forever-
So cherished in dreams, like all of them, passed.

Sought in red longing of all my adventures,

No Nausicaa smiled at me in this world;
Whatever I had to give them lavishly,
I handed to you, O my unloved girl.

Whatever was left out of my livid poems,
With the fervor and passion amid my ruby sands-
And whatever I had to give them lavishly,
I put it, my unloved one, in your feeble hands.

In the roads of my life, in those brutal days
Of passion, fire, whatever-I gave you everything
To finish any dream-so that I might forget them,
So that no Nausicaa would ever want to sing.

Yet again and again, like Naiads, like Naiads.
They are calling me in their hankering breath-
Promising true love's incessant attraction,
Yet giving me barely the sorrow of death.

Neither my cuddles, richly splashed on you,
In the crimson dreams of nightly desire
Nor the boundless longing written in my songs,
Did stifle, my Nausicaa, my everlasting fire.

Like Naiads, like Naiads, like Naiads.

You are calling me today-and tomorrow
You'll be calling me, as long as I breathe.
Promising me love, but giving me sorrow.

They'll be calling me until my last dream;
She'll be kissing me-just before my death-
As if she is kissing the Ulysses she longed for-
My Nausicaa, dung to my very last breath.

A VISION OF DEATH

Like a tightly stretched string of a forsaken cello,
My heart is vibrating with fears uncontrolled:
It's the peak of my longings-my very last lyre-
A tight rope that's hanging from crossed wooden poles.
Like the darkest derision of my fortune and doom,
An old pledge and promise, so vainly harangued.
The poles of the gallows stand proud in the city.
Patiently waiting for the one to be hanged.
The gallows stands silent-while there, in the centre.
Glumly and gloomily, this dark rope still sways,
Like the flameless eruption of my orphaned sad being-
Out of these tender and heartbreaking days.
A flameless sad evening has calmly descended,
A silence that's tearing the heavens apart,
like the aching abrasion of today and tomorrow
Or the anguish of downfall interning my heart.
The stores, dimly stooped, and the crowd congregated
Round the gallows with ominous crossed wooden poles.
So close to death s dismal and delicate lyre-
Do they really seek something to be sadly consoled?
Who on earth has invented this vicious delusion?
Who has chosen to turn the bright dawns of my soul
Into shadowy evenings - this sinister gallows,
A dark rope that's hanging from crossed wooden poles.
Could it possibly be me and my heart faint and moonstruck.
That failed to deliver festive flames from afar
And wished that no lyre should be blessing the haloed
Hopes of my homeland and her forthcoming star?

So I will advance now. With a grief-stricken longing,
With a poet's ambitions, and the flames in hand,
With the glowering song of my days so unsmiling,
With the last love and dream of my Sweet native land,
I'll advance in this fading and flickering twilight,
Like a lonely ghost haunted, like a phantom long-chased,
To offer my neck to the crossed wooden poles-
Whishing to swing, oh so mournfully chaste!
May no other victim be claimed but my body,
May no other feet make their steps to the gallows,
in my eyes of the hanged, O my motherland troubled,
I let them notice the halo of all your tomorrows.
In my eyes of the hanged, protruded and bulging,
Let them notice the halo of all their tomorrows.
May no other victim be claimed but my body,
May no other shadow come close to the gallows.