the return of Ulysses

by Jerry Ratch

Then you came home from your travels and stole her, your new queen, though she was ready. And raped my heart as you entered the new passage to heaven. And I cried out your name on the river, and swam in the warm waters behind you, naming your new name and the old, even as I understood I could no longer hold you, but she could. And I knew what was in store for her, and envied her even so.

And fuming I followed you over the waters, and the deep face of things watched this race that ended on those shores, then never ended, so it seems. So you can sleep with her in your memories, and her breasts that are in heaven. Gods other than you let their fingers dabble in my flesh meanwhile, and I spilled outward for some time.

In a dream you grab one of the gods by the wrist, your eyes locked, and that god fades in the thin air. Then after you doze, you awaken in my presence, and many of the gods are trying to brush each other aside over your girl. And that girl is me! And you make me so happy that I awaken crying out your name, your real name on my lips like an incantation, like a prayer to our past lives. And it is a living dream, still, and I am in it, and you are in it, and we are both so young and alive and free.

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