

EPISODE 3 – My Name is Nobody

total running time: 9:52

Exchange of gifts (⊕ 4:30)

We were trapped in the Cyclops' cave. All through that night I paced, trying to fight off panic, trying to think of some way of outwitting this cunning brute. The next morning he woke up, ate another two of my men, crunching through their bones, smacking his lips, rolling his great eye as he did so. Then he milked the female sheep and goats, he pushed the boulder from the
5 cave entrance. For a few moments daylight came streaming in, then he herded his animals outside. And once he and they were out in the day, he put the rock back so that we could not escape.

We searched the cave from top to bottom. We found a tree trunk that the Cyclops was drying to use as a walking stick. With our swords we sharpened one end of the trunk, so that it came
10 to a point like a stake, like a fence-post, and then we hid it under a dung-hill. That evening the ghastly shepherd returned with his flock. We heard the rumble of the rock, in came the beasts. He followed them in, then he turned and rolled the rock back into its place, sealing the cave entrance as surely as a stopper seals the top of a wineskin. And he peered at us and grinned: "Have you had an enjoyable day?"

15 We stepped forward: "We little two-eyes have made something you one-eyes have not. I have it here in this wineskin. If I give it as a gift to you, would you give me something in return?"
"Give me your gift and then I will give you my answer."

I threw the goatskin of strong wine to his feet. He looked at it, he looked at me. Then he lifted it up, he took the stopper from it and squeezed a puddle into his palm and sucked. A grin spread
20 across his face, terrible to behold it was. And then he squeezed the wineskin so that all the wine gushed into his open mouth, he threw down the empty skin and said, "What is your name?"
"My name?" I said. "My name is Nobody."

"Well then, Nobody, I thank you for your gift. It tasted good. In return I will give you something precious indeed. I will give you a little more life. I promise – you will be the last one that I eat."

25 And he grabbed another one of my men then, lifted him up, bit through his neck, crunched through his skull as though it was an eggshell, but as he chewed his cheeks reddened. He began to sway and stumble. He put out his hand to steady himself, then he lay down on the ground, his cheek pressed against the sand, his eye shut, his mouth open, his lips dripping mingled blood and wine, and he began to snore.

30 We took the tree trunk from where we'd hidden it. We put the point of it into the fire until it glowed white hot, and then we lifted the tree trunk, the point facing forwards, onto our shoulders and, urging each other on, we ran at the Cyclops and plunged the white hot point into his eye. The Cyclops gave an awful yell, he reared up, he pulled the wood from his head with a sucking sound, he threw it to the ground. The scream of the Cyclops summoned other
35 Cyclopes in other caves in that hill. They came running, they shouted through the rock in the cave mouth.

“Polyphemus, what’s the matter?” He shouted back, “I have been blinded!”

“Who has blinded you?” they shouted.

He answered, “Nobody, Nobody has blinded me!”

40 “If nobody has blinded you there is nothing we can do to help. Pray to the gods and goddesses and your sight will be restored to you.” And the Cyclopes went back to their caves and their dreams.

Cursed (☹ 5:22)

All that night we played a horrible game of blind man’s buff with Polyphemus. He was feeling his way along the walls of the cave, reaching out into the darkness around him, uttering terrible threats, the blood dripping from his chin. We were ducking underneath his sweeping hands, gathering wherever we could. When at last the bleating of the animals alerted the Cyclops to the coming of the day, he felt his way along the walls until he felt the boulder, in the cave
5 mouth. He pushed it out and then he turned and squatted so that his back stuck out of the cave, so that he was facing into the cave. He felt the ground until he felt the fences that held in his sheep and goats, and he pulled them apart. Just as they were trained to do, the sheep and goats trotted out of the cave to graze, but of course they had to make their way under him. As
10 they did so he would run his fingers across their sides and their backs. You see he was hoping we would try and escape among the beasts and he would be able to feel us and grab us and pull us limb from limb. But I had guessed that he would do this. And during the night I and my friends had found whatever rope or vines we could and we had tied the sheep together, one beside the other in groups of three. And then each of my men had slid on his back under the
15 belly of the second – the middle – of the three sheep. And I had tied the man under the animal, so that now the Cyclops would run his fingers over the woolly flanks, the woolly backs of three sheep, and then he would release them, not knowing, under them one of my men was being dragged to freedom.

In this way all my companions escaped, only I remained. I had held back a curly horned ram.
20 Now I slid underneath its belly, I reached up, I grabbed the wool on its back and I shook it. It took my instruction. It trotted towards the Cyclops. The Cyclops’ sweeping hands touched the horns on the ram’s head, his fingers closed round the ram’s head, and the ram stopped.

“I know you,” said the Cyclops. “You are the leader of the herd. The first to leave the cave each morning and munch the juicy grass and yet today, when all the others have gone, you are still
25 here. Why?”

Under that ram my heart was beating so loud I was sure the Cyclops could hear it. But then I heard the Cyclops say, “I know why. Yes. Somehow you sense I suffer, don’t you? You stay here to keep me company. Little ram, there is nothing you can do. I am blind now. I will never again see the sunshine. Ram, you must go and graze with your companions.”

30 And he released the beast and it trotted out and within moments I was blinking in the bright

light, I was gulping in fresh air after the stink of the cave. I was free. I untied my men from underneath the animals, we loaded the sheep aboard the ship and we made our way out of the bay. I looked back at this island that so recently had seemed to me a paradise and I could see the hill. I could see the cave. I could see the Cyclops was still squatting facing into the cave
35 waiting for us to make our move. And I couldn't stop myself. I had to gloat. I put my hands to my mouth and shouted "No eyes!". The Cyclops stumbled out of the cave, he felt the ground in front of himself until he had in his hands the boulder. He hurled it towards the sound of me. It struck the ocean near the prow, a wave rose up and drenched me. I laughed. My men, they hissed, they shook their heads, but like a craftsman, I had to leave my name on my handiwork.
40 "Polyphemus, it was not Nobody who blinded you. Remember this name for the rest of your life of stumbling darkness. It was Odysseus who blinded you! Odysseus, king of rocky Ithaca, ram among sheep."

"Father Poseidon," shouted the Cyclops, "did you hear his name? It was Odysseus who blinded your son! Blight his voyage with trial and calamity so that if at last he reaches his
45 homeland, let it be alone, and unknown and under a strange sail, and let him find danger waiting where there should be a welcome!"