

Pandora's Box

The creation of the world is a problem naturally fitted to excite the liveliest interest of man, its inhabitant. The ancient pagans, not having the information on the subject which we derive from the pages of Scripture, had their own way of telling the story, which is as follows:

Before earth and sea and heaven were created, all things wore one aspect, to which we give the name of Chaos- a confused and shapeless mass, nothing but dead weight, in which, however, slumbered the seeds of things. Earth, sea, and air were all mixed up together; so the earth was not solid, the sea was not fluid, and the air was not transparent. God and Nature at last interposed, and put an end to this discord, separating earth from sea, and heaven from both. The fiery part, being the lightest, sprang up, and formed the skies; the air was next in weight and place. The earth, being heavier, sank below; and the water took the lowest place, and buoyed up the earth.



Here some god- it is not known which- gave his good offices in arranging and disposing the earth. He appointed rivers and bays their places, raised mountains, scooped out valleys, distributed woods, fountains, fertile fields. and stony plains. The air being cleared, the stars began to appear, fishes took possession of the sea, birds of the air, and four-footed beasts of the land.

But a nobler animal was wanted, and Man was made. It is not known whether the creator made him of divine materials, or whether in the earth, so lately separated from heaven, there lurked still some heavenly seeds. Prometheus took some of this earth, and kneading it up with water, made man in the image of the gods. He gave him an upright stature, so that while all other animals turn their faces downward, and look to the earth, he raises his to heaven, and gazes on the stars.

Prometheus was one of the Titans, a gigantic race, who inhabited the earth before the creation of man. To him and his brother Epimetheus was committed the office of making man, and providing him and all other animals with the faculties necessary for their preservation. Epimetheus undertook to do this, and Prometheus was to overlook his work, when it was done. Epimetheus accordingly proceeded to bestow upon the different animals the various gifts of courage, strength, swiftness, sagacity; wings to one, claws to another, a shelly covering to a third, etc. But when man came to be provided for, who was to be superior to all other animals, Epimetheus had been so prodigal of his resources that he had nothing left to bestow upon him. In his perplexity he resorted to his brother Prometheus, who, with the aid of Minerva, went up to heaven, and lighted his torch at the chariot of the sun. and brought down fire to man. With this gift man was more than a match for all other animals. It enabled him to make weapons wherewith to subdue them; tools with which to cultivate the earth; to warm his dwelling, so as to be comparatively independent of climate; and finally to introduce the arts and to coin money, the means of trade and commerce.

Woman was not yet made. The story (absurd enough!) is that Jupiter made her, and sent her to Prometheus and his brother, to punish them for their presumption in stealing fire from heaven; and man, for accepting the gift. The first woman was named Pandora. She was made in heaven, every god contributing something to perfect her. Venus gave her beauty, Mercury persuasion, Apollo music, etc. Thus equipped, she was conveyed to earth, and presented to Epimetheus, who gladly accepted her, though cautioned by his brother to beware of Jupiter and his gifts. Epimetheus had in his house a jar, in which were kept certain noxious articles for which, in fitting man for his new abode, he had had no occasion. Pandora was seized with an eager curiosity to know what this jar contained; and one day she slipped off the cover and looked in. Forthwith there escaped a

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multitude of plagues for hapless man,- such as gout, rheumatism, and colic for his body, and envy, spite, and revenge for his mind,- and scattered themselves far and wide. Pandora hastened to replace the lid! but, alas! the whole contents of the jar had escaped, one thing only excepted, which lay at the bottom, and that was hope. So we see at this day, whatever evils are abroad, hope never entirely leaves us; and while we have that, no amount of other ills can make us completely wretched.

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Return of Ulysses (Cyclops)

The romantic poem of the Odyssey is now to engage our attention. It narrates the wanderings of Ulysses (Odysseus in the Greek language) in his return from Troy to his own kingdom Ithaca.

From Troy the vessels first made land at Ismarus, city of the Ciconians, where, in a skirmish with the inhabitants, Ulysses lost six men from each ship. Sailing thence, they were overtaken by a storm which drove them for nine days along the sea till they reached the country of the Lotus-eaters. Here, after watering, Ulysses sent three of his men to discover who the inhabitants were. These men on coming among the Lotus-eaters were kindly entertained by them, and were given some of their own food, the lotus-plant, to eat. The effect of this food was such that those who partook of it lost all thoughts of home and wished to remain in that country. It was by main force that Ulysses dragged these men away, and he was even obliged to tie them under the benches of the ships.



[Footnote: Tennyson in the "Lotus-eaters" has charmingly expressed the dreamy, languid feeling which the lotus food is said to have produced.

"How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each others' whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos, day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray:
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass."]

They next arrived at the country of the Cyclopes. The Cyclopes were giants, who inhabited an island of which they were the only possessors. The name means "round eye," and these giants were so called because they had but one eye, and that placed in the middle of the forehead. They dwelt in caves and fed on the wild productions of the island and on what their flocks yielded, for they were shepherds. Ulysses left the main body of his ships at anchor, and with one vessel went to the Cyclopes' island to explore for supplies. He landed with his companions, carrying with them a jar of wine for a present, and coming to a large cave they entered it, and finding no one within examined its contents. They found it stored with the richest of the flock, quantities of cheese, pails and bowls of milk, lambs and kids in their pens, all in nice order. Presently arrived the master of

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the cave, Polyphemus, bearing an immense bundle of firewood, which he threw down before the cavern's mouth. He then drove into the cave the sheep and goats to be milked, and, entering, rolled to the cave's mouth an enormous rock, that twenty oxen could not draw. Next he sat down and milked his ewes, preparing a part for cheese, and setting the rest aside for his customary drink. Then, turning round his great eye, he discerned the strangers, and growled out to them, demanding who they were, and where from. Ulysses replied most humbly, stating that they were Greeks, from the great expedition that had lately won so much glory in the conquest of Troy; that they were now on their way home, and finished by imploring his hospitality in the name of the gods. Polyphemus deigned no answer, but reaching out his hand seized two of the Greeks, whom he hurled against the side of the cave, and dashed out their brains. He proceeded to devour them with great relish, and having made a hearty meal, stretched himself out on the floor to sleep. Ulysses was tempted to seize the opportunity and plunge his sword into him as he slept, but recollected that it would only expose them all to certain destruction, as the rock with which the giant had closed up the door was far beyond their power to remove, and they would therefore be in hopeless imprisonment. Next morning the giant seized two more of the Greeks, and despatched them in the same manner as their companions, feasting on their flesh till no fragment was left. He then moved away the rock from the door, drove out his flocks, and went out, carefully replacing the barrier after him. When he was gone Ulysses planned how he might take vengeance for his murdered friends, and effect his escape with his surviving companions. He made his men prepare a massive bar of wood cut by the Cyclops for a staff, which they found in the cave. They sharpened the end of it, and seasoned it in the fire, and hid it under the straw on the cavern floor. Then four of the boldest were selected, with whom Ulysses joined himself as a fifth. The Cyclops came home at evening, rolled away the stone and drove in his flock as usual. After milking them and making his arrangements as before, he seized two more of Ulysses' companions and dashed their brains out, and made his evening meal upon them as he had on the others. After he had supped, Ulysses approaching him handed him a bowl of wine, saying, "Cyclops, this is wine; taste and drink after thy meal of men's flesh." He took and drank it, and was hugely delighted with it, and called for more. Ulysses supplied him once again, which pleased the giant so much that he promised him as a favor that he should be the last of the party devoured. He asked his name, to which Ulysses replied, "My name is Noman."

After his supper the giant lay down to repose, and was soon sound asleep. Then Ulysses with his four select friends thrust the end of the stake into the fire till it was all one burning coal, then poisoning it exactly above the giant's only eye, they buried it deeply into the socket, twirling it round as a carpenter does his auger. The howling monster with his outcry filled the cavern, and Ulysses with his aids nimbly got out of his way and concealed themselves in the cave. He, bellowing, called aloud on all the Cyclopes dwelling in the caves around him, far and near. They on his cry flocked round the den, and inquired what grievous hurt had caused him to sound such an alarm and break their slumbers. He replied, "O friends, I die, and Noman gives the blow." They answered, "If no man hurts thee it is the stroke of Jove, and thou must bear it." So saying, they left him groaning.

Next morning the Cyclops rolled away the stone to let his flock out to pasture, but planted himself in the door of the cave to feel of all as they went out, that Ulysses and his men should not escape with them. But Ulysses had made his men harness the rams of the flock three abreast, with osiers which they found on the floor of the cave. To the middle ram of the three one of the Greeks suspended himself, so protected by the exterior rams on either side. As they passed, the giant felt of the animals' backs and sides, but never thought of their bellies; so the men all passed safe, Ulysses himself being on the last one that passed. When they had got a few paces from the cavern, Ulysses and his friends released themselves from their rams, and drove a good part of the flock down to the shore to their boat. They put them aboard with all haste, then pushed off from the shore, and when at a safe distance Ulysses shouted out, "Cyclops, the gods have well requited thee for thy atrocious deeds. Know it is Ulysses to whom thou owest thy shameful loss of sight." The Cyclops, hearing this,

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seized a rock that projected from the side of the mountain, and rending it from its bed, he lifted it high in the air, then exerting all his force, hurled it in the direction of the voice. Down came the mass, just clearing the vessel's stern. The ocean, at the plunge of the huge rock, heaved the ship towards the land, so that it barely escaped being swamped by the waves. When they had with the utmost difficulty pulled off shore, Ulysses was about to hail the giant again, but his friends besought him not to do so. He could not forbear, however, letting the giant know that they had escaped his missile, but waited till they had reached a safer distance than before. The giant answered them with curses, but Ulysses and his friends plied their oars vigorously, and soon regained their companions.

Ulysses next arrived at the island of Aeolus. To this monarch Jupiter had intrusted the government of the winds, to send them forth or retain them at his will. He treated Ulysses hospitably, and at his departure gave him, tied up in a leathern bag, with a silver string, such winds as might be hurtful and dangerous, commanding fair winds to blow the barks towards their country. Nine days they sped before the wind, and all that time Ulysses had stood at the helm, without sleep. At last quite exhausted he lay down to sleep. While he slept, the crew conferred together about the mysterious bag, and concluded it must contain treasures given by the hospitable king Aeolus to their commander. Tempted to secure some portion for themselves, they loosed the string, when immediately the winds rushed forth. The ships were driven far from their course, and back again to the island they had just left. Aeolus was so indignant at their folly that he refused to assist them further, and they were obliged to labor over their course once more by means of their oars.

*May be referred to simply as Connelly supplied story.

Echo and Narcissus

Echo was a beautiful nymph, fond of the woods and hills, where she devoted herself to woodland sports. She was a favourite of Diana, and attended her in the chase. But Echo had one failing; she was fond of talking, and whether in chat or argument, would have the last word. One day Juno was seeking her husband, who, she had reason to fear, was amusing himself among the nymphs. Echo by her talk contrived to detain the goddess till the nymphs made their escape. When Juno discovered it, she passed sentence upon Echo in these words: "You shall forfeit the use of that tongue with which you have cheated me, except for that one purpose you are so fond of- reply. You shall still have the last word, but no power to speak first."

This nymph saw Narcissus, a beautiful youth, as he pursued the chase upon the mountains. She loved him and followed his footsteps. O how she longed to address him in the softest accents, and win him to converse! but it was not in her power. She waited with impatience for him to speak first, and had her answer ready. One day the youth, being separated from his companions, shouted aloud, "Who's here?" Echo replied, "Here." Narcissus looked around, but seeing no one, called out, "Come." Echo answered, "Come." As no one came, Narcissus called again, "Why do you shun me?" Echo asked the same question. "Let us join one another," said the youth. The maid answered with all her heart in the same words, and hastened to the spot, ready to throw her arms about his neck. He started back, exclaiming, "Hands off! I would rather die than you should have me!" "Have me," said she; but it was all in vain. He left her, and she went to hide her blushes in the recesses of the woods. From that time forth she lived in caves and among mountain cliffs. Her form faded



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with grief, till at last all her flesh shrank away. Her bones were changed into rocks and there was nothing left of her but her voice. With that she is still ready to reply to any one who calls her, and keeps up her old habit of having the last word.

Narcissus's cruelty in this case was not the only instance. He shunned all the rest of the nymphs, as he had done poor Echo. One day a maiden who had in vain endeavoured to attract him uttered a prayer that he might some time or other feel what it was to love and meet no return of affection. The avenging goddess heard and granted the prayer.

There was a clear fountain, with water like silver, to which the shepherds never drove their flocks, nor the mountain goats resorted, nor any of the beasts of the forests; neither was it defaced with fallen leaves or branches; but the grass grew fresh around it, and the rocks sheltered it from the sun. Hither came one day the youth, fatigued with hunting, heated and thirsty. He stooped down to drink, and saw his own image in the water; he thought it was some beautiful water-spirit living in the fountain. He stood gazing with admiration at those bright eyes, those locks curled like the locks of Bacchus or Apollo, the rounded cheeks, the ivory neck, the parted lips, and the glow of health and exercise over all. He fell in love with himself. He brought his lips near to take a kiss; he plunged his arms in to embrace the beloved object. It fled at the touch, but returned again after a moment and renewed the fascination. He could not tear himself away; he lost all thought of food or rest. While he hovered over the brink of the fountain gazing upon his own image. He talked with the supposed spirit: "Why, beautiful being, do you shun me? Surely my face is not one to repel you. The nymphs love me, and you yourself look not indifferent upon me. When I stretch forth my arms you do the same; and you smile upon me and answer my beckonings with the like." His tears fell into the water and disturbed the image. As he saw it depart, he exclaimed, "Stay, I entreat you! Let me at least gaze upon you, if I may not touch you." With this, and much more of the same kind, he cherished the flame that consumed him, so that by degrees he lost his colour, his vigour, and the beauty which formerly had so charmed the nymph Echo. She kept near him, however, and when he exclaimed, "Alas! alas!" she answered him with the same words. He pined away and died; and when his shade passed the Stygian river, it leaned over the boat to catch a look of itself in the waters. The nymphs mourned for him, especially the water-nymphs; and when they smote their breasts Echo smote hers also. They prepared a funeral pile and would have burned the body, but it was nowhere to be found; but in its place a flower, purple within, and surrounded with white leaves, which bears the name and preserves the memory of Narcissus.

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Hercules

[Hercules](#) was the son of Jupiter and Alcmena. As Juno was always hostile to the offspring of her husband by mortal mothers, she declared war against Hercules from his birth. She sent two serpents to destroy him as he lay in his cradle, but the precocious infant strangled them with his own hands. He was, however, by the arts of Juno rendered subject to Eurystheus and compelled to perform all his commands. Eurystheus enjoined upon him a succession of desperate adventures, which are called the "Twelve Labors of Hercules." The first was the fight with the Nemean lion. The valley of Nemea was infested by a terrible lion. Eurystheus ordered Hercules to bring him the skin of this monster. After using in vain his club and arrows against the lion, Hercules strangled the animal with his hands. He returned carrying the dead lion on his shoulders; but Eurystheus was so frightened at the sight of it and at this proof of the prodigious strength of the hero, that he ordered him to deliver the account of his exploits in future outside the town.

His next labor was the slaughter of the Hydra. This monster ravaged the country of Argos, and dwelt in a swamp near the well of Amymone. This well had been discovered by Amymone when the country was

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suffering from drought, and the story was that Neptune, who loved her, had permitted her to touch the rock with his trident, and a spring of three outlets burst forth. Here the Hydra took up his position, and Hercules was sent to destroy him. The Hydra had nine heads, of which the middle one was immortal. Hercules struck off its heads with his club, but in the place of the head knocked off, two new ones grew forth each time. At length with the assistance of his faithful servant Iolaus, he burned away the heads of the Hydra, and buried the ninth or immortal one under a huge rock.

Another labor was the cleaning of the Augean stables. Augeas, king of Elis, had a herd of three thousand oxen, whose stalls had not been cleansed for thirty years. Hercules brought the rivers Alpheus and Peneus through them, and cleansed them thoroughly in one day.



His next labor was of a more delicate kind. Admeta, the daughter of Eurystheus, longed to obtain the girdle of the queen of the Amazons, and Eurystheus ordered Hercules to go and get it. The Amazons were a nation of women. They were very warlike and held several flourishing cities. It was their custom to bring up only the female children; the boys were either sent away to the neighboring nations or put to death. Hercules was accompanied by a number of volunteers, and after various adventures at last reached the country of the Amazons. Hippolyta, the queen, received him kindly, and consented to yield him her girdle, but Juno, taking the form of an Amazon, went and persuaded the rest that the strangers were carrying off their queen. They instantly armed and came in great numbers down to the ship. Hercules, thinking that Hippolyta had acted treacherously, slew her, and taking her girdle made sail homewards.

Another task enjoined him was to bring to Eurystheus the oxen of Geryon, a monster with three bodies, who dwelt in the island Erytheia (the red), so called because it lay at the west, under the rays of the setting sun. This description is thought to apply to Spain, of which Geryon was king. After traversing various countries, Hercules reached at length the frontiers of Libya and Europe, where he raised the two mountains of Calpe and Abyla, as monuments of his progress, or, according to another account, rent one mountain into two and left half on each side, forming the straits of Gibraltar, the two mountains being called the Pillars of Hercules. The oxen were guarded by the giant Eurytion and his two-headed dog, but Hercules killed the giant and his dog and brought away the oxen in safety to Eurystheus.

The most difficult labor of all was getting the golden apples of the Hesperides, for Hercules did not know where to find them. These were the apples which Juno had received at her wedding from the goddess of the Earth, and which she had intrusted to the keeping of the daughters of Hesperus, assisted by a watchful dragon. After various adventures Hercules arrived at Mount Atlas in Africa. Atlas was one of the Titans who had warred against the gods, and after they were subdued, Atlas was condemned to bear on his shoulders the weight of the heavens. He was the father of the Hesperides, and Hercules thought might, if anyone could, find the apples and bring them to him. But how to send Atlas away from his post, or bear up the heavens while he was gone? Hercules took the burden on his own shoulders, and sent Atlas to seek the apples. He returned with them, and though somewhat reluctantly, took his burden upon his shoulders again, and let Hercules return with the apples to Eurystheus.

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Perseus and Medusa.

Perseus was the son of Jupiter and Danae. His grandfather Acrisius, alarmed by an oracle which had told him that his daughter's child would be the instrument of his death, caused the mother and child to be shut up in a chest and set adrift on the sea. The chest floated towards Seriphus, where it was found by a fisherman who conveyed the mother and infant to Polydectes, the king of the country, by whom they were treated with kindness. When Perseus was grown up Polydectes sent him to attempt the conquest of Medusa, a terrible monster who had laid waste the country. She was once a beautiful maiden whose hair was her chief glory but as she dared to vie in beauty with Minerva, the goddess deprived her of her charms and changed her beautiful ringlets into hissing serpents. She became a cruel monster of so frightful an aspect that no living thing could behold her without being turned into stone. All around the cavern where she dwelt might be seen the stony figures of men and animals which had chanced to catch a glimpse of her and had been petrified with the sight. Perseus, favored by Minerva and Mercury, the former of whom lent him her shield and the latter his winged shoes, approached Medusa while she slept and taking care not to look directly at her, but guided by her image reflected in the bright shield which he bore, he cut off her head and gave it to Minerva, who fixed it in the middle of her Aegis.



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The Minotaur

A long time ago – almost before history began – King Minos ruled the lovely island of Crete. The father of Minos was none other than Zeus, lord of all the gods, and he made sure that his son's wealth and power only grew and grew.

Minos built a navy, and his ships sailed far and wide, bringing back goods, taxes, and something even more important than those – knowledge. For instance, when Minos wanted to build a palace that would strike awe and wonder into all who laid eyes on it, he asked his sea captain, "Of all the palaces you have seen, on all your travels over the seas, which was the most magnificent?"

And the sea captain replied, "Your Majesty, the palace of Aegeus, King of Athens, surpasses all others for its beauty and grace. It was designed by Daedalus and the Athenians boast that he is the most brilliant architect who has ever lived."

When he heard this, King Minos ordered the sea captain to fetch Daedalus to Crete. The sea captain sailed to Athens and told King Aegeus that Minos had need of his chief architect and as Minos was the most powerful leader of those times, King Aegeus could not deny him his wish.

And so Daedalus brought his knowledge and great skill to Crete and there he designed a wonderful palace for Minos. It was built on three floors, which was very high for buildings of those days, and the bathrooms and kitchens had plumbing that was far ahead of their times. Everywhere you went inside, you saw the double headed axe of King Minos which was his symbol of power. Upstairs, the walls were covered with bright pictures of dances and festivities. On them, you could see the young men and women of Crete leaping over the horns of bulls. It a dangerous sport indeed, but the Cretans loved to show off their skill and bravery.

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The happiness of Minos was almost complete – there was but one sadness in his life. His wife gave birth to a child that was strange and unnatural. Although its face was human, it walked on four feet with hooves. Horns came out of his head, and in time it grew into a terrible monster – half man, half bull. When it bellowed the whole land of Crete shook, the walls of the palace trembled, and there were storms at sea. The people gossiped about this strange child of the King, whom they called the Minotaur. Minos wanted to have it killed, but he thought the gods would be angry with him if he killed his own son. Instead he ordered Daedalus to build a maze, known as a labyrinth, where the Minotaur could live out of sight and out of mind.

Daedalus built a Labyrinth underground that was so intricate and cunning in its design, that even he himself had trouble finding the way out.



The Minotaur agreed to live in the labyrinth, but he demanded that human beings be sent into his maze at regular intervals, otherwise he would rage with hunger even until the walls of the palace fell down. And so Minos ordered the kings of the nearby lands to send ships full of their young people to sacrifice to the Minotaur. Every ninth year it was the turn of Athens to send its human tribute to Crete. Twice, King Aegeus agreed to this – for he was still afraid of Minos and the power of his navy – but on the third occasion, his son, Prince Theseus said to him, "Father, this time, let me sail to Crete, and I shall kill the Minotaur and end this misery for our people."

Aegeus was very reluctant to send his beloved son to chance his life against the Minotaur but as he could see no other way out of the terrible situation for his people, he agreed.

It was decided that the ship of Theseus would carry two sets of sails. If the mission was successful, it would return to Athens under white sails, but if Theseus was killed by the Minotaur, it would sail back under black sails. That way, the people of Athens would receive the

news of the outcome all the sooner.

Prince Theseus sailed to Crete and stayed with King Minos in his magnificent palace. There, on occasion, he caught sight of Princess Ariadne, the lovely daughter of King Minos. When Ariadne saw Theseus she felt great pity for him.

"Certainly, he looks very nice," she thought, "But what a shame that his life is about to end so soon and so terribly! For even if he succeeds in killing the Minotaur, he will never find his way out of the dark and winding labyrinth."

And when Theseus saw Ariadne he thought, "Surely the King's own daughter knows some of his secrets. If only she could be persuaded to help me, I might stand a better chance of killing the Minotaur and escaping from the labyrinth with my life."

One day, when for a very short time Theseus found himself alone with Ariadne, he went down on his knees and begged her for any help that she could give him.

Ariadne promised to do what she could and that evening she asked the advice of Daedalus for if anyone knew the way out of the maze, it would surely be its architect. Daedalus too wanted to help Theseus for they were both from the City of Athens, and so he gave Ariadne his secret plan of the labyrinth – but she was dismayed when she examined it and saw the numerous twists and turns in the underground passageways. Even with a map it would be impossible to find one's way through such a maze.

Later on she found Theseus walking alone in the gardens and she gave him the map. When he unfurled the map and saw its complexity he said: "Oh Princess. I trust in my courage and my skill with my spear and my sword but doubt that I shall ever find my way out of a maze such as this."

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But Ariadne had thought of a second way to help Theseus. She gave him a ball of thread, and told him to unwind it as he went through the dark labyrinth. And on the way back he should gather the wool up, and follow it back to the daylight.

Theseus was pleased with the plan, and he kissed the hand of the princess thanking her for all her help. The next day he said to King Minos.

“You Majesty, I have been honoured to be your guest for one whole week. Now I am ready to complete my mission, and meet either death or glory.”

King Minos would have been happy for the foreign prince to rid him of the Minotaur, but he thought he stood little chance. He led Theseus to the entrance to the labyrinth and wished him goodbye for he never expected to see him again. Then Theseus ventured into the maze, and a little way in, he tied one end of the ball of thread to a beam. He went further and soon he was in complete darkness. He had to feel his way along the walls, and around the twists and turns of the labyrinth. All the while he unwound the ball of wool that Ariadne had given him. Somewhere, deep inside, the bull was stamping and snorting, impatient to meet its latest sacrifice.

At last, deep within, Theseus could hear that the Minotaur was close by. He found a passageway that led to a dead end, as many of them did but what made this one different was that there was a sudden turning just before the end. He had seen this passage on the map, and it was just the place he was looking for.

Theseus hid himself around this final twist and called out to the Minotaur. It heard him and came charging down the passage but it could not slow down before the turning and charged straight into the wall. While it was still stunned from the impact Theseus thrust his spear into the beast’s neck and killed it though it did not give up its life before letting out a terrible bellow.

The walls of the palace shook and trembled, and King Minos said, “Thank Zeus ! It seems that Prince Theseus has rid us of the terrible monster. But he will never find his way out of the labyrinth and will surely die there.”

But Theseus began to gather up the ball of thread until at last he reached the exit where Ariadne was eagerly waiting for him.

“Princess, how can I thank you,” said Theseus, “For without your help I would never have found my way out of that terrible place.”

And Ariadne replied, “Take me back to Athens with you, and I shall be your bride.”

Now these were far from the words that Theseus had been hoping to hear. For although Ariadne was extremely beautiful, he was due to marry a different Princess on his return to Athens. But he could not quite find the words to explain this to Ariadne, and so he replied in haste, “Come: we must leave right away before your father discovers the truth.”

And leading her by the hand he led her down to his ship that was ready and waiting.

They set sail immediately for Athens, and in her heart Ariadne was overjoyed because she would soon marry her hero or so she believed but he had different plans. On the way back, they stopped at the island of Naxos to gather supplies. Ariadne walked to the end of the beach, paddling in the waves and Theseus told the sea captain to set sail as fast as he could. Poor Ariadne was marooned on the island of Naxos abandoned by her faithless lover. She stood high up on the cliffs and watched his sail disappear over the horizon. As she shed bitter tears, Bacchus, the god of wine heard her weeping and decided to cheer her up as best he could. He led his procession to her – wild animals and dancing servants – banging on drums and sounding trumpets. He took her crown from her head, and cast it up into the sky, it soared up to the heavens and its jewels turned into stars and formed a constellation in the shape of a crown.

As Theseus sailed away, he was laughing with the sea captain about the trick they had played. But Poseidon, the god of the seas heard them and was angry with Theseus for his betrayal of the Princess. He sent a storm to toss his ship. The white sails were ripped and torn and fell into the raging seas. The ship survived the storm, but the captain was forced to repair his ship and use the second set of sails – the black ones that were meant to signal failure.

Stories from Greek Mythology

As they approached Athens, they were spotted by fishermen who raced back home to report the dreaded news.

The ship of Theseus, the hope of Athens, was returning under black sails. When this news reached the ears of the old king he ordered his chariot to take him down the harbour to see the ship return. When he saw that it was indeed returning under black sails, he was filled with uncontrollable grief and threw himself from the top of the harbour tower and into the sea where he drowned.

And that is the story of how Theseus betrayed Ariadne who had helped him escape death in the labyrinth of the Minotaur.

Bertie says that if you ever visit the National Gallery in London, you can see a famous picture of Ariadne and Bacchus on the island of Naxos – it's by an Italian painter called Titian.

And that was not quite the end of the tale, because there is another story about what happened to Daedalus, the architect of the famous Labyrinth. Bertie says it's a much shorter story, but it's a good one, with a moral to it.

*Text provided by storynory.com

Daedulus and Icarus

Daedalus was a brilliant architect and inventor – in fact, he was so brilliant that King Minos of Crete did not want to let him go back to his home in Athens. Instead, he kept him as a prisoner. Daedalus lived with his son Icarus in a tower of the palace, and King Minos made him invent weapons of war that would make his army and navy even more powerful than they already were.

Although Daedalus and Icarus had every comfort that they could ask for, the father longed to return home to Athens. His son hardly remembered his home city, but he too wanted to leave, because he longed to run and play in the open, rather than be in a tower all day.

Daedalus looked out over the waves of the Mediterranean Sea, and he realised that even if they could manage to slip out of the tower and find a little boat, they wouldn't be able to sail very far before they were spotted and caught by one of the ships of King Minos's navy.

He thought for a long time about the best way to escape, and finally he came up with a plan, and this is what he did. He told King Minos that he needed feathers and wax for a new invention that he was working on. When these were brought to him, he took them up onto the roof of the tower. Here he arranged them in four lines, starting with the smallest feathers, and following those with the longer ones, so that they formed gentle curves. Then he began to stick the feathers together with thread in the middle and wax at the base.

While he was working, Icarus played with the wax, squashing it between his finger and thumb, and when the feathers blew away in the breeze he ran after them and caught them.

When Daedalus had finished, he showed Icarus his work. He had made the feathers into two pairs of wings. He fastened the larger pair to his arms, and began to flap them until his feet took off from the floor and he began to hover in mid air. Icarus laughed with delight and could not wait to try out the smaller pair of wings. Over the next few days father and son both practised with them until little Icarus was almost as good at flying as his father.

Then one morning Daedalus said to Icarus:



Stories from Greek Mythology

“Now Son, we are ready to leave this island for good. We shall fly home to Athens. But although you are now quite good at flying, you must not forget that it can be very dangerous. So listen to my instructions and be sure to follow them to the letter. At all times follow me, for I will find the way home. Do not veer off on a different flight path, or you will soon be lost. And do not fly too low, or your wings will fill with moisture from the waves and they will become too heavy you will sink down. Nor should you fly too high, or the sun will heat the wax and your wings will fall apart. Have you understood all that I have said?”

Little Icarus nodded to show his father that he had understood. And then Daedalus led his son up onto the battlements of the tower, and like a bird leading her fledglings from the nest for the first time, he jumped into mid air and flapped his wings, and Icarus followed soon after.

If a fisherman or a shepherd had looked up just then, he would have seen two very unusual birds hovering above the waves. No doubt he would have thought that they had caught sight of two winged gods : For who could have believed that a mortal father and son had mastered the art of flight?

Over the seas they sailed, and at first Icarus felt frightened for he had never ventured very far in his practice flights. But soon he found that he was really good at flying. In fact, it was the most tremendous fun you could ever have. He began to swoop up and down with the sea gulls. Wow! It was amazing ! His father turned round and called:

“Icarus, Take Care!” and for a while after that Icarus obeyed his father and flapped along behind him. But then his wings caught a warm air current, and he found that he could soar along and upwards almost without any effort. This was the life ! He was floating ever so high above the waves and the ships down below were like tiny little specks. His father called up to him

“Icarus, remember what I told you. Come down right now!” But Icarus could not hear, and his father could not catch up with him.

Icarus was way too close to the sun, and soon the wax that held the feathers together began to melt.

Gradually his wings began to lose their shape, and some of the feathers even began to fall off. Icarus flapped his arms frantically, but it was too late. He had lost the power of flight and down he plunged into the sea.

*Text provided by storynory.com

King Midas

There was once a dreadfully ugly beast called Silenus. He pranced over the mountains on a pair of hairy goat’s legs. A long tail swished behind him. But from the waist up, he was a man, more or less. His big belly bounced up and down as he ran along. A pair of horns sprouted out of his bald and shiny head. Quite often, slobber dribbled from his thick and purple lips. In short, this delightful creature was a satyr.

Silenus was a friend of Dionysus, the God of Wine. Dionysus often used to gather his wild band of followers in the woods for a noisy, riotous party. They included satyrs as well as Maenids, who were wild women of the woods. They would bang drums, blow pipes and horns, and crash cymbals and they danced themselves into a mad frenzy. But above all, they liked to drink wine.

One time after Silenus had been partying all night, he staggered out of the woods, and into the palace grounds of Midas, king of Phrygia. He lay down between the rose bushes and fell into a deep sleep. Around mid-morning Princess Zoe was walking through the gardens collecting rose blossoms. She saw the hairy hoof of Silenus sticking out from among the bushes, and she thought that a poor sick goat had come into the garden to lie down. As he was dirty and smelled not very nice, she called the gardener. When he came, he pulled on the leg and found, not a goat, but a satyr.

“Ugh, he’s horrible,” exclaimed Zoe. “Throw him on the compost heap.”

“Ah, I’d better ask the king before I do that,” said the Gardener. “After all, a satyr can bring good fortune.”

When King Midas learned that there was a satyr sleeping in the rose garden, he ordered that he be given a bed in the palace until he felt better. The servants carried him on a stretcher to the best guest room. And there he remained, snoring loudly and smelling like – well, a goat – for almost another day.

Stories from Greek Mythology

When finally he arose, he staggered into the palace kitchen and noisily demanded cheese, eggs, and wine. The cook wanted to chase him out with a meat cleaver, but steward held him back saying that the satyr was a guest of the King. Silenus took the wine and went wandering around the palace leaving dirty hoof prints as he went.

When the Queen saw him, she was horrified: "Who or what is this vile creature that's come to stay with us?" she asked the King.

Midas replied that he was a friend of Dionysus, and everyone must treat him great courtesy.

Although Princess Zoe and the Queen did their best to stay out of the way of the satyr, King Midas entertained his guest, eating and drinking with him until late at night, and playing music on the pan pipes. All in all, Silenus stayed with Midas for a week.

And no one was more pleased about this show of hospitality than Dionysus, because in his eyes, anyone who honoured Silenus, honoured Dionysus.

A few days after Silenus had left, Midas was walking in his rose garden when he heard some strange but lovely music. He followed the sound and discovered a perfectly beautiful man sitting on the grass and playing a pipe. He knew right away that the stranger was one of the gods and he fell down on one knee. The god said:

"Get up man. I'm not one for ceremonies.

I wish to reward you. What gift would you like more than any other in the world? Power isn't really my thing, but I can offer you wine, women or song."

"I need money", said Midas.

"Money. What good comes of money?" asked the god.

"Well of course a god like you has no use for money," said Midas, "But we mortals can never have enough of it. I wish that everything I touched turned to gold."

And although Dionysus thought it was a foolish wish, he granted it with the words: "Midas, all that you touch shall turn to gold."

The god disappeared, and King Midas rejoiced in his curse. He reached out and touched a rose blossom and it turned to gold. He picked up a stone, and that too became golden. Even a clod of earth became gold.

He plucked an apple from a low branch, and it immediately became cold and shiny. He held it in his hand and said:

"Oh, how pure and perfect it is."

And then he tossed the golden apple over his shoulder, and hurried into the palace to try his touch on random objects: columns, statues, furniture, doorknobs.

The servants heard his voice laughing and shouting: "Gold, Glorious Gold!" And they wondered what had got into the king.

Princess Zoe heard him too. She found him turning peas into little golden nuggets.

"Father. What has happened?" she asked.

"The most wonderful thing," he replied. And he hugged her.

But this was not what he had expected. He was holding not his daughter in his arms, but a cold, still statue.

Distraught, he went to the fountain to wash his hot tears from his face. But as he scooped up the water in his hands, it turned into liquid gold.

Now he realised the cruelty of his gift. He called out:

"Lord Dionysus. Save me from this cursed metal!"

And Dionysus heard him and took pity on the foolish King. He appeared sitting on the edge of the fountain and said:

"Go to the river that flows by the great city of Sardis. make your way up stream until you come to the source. Plunge your head and body at the same moment into the foaming fountain, where it gushes out, and wash away your foolishness."

Stories from Greek Mythology

Midas did as he was told. And when he plunged into the stream, the banks and the flowers that grew on them became yellow and golden. But Midas emerged from the waters free of his wish for riches and gold. And as long as he lived, he rejoiced in all that was simple and natural.

*Text provided by storynory.com

Odysseus and The Sirens

Leaving Hades, Odysseus and his men sailed for many days without sight of land. Not before long, though, strange disquieting sounds reached the ears of the men aboard the ship. The sounds tugged at their hearts and made them want to weep with joy. Odysseus at once realized that they were approaching the Sirens that Circe had warned him about.

The sorceress had told him to block every man's ears with wax for if any were to hear the song of the Sirens, he would surely jump off the ship, go close to the Sirens and the winged monsters would kill them. Odysseus did exactly that with his men, but he himself wanted to hear their strange song. He thus ordered his sailors to tie him up to the mast so he could not jump into the sea in an attempt to meet the Sirens.

With their ears blocked with wax, the men heard nothing and the ship passed near the Sirens. Suddenly, Odysseus wanted to get free of his bonds and swim towards the Sirens for their song had just become clear and it was very beautiful and captivating. But the ropes were very tight and fortunately he could not untie himself. His fellows could hear neither the Sirens neither the screams of their leader, who was praying them to untie him. As the ship was sailing away from the shore, the song of the Sirens was fading out.

*Text provided by storynory.com

