

# The Story of Adonis

There was once a princess called Smyrna who dwelt in the island of Cyprus. At first she lived happily in that beautiful island, which was under the special care of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty. But Smyrna was wicked at heart. She turned away from the true worship of Aphrodite, and soon became so wicked that there was nothing for her father the king to do but order his people to kill her. Smyrna, however, escaped in a ship which was sailing to that part of Asia Minor which we now call Turkey. Even there she was not safe, but was forced to flee farther and farther north until at last she sank exhausted to the ground near the seashore in the country of Lydia.

"I know that I deserve the cruelest punishment possible," she sobbed. "I know that I am too evil to live-perhaps I am too evil to die also. Forgive me, Aphrodite, and you other goddesses. Spare me the pain of being burnt to death. Spare me also whatever punishment may wait me in the land of the dead: I know that dark Hades is king there but his wife, Persephone, is kind and merciful.

Gods and goddesses, if you indeed have such powers as we believe you have, let me neither live nor die. Change me, instead, into some other form so that I may be a woman no longer."

Aphrodite heard her prayer, and so did Persephone. Together they whispered a request to kindly Mother Earth, and at once a change began to come over Smyrna. The soil seemed to catch and hold her: she was rooted to the ground by her toes, while her legs and body grew bark over them and turned into the trunk of a tree. Soon her arms became branches and her fingers twigs, while her hair turned into leaves.

Smyrna was no longer a woman but had become the tree which bore her name in ancient Greece, though the Romans changed it a little into Myrrh. Now she wept tears not of salt water but of sweet-smelling gum, which oozed out of the bark and was soon sought for eagerly as a rare and wonderful perfume.

But an even stranger thing was to happen. Hardly had Smyrna turned into the first myrrh tree when the bark opened suddenly and a baby boy tumbled out.

He was such a beautiful child that Aphrodite decided to bring him up in secret, make him immortal, and marry him. She gave him the name of Adonis, and hid him away in a magic chest which she asked Persephone to guard for her in her kingdom under the earth.

Adonis grew fast, and when Aphrodite came to claim him back he was already grown to be a handsome boy-and Persephone had fallen in love with him herself, and refused to restore him to Aphrodite.

The goddess of love complained to Zeus, the king of the gods, in his high palace on Mount Olympus in northern Greece.

Zeus decided not to judge the case himself. Aphrodite and Persephone were both his daughters, and he did not wish to make an enemy of either of them. So he chose Calliope, one of the nine Muses, to be the judge. The Muses were lesser goddesses who ruled over the arts, Calliope being the Muse of epic poetry. Their

home was on Mount Helicon by the magic fountain of Hippocrene which caught the first blush of the morning: but sometimes they wandered on Mount Parnassus not far away, which was sacred to Apollo, the bright god of light and music and prophecy, who was their leader.

Calliope did her best to be fair. She told Adonis that he must spend a third of every year with Persephone, a third with Aphrodite, and a third wherever he chose.

Adonis soon chose to spend the four months which were his own with Aphrodite as well as the four when he was hers by right.

As Adonis grew from a boy into a man, his one love was for hunting. All day he would cheer on his hounds, chasing with them through the woods and thickets, up hill and down dale, in pursuit of hares, deer, and even wild boars.

Aphrodite grew more and more in love with him; but he cared nothing for her, nor for any mortal woman either, except as a companion in the chase. Indeed it seemed as if love had been left out of him altogether; and not even the goddess of love herself could wake the slightest passion in him.

Aphrodite did everything she could think of. She even joined him in the chase, wearing short skirts and carrying a bow and arrows like her half sister Artemis, the goddess of hunting. Adonis found her a wonderful companion; but he did not learn to love her except as a friend.

"I'll go away and leave you!" exclaimed Aphrodite at last. "When I have gone, you'll realize that you can't do without me, and that you really love me all the time."

"Then I'll go hunting all by myself!" cried the selfish Adonis.

"Be very careful," said Aphrodite anxiously. "Keep away from lions and bears and wolves. Even wild boars can be dangerous."

But Adonis paid little attention, and at last Aphrodite flew away in her airy chariot drawn by birds, to see whether absence might make him learn to love her.

Adonis, however, had not a thought for her. He set out hunting at once, and wandered for a long time through the forests which grew where the city of Smyrna, named after his mother, was later to stand.

But suddenly, instead of being the hunter, he became the hunted. A huge wild boar came rushing at him, snorting wildly and clashing its sharp tusks. Adonis fled, and hid in a field of wild lettuces. But the boar soon found him, and in a moment had given him a deadly wound in the thigh.

Then at last Adonis cried out to Aphrodite for help, and she came speeding to his side, the mountains echoing to her cries of grief.

"Persephone has won," she sobbed. "Now you will have to dwell in her dark land forever: for you are still but mortal, and all who die become her subjects. But every year the women of Asia shall mourn you as I mourn now. And see! A memorial of you shall spring from the earth forever!"

Adonis could see nothing, for his eyes had closed in death. But the blood which dripped from his wound and sank into the ground was already sending up a new flower. All round him grew the delicate, short-lived blossoms of the anemone the flower that blooms only to fall at the soft breath of the wind wailing for lost Adonis. And every year, just as Adonis himself once returned from the land of the dead to wander the woods with shining Aphrodite, so his blood rises through the earth and lives for a while in the sunshine in the anemone blossoms.

## STORY OF ARACHNE AND ATHENA

Arachne was famous not for her birth or for her city, but only for her skill. Her father was a dyer of wool; her mother also was of no great family. She lived in a small village whose name is scarcely known. Yet her skill in weaving made her famous through all the great cities of Lydia. To see her wonderful work the nymphs of Tmolus would leave their vineyards, the nymphs of Pactolus would leave the golden waters of their river. It was a delight not only to see the cloth that she had woven, but to watch her at work, there was such beauty in the way she did it, whether she was winding the rough skeins into balls of wool, or smoothing it with her fingers, or drawing out the fleecy shiny wool into threads, or giving a twist to the spindle with her quick thumb, or putting in embroidery with her needle. You would think that she had learned the art from Athena herself, the goddess of weaving.

Arachne, however, when people said this, would be offended at the idea of having had even so great a teacher as Athena. "Let her come," she used to say, "and weave against me. If she won, she could do what she liked with me."

Athena heard her words and put on the form of an old woman. She put false gray hair on her head, made her steps weak and tottering, and took a staff in her hand. Then she said to Arachne: "There are some advantages in old age. Long years bring experience. Do not, then, refuse my advice. Seek all the fame you like among men for your skill, but allow the goddess to take first place, and ask her forgiveness, you foolish girl, for the words which you have spoken. She will forgive you if you ask her."

Arachne dropped the threads from her hand and looked angrily at the old woman. She hardly kept her hands off her, and her face showed the anger that she felt. Then she spoke to the goddess in disguise: "Stupid old thing, what is wrong with you is that you have lived too long. Go and give advice to your daughters, if you have any. I am quite able to look after myself. As for what you say, why does not the goddess come here herself? Why does she avoid a contest with me?"

"She has come," Athena replied, and she put off the old woman's disguise, revealing herself as a god in human form. The nymphs bowed down to worship her and the women also who were there. Arachne alone showed no fear. Nevertheless she started, and a sudden blush came to her unwilling face and then faded away again, as the sky grows crimson at the moment of sunrise and then again grows pale. She persisted in what she had said already, and stupidly longing for the desired victory, rushed headlong to her fate.

Athena no longer refused the contest and gave no further advice. At once they both set up their looms and stretched out on them the delicate warp.

The web was fastened to the beam; reeds separated the threads and through the threads went the sharp shuttles which their quick fingers sped. Quickly they worked, with their clothes tucked up round themselves, their skilled hands moving backward and forward like lightning, not feeling the work since they were both so good at it. In their weaving they used all the colors that are made by the merchants—purple of the oyster and every other dye, each shading into each, so that the eye could scarcely tell the difference between the finer shades, though the extreme colors were clear enough. So, after a storm of rain, when a rainbow spans the sky, between each color there is a great difference, but still between each an insensible shading. And in their work they wove in stiff threads of gold, telling ancient stories by pictures.

Athena, in her weaving, showed the ancient citadel of Athens and the story of the old quarrel between her and Poseidon, god of the sea, over the naming of this famous land. There you could see the twelve gods as witnesses, and there Poseidon striking with his huge trident the barren rock from which leaped a stream of sea water. And there was Athena herself, with shield and spear and helmet. As she struck the rock there sprang up a green olive tree, and the victory was hers. Athens was her city.

As for Arachne, the pictures which she wove were of the evil loves of the gods. There was Europa, carried away by a bull over the sea. You would have thought it a real bull and real waves of water. Then she wove Zeus tricking Danae into an affair while disguised as a golden shower, tricking Aegina while hiding as a flame, and even tricking Mnemosyne mother of the Muses, while in the disguise of a shepherd. There was Poseidon too, disguised as a dolphin, a horse, or a ram. Every scene was different, and each scene had the surroundings that it ought to have. Round the edge of the web ran a narrow border filled with designs of flowers and sprays of ivy intertwined.

Neither Athena nor Envy itself could find any fault with Arachne's work. Furious at the success of the mortal girl, Athena tore to pieces the gorgeous web with its stories of the crimes of the gods. With the hard boxwood spindle that she held, she struck Arachne on the head over and over again.

Arachne could not bear such treatment. In her injured pride she put a noose round her neck and hung herself. As she dangled from the rope, Athena, in pity, lifted her body and said: "You may keep your life, you rude and arrogant girl, but you and all your descendants will still hang."

Then, as she went out, she sprinkled over her some magic powders, and immediately her hair fell off; so did her nose and ears; her head became tiny and all her body shrank; her slender fingers were joined onto her body as legs; everything else was stomach and now, turned into a spider, she still spins threads out of her own stomach and everywhere still exercises her old craft of weaving.

## The story of Icarus and Daedalus

Among all those mortals who grew so wise that they learned the secrets of the gods, none was more cunning than Daedalus.

He once built, for King Minos of Crete, a wonderful Labyrinth of winding ways so cunningly tangled up and twisted around that, once inside, you could never find your way out again without a magic clue. But the King's favor veered with the wind, and one day he had his master architect imprisoned in a tower. Daedalus managed to escape from his cell; but it seemed impossible to leave the island, since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the King.

At length, watching the sea gulls in the air the only creatures that were sure of liberty-he thought of a plan for himself and his young son Icarus, who was captive with him.

Little by little, he gathered a store of feathers great and small. He fastened these together with thread, molded them in with wax, and so fashioned two great wings like those of a bird. When they were done, Daedalus fitted them to his own shoulders, and after one or two efforts, he found that by waving his arms he could winnow the air and cleave it, as a swimmer does the sea. He held himself aloft, wavered this way and that with the wind, and at last, like a great fledgling, he learned to fly.

Without delay, he fell to work on a pair of wings for the boy Icarus and taught him carefully how to use them, bidding him beware of rash adventures among the stars. "Remember," said the father, "never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near."

For Icarus, these cautions went in at one ear and out by the other. Who could remember to be careful when he was to fly for the first time? Are birds careful? Not they! And not an idea remained in the boy's head but the one joy of escape.

The day came, and the fair wind that was to set them free. The father-bird put on his wings, and, while the light urged them to be gone, he waited to see that all was well with Icarus, for the two could not fly hand in hand. Up they rose, the boy after his father. The hateful ground of Crete sank beneath them; and the country folk, who caught a glimpse

of them when they were high above the treetops, took it for a vision of the gods-Apollo, perhaps, with Cupid after him.

At first there was a terror in the joy. The wide vacancy of the air dazed them-a glance downward made their brains reel. But when a great wind filled their wings, and Icarus felt himself sustained, like a halcyon bird in the hollow of a wave, like a child uplifted by his mother, he forgot everything in the world but joy. He forgot Crete and the other islands that he had passed over: he saw but vaguely that winged thing in the distance before him that was his father Daedalus. He longed for one draft of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity: he stretched out his arms to the sky and made toward the highest heavens.

Alas for him! Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, that had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, dropped. He fluttered his young hands vainly-he was falling-and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings; the feathers were falling, one by one, like snowflakes; and there was none to help.

He fell like a leaf tossed down by the wind, down, down, with one cry that overtook Daedalus far away. When he returned and sought high and low for the poor boy, he saw nothing but the birdlike feathers afloat on the water, and he knew that Icarus was drowned.

The nearest island he named Icaria, in memory of the child; but he, in heavy grief, went to the temple of Apollo in Sicily and there hung up his wings as an offering. Never again did he attempt to fly.

# THE STORY OF NARCISSUS

Up on the wild, lonely mountains of Greece lived the Oreades, the nymphs of the hills, and among them one of the most beautiful was called Echo. She was one of the most talkative, too, and once she talked too much and angered Hera, wife of Zeus, king of the gods. When Zeus grew tired of the golden halls of Mount Olympus, the home of the immortal gods, he would come down to earth and wander with the nymphs on the mountains. Hera, however, was jealous and often came to see what he was doing. It seemed strange at first that she always met Echo, and that Echo kept her listening for hours on end to her stories and her gossip. But at last Hera realized that Echo was doing this on purpose to detain her while Zeus went quietly back to Olympus as if he had never really been away.

"So nothing can stop you talking?" exclaimed Hera. "Well, Echo, I do not intend to spoil your pleasure. But from this day on, you shall be able only to repeat what other people say and never speak unless someone else speaks first." Hera returned to Olympus, well pleased with the punishment she had made for Echo, leaving the poor nymph to weep sadly among the rocks on the mountainside and speak only the words which her sisters and their friends shouted happily to one another.

She grew used to her strange fate after a while, but then a new misfortune befell her. There was a beautiful youth called Narcissus who was the son of a nymph and the god of a nearby river. He grew up on the plain of Thebes until he was sixteen years old, and then began to hunt on the mountains toward the north where Echo and her sister Oreades lived. As he wandered through the woods and valleys, many a nymph looked upon him and loved him. But Narcissus laughed at them scornfully, for he loved only himself.

Farther up the mountains Echo saw him. And at once her lonely heart was filled with love for the beautiful youth, so that nothing else in the world mattered but to win him.

Now she wished indeed that she could speak to him words of love. But the curse which Hera had placed upon her tied her tongue, and she could only follow wherever he went, hiding behind trees and rocks, and feasting her eyes vainly upon him. One day Narcissus wandered farther up the mountain than usual, and all his friends, the other Theban youths, were left far behind. Only Echo followed him, still hiding among the rocks, her heart heavy with unspoken love.

Presently Narcissus realized that he was lost, and hoping to be heard by his companions, or perhaps by some mountain shepherd, he called out loudly: "Is there anybody here?"

"Here!" cried Echo.

Narcissus stood still in amazement, looking all round in vain. Then he shouted, even more loudly: "Whoever you are, come to me!"

"Come to me!" cried Echo eagerly.

Still no one was visible, so Narcissus called again: "Why are you avoiding me?" Echo repeated his words, but with a sob in her breath, and Narcissus called once more: "Come here, I say, and let us meet!"

"Let us meet!" cried Echo, her heart leaping with joy as she spoke the happiest words that had left her lips since the curse of Hera had fallen on her. And to make good her words, she came running out from behind the rocks and tried to clasp her arms about him.

But Narcissus flung the beautiful nymph away from him in scorn.

"Away with these embraces!" he cried angrily, his voice full of cruel contempt. "I would die before I would have you touch me!"

"I would have you touch me!" repeated poor Echo.

"Never will I let you kiss me!"

"Kiss me! Kiss me!" murmured Echo, sinking down among the rocks, as Narcissus cast her violently from him and sped down the hillside.

"One touch of those lips would kill me!" he called back furiously over his shoulder.

"Kill me!" begged Echo.

And Aphrodite, the goddess of love, heard her and was kind to her, for she had been a true lover. Quietly and painlessly, Echo pined away and died. But her voice lived on, lingering among the rocks and answering faintly whenever Narcissus or another called.

"He shall not go unpunished for this cruelty," said Aphrodite. "By scorning poor Echo like this he scorns love itself. And scorning love, he insults me. He is altogether eaten up with self-love. ...Well, he shall love himself and no one else, and yet shall die of unreturned love!"

It was not long before Aphrodite made good her threat, and in a very strange way. One day, tired after hunting, Narcissus came to a still, clear pool of water away up the mountainside not far from where he had scorned Echo and left her to die of a broken heart.

With a cry of satisfaction, for the day was hot and cloudless, and he was parched with thirst, Narcissus flung himself down beside the pool and leaned forward to dip his face in the cool water.

What was his surprise to see a beautiful face looking up at him through the still waters of the pool. The moment he saw, he loved-and love was a madness upon him so that he could think of nothing else.

"Beautiful water nymph!" he cried. "I love you! Be mine!"

Desperately he plunged his arms into the water-but the face vanished and he touched only the pebbles at the bottom of the pool. Drawing out his arms, he gazed intently down, and as the water grew still again, saw once more the face of his beloved.

Poor Narcissus did not know that he was seeing his own reflection: for Aphrodite hid this knowledge from him-and perhaps this was the first time that a pool of water had reflected the face of anyone gazing into it.

Narcissus seemed enchanted by what he saw. He could not leave the pool, but lay by its side day after day looking at the only face-in the world which he loved-and could not win; and pining just as Echo had pined.

Slowly Narcissus faded away, and at last his heart broke.

"Woe is me for I loved in vain!" he cried.

"I loved in vain!" sobbed the voice of Echo among the rocks.

"Farewell, my love, farewell," were his last words, and Echo's voice broke and its whisper shivered into silence: "My love. ..farewell!"

So Narcissus died, and the earth covered his bones. But with the spring, a plant pushed its green leaves through the earth where he lay. As the sun shone on it a bud opened and a new flower blossomed for the first time-a white circle of petals round a yellow center. The flowers grew and spread, waving in the gentle breeze which whispered among them like Echo herself come to kiss the blossoms of the first narcissus flowers.

# The Story of Phaethon

The palace of the sun god, Helios, was a radiant place. It shone with gold and gleamed with ivory and sparkled with jewels. Everything inside of it flashed and glowed and glittered. It was always high noon there. Shadowy twilight never dimmed the brightness. Darkness and night were unknown. Few among mortals could have long endured that unchanging brilliancy of light, but few had ever found their way there.

Nevertheless, one day a youth, mortal on his mother's side, dared to approach. Often he had to pause and clear his dazzled eyes, but the mission which had brought him was so urgent that his purpose held fast and he pressed on, up to the palace, through the golden doors, and into the throne room where surrounded by a blinding, blazing splendor the sun god sat. There the lad was forced to stop. He could bear no more for the god's brilliant hat was so bright that he could not take another step.

Nothing escapes the eyes of the Sun. He saw the boy instantly and he looked at him very kindly. "What brought 'you here?" he asked.

"I have come," the other answered boldly, "to find out if you are my father or not. My mother said you were, but the boys at school laugh when I tell them I am your son. They will not believe me. I told my mother, and she said I had better go and ask you."

Smiling gently, Helios took off his crown of burning light so that the boy could look at him without distress. "Come here, Phaethon," he said. "You are my son. Clymene told you the truth. I expect you will not doubt my word too? But I will give you evidence of my word. You may ask anything you want of me and you shall have it. I call the Styx to be witness to my promise, the river of the oath of the gods."

No doubt Phaethon had often watched the Sun riding through the heavens and had told himself with a feeling, half awe, half excitement, "It is my father up there." And then he would wonder what it would be like to be in that chariot, guiding the steeds along that dizzy course, giving light to the world. Now at his father's words this wild dream had become possible. Instantly he cried, "I choose to take your place, Father. That is the only thing I want. Just for a day, a single day, let me have your chariot to drive."

Helios realized his own mistake. Why had he taken that fatal oath and bound himself to give in to anything that happened to enter a boy's rash young head? "Dear son," he said, "this is the only thing I would have refused you. I know I cannot refuse. I have sworn by the Styx. I must give in if you persist. But I do not believe you will. Listen while I tell you why this is not what you want. You are Clymene's son as well as mine. You are mortal and no mortal could drive my chariot. Indeed, no god except myself can do that. The ruler of the gods cannot. Consider the road. It rises up from the sea so steeply that the horses can hardly climb it, fresh though they are in the early morning. In mid heaven it is so high that even I do not like to look down. Worst of all is the descent, it is so steep that the sea gods waiting to receive me wonder how I can avoid falling from my chariot into their arms. To guide the horses, too, is a continual struggle. Their fiery spirits grow hotter as they climb and they scarcely suffer my control. What would they do with you?"

"Are you imagining that there are all sorts of wonders up there, cities of the gods full of beautiful things? There is nothing of the kind. You will have to pass beasts, fierce beasts of prey, and they are all that you will see. The Bull, the Lion, the Scorpion, the great Crab, each will try to harm you. Be persuaded. Look around you. See all the goods the rich world holds. Choose from them your heart's desire and it shall be yours. If what you want is to be proved my son, my fears for you are proof enough that I am your father."

But none of all this wise talk meant anything to the boy. A glorious future opened up before him. He saw himself proudly standing in that wondrous car, his hands triumphantly guiding those

steeds which Jove himself could not master. He did not give a thought to the dangers his father detailed. He felt not a quiver of fear, not a doubt of his own powers. At last the Sun gave up trying to dissuade him. It was hopeless, as he saw. Besides, there was no time. The moment for starting was at hand. Already the gates of the east glowed purple, and Dawn had opened her courts full of rosy light. The stars were leaving the sky; even the lingering morning star was dim.

There was need for haste, but all was ready. The Seasons, the gatekeepers of Olympus, stood waiting to fling the doors wide. The horses had been bridled and yoked to the chariot. Proudly and joyously Phaethon mounted it and they were off. He had made his choice. "Whatever came of it he could not change now. Not that he wanted to in that first exhilarating rush through the air, so swift that the East Wind was outstripped and left far behind. The horses' flying feet went through the low banked clouds near the ocean as through a thin sea mist and then up and up in the clear air, climbing the height of heaven. For a few ecstatic moments Phaethon felt himself the lord of the sky. But suddenly there was a change. The chariot was swinging wildly to and fro; the pace was faster; he had lost control. Not he, but the horses were directing the course. That light weight in the car, those feeble hands clutching the reins, had told them their own driver was not there. They were the masters then. No one else could command them. They left the road and rushed where they chose, up, down, to the right, to the left. They nearly wrecked the chariot against the Scorpion; they brought up short and almost ran into the Crab. By this time the poor charioteer was half fainting with terror and he let the reigns fall.

That was the signal for still more mad and reckless running. The horses soared up to the very top of the sky and then, plunging headlong down, they set the world on fire. The highest mountains were the first to burn, Ida and Helicon, where the Muses dwell, Parnassus, and heaven-piercing Olympus. Down their slopes the flame ran to the low-lying valleys and the dark forest lands, until all things everywhere were ablaze. The springs turned into steam; the rivers shrank. It is said that it was then the Nile fled and hid his head, which still is hidden. And as the sun chariot passed close by the earth, its heat charred the people of Africa forever darkening their skin.

In the car Phaethon, hardly keeping his place there, was wrapped in thick smoke and heat as if from a fiery furnace. He wanted nothing except to have this torment and terror ended. He would have welcomed death. Mother Earth, too, could bear no more. She uttered a great cry which reached up to the gods. Looking down from Olympus they saw that they must act quickly if the world was to be saved. Zeus seized his thunderbolt and hurled it at the rash, and silly driver. It struck him dead, shattered the chariot, and made the maddened horses rush down into the sea.

Phaethon all on fire fell from the car through the air to the earth. The mysterious river Eridanus, which no mortal eyes have ever seen, received him and put out the flames and cooled the body. The naiads in pity for him, so bold and so young to die, buried him and carved upon the tomb:

*Here Phaethon lies who drove the sun god's car.  
Greatly he failed, but he had greatly dared.*

His sisters, the Heliades, the daughters of Helios, the Sun, came to his grave to mourn for him.

# POOR WOMEN: THE STORIES OF IO AND EUROPA

Zeus, king of the gods, often fell in love with beautiful young women on earth. Naturally Queen Hera, his wife, was jealous, and Zeus thought up clever schemes to disguise his pursuit of them.

One of Zeus's loves was Io, the beautiful daughter of a river god. Whenever Zeus was with Io, he ordered a dark, thick cloud to cover the earth, concealing them. But one day Hera, sitting on her throne on Mount Olympus, said to herself, it is unnatural for the sky to become so dark right in the middle of the day. My husband must be deceiving me again.

She glided down to earth to surprise Zeus, but Zeus was too quick for her. He changed Io into a beautiful white cow, and when Hera arrived, he was stroking the animal. Hera, used to Zeus's crafty ways, was still suspicious, and she said to Zeus, "That is a lovely white cow. May I have her as a gift?" Zeus knew that if he refused, he might give himself away. So he gave Io, who was now a cow, to Hera. Hera immediately took the white cow to Argus, a monster with one hundred eyes, and asked him to guard her.

Io was miserable, tied up in a cave with a rope cutting into her neck, helpless and far from home. One day her father and sisters happened by, and Io moaned at them frantically, trying to tell them who she was. But of course they could not understand her bellows. When they turned to leave, she scratched her name-IO-in the dirt with her hoof. At last her father realized that this white cow was his beloved daughter. He tried desperately to untie her, but Argus chased him away, and Io was left to suffer alone.

Zeus, who could see all things on earth, pitied Io and sent his son Hermes to kill Argus and set Io free. But how was Hermes to take a hundred-eyed creature by surprise? Even when Argus slept, he closed only two eyes.

Clever Hermes disguised himself as a shepherd and sat beside Argus, telling him a long tale, on and on in a monotonous tone of voice. Argus became so bored that, one by one, all of his eyes closed. Then Hermes seized his chance to kill Argus, and at last Io was free.

But Io's troubles were not over. She was still a cow, and Hera was still jealous. And when Hera saw that Io was free, she sent a gadfly to sting her repeatedly. Tormented, Io ran in a mad frenzy from mountain to seacoast and across a sea that was later called the Ionian Sea in her memory.

Finally Io reached the river Nile in Egypt. Zeus followed her there, and, after promising Hera that he would never love Io again, he changed her back into her true form--that of a lovely maiden.

Europa, daughter of a king, was another of Zeus's loves. She was luckier than Io, for Hera was unaware of Zeus's feelings for Europa.

One day Zeus looked down from heaven and saw a group of girls gathering flowers in a meadow near the sea. All of them were winsome, but one, called Europa, outshone the others. Zeus was smitten with love for her and immediately went to earth in disguise, just in case Hera should try to find him.

Suddenly the girls looked up and saw a herd of bulls coming toward them. "Oh, look!" cried Europa to her friends. "Have you ever seen a bull as magnificent as that one? What a rich chestnut color he is! And he has a silver circle on his brow!" The bull, who was Zeus of course, ambled toward Europa and moaned softly. "How gentle he is!" Europa said, stroking him. Then the bull lay down at her feet, as if inviting her to climb onto his back.

Europa did so without fear. But before her friends could join her, the bull leaped up, dashed toward the ocean, and then flew over it, far out to sea. Clinging to the bull's horns, Europa looked down and saw a procession of sea gods riding on dolphins, led by Poseidon.

Europa cried out to the bull, "You, too, must be a god. And if you are, take pity on me. Do not carry me off to some strange land far from all my friends."

And the bull answered, "I am Zeus, lord of the sky, but do not be afraid, for I love you. I am carrying you to my own special island, Crete, where I was born. There I shall show myself to you as a god, and you shall bear me sons who one day will be famous and revered."

And so it happened. Europa became the mother of a great king, Minos, and also of Rhadamanthus, both judges of the dead. And Europa, after whom the continent of Europe is named, became even more famous than her sons.

## THE STORY OF NIOBE

Niobe was queen of the city of Thebes and daughter of Tantalus, who was a son of Zeus by a mortal. She had a loving husband, and together they ruled Thebes in harmony. Though Niobe had power and beauty and wealth, her greatest joy was her fourteen children--seven strapping sons and seven lovely daughters. She would have continued to be a proud, happy mother had she not defied a goddess and placed herself above her.

Niobe's downfall began at a celebration to honor Leto the Titan, mother of the goddess Artemis and the god Apollo. The people of Thebes were crowding into the temple to burn incense in Leto's honor. Suddenly Niobe appeared, and her commanding voice rang out. "Foolish people! Why do you honor Leto, when I am your queen? Why do you worship Leto, who has only two children, while I have fourteen? Leto is of no importance compared to me. Make your vows and sacrifices to me, not to her."

Leto heard Niobe's taunting words, and she called her twins, Apollo and Artemis, to a mountaintop on the island of Delos. "Niobe, a mortal, is trying to displace me, a goddess," she told them. "What is more, she claims that because she has fourteen children, she is more worthy than I, a mother of two. But you, Apollo and Artemis, are a god and a goddess, far more important than all her children put together. We must teach Niobe not to belittle us."

"We must take revenge immediately," said Apollo, picking up his silver bow and arrows.

"Yes," said Artemis. "We will use our arrows to defend our mother."

And they glided to Thebes, covered by clouds, and stationed themselves on a tower. Below them was a parade ground, and there they saw Niobe's sons, richly outfitted, exercising their prancing horses.

Apollo and Artemis took aim. Zing! An arrow pierced the heart of Niobe's eldest son. He dropped from his horse, lifeless. Then: Zing! Zing! Zing! One by one, Niobe's seven sons fell to the ground and died.

Niobe heard the wailing of the bystanders and rushed to the scene, followed by her seven daughters. She knelt over her sons' bodies, screaming with grief. Yet, even in mourning, she was proud and cried to Leto, "You have not triumphed, for I am still more worthy than you. Seven of my children remain, while you have only two."

But she had hardly finished her sentence when seven more arrows felled her seven daughters.

Niobe ceased her taunting and wailing. She was so overcome with grief that she could not move or utter a word. The only sign of life in her crouching figure was her tears, which flowed without end. The gods had punished her. They had changed her into a stone that is wet with tears to this very day.

## Stories of People in Tartarus

### Tantalus

Tantalus (TAN-ta-luss) was a Greek king (and a son of Zeus) who thought he could fool the gods. When Zeus invited Tantalus to come up on Mount Olympus and eat dinner with the gods, Tantalus would steal the gods' special food (ambrosia and nectar) to give to his friends back on earth!

And then he did something worse than that. After spending so much time hanging out with the gods he began to get complacent with them and think of them as "normal". He didn't think they were all that special. Eventually he decided to "test them" to see if they were really as "all powerful" as they claimed. He had heard that the gods could not eat human flesh as it was believed to be poisonous to them. He wanted to test this idea.

He invited the gods over for dinner at HIS house, and tried to trick them into eating human flesh. Tantalus had his own son, Pelops, cut up into pieces and boiled in the stew. Most of the gods figured out what was happening and didn't eat any, but Demeter was so worried about Persephone, who had recently been kidnapped, that she ate a little piece of Pelops' shoulder

For this crime, Zeus himself killed Tantalus, and this sassy human had to spend his whole afterlife in the underworld, in Tartarus. His torture was that he had to stand forever waist-deep in a pool of water, with a fruit tree dangling branches full of ripe fruit over his head. He got terribly hungry and thirsty, but whenever he bent down to drink the water, it would all magically drain away, and whenever he reached up to pick some fruit, the branches would lift up out of his reach. But no matter how hungry or thirsty he got, he was already dead, so he could never die.

### Sisyphus (SIS-i-fus)

Sisyphus was condemned in Tartarus to an eternity of rolling a boulder uphill then watching it roll back down again. He was founder and king of Corinth, or Ephyra as it was called in those days. Sisyphus was the son of Aeolus, the king of Thessaly, and Enarete. He was the Greek version of a street thug who made a sport out of robbing and murdering travelers. He even betrayed the secrets of the gods, which is never a good thing. He was notorious as the most cunning criminal on earth.

His greatest triumph came at the end of his life, when the god Hades came to claim him personally for the kingdom of the dead. Hades had brought along a

pair of handcuffs, a new invention, and Sisyphus expressed such an interest that Hades was persuaded to demonstrate their use - on himself.

And so it came about that the high lord of the Underworld was kept locked up in a closet at Sisyphus's house for many a day, a circumstance which put the great chain of being seriously out of whack. Nobody could die. A soldier might be chopped to bits in battle and still show up at camp for dinner. Finally Hades was released and Sisyphus was ordered summarily to report to the Underworld for his eternal assignment. But the wily one had another trick up his sleeve.

He simply told his wife not to bury him and then complained to Persephone, Queen of the Dead, that he had not been accorded the proper funeral honors. What's more, as an unburied corpse he had no business on the far side of the river Styx at all - his wife hadn't placed a coin under his tongue to secure passage with Charon the ferryman. Surely her highness could see that Sisyphus must be given leave to journey back topside and put things right.

Kindly Persephone agreed, and Sisyphus made his way back to the sunshine, where he promptly forgot all about funerals and such drab affairs and lived on in happiness for another good stretch of time. But even this paramount trickster could only postpone the inevitable. Eventually he was hauled down to Hades, where his indiscretions caught up with him.

For a crime against the gods - the specifics of which are variously reported - he was condemned to an eternity at hard labor. And frustrating labor at that. For his assignment was to roll a great boulder to the top of a hill. Only every time Sisyphus, by the greatest of exertion and toil, attained the summit, the cursed rock would magically be caused to roll back down again thus causing him to start all over.