



THE STORY OF ARACHNE



There was once a mortal girl named Arachne who loved to weave cloth. All she did day and night was turn flax, wool and silk into beautiful cloth on her loom. People came from far and wide to see what she had created. They praised her work, and said that they had never seen anything so exquisite.

One day, as Arachne sat next to her loom, weaving cloth, she said to herself, 'In all the world, there is no cloth finer than that which I spin, and no weaver more talented than I. Even the goddess Athena could not produce cloth as fine as mine.'

However, Athena, the goddess of wisdom and crafts, heard Arachne. She appeared in front of her and said, 'I have heard your boast. To decide who is the most talented weaver, you and I will have a competition. Zeus will be the judge. Whoever loses can never use a loom again. Do you agree?'

Arachne arrogantly agreed, thinking she would easily win. The competition began.

Arachne began weaving. She wove cloth that was marvellous to look upon, so thin and light that it floated in the air, but so strong that it could contain a lion. All who saw it were filled with delight.

'She is truly gifted. No wonder she boasted of her skill,' everyone who had come to watch the competition whispered. Zeus nodded in agreement.

Then Athena began to weave. She used the blue of the sky, the silver from the summer clouds, and the bright greens from the forest. Her cloth was full of enchanting images of flowers, castles, beasts and gods. All who saw it could not take their eyes from it; they were filled with awe and wonder, and immediately forgot all about Arachne's cloth.

Arachne realised that her talent was nothing compared to the goddess Athena's superior skill. As Zeus named Athena the winner, Arachne wept, for she knew that she would never be allowed to weave again, and was heartbroken.

Athena took pity on her. Although she could not change the rules of the competition and let Arachne use a loom, she could give her a new form so that she could continue spinning and weaving. So, Athena turned Arachne into a small, nimble spider, who immediately began to spin and weave a beautiful web.



DAEDALUS & ICARUS



There was once a fantastic inventor named Daedalus, who had a young son named Icarus. They lived on the island of Crete. Minos, the king of Crete, heard about Daedalus's skills. He had his Royal guards kidnap him and his young son and lock them away in a cave high above the sea, where the inventor could only make things for the king.

At first, Daedalus didn't worry about this imprisonment too much - he was kept very busy with the king's requests for various inventions. However, as his son grew, Daedalus began to think that living in a cave with no contact with the outside world was not the best thing for his son. He asked King Minos to let his son go.

However, the king had no intention of ever letting either of them out of the cave - Daedalus was much too useful, and Icarus might yet grow up to share his father's talents and skills too. When Daedalus' request was denied, Icarus spent a long time at the entrance to the cave, listening to the waves crashing on the rocks below and watching the seagull chicks in their nests on the cliffs.

'How I envy those chicks, for soon they will be able to spread their wings, soar up into the sky and fly far away from here,' Icarus said sadly. This gave Daedalus an idea. Over the next few days, he and Icarus collected as many feathers from the seagulls as they could reach. They then used a very thin, light metal to make the frame of two pairs of human-sized wings. Hot candle wax was used to stick the feathers to the frames.

At last they were ready to leave. Icarus was very excited, but Daedalus cautioned him, saying, 'If you fly too close to the sun, the heat will melt the wax, and you will lose your feathers. As long as you listen to me and follow my path you will be fine.'

As they set off, the wind immediately caught Icarus' wings, and up he soared. He felt free! He was delighted, and began to swoop and dive with the seagulls. His father shouted, telling him to be careful, but Icarus ignored him - he was having too much fun. He was sick of always having to listen to his father's instructions. Unwittingly, he soared higher and higher into the sky alongside the birds.

'No, Icarus! Stop! The wax will melt if you go too near the sun!' his father shouted, but Icarus could no longer hear him. As he climbed even higher in the sky, Icarus began to feel wax running down his arms, and with horror, saw that one by one, the feathers from his frame were falling like snowflakes. Too late he remembered his father's warning. He began to lose height, picking up speed as he dropped towards the sea, before finally plunging into the water with a big splash. Daedalus searched and searched for his son, but there was no sign of him, save for a few feathers floating in the water.



KING MIDAS & THE GOLDEN TOUCH



King Midas lived in luxury in a large castle with his daughter. He had everything he could ever wish for. Money was his obsession, and his favourite hobby was counting his many gold coins.

One day, whilst taking a stroll outside, King Midas found a satyr (a creature with human form and a horse's ears and tail) called Silenus taking a nap in his rose gardens. Silenus explained that he was travelling with the god Dionysus, but had grown tired and fallen asleep in the king's garden. Midas invited the satyr to spend a few days with him as his guest. After this, he helped him to find Dionysus.

The god of wine and celebrations was very happy to see his friend Silenus, and grateful to King Midas for the kindness he had shown the satyr. In return, he granted the king a wish. Midas did not have to think for long. He said, 'I wish that everything I touch turns to gold.' Dionysus urged the king to think carefully about this request, but Midas was positive that this is what he wanted. Dionysus told him that his wish was granted, and the following day, everything he touched would become gold.

The first thing King Midas did when he awoke the next morning was to reach out and touch a small table by his bed. It immediately turned to gold! Midas was so excited, and ran all over the palace touching chairs, tables, doors and statues, which all turned to gold. Suddenly hungry after all this excitement, he sat down at the table to have breakfast. He picked up a grape and popped it into his mouth - but, it had turned into gold! The same thing happened to a slice of bread and a glass of water that the king touched. Fear began to creep upon Midas.

At that moment, his daughter entered the room. The king was relieved to see her, and jumped up to give her a hug. However, as soon as he touched her, she too turned into gold. Midas was in despair. What had he done? Tears ran down his face as he prayed to Dionysus to undo his foolish wish that had become a curse.

Dionysus heard the king's prayers, and felt sympathy for him. He told Midas to go and wash his hands in the river Pactolus. As he did so, he was astonished to see gold flowing from his fingers. On returning home, Midas saw with much relief that everything had returned back to normal. He hugged his daughter, and was so grateful to have her back that he vowed to be a better person, and a better king. He no longer saw gold as the most important thing in his life, and instead shared his wealth with his people.