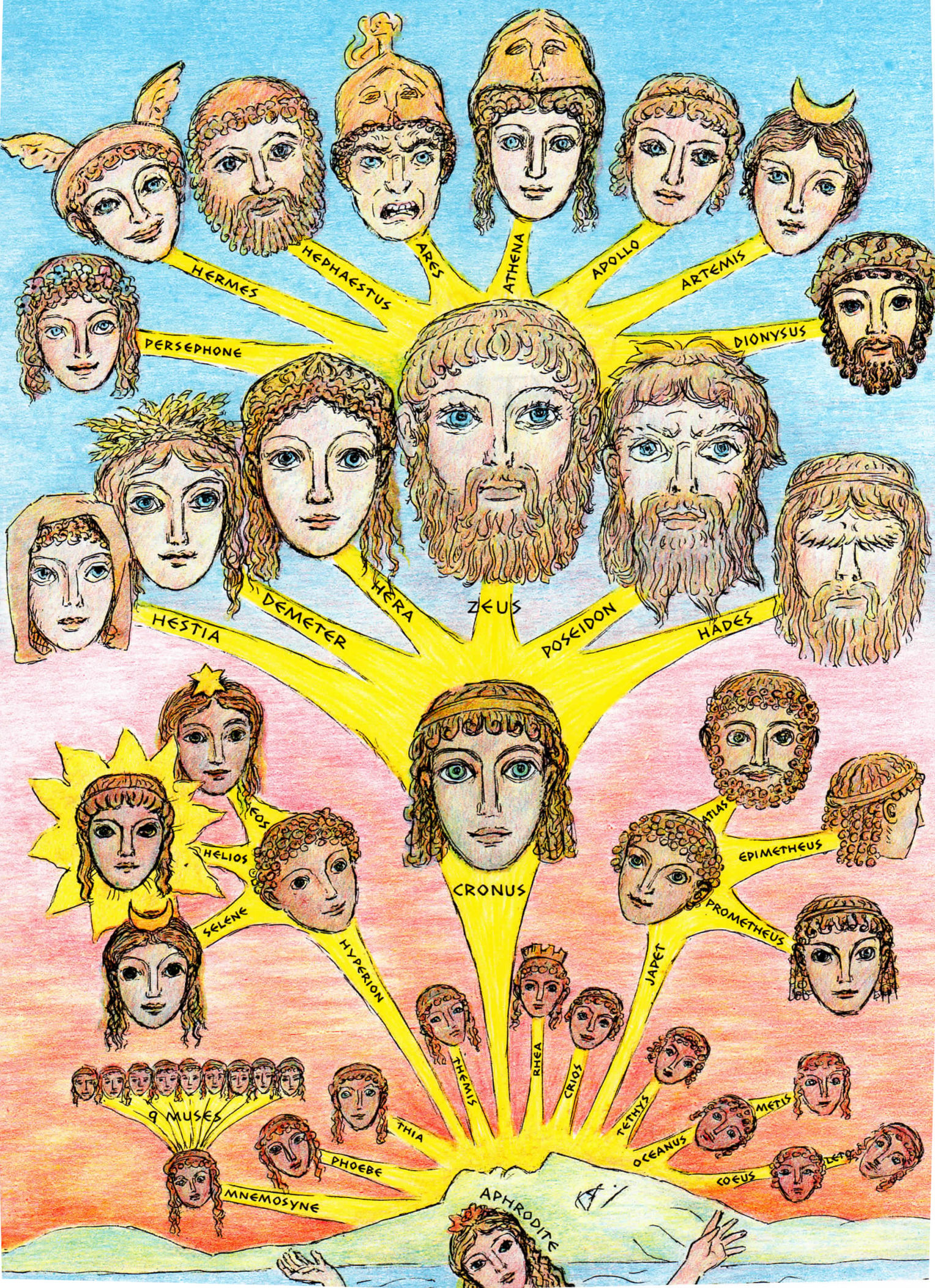
INGRI and EDGAR PARIN D'AULAIRE'S

BOOK OF GREEK MYTHS

DELACORTE PRESS


HERMES
HEPHAESTUS
ARES
ATHENA
APOLLO
ARTEMIS
PERSEPHONE
DIONYSUS
HESTIA
DEMETER
HERA
ZEUS
POSEIDON
HADES
CRONUS
EOS
HELIOS
SELENE
HYPERION
ATLAS
EPIMETHEUS
PROMETHEUS
JAPET
THEMIS
RHEA
CRIOS
TETHYS
METIS
OCEANUS
COEUS
LETO
9 MUSES
THIA
PHOEBE
MNEMOSYNE
APHRODITE


Hyperboreans
Nymphs of the North
THRACE
wild land of Ares
Orpheus born here
Colchis
Amazons
wild Centaurs fled here
OLYMPUS
Snakelegged Giants attacked Olympus from here
Hephaestus' forge here
Lemnos
Troy
ASIA MINOR
Black Sea
THESSALY
home of the Lapiths
IOLCUS
Pelion Mt. home of the Centaurs
AEGEAN SEA
Lesbos
Orpheus buried here
Achelous River
Nessus and Deianira here
Calydonian boar here
Parnassus Mt.
Oracle of Delphi
Golden Ram flew to Colchis from here
EUBOEA
Poseidon's palace here
Chios
Orion was blinded here
Thebes
Heracles born here
Eleusis
Persephone kidnapped here
Athens
Erymanthian Boar here
Corinth
Augeas' Stables here
Olympia
Birthplace of Hermes
Mycenae
Nemean lion here
Argos
Tiryns
Troezen
ARCADIA
home of Pan
Hydra here
PELOPONNESE
Sparta
Birthplace of Helen
Dionysus was kidnapped here
ICARIA
Delos
Seriphos where Danae drifted ashore
Icarus was lost here
NAXOS
Ariadne fell asleep here
IONIAN SEA
Cythera Aphrodite landed here
CRETE
Ida Mt. Childhood home of Zeus
Cnossus and Labyrinth
Tyre
Egypt

IN OLDEN TIMES,

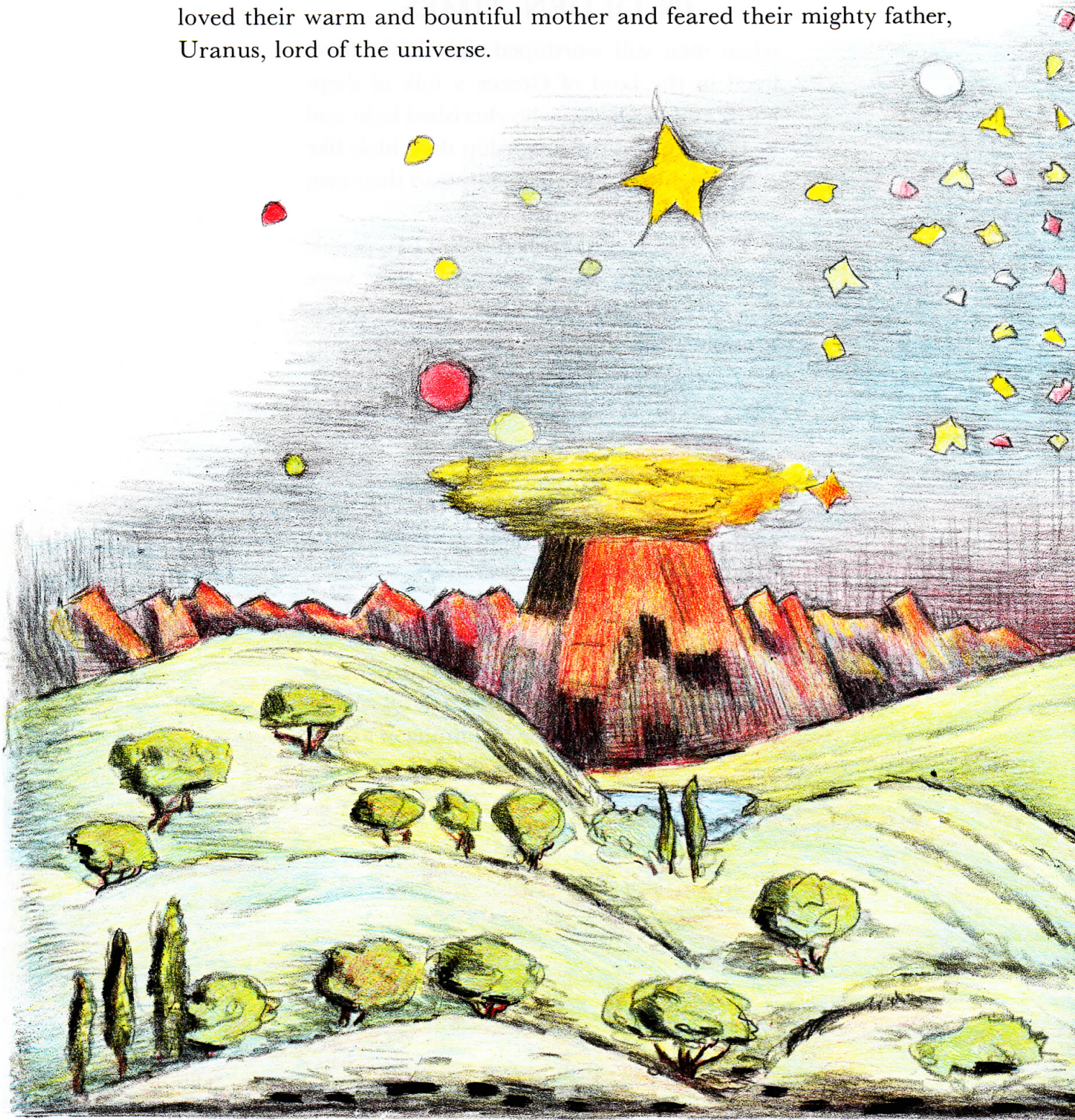
when men still worshiped ugly idols, there lived in the land of Greece a folk of shepherds and herdsmen who cherished light and beauty. They did not worship dark idols like their neighbors, but created instead their own beautiful, radiant gods.

The Greek gods looked much like people and acted like them, too, only they were taller, handsomer and could do no wrong. Fire-breathing monsters and beasts with many heads stood for all that was dark and wicked. They were for gods and great heroes to conquer.

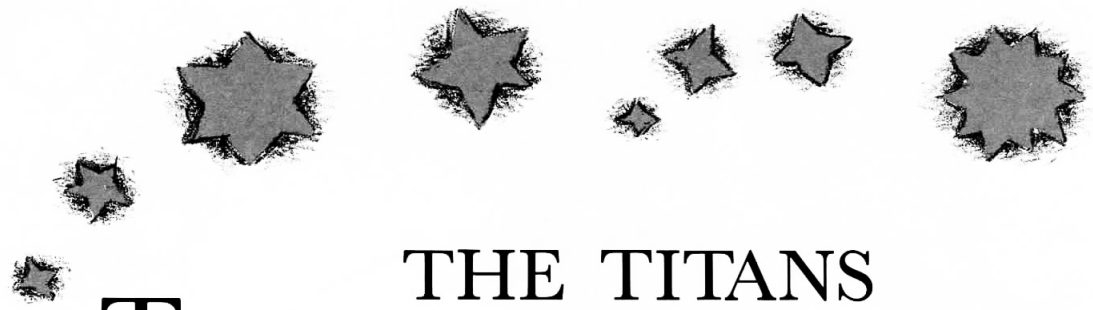
The gods lived on top of Olympus, a mountain so high and steep that no man could climb it and see them in their shining palace. But they often descended to earth, sometimes in their own shapes, sometimes disguised as humans or animals.

Mortals worshiped the gods and the gods honored Mother Earth. They had all sprung from her, for she was the beginning of all life.

GAEA, the Earth, came out of darkness so long ago that nobody knows when or how. Earth was young and lonesome, for nothing lived on her yet. Above her rose Uranus, the Sky, dark and blue, set all over with sparkling stars. He was magnificent to behold, and young Earth looked up at him and fell in love with him. Sky smiled down at Earth, twinkling with his countless stars, and they were joined in love. Soon young Earth became Mother Earth, the mother of all things living. All her children loved their warm and bountiful mother and feared their mighty father, Uranus, lord of the universe.







THE TITANS

THE TITANS were the first children of Mother Earth. They were the first gods, taller than the mountains she created to serve them as thrones, and both Earth and Sky were proud of them. There were six Titans, six glorious gods, and they had six sisters, the Titanesses, whom they took for their wives.

When Gaea again gave birth, Uranus was not proud. Their new children were also huge, but each had only one glowing eye set in the middle of his forehead. They were the three Cyclopes and they were named Lightning, Thunder, and Thunderbolt. They were not handsome gods, but tremendously strong smiths. Sparks from their heavy hammers flashed across the sky and lit up the heavens so brightly that even their father's stars faded.

After a while Mother Earth bore three more sons. Uranus looked at them with disgust. Each of them had fifty heads and a hundred strong arms. He hated to see such ugly creatures walk about on lovely Earth, so he seized them and their brothers the Cyclopes and flung them into Tartarus, the deepest, darkest pit under the earth.

Mother Earth loved her children and could not forgive her husband for his cruelty to them. Out of hardest flint she fashioned a sickle and spoke to her sons the Titans:

"Take this weapon, make an end to your father's cruelty and set your brothers free."

Fear took hold of five of the Titans and they trembled and refused. Only Cronus, the youngest but the strongest, dared to take the sickle. He fell upon his father. Uranus could not withstand the weapon wielded by his strong son and he fled, giving up his powers.

Mother Earth made Pontus, the boundless seas, her second husband, and from this union sprang the gods of the watery depths. And from her rich ground grew an abundance of trees and flowers and, out of her crevices, sprites, beasts, and early man crept forth.



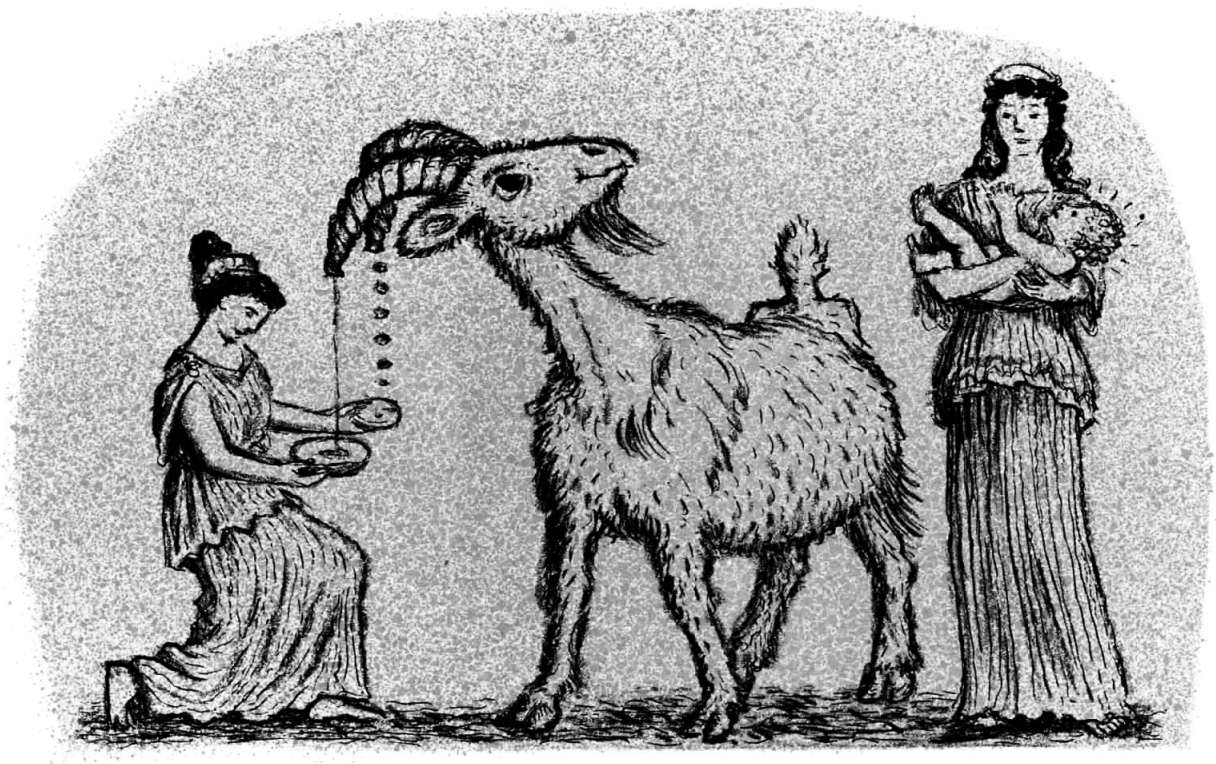
CRONUS was now the lord of the universe. He sat on the highest mountain and ruled over heaven and earth with a firm hand. The other gods obeyed his will and early man worshiped him. This was man's Golden Age. Men lived happily and in peace with the gods and each other. They did not kill and they had no locks on their doors, for theft had not yet been invented.

But Cronus did not set his monstrous brothers free, and Mother Earth was angry with him and plotted his downfall. She had to wait, for no god yet born was strong enough to oppose him. But she knew that one of his sons would be stronger than he, just as Cronus had been stronger than his father. Cronus knew it too, so every time his Titaness-wife Rhea gave birth, he took the newborn god and swallowed it. With all of his offspring securely inside him, he had nothing to fear.



But Rhea mourned. Her five sisters, who had married the five other Titans, were surrounded by their Titan children, while she was all alone. When Rhea expected her sixth child, she asked Mother Earth to help her save the child from his father. That was just what Mother Earth had been waiting for. She gave her daughter whispered advice, and Rhea went away smiling.

As soon as Rhea had borne her child, the god Zeus, she hid him. Then she wrapped a stone in baby clothes and gave it to her husband to swallow instead of her son. Cronus was fooled and swallowed the stone, and the little god Zeus was spirited away to a secret cave on the island of Crete. Old Cronus never heard the cries of his young son, for Mother Earth set noisy earth sprites outside the cave. They made such a clatter, beating their shields with their swords, that other sounds were drowned out.



ZEUS
AND HIS FAMILY

ZEUS was tended by gentle nymphs and was nursed by the fairy goat Amaltheia. From the horns of the goat flowed ambrosia and nectar, the food and drink of the gods. Zeus grew rapidly, and it was not long before he strode out of the cave as a great new god. To thank the nymphs for tending him so well, he gave them the horns of the goat. They were horns of plenty and could never be emptied. From the hide of the goat he made for himself an impenetrable breastplate, the Aegis, and now he was so strong that Cronus could do nothing against him.

Young Zeus chose Metis, a Titan's daughter, for his first wife. She was the goddess of prudence, and he needed her good advice. She warned him not to try alone to overthrow his child-devouring father, for Cronus had all the other Titans and their sons on his side. First Zeus must also have strong allies.

Metis went to Cronus and cunningly tricked him into eating a magic herb. He thought that the herb would make him unconquerable. Instead it made him so sick that he vomited up not only the stone he had swallowed, but his five other children as well. They were the gods Hades and Poseidon and the goddesses Hestia, Demeter, and Hera, all mighty gods who right away joined forces with Zeus. When Cronus saw the six young gods rising against him, he knew that his hour had come and he surrendered his powers and fled.

Now Zeus was the lord of the universe. He did not want to rule alone. He shared his powers with his brothers and sisters. But the Titans and their sons revolted. They refused to let themselves be ruled by the new gods. Only Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus left the Titans to join Zeus, for Prometheus could look into the future and he knew that Zeus would win.

Zeus freed the monstrous sons of Mother Earth from Tartarus. Gratefully the hundred-armed ones fought for him with all their strength, and the Cyclopes forged mighty weapons for him and his brothers.

They made a trident for Poseidon. It was so forceful that when he struck the ground with it, the earth shook, and when he struck the sea, frothing waves stood mountain high.

For Hades they made a cap of invisibility so he could strike his enemies unseen, and for Zeus they forged lightning bolts. Armed with them, he was the mightiest god of them all, nothing could stand against him and his thunderbolts. The Titans fought a bitter battle, but at last they had to surrender, and Zeus locked them up in Tartarus. The hundred-armed monsters went to stand guard at the gates to see that they never escaped. Atlas, the strongest of the Titans, was sent to the end of the world to carry forever the vault of the sky on his shoulders.

Angry with Zeus for sending her sons the Titans into the dark pit of Tartarus, Mother Earth now brought forth two terrible monsters, Typhon and his mate, Echidna, and sent them against Zeus. They were so fearful that when the gods saw them they changed themselves into animals and fled in terror. Typhon's hundred horrible heads touched the stars, venom dripped from his evil eyes, and lava and red-hot stones poured from his gaping mouths. Hissing like a hundred snakes and roaring like a hundred lions, he tore up whole mountains and threw them at the gods.

Zeus soon regained his courage and turned, and when the other gods saw him taking his stand, they came back to help him fight the monster. A terrible battle raged, and hardly a living creature was left on earth. But Zeus was fated to win, and as Typhon tore up huge Mount Aetna to hurl at the gods, Zeus struck it with a hundred well-aimed thunderbolts and the mountain fell back, pinning Typhon underneath. There the monster lies to this very day, belching fire, lava, and smoke through the top of the mountain.

Echidna, his hideous mate, escaped destruction. She cowered in a cave, protecting Typhon's dreadful offspring, and Zeus let them live as a challenge to future heroes.



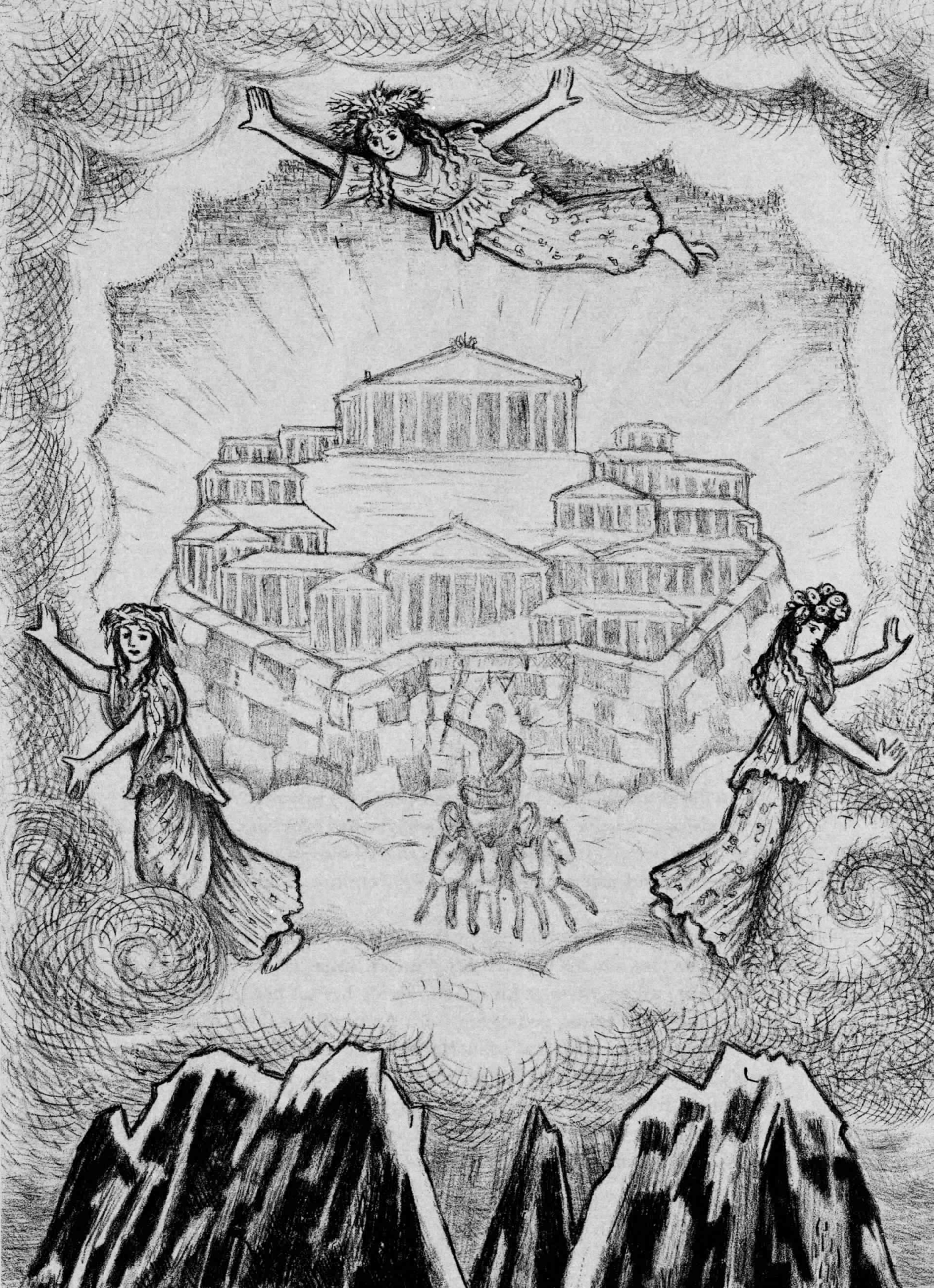




Now at last Mother Earth gave up her struggle. There were no more upheavals, and the wounds of the war soon healed. The mountains stood firmly anchored. The seas had their shores. The rivers had their river-beds and oxhorned river-gods watched over them, and each tree and each spring had its nymph. The earth again was green and fruitful and Zeus could begin to rule in peace.

The one-eyed Cyclopes were not only smiths but masons as well, and they built a towering palace for the gods on top of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. The palace was hidden in clouds, and the goddesses of the seasons rolled them away whenever a god wanted to go down to earth. Nobody else could pass through the gate of clouds.

Iris, the fleet-footed messenger of the gods, had her own path down to earth. Dressed in a gown of iridescent drops, she ran along the rainbow on her busy errands between Olympus and earth.





In the gleaming hall of the palace, where light never failed, the Olympian gods sat on twelve golden thrones and reigned over heaven and earth. There were twelve great gods, for Zeus shared his powers, not only with his brothers and sisters, but with six of his children and the goddess of love as well.

Zeus himself sat on the highest throne, with a bucketful of thunderbolts beside him. On his right sat his youngest sister, Hera, whom he had chosen from all his wives as his queen. Beside her sat her son, Ares, god of war, and Hephaestus, god of fire, with Aphrodite, goddess of love, between them. Next was Zeus's son Hermes, the herald of the gods, and Zeus's sister Demeter, goddess of the harvest with her daughter, Persephone, on her lap. On the left of Zeus sat his brother Poseidon, the lord of the sea. Next to him sat the four children of Zeus: Athena, the twins Apollo and Artemis, and Dionysus, the youngest of the gods. Athena was

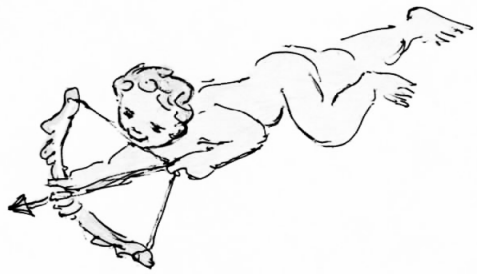


the goddess of wisdom, Apollo, the god of light and music, Artemis, goddess of the hunt, and Dionysus, the god of wine.

Hestia, the eldest sister of Zeus, was goddess of the hearth. She had no throne, but tended the sacred fire in the hall, and every hearth on earth was her altar. She was the gentlest of all the Olympians.

Hades, the eldest brother of Zeus, was the lord of the dead. He preferred to stay in his gloomy palace in the underworld and never went to Olympus.

The gods themselves could not die, for divine ichor flowed in their veins instead of blood. Most of the time they lived happily together, feasting on sweet-smelling ambrosia and nectar, but when their wills clashed, there were violent quarrels. Then Zeus would reach for a thunderbolt and the Olympians would tremble and fall to order, for Zeus alone was stronger than all the other gods together.



APHRODITE, the beautiful goddess of love, was the only Olympian who had neither mother nor father. Nobody knew from where she had come. The West Wind had first seen her in the pearly light of dawn as she rose out of the sea on a cushion of foam. She floated lightly over the gentle waves and was so lovely to behold that the wind almost lost his breath. With soft puffs, he blew her to the flowering island of Cythera, where the three Graces welcomed her ashore. The three Graces, goddesses of beauty, became her attendants. They dressed her in shimmering garments, bedecked her with sparkling jewels, and placed her in a golden chariot drawn by white doves. Then they led her to Olympus, where all the gods rejoiced in her beauty, seated her on a golden throne, and made her one of them.

Zeus was afraid that the gods would fight over the hand of Aphrodite, and, to prevent it, he quickly chose a husband for her. He gave her to Hephaestus, the steadiest of the gods, and he, who could hardly believe in his good luck, used all his skill to make the most lavish jewels for her. He made her a girdle of finely wrought gold and wove magic into the filigree work. That was not very wise of him, for when she wore her magic girdle no one could resist her, and she was all too irresistible already.

Aphrodite had a mischievous little son whose name was Eros. He darted about with a bow and a quiver full of arrows. They were arrows of love and he delighted in shooting them into the hearts of unwary victims. Whoever was hit by one of his arrows fell head over heels in love with the first person he saw, while Eros laughed mockingly.

Once a year Aphrodite returned to Cythera and dived into the sea from which she had come. Sparkling and young, she rose from the water, as dewy fresh as on the day when she had first been seen. She loved gaiety and glamour and was not at all pleased at being the wife of sooty, hard-working Hephaestus. She would rather have had his brother Ares for her husband.





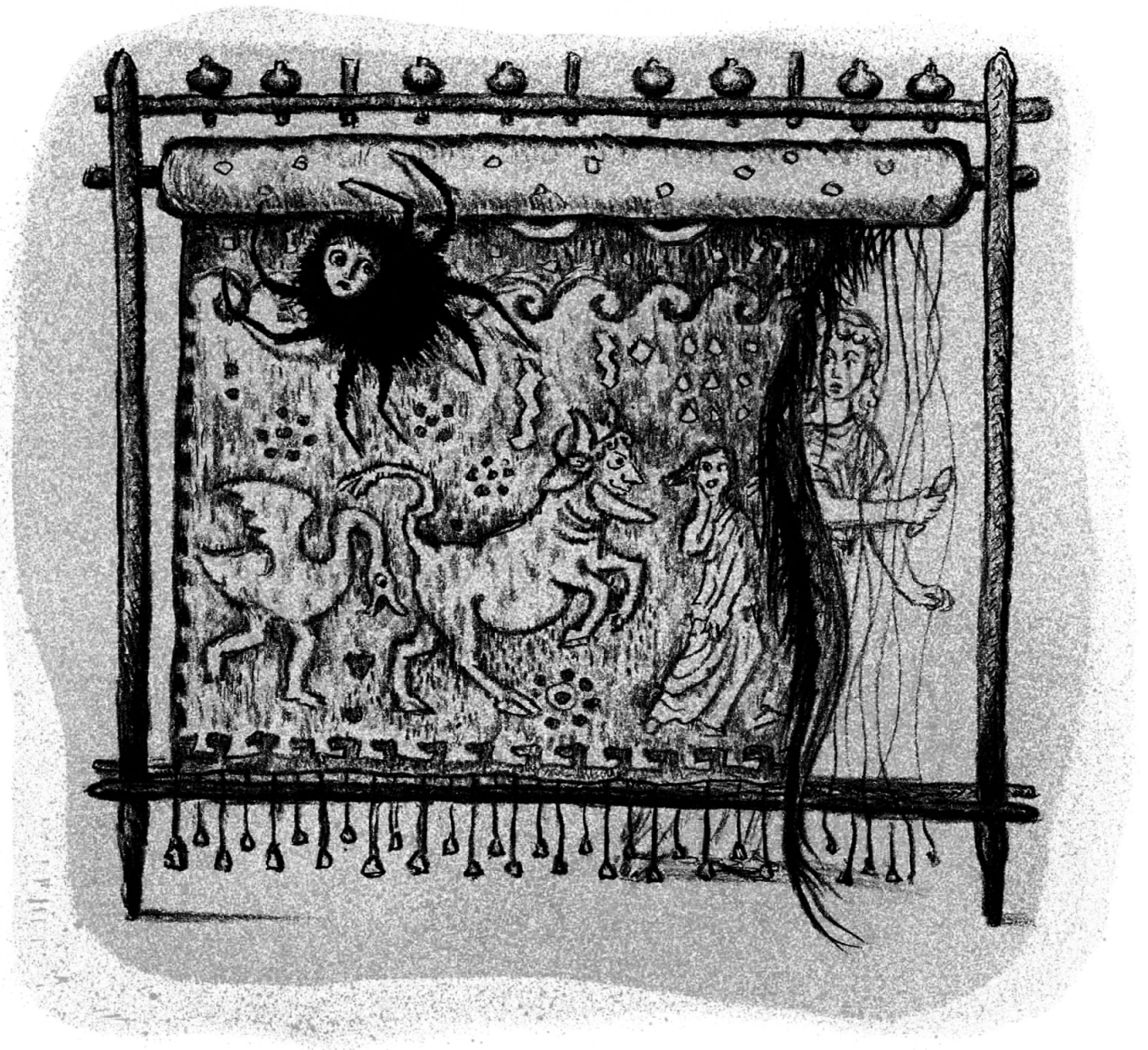
ATHENA, the goddess of wisdom, was the favorite child of Zeus. She had sprung fully grown out of her father's head.

Her mother was Metis, goddess of prudence, the first wife of Zeus. He depended on her, for he needed her wise council, but Mother Earth warned him that, were Metis to bear him a son, this son would dethrone him as Zeus had dethroned Cronus, his father who had dethroned his own father, Uranus. This must not happen, thought Zeus, but he could not do without her advice, so he decided to swallow her. Slyly, he proposed that they play a game of changing shapes, and Metis, forgetting her prudence, playfully turned herself into all kinds of animals, big and small. Just as she had taken on the shape of a little fly, Zeus opened wide his mouth, took a deep breath, and zip! he swallowed the fly. Ever after, Metis sat in his head and guided him from there.

Now it happened that Metis was going to have a daughter, and she sat inside Zeus's head hammering out a helmet and weaving a splendid robe for the coming child. Soon Zeus began to suffer from pounding headaches and cried out in agony. All the gods came running to help him, and skilled Hephaestus grasped his tools and split open his father's skull. Out sprang Athena, wearing the robe and the helmet, her gray eyes flashing. Thunder roared and the gods stood in awe.



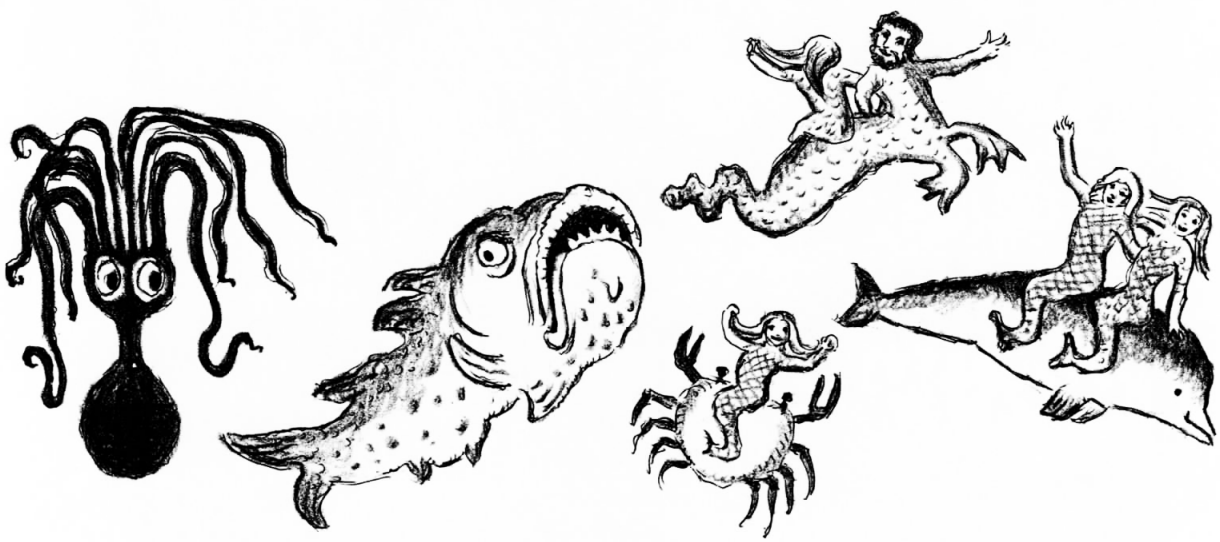
Leading a procession of citizens, the two gods mounted the Acropolis, the flat-topped rock that crowned the city. Poseidon struck the cliff with his trident, and a spring welled up. The people marveled, but the water was salty as the sea that Poseidon ruled, and not very useful. Then Athena gave the city her gift. She planted an olive tree in a crevice on the rock. It was the first olive tree the people had ever seen. Athena's gift was judged the better of the two, for it gave food, oil, and wood, and the city was hers. From her beautiful temple on top of the Acropolis, Athena watched over Athens, her city, with the wise owl, her bird, on her shoulder, and under her leadership the Athenians grew famous for their arts and crafts.



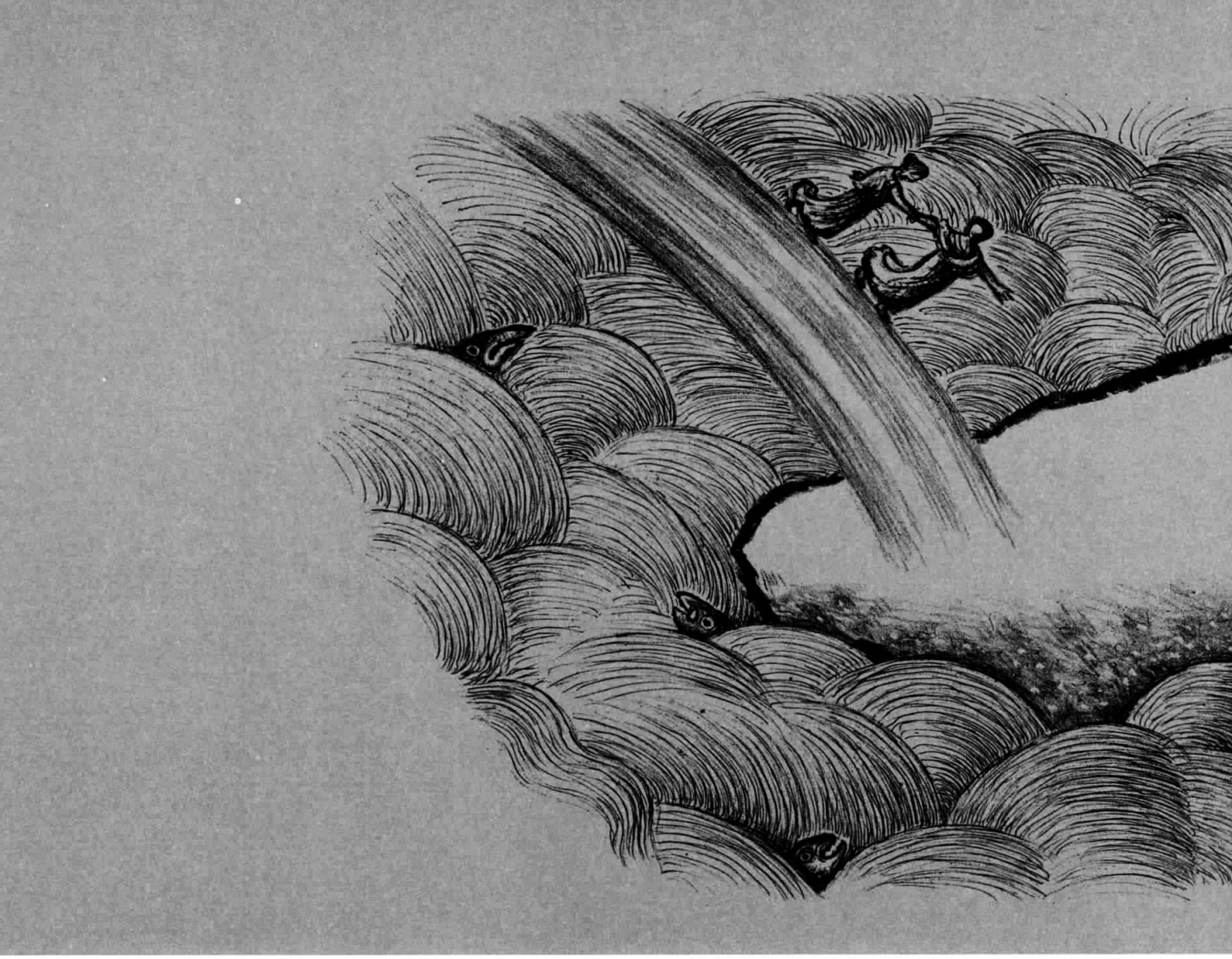
POSEIDON, lord of the sea, was a moody and violent god. His fierce blue eyes pierced the haze, and his sea-blue hair streamed out behind him. He was called the Earthshaker, for when he struck the ground with his trident, the earth trembled and split open. When he struck the sea, waves rose mountain high and the winds howled, wrecking ships and drowning those who lived on the shores. But when he was in a calm mood, he would stretch out his hand and still the sea and raise new lands out of the water.

In the days of Cronus and the Titans, the sea was ruled by Nereus, son of Mother Earth and Pontus, the seas. Nereus was an old sea god with a long gray beard and a fishtail and was the father of fifty sea nymphs, the lovely Nereids. When Poseidon, the Olympian, came to take over the kingdom of the sea, kind old Nereus gave him his daughter Amphitrite for his queen and retired to an underwater grotto. He gave the new king and queen his palace at the bottom of the sea. It was made of the palest gold and lay in a garden of corals and shimmering pearls. There Amphitrite lived contentedly surrounded by her forty-nine Nereid sisters. She had an only son, whose name was Triton. He had a fishtail instead of legs, like his grandfather Nereus, and rode about on the back of a sea monster, trumpeting on a conch shell.

Poseidon was rarely at home. He was a restless god and loved to race the waves with his team of snow-white horses. It was said that he had created the horse in the shape of breaking waves. Like his brother Zeus, Poseidon had many wives and many children, but Amphitrite was not jealous like Hera.





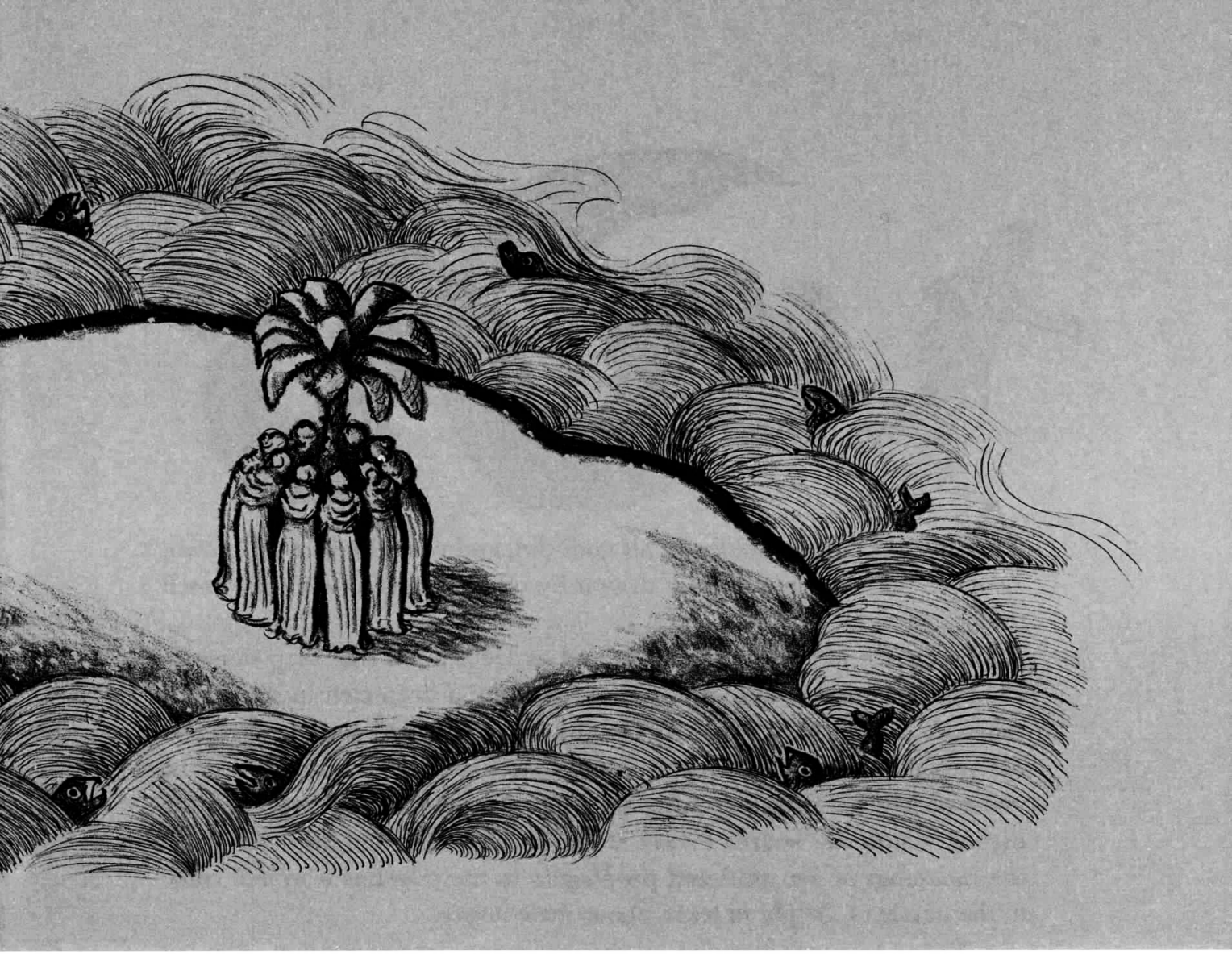


One of the islands that Poseidon raised out of the sea was Delos. It was so newly created that it was still floating about on the water. The little island was barren. Nothing grew on it yet except a single palm tree. In its shade, the two great gods Apollo and Artemis were to be born.

Zeus had married the goddess Leto, and when Hera found out that Leto was expecting twins, she flew into a jealous rage and ordered all the lands in the world to refuse Leto shelter. Chased away from every land, poor Leto wandered from place to place and could not rest to give birth to her twins.

At last she came to Delos and the little island welcomed her. Since it was still floating and not quite land, it was free from Hera's bidding.

Exhausted, Leto sank down in the shade of the palm tree, but still she could not give birth to her twins, for Hera forbade Ilithyia, the goddess of childbirth, to go to her. Without her help no child could be born. All the other goddesses felt sorry for Leto and tried to sway Hera by offering her

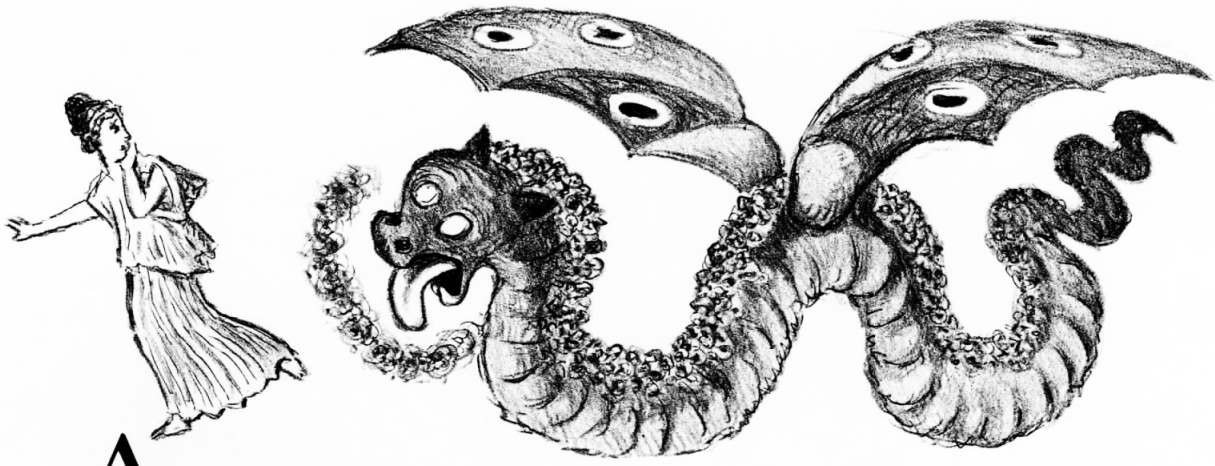


a beautiful necklace. It was nine yards long, made of gold and amber, and Hera could not resist it. She let Ilithyia go, and Iris whisked her down the rainbow to Leto.

Leto's first child was Artemis, a girl as beautiful as the moon, with hair as dark as the night. She was to be the goddess of the hunt and all newborn creatures. Then Apollo came into the world. He was fair as the sun and he was to be the god of music, light, and reason.

Zeus was filled with joy at the sight of his beautiful twins and he gave them each a silver bow and a quiver full of arrows. The arrows of Artemis were soft as moonbeams and brought painless death, those of Apollo were hard and piercing as the rays of the sun.

Zeus blessed the little island and fastened it to the bottom of the sea. Grass and flowers burst forth from the barren ground, and Delos became the richest of all the Greek islands. Pilgrims flocked to it and loaded it with temples and treasures to honor Leto and her twins.



APOLLO grew rapidly, as all gods did, and when he was full grown, Zeus sent him off in a chariot drawn by white swans to win for himself the oracle of Delphi.

No place in Greece was as sacred as Delphi, on the steep slopes of Mount Parnassus. Sulphurous fumes rose from a deep cleft in the mountainside. A sibyl, the priestess of Delphi, sat on a tripod over the cleft and the vapors put her into a magic sleep. In her dreams the sibyl heard the voice of Mother Earth coming up from the depths, and repeated the mystic words she heard. Priests stood around the sibyl and explained the meanings of her muttered prophecies to the pilgrims who had come to the oracle of Delphi to learn about their future.

The oracle was guarded by the darksome dragon Python, who lay coiled around the sacred place. Old age had made him mean and so ill-tempered that the nymphs fled from the sacred spring nearby and the birds no longer dared to sing in the trees.

The oracle had warned Python that Leto's son would one day destroy him. He had tried to devour Leto when she wandered about looking for a place to give birth to her children, but she had escaped. When the old black dragon saw radiant Apollo flying toward him in his golden chariot, he knew that his last hour had come. But he sold his life dearly. He unleashed his fury, spitting fire and venom, and his black scaly body did not stop its writhing and coiling until Apollo had shot him with a thousand of his silver shafts. In torrents did the dragon's venom flow down the mountainside, and the oracle of Delphi was Apollo's.

Now there was light and joy on the once-somber slopes of Mount Parnassus. The air was filled with sweet tunes as the birds in the sky and the nymphs of the sacred spring returned to sing Apollo's praise. The voice of the young god rose above all the others, for he was also the god of music.





ARTEMIS, as a newborn goddess, went to her father, Zeus, and asked him to grant her a wish. She wanted to remain forever a wild young maiden hunting through the woods, and she asked him to promise never to make her marry. Zeus consented, and then she asked him for fifty fleet nymphs as companions and a pack of lop-eared hounds to hunt with. Her father gave her all she asked, and she herself caught four hinds with golden antlers and harnessed them to her silver chariot.

When the moon's magic light shone over echoing hills and wooded valleys, Artemis hunted with the nymphs and her hounds. After a wild hunt, the goddess loved to bathe in a quiet pool. Woe to the mortal who happened to see her then!

One night, quite by chance, a young hunter whose name was Actaeon came upon the pool in the woods where Artemis and her nymphs were bathing. He should have taken to his heels and run for his life, but instead, he stood spellbound by the sight of the goddess. Artemis was furious! While the nymphs flung a tunic over her shoulders, the goddess dipped her hand into the pool and threw a handful of water at Actaeon. The moment the silvery drops touched his forehead, antlers sprouted, and rapidly all of Actaeon changed into a stag. His own hounds leaped at him, and, to his horror, he could not utter a human sound to call them off. They brought him down, never knowing that the deer was their own master.

"No mortal shall live to boast that he has seen Artemis bathing," said the goddess, and she picked up her bow and arrows and went on hunting with her nymphs. Artemis was a cold and pitiless goddess.



Apollo and Artemis, though different as day and night, were very fond of each other and they both adored their mother. No one could say a belittling word about gentle Leto without arousing the wrath of her twins.

There was a queen of Thebes whose name was Niobe. She was beautiful and she was rich and she was blessed with fourteen children. Zeus himself was her grandfather, and she was very proud.

"Why worship Leto?" she said to her people. "Build me a temple and worship me in her stead. I have seven sons and seven daughters, while she has only one of each."

When Apollo and Artemis heard this, they grew very angry. Niobe's disrespect could not go unpunished.

Apollo shot his hard arrows at Niobe's seven sons. By no fault of their own, they were torn from life in the prime of their youth. Then Artemis let fly her painless shafts at the seven daughters. Quietly, they lay down on their beds and died.

Niobe's proud heart was broken. She wept for so long that the gods at last took pity on her and changed her into an unfeeling rock. Still, inside the rock, a spring welled up and water like tears trickled down the face of the hard stone.

Apollo had many wives, but Zeus kept his promise to Artemis and never made her marry. Only once she promised her hand to a suitor, but that was a promise she had no intention of keeping. The suitor was Otus, a gigantic son of Poseidon.

Otus and his brother, Ephialtes, were almost sixty feet tall when they reached manhood, and still they went on growing. The gods watched them with concern, for an oracle had predicted that neither gods nor mortals could kill the giant brothers. Mother Earth, however, watched them with pleasure. She was still angry with Zeus for keeping her sons, the Titans, in Tartarus, and she hoped that Otus and Ephialtes would grow big enough to overthrow him.

One night as the brothers slept with their ears to the ground, they heard Mother Earth whisper that such tall and handsome youths should not let themselves be ruled by Zeus. That was just what they had been thinking themselves, for they were vain, as many strong people are. They pulled up mountains, piled them on top of each other, and built a vast new mountain as high as Olympus. From the top they called to Zeus to

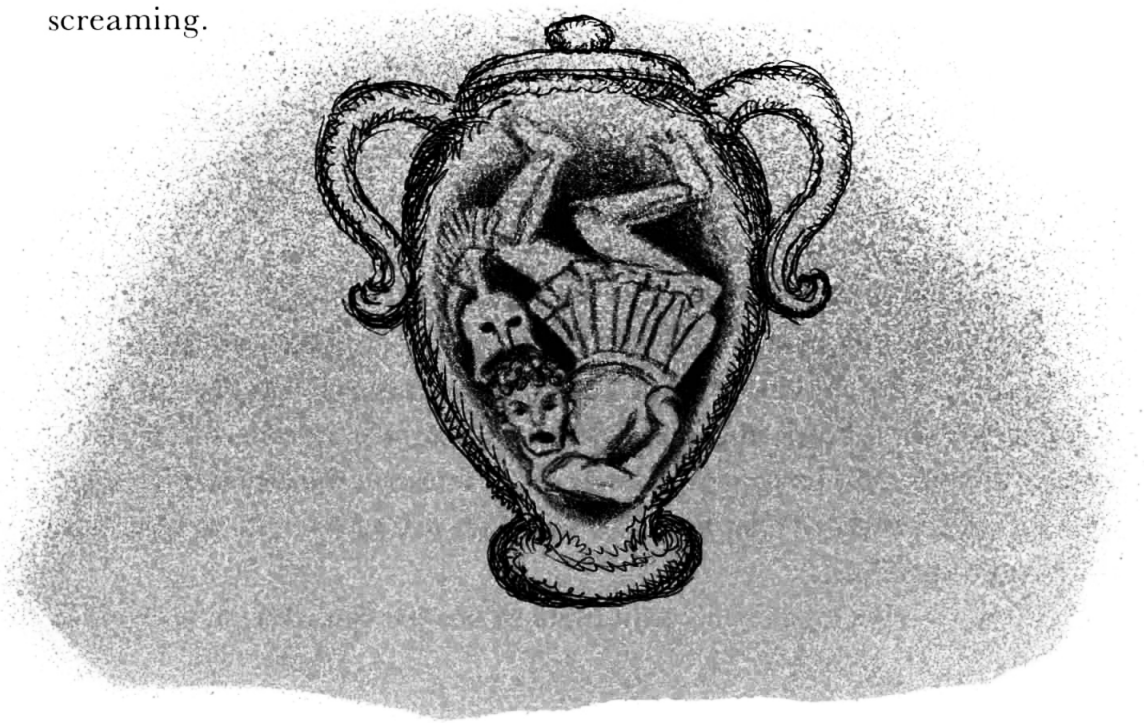
surrender his powers to them and move out of his palace with the other Olympians. Artemis could stay and become his bride, shouted Otus, and Ephialtes would take Hera.

The two goddesses tossed their heads with scorn, and Zeus in a fury hurled thunderbolts at the ruffians. Zeus's thunderbolts glanced off harmlessly, and when Ares rushed out to fight them, they grabbed him and crammed him into a bronze jar and clamped the lid shut.

For once Zeus was really worried, but Apollo, the god of reason, said that if no one could kill them they must be tricked into killing each other. He persuaded Artemis to pretend that she was in love with Otus. Otus smirked when Apollo called to him that Artemis thought so much of him she had accepted his proposal and would wait for him on the island of Naxos. That made Ephialtes jealous. Why hadn't Hera fallen in love with *him?* Wasn't he as handsome as his brother? But he swallowed his pride and went to Naxos with his brother to meet the bride.

When Artemis saw the two brothers arriving, she quickly changed herself into a white deer and ran across their path. She darted to and fro between them and the brothers, who were eager huntsmen, threw their javelins at the deer. Cleverly, she dodged and the brothers fell to the ground, pierced by each other's javelins. Neither gods nor mortals could kill the giant brothers, but now they had put an end to each other and were thrown into Tartarus, tied back to back with writhing snakes.

All the gods thanked Artemis for saving them, and pulled Ares out of the jar where he had been crouching all the while, howling and screaming.





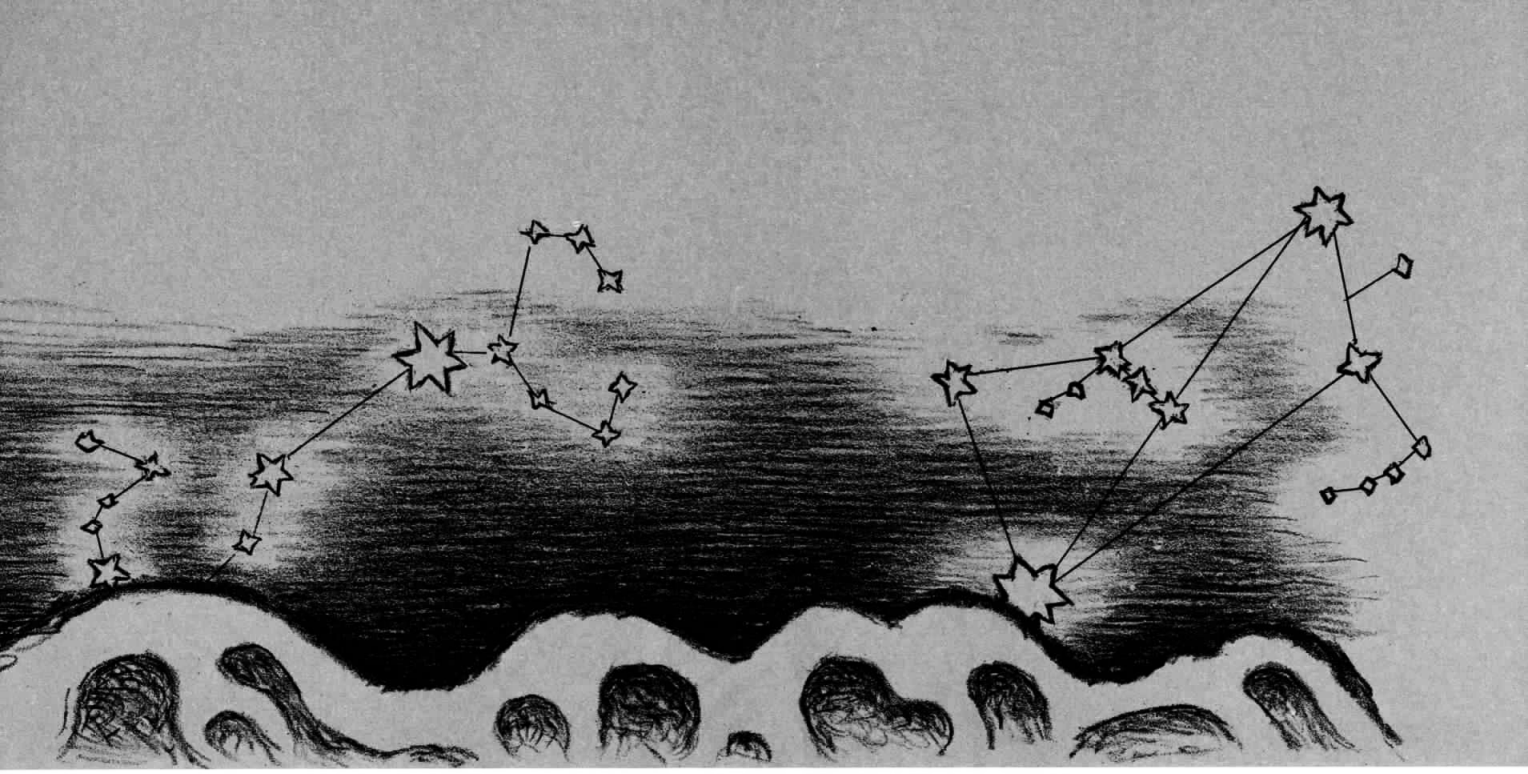
Orion was another giant son of Poseidon, but, unlike Otus and Ephialtes, he was modest. He was a great hunter, no beast could escape from his club and jeweled sword, but he never forgot to praise Artemis as the greatest of all hunters.

One day Orion, who could walk on water as if it were land, came to the island of Chios. The island was infested with lions, wolves, and boars who roared and howled so loudly at night that the King of Chios could not sleep. He promised Orion the hand of his daughter if he could rid the island of all the wild beasts. The king's daughter was beautiful, her father's greatest treasure, and Orion hunted as never before. Soon there was not a wild beast left, but the king did not want to part with his daughter, and claimed that he could still hear the howling of wolves at night. Orion grew angry and threatened to carry off the princess, but the king soothed him with honeyed words, sent for wine, and filled his cup so often that Orion drank too much and feel asleep. Stealthily the evil king crept up and put out both his eyes.

"Now see if you can carry off my daughter," he said.

Blind and helpless, Orion left Chios and staggered over the seas in search of the sun, which he knew could restore his eyesight, but he could not find his way. From afar he heard the Cyclopes' hammers and he followed the sound till he came to Hephaestus' forge on the island of Lemnos. The kind god took pity on him and lent him a Cyclops boy to show him the way to the East.

With the Cyclops on his shoulders to see for him, Orion walked on



till he met the rising sun. The sun let its healing rays play over Orion's blind eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he rushed back to seek revenge on the false king. But when he arrived, the palace was empty, for the king had seen his huge, menacing shape against the sky and fled with his daughter.

Again Orion went hunting and soon forgot the king and the beautiful princess. He walked from island to island and after a while he came to the island of Crete. There he met the goddess Artemis. She was glad to see him, for he could hunt as well as she and was so very modest about it. Together they hunted wild goats and rejoiced in each other's company. Orion was the only man Artemis had ever favored, and her brother Apollo grew jealous. One day while Artemis was away, he sent an enormous scorpion to attack Orion. Orion's club and mighty sword were no avail against the scorpion's poisonous tail. He turned to flee, but as he did, the giant insect stung his heel.

Artemis was angry with her brother when she returned and found her companion dead. But she could not stay angry with her twin for long, and he helped her hang Orion's image in the skies as a constellation so the great hunter would never be forgotten.

Over the stormy winter sea the constellation of Orion glitters, enormous and menacing, and the dark clouds flee before him like wild animals. But in summer, when the constellation of the Scorpion rises over the horizon, Orion begins to sway and stagger, and then he, in his turn, flees and disappears into the ocean.

HERACLES

PROUDLY did the Muses sing of Heracles, often called Hercules, the strongest man who ever lived on earth and the greatest of all the descendants of Danaüs. His mother was Princess Alcmena, granddaughter of Perseus and Andromeda, and famed for her beauty and virtue.

His father was Zeus, so Hera, of course, hated Alcmena and pursued Heracles with her wrath. When he was an infant the goddess sent two spotted serpents into his cradle, but little Heracles simply grasped them in his powerful hands and squeezed the life out of them. He grew stronger every day, but his trouble was that he did not know his own strength.

Being of noble birth, he had to learn to sing and play the lyre, but Heracles would much rather wrestle and fight. One day his music teacher Linus scolded him for singing out of tune. In a fit of fury Heracles banged his lyre over the teacher's head, harder than he had meant, and the blow killed the poor man. Heracles was too strong to have around a palace so he was sent into the mountains as a shepherd. There he could use his tremendous strength on prowling beasts. Soon he had rid the countryside around Thebes of lions and wolves, and the fame of his strength spread far and wide. He came back from the mountains as a hero, and the King of Thebes regarded him so highly that he gave him his daughter in marriage. Hera did not like this at all, and she made Heracles insane. Raving mad, he swatted down his own children, mistaking them for wild beasts. When he regained his senses, he was horrified at what he had done, and went to the oracle of Delphi to learn what he must do to atone for his crime. He was told that he must serve for ten years as the slave of his cousin Eurystheus and perform ten labors for him.

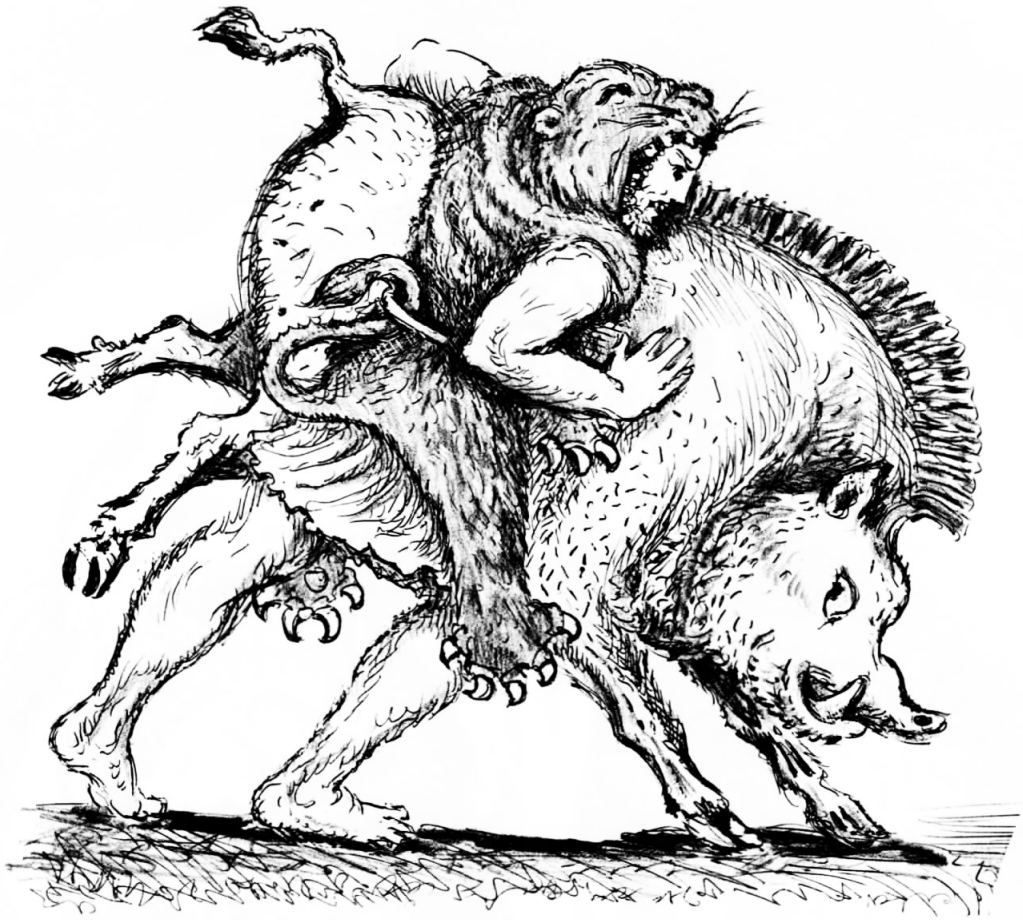
Hera was pleased, for Eurystheus, the King of Mycenae, was a weak little man who hated his strong cousin Heracles. With her help the king would surely think of the hardest tasks for Heracles to perform.

For his first four labors Eurystheus sent Heracles to rid the nearby countryside of dangerous beasts and monsters.

In the valley of Nemea dwelt a monstrous lion whose hide was so tough it could not be pierced by any weapons. It was one of Echidna's dreadful offspring, which Zeus had let live as a challenge to future heroes.

Heracles chased it out of its lair, seized it in his bare hands, and





squeezed it to death. Then he skinned the beast with its own claws, and with the impenetrable skin of the Nemean lion slung over his head and shoulders, he reported back to Eurystheus, his first labor performed.

In the swamps of Lerna there lived a nine-headed Hydra, another of Echidna's brood. This monster was so poisonous that the fumes from its breath alone were enough to kill whatever came close to it.

Heracles filled his enormous lungs with air, held his breath, and ran at the Hydra. Swinging his club, he knocked off its heads, and one after the other they rolled to the ground. But no sooner had he knocked off one head than a new one grew in its place. He half turned around and let out enough air to call to his charioteer to bring a firebrand and sear the necks. Then no new heads could sprout. When Hera saw that Heracles was winning over the Hydra, she sent a giant crab to pinch his heel. With a mighty kick Heracles sent the giant crab flying as he knocked off the last of the heads. Then he dipped his arrows in the Hydra's blood, making them so poisonous that a mere scratch from them was deadly, and he returned to Mycenae, his second labor performed.

On the slopes of Mount Erymanthus roamed a wild and dreadful boar, with tusks as sharp as swords. Eurystheus sent Heracles to bring this beast back alive.

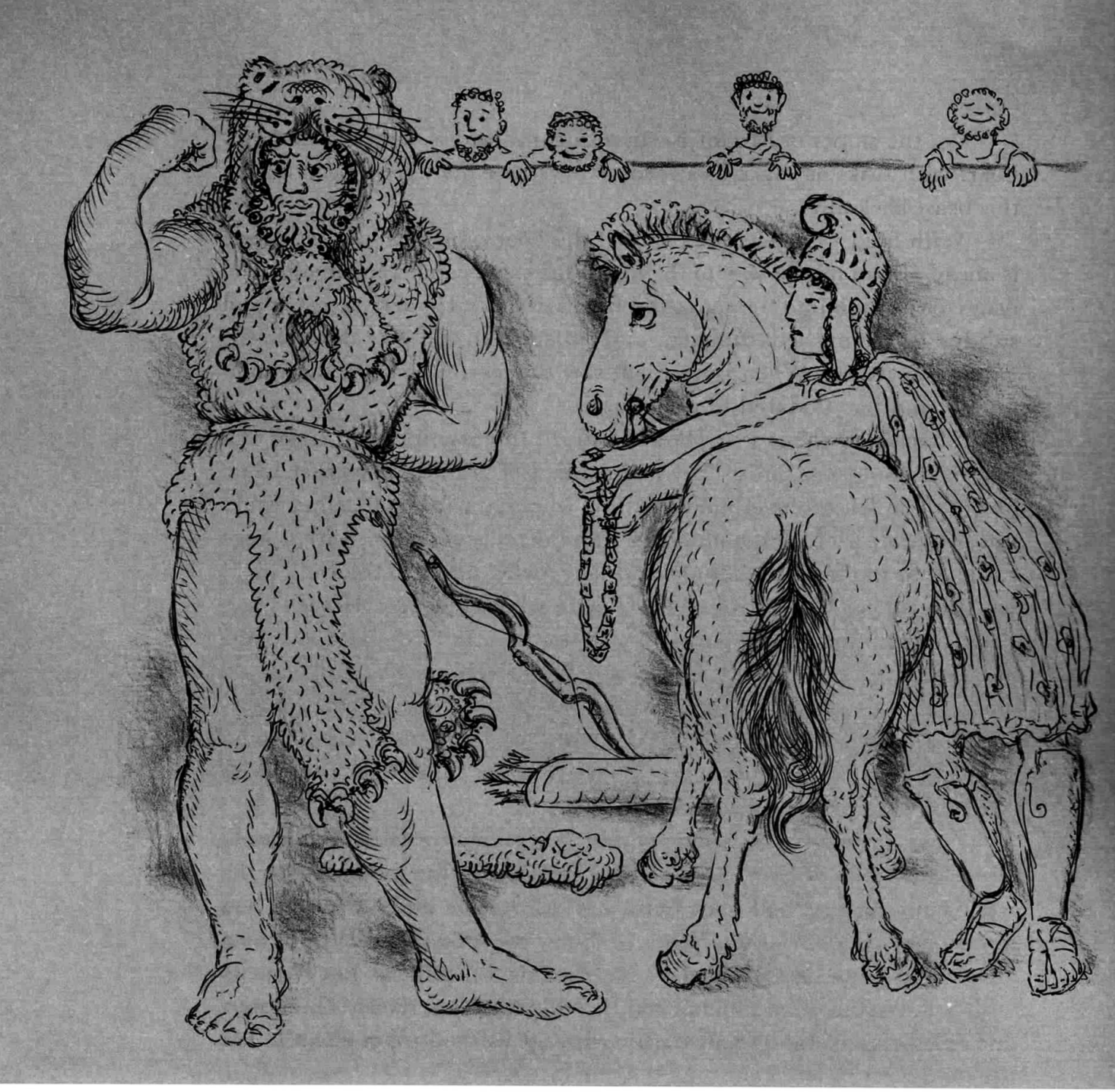
With loud yells, Heracles chased the boar out of its lair and drove it ahead of him all the way to the top of the snow-capped mountain. The heavy beast sank into the snow and it was easy for Heracles to catch and subdue it. He pushed, dragged, and rolled it all the way down to the gates of Mycenae. When Eurystheus saw the fearful boar, he dived into an urn and barely dared to peek out.

Then Eurystheus sent Heracles to rid the Stymphalian Lake of a swarm of dangerous birds. They had feathers of brass so sharp that, when one of them fell to the ground, it killed whomever it hit. But they could not penetrate Heracles' lion skin, and he made such a din, with a huge rattle, that the birds took fright and flew away, never to return.

Eurystheus was distressed to see with what great ease Heracles had performed his first four labors. Now he sent him to bring back alive one of the sacred hinds of Artemis. He hoped that Heracles would harm the creature with his brute strength and thereby earn the wrath of the goddess. But Heracles pursued the swift deer with great patience over hills and dales. The year was almost over when at last he caught the deer. With great care he carried it back to Mycenae.

Next, to humble his strong cousin, Eurystheus ordered Heracles to clean the stables of King Augeas, who lived across the mountains to the west. King Augeas had huge herds and his stables and barnyards had not been cleaned for years. Heaps of dung rose mountain high. No man alive could clean his stables in a year, thought Eurystheus. But Heracles with tremendous strength changed the course of two rivers. The waters flooded through stables and barnyards and washed them clean in less than a day.





Eurystheus now, on the advice of Hera, sent Heracles far afield for his last four labors. He must travel way to the east and fetch back to Mycenae the golden girdle of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. The Amazons were a tribe of wild and warlike women who rode better and fought harder than any men. Eurystheus was sure that even Heracles would be overwhelmed by the furious women. But when Heracles arrived in Amazon land, the proud queen was so taken by the sight of his bulging muscles that she gave him her belt without a fight. She would gladly



have given him her hand in the bargain, but Hera, in the disguise of an Amazon, spread the rumor that Heracles had come to kidnap Hippolyta. The Amazons threw themselves upon Heracles, but for once they had found their master! Heracles swung his mighty club, and the little Amazon husbands, who were spinning and cooking and tending the babies, were amazed to see their dangerous wives subdued by a single man.

In triumph, Heracles returned to Mycenae with Hippolyta's belt. He could not bring the queen, she had been killed in the fight.

Far to the north there lived a king whose name was Diomedes. He was a very inhospitable king and had trained his four mares to devour all strangers who came to his land.

Now Eurystheus sent Heracles to capture the four man-eating mares and bring them back alive.

Heracles traveled to the north, slew King Diomedes, and threw him to his own mares. When the mares had eaten the evil king, they were so tame that they let Heracles drive them back to the gates of Mycenae.

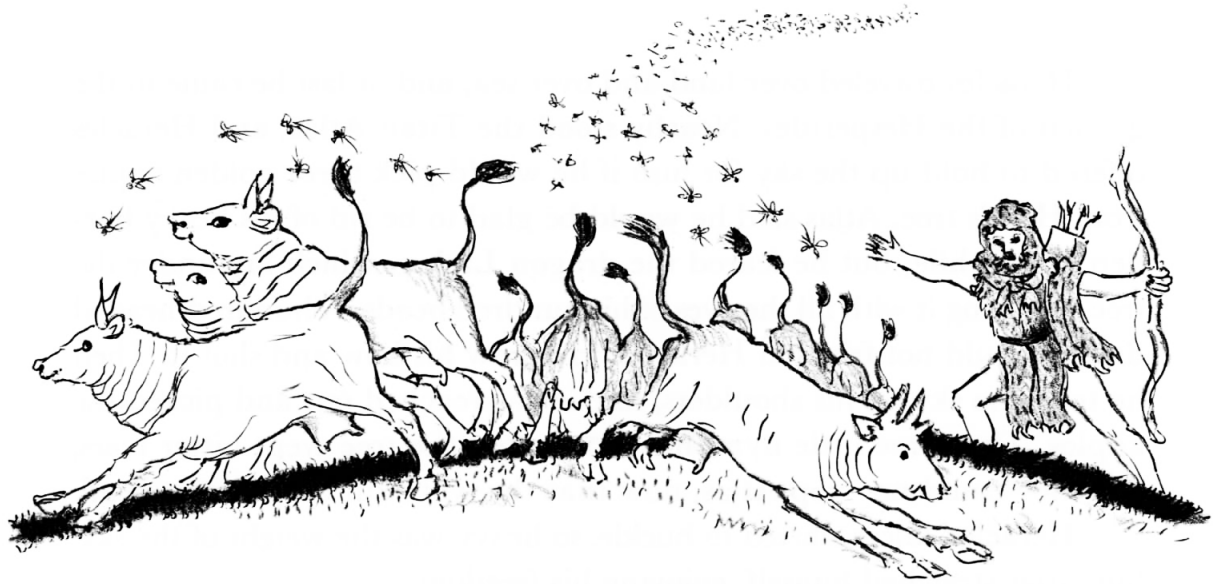
Then Eurystheus sent Heracles south to catch a fierce, fire-breathing bull on the island of Crete. The Cretans, who were great bullfighters, could not catch the bull, but Heracles seized the charging bull by the horns without heeding the flames from its nostrils, flung it to the ground, and returned to Mycenae, bringing the subdued beast. Eurystheus was glad he had a safe urn to hide in.

For his tenth labor, Heracles was sent to an island far out in the ocean, to bring back a huge herd of red cows. They belonged to Geryon, a monster with three bodies on one pair of legs.

Heracles walked off with a powerful stride and soon reached the end of all land in the west. The only boat he could spot was the golden vessel of Helios, the sun. Heracles aimed his mighty bow at the sun and threatened to shoot him from the sky if he did not lend it to him. Helios did not dare to refuse, and he let Heracles take his golden boat.

Before he sailed off, Heracles pulled up two huge crags and set them down, one on each side of the strait that separates Europe from Africa. There they stand to this day, called the Pillars of Hercules.

When Heracles was out at sea and the waves rose high around him, he aimed a poisoned arrow at the waves, threatening to shoot them if they did not still at once. The waves flattened in fear and Heracles sailed on to Geryon's island. He began at once to load the herd of red cows, and Geryon's watchman and his two-headed dog rushed at him. With one swing of his mighty club Heracles did away with them both. Then Geryon himself came running to attack him, his three huge bodies swaying on his thin legs. Calmly Heracles lifted his bow, took careful aim, and sent a poisoned arrow through all of the monster's three bodies. As time was getting short, Heracles rowed back as fast as he could with the herd. When he arrived at the mainland, Hera sent a swarm of gadflies to sting the cows and they scattered all over Europe. Still, Heracles man-



aged to round them up and bring them to the gates of Mycenae just before the year was up. There, Eurystheus sacrificed the cows to Hera, and, gratified, the goddess whispered into his ear that he must demand two more labors from Heracles, for his charioteer had helped him to singe the heads of the Hydra, and not he but the waters of two rivers had washed the Augean stables clean.

Heracles scowled but he bowed his head in submission, for he had won much glory on his ten labors and hoped to win some more.

For his eleventh labor, Heracles was sent to find Hera's secret garden of the Hesperides and pick three golden apples from the little apple tree that Mother Earth had given Hera for her wedding gift. Nereus, the Old Gray Man of the Sea, was the only one on earth who knew where the garden was, but he would not reveal the secret. When Heracles seized him to squeeze the secret out of him, Nereus tried to escape by changing himself into all kinds of animals. But Heracles held on to him and at last Nereus had to tell him that the garden of the Hesperides lay west of the setting sun, not far from where the Titan Atlas stood, holding up the sky.

On his way to the garden, Heracles heard the groans of the Titan Prometheus, who was chained to the Caucasus Mountains. Heracles was in a hurry, but he felt sorry for the Titan and took time off to tear apart his chains. Zeus, impressed by the strength of his son, let him do it. In gratitude Prometheus warned Heracles not to pick the golden apples himself, or he would die. They were apples of immortality and could be picked only by a god.

Heracles traveled over land and over sea, and at last he came to the garden of the Hesperides. Nearby stood the Titan Atlas, and Heracles offered to hold up the sky for him if he would pick three golden apples from Hera's tree. Atlas said he would be glad to be rid of his heavy burden for a while, but he feared the dragon Ladon, which lay under the tree watching it with all the eyes of his hundred heads. A hundred-headed dragon could not frighten Heracles. He drew his bow and shot it. Then he took the sky on his shoulders, and Atlas reached out and picked the apples. The three little nymphs who tended the tree wept bitter tears, but they could not stop Atlas, now that the watchful dragon was dead.

Heracles' knees started to buckle, so heavy was the weight of the sky, but Atlas stretched himself, enjoying his freedom.

"I might as well take these apples to Eurystheus myself," said the Titan, and started to walk away. Heracles well understood that Atlas had no intention of ever coming back, but he pretended to agree.

"Very well," he said, "just hold the sky while I make a pad of my lion skin, the sky is hard on my shoulders."

This sounded reasonable to Atlas. He put down the golden apples and braced himself against the vault of the sky.

"Thank you for picking the apples," said Heracles, and hurried homeward.

On his way to Mycenae, Heracles was stopped by the giant wrestler Antaeus. He lived in a hut beside the road, and forced all travelers to wrestle with him. He was a son of Mother Earth and could not die as long as he touched her, so he always won and had built his hut of the skulls and bones of his victims. When Heracles threw the giant to the ground, thinking he was dead, but saw him springing up revived, he understood what was happening. Seizing Antaeus, he held him in the air until he had squeezed all life out of him.

Heracles hurried on to Mycenae and gave the golden apples to Eurystheus. But Eurystheus did not dare to keep them. He gave them to Athena, who took them back to Hera's garden, where they belonged.

For his twelfth labor Heracles had to go to the underworld, capture Cerberus, the snarling, three-headed watchdog of Hades, and bring him to Mycenae.

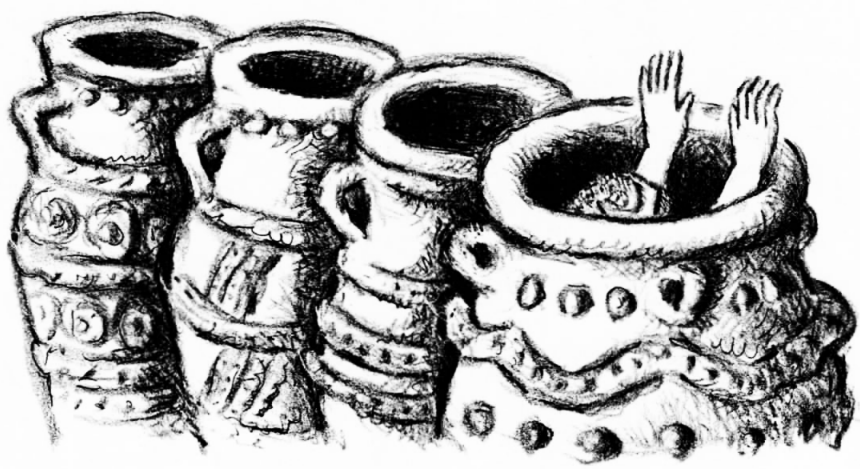
Heracles searched far and wide till at last he found an entrance to the underworld near Helios' evening palace, far to the west. Setting his

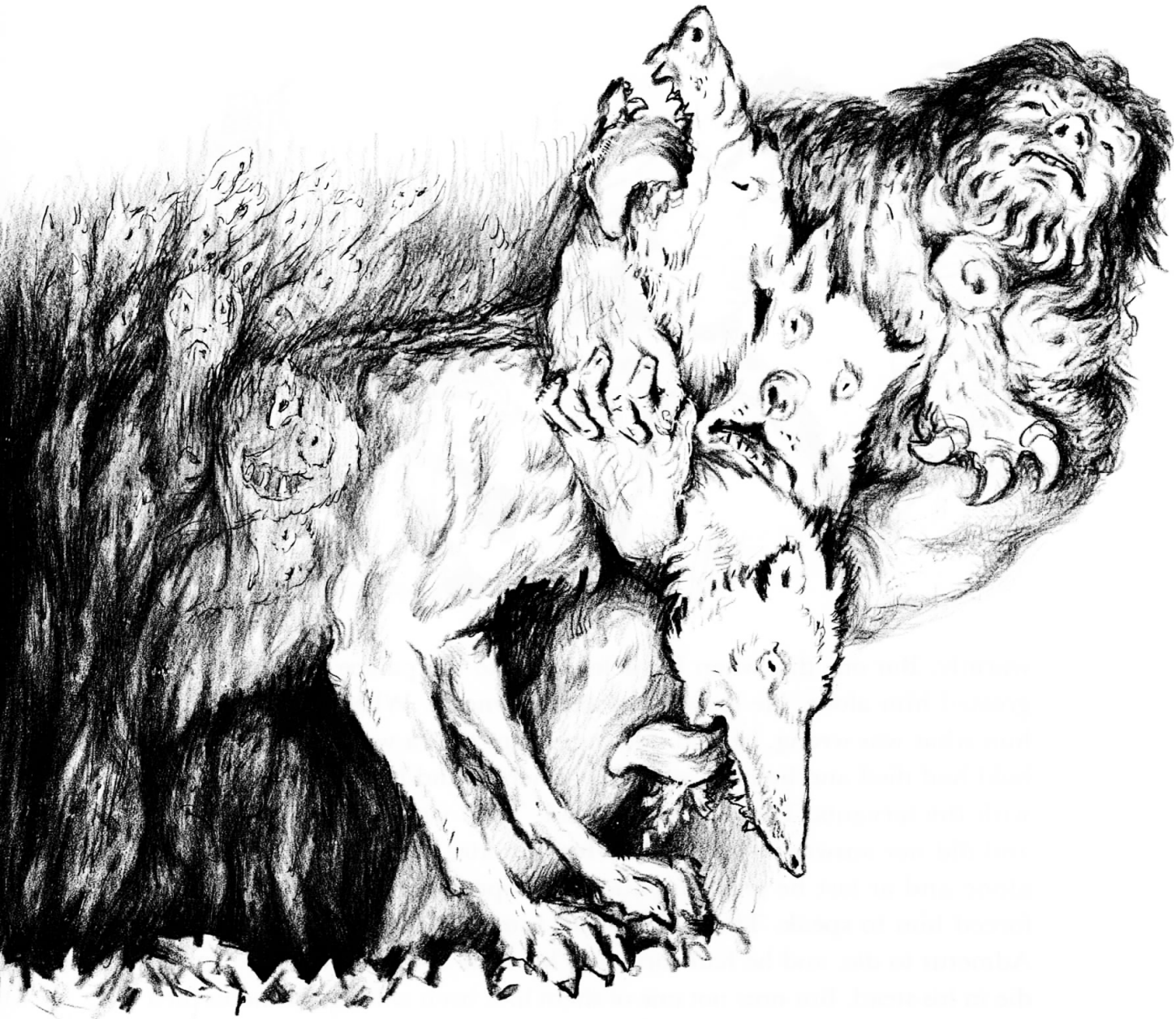
face in a terrible scowl, he walked straight down to Hades. The fluttering souls trembled and Hades himself was so frightened at the sight that he told him to take the dog, only please not to treat it too roughly. Cerberus growled and lashed out with his spiked tail, but Heracles threw his arms around him and squeezed him till the dog's three tongues hung out. Whining, Cerberus let Heracles drag him to the upper world and all the way to the gates of Mycenae. When Eurystheus saw the fearful hound, once again he dived into the urn and cowered there, not daring to make a sound. Heracles did not know what to do with the dog, so he dragged Cerberus all the way back down to Hades.

Now Heracles was free. He had performed not only ten but twelve labors. He had atoned for his sins and Zeus was very pleased with his strong son. He was pleased with Hera, too, for she had unknowingly helped Heracles win more glory and fame than any other hero on earth. Admired by everyone, Heracles traveled all over Greece, performing more heroic deeds and making many friends.

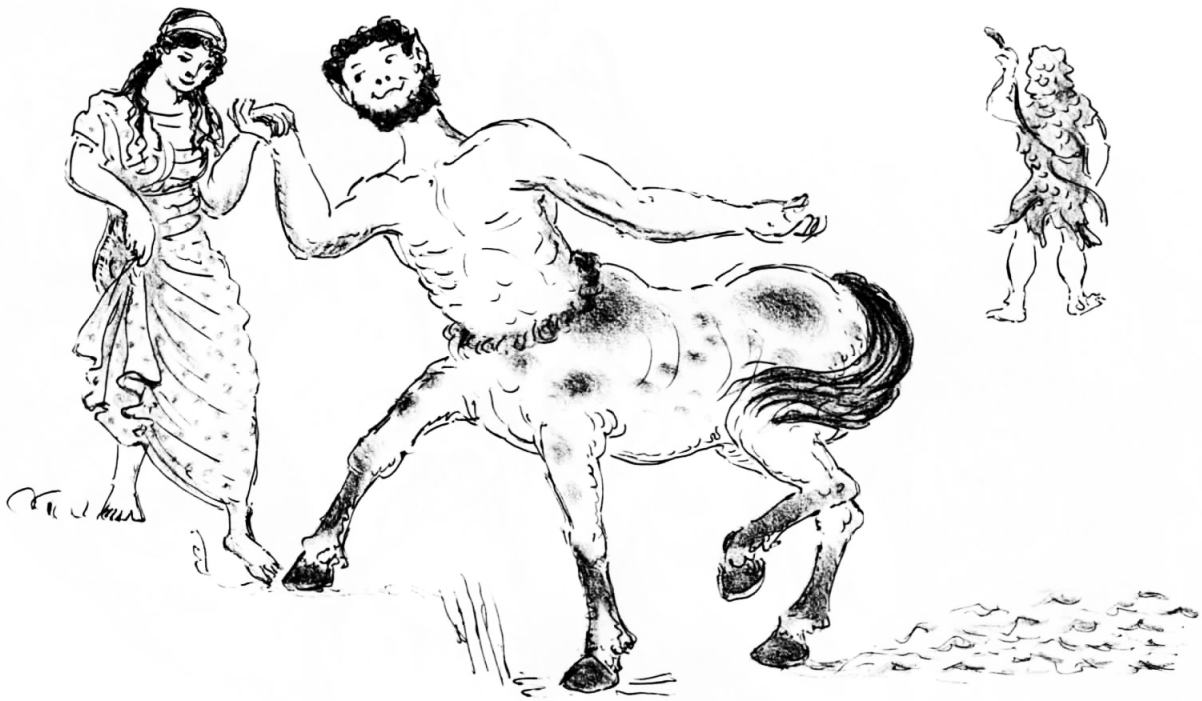
But Hera, still relentless, again made him insane and he swatted men down like flies. When he recovered his senses, he once more had to atone for his sins, and this time it was his father, Zeus, who meted out his punishment, seeing to it that there was no glory to be won.

Zeus sentenced Heracles to serve for three years as the slave of Queen Omphale of Lydia. She dressed him in woman's clothes and made the strongest man in the world sit at her feet, spinning and sewing with his huge hands, while she herself donned his lion skin and brandished his club. Heracles grumbled and groaned, but he did as he was ordered. When his three years at last were over, he had learned his lesson of humility.





Again he performed heroic deeds and his friends were glad to see him back. One of his great friends was Admetus, King of Thessaly, under whom Apollo once had served when he was a slave on earth. To thank Admetus for his kindness, Apollo had persuaded the Fates not to cut his thread of life when his time to die had come, as long as Admetus could find someone else willing to die in his stead. That would be easy, thought the king. His faithful men were always saying that his life was dearer to them than their own. King Admetus had always been afraid of dying early, for he was very happy with his beautiful queen, Alcestis. The king and the queen were both fond of Heracles and always welcomed him



warmly. But one day when Heracles came to the palace, King Admetus greeted him alone. He looked sad and downcast. When Heracles asked him what was wrong, he said nothing except that a woman of the household had died and he must go to her funeral. And he left Heracles alone with the servants. They too looked sad. They waited on him in silence and did not answer his questions. Heracles ate, drank, and made merry alone and at last he grew impatient, grasped one of the servants, and forced him to speak. The servant told him that the time had come for Admetus to die, and he had turned to his men and asked one of them to die in his stead. But now not one of them had been willing. Admetus then went to his parents, who were old and weary of life, and asked them to die in his stead. They too refused. But when he returned to his palace, he found Queen Alcestis setting off for the realm of the dead. She loved him so much, she said, she would gladly give her life for him, and the king was so fond of his own life that he let his queen depart. Now the king and all the household were mourning for Alcestis.

Heracles shed big tears when he heard this sad story, but, being a man of action, he seized his club and strode off to the underworld to force Hades to give Alcestis back. Such a loving wife should not be allowed to die.

Heracles did not have to use his club. Cerberus slunk out of the way



as he stormed into the palace of Hades. The lord of the dead, himself, had a cold, unloving queen and he was so moved when Heracles told him of Alcestis' devotion that he let her go.

Heracles brought Queen Alcestis back to King Admetus and the grief in the palace changed to great joy. Now they all ate, drank, and made merry together and Alcestis grew famous far and wide as the most devoted wife who ever lived.

Heracles too wanted a wife and he chose Deianira, a Caledonian princess, for his bride. Deianira had already been promised to the river-god Achelous, but she dreaded the thought of being married to a river-god, who could change his shape at will. She would never know in which shape her husband would come home at night. She would rather marry the great hero Heracles. The two suitors agreed to wrestle, the victor to have the Princess Deianira. Of course, Heracles won. The river-god rushed at him in the shape of a bull, and Heracles seized him by a horn, wrenched it off, and threw him to the ground before he had time to change into something else. So Heracles and Deianira were married and were very happy together.

One day as they were out traveling, they came to a swollen stream. Heracles forded it with ease, but Deianira was afraid and stood on the bank. Along came the centaur Nessus and politely offered to carry her

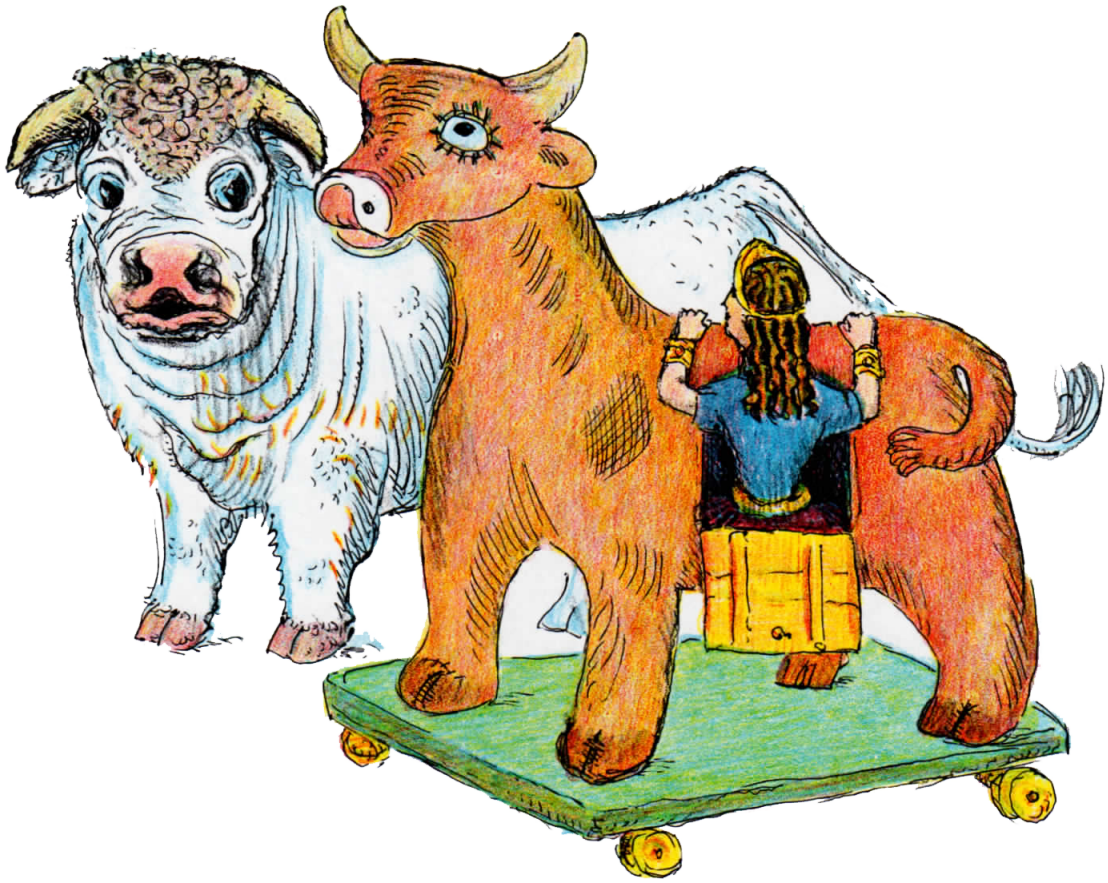
across. But Nessus, like all centaurs, was fond of pretty girls and before he had reached midstream he had made up his mind to carry her off. Once on the other side, he galloped off with her. Deianira screamed for help, Heracles shot a poisoned arrow at the centaur and Nessus fell to the ground. Before he died he whispered to Deianira, "Take some of my blood and save it. If you ever fear that you are losing your husband's love, paint some of the blood on his tunic and he will love you again."

Deianira carefully saved the drops of blood, for she knew well that many a girl would like to steal her magnificent husband.

One day as Heracles was away at war, he won a great victory and sent a messenger home for his best tunic. He wanted to celebrate with his men, but Deianira thought he wanted to make himself handsome for a girl. She painted some of Nessus' blood on the tunic. As soon as Heracles put it on, he felt as though a thousand fires were burning him. It was not a love potion that Nessus had given Deianira, but the deadly poison of the Hydra from Heracles' arrow, mixed with Nessus' blood. Heracles was so strong that the poison could not kill him, but his sufferings were unbearable. He ordered his men to build a funeral pyre, spread his lion skin over the top, and lay down on it. Then he gave his bow and deadly arrows to his young friend, Philoctetes, as a parting gift. As the flames rose around him, a loud thunderclap was heard, and Heracles, by the order of Zeus, rose up to Olympus, reclining on his lion skin.

The gods all welcomed Heracles and were glad to have him with them, for the Fates had predicted that Olympus would be attacked by a fearful enemy and the Olympians could be saved only if the strongest man ever born fought on their side. The prediction soon came to pass. In a last effort to defeat the mighty thunder-god Zeus, Mother Earth had given birth to fifty snake-legged giants, who surrounded Olympus and tried to storm the palace. They seemed unconquerable, for, like Antaeus, whom Heracles had fought on earth, they sprang up again revived as soon as they touched Mother Earth. Heracles knew what to do, and with his help the gods won over the giants and cast them down into the dismal pit of Tartarus. Heracles was now the hero of Mount Olympus, beloved by all the gods. Even Hera begged him to forgive her and gave him her daughter Hebe, goddess of eternal youth, for his Olympian bride. From then on Heracles lived in eternal bliss, forever a joy to the gods. His father Zeus was very pleased.





THESEUS

THE MUSES sang of Heracles and his labors, and they also sang of the island of Crete, ruled by King Minos, the son of Zeus and Europa. His queen, Pasiphaë, a daughter of the sun-god Helios, had a golden glimmer in her eyes like all the descendants of the sun, and was accustomed to great magnificence. King Minos wanted his queen to live in a palace as splendid as her father's, and he ordered Daedalus, an Athenian architect and inventor of marvelous skill, to build the great palace of Cnossus.

The palace rose up story upon story, over a forest of columns. Winding stairs and intricate passageways connected the many halls and courtyards. Pictures were painted on the walls of the great halls, fountains splashed in the courtyards, and the bathrooms even had running water. Bulls' horns of the purest gold crowned the roofs, for the Cretans worshiped the bull, since Zeus, in the shape of a bull, had brought Europa to the island. Here the king and the queen and all their court lived in great splendor and happiness until one day Poseidon sent a snow-white bull from the sea. Since the island of Crete was completely surrounded

by his domain, the sea, he too wanted to be honored, and ordered King Minos to sacrifice the bull to him. But Queen Pasiphaë was so taken by the beauty of the white bull that she persuaded the king to let it live. She admired the bull so much that she ordered Daedalus to construct a hollow wooden cow, so she could hide inside it and enjoy the beauty of the bull at close range.

Poseidon was very angry, and for punishment he made the bull mad. It ravaged the whole island, and though the Cretans were great bull-fighters, no one could subdue the beast until Heracles had come to capture it for one of his labors.

To punish the king and queen, Poseidon caused Pasiphaë to give birth to a monster, the Minotaur. He was half man, half bull, and ate nothing but human flesh. Such a fearful monster could not go free, and the clever Daedalus constructed for him a labyrinth under the palace. It was a maze of passageways and little rooms from which nobody could ever hope to find his way out. There the Minotaur was shut in, and as long as he was provided with victims to devour, he kept quiet. When he was hungry, he bellowed so loudly that the whole palace shook. King Minos had to wage war with the neighboring islands so he could supply the Minotaur with the prisoners of war for food. When a son of Minos visited Athens and was accidently killed, King Minos used this as an excuse to threaten to sack the city unless seven Athenian maidens and seven Athenian youths were sent to Crete to be sacrificed to the Minotaur every nine years.

To save his city, Aegeus, the King of Athens, had to consent, for Minos was much stronger than he. The people of Athens grumbled, for, while King Aegeus was childless and had nothing to lose, they had to see their sons and daughters sacrificed to the cruel Minotaur.

Two times nine years had passed and the king was growing old. For the third time a ship with black sails of mourning was due to depart, when word came to the king that a young hero, Theseus, from Troezen, was making his way to Athens, destroying all the monsters and highwaymen he met on the road. When King Aegeus heard that, his old heart beat faster. Once in his youth he had visited Troezen and had been secretly married to Princess Aethra. He did not bring Aethra back to Athens with him, but before he left, he said to her, "Should you bear me a son and should he grow up strong enough to lift this boulder under which I hide my sword and golden sandals, send him to me, for then he

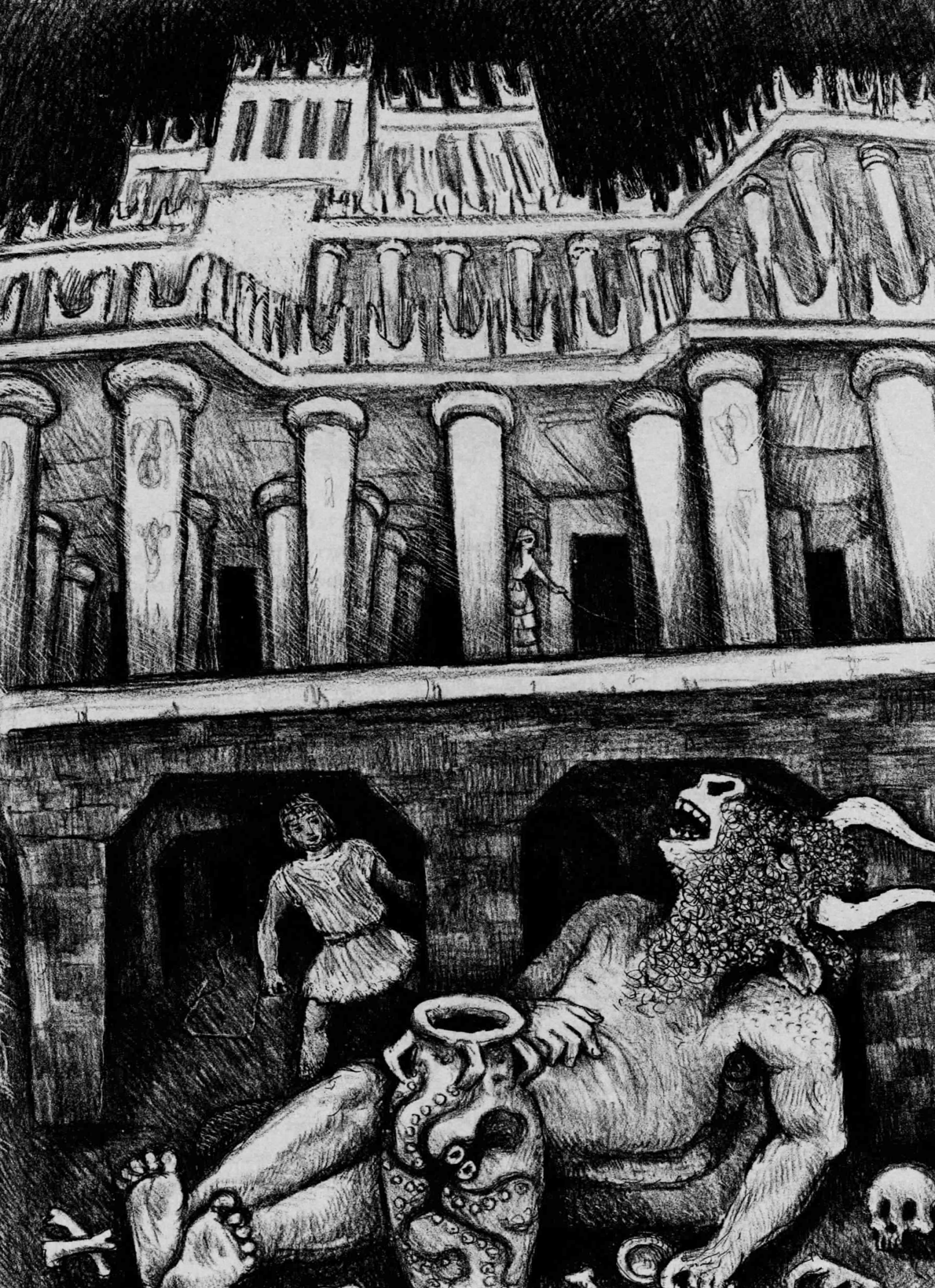
will be the worthy heir to the throne of Athens." King Aegeus in those days was known for his great strength.

Theseus, the young hero, arrived in Athens and went straight to the king's palace. Tall and handsome, he stood before Aegeus with the sandals and the sword, and the king was overjoyed. At last he had a son who was a hero as well. The king happily proclaimed Theseus the rightful heir to the throne of Athens and he became the hero of all Athens when he offered to take the place of one of the victims who were to be sent to Crete. Old King Aegeus begged his son not to go, but Theseus would not change his mind. "I shall make an end of the Minotaur and we shall return safely," he said. "We sail with black sails, but we shall return with white sails as a signal of my success."

The ship sailed to Crete and the fourteen young Athenians were locked in a dungeon to await their doom. But King Minos had a lovely daughter, Ariadne, as fair a maiden as eyes could see. She could not bear the thought that handsome Theseus should be sacrificed to the ugly Minotaur. She went to Daedalus and begged for help to save him. He gave Ariadne a magic ball of thread and told her that at midnight, when the Minotaur was fast asleep, she must take Theseus to the labyrinth. The magic ball of thread would roll ahead of him through the maze and lead him to the monster, and then it was up to Theseus to overpower the beast.

In the dark of the night, Ariadne went to Theseus' prison and whispered that, if he would promise to marry her and carry her away with him, she would help him. Gladly Theseus gave his word, and Ariadne led him to the gate of the labyrinth, tied the end of the thread to the gate so he would find his way back, and gave him the ball. As soon as Theseus put the ball of thread on the ground, it rolled ahead of him through dark corridors, up stairs, down stairs, and around winding passageways. Holding on to the unwinding thread, Theseus followed it wherever it led him, and before long he heard the thunderous snoring of the Minotaur, and there, surrounded by skulls and bleached bones, lay the monster fast asleep.

Theseus sprang at the Minotaur. It roared so loudly that the whole palace of Cnossus shook, but the monster was taken by surprise, and so strong was Theseus that, with his bare hands, he killed the cruel Minotaur.





Theseus quickly followed the thread back to Ariadne, who stood watch at the gate. Together they freed the other Athenians and ran to their ship in the harbor. Before they sailed, they bored holes in all of King Minos' ships so he could not pursue them. Ariadne urged them to hurry, for even she could not save them from Talos, the bronze robot who guarded the island. If he should see their ship leaving, he would throw rocks at it and sink it. Should one of them manage to swim ashore, Talos would throw himself into a blazing bonfire until he was red hot. Then he would burn the survivor to ashes in a fiery embrace. They could already hear his clanking steps, when just in time they hoisted their sail and a brisk wind blew them out to sea. In their rush they forgot to hoist the white sail of victory instead of the black sail of mourning.

Theseus' heart was filled with joy. Not only had he saved the Athenians from the Minotaur, he was also bringing a beautiful bride home to Athens. But in the middle of the night the god Dionysus appeared to him and spoke: "I forbid you to marry Ariadne. I myself have chosen her for my bride. You must set her ashore on the island of Naxos."

Theseus could not oppose an Olympian god. When they came to Naxos, he ordered everyone to go ashore and rest. There Ariadne fell into a heavy slumber, and while she slept, Theseus led the others back to the ship and they sailed off without her.

Poor Ariadne wept bitterly when she awoke and found herself deserted. Little did she suspect that the handsome stranger who came walking toward her was the god Dionysus and that it was he who had ordered



Theseus to abandon her. The god gently dried her tears and gave her a drink from the cup in his hand and right away the sadness left her. She smiled up at the god and he put a crown of sparkling jewels on her head and made her his bride. They lived happily together for many years and their sons became kings of the surrounding islands. Dionysus loved Ariadne greatly, and when she died he put her jeweled crown into the sky as a constellation so she would never be forgotten.

Theseus, in his grief at having lost Ariadne, again forgot to hoist the white sail. When King Aegeus saw the black-sailed ship returning from Crete, he threw himself into the sea in despair.

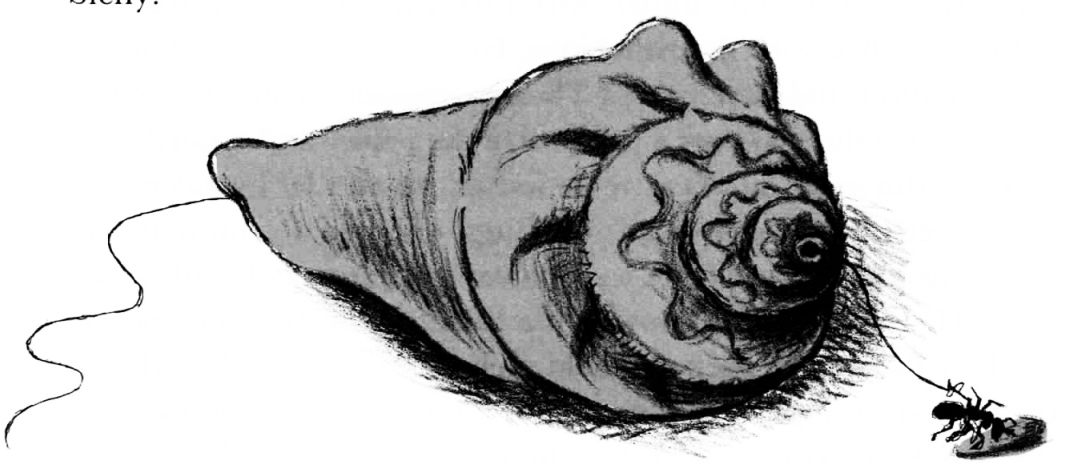
Theseus inherited his father's throne and he and all of Athens mourned the loss of the old king and in his honor named the sea in which he had drowned the Aegean.

King Minos was beside himself with fury when he discovered that his daughter had fled with the Athenians. He knew that no one but the brilliant Daedalus could have helped Theseus unravel the mystery of the labyrinth, so Daedalus was kept a prisoner in the palace and treated very harshly. Daedalus could not bear to be locked up and let his talents go to waste. Secretly he made two sets of wings, one pair for himself and one pair for his son, Icarus. They were cleverly fashioned of feathers set in beeswax. He showed his son how to use them and warned him not to fly too high or the heat of the sun would melt the wax. Then he led him up to the highest tower, and, flapping their wings, they flew off like two birds. Neither King Minos nor Talos, the robot, could stop their flight.

Young and foolish, Icarus could not resist the temptation to rise ever higher into the sky; the whole world seemed at his feet. He flew too close to the sun and the wax began to melt. The feathers came loose, the wings fell apart, and Icarus plunged into the sea and drowned. Sadly Daedalus flew on alone and came to the island of Sicily. His fame had flown ahead of him and the King of Sicily welcomed him warmly, for he too wanted a splendid palace and bathrooms with running water.

As soon as King Minos' ships were mended, he set off in pursuit of Daedalus, the cunning craftsman. He sailed east and he sailed west, and when he came to the Sicilian shore and saw the wondrous palace going up, he had no doubts who was building it. But the king of Sicily hid Daedalus and denied that he had him in his service. Slyly King Minos sent a conch shell up to the palace, with a message that, if anyone could pull a thread through the windings of the conch, he would give him a sack of gold as a reward. The King of Sicily asked Daedalus to solve the problem. Daedalus thought for a while, then he tied a silken thread to an ant, put the ant at one end of the conch shell and a bit of honey at the other end. The ant smelled the honey and found its way through the conch, pulling the thread along with it. When King Minos saw this, he demanded the immediate surrender of Daedalus, for now he had proof that the King of Sicily was hiding him. Nobody but Daedalus could have threaded the conch!

The King of Sicily had to give in. He invited Minos to a feast, promising to surrender Daedalus. As was the custom, King Minos took a bath before the feast. But when he stepped into the fabulous bath that Daedalus had built, boiling water rushed out of the tap and scalded him to death. And Daedalus remained for the rest of his life at the court of the King of Sicily.





After the death of King Minos there was peace between Crete and Athens, and Theseus married Phaedra, Ariadne's younger sister. He became the greatest king Athens ever had, and his fame as a hero spread all over Greece. Another great hero, Pirithoüs, King of the Lapith people in northern Greece, was his inseparable friend. The first time the two heroes had met, they faced each other in combat. But each was so impressed by the other that instead of fighting, they dropped their weapons and swore eternal friendship. Together they performed many great deeds, and when Pirithoüs married a Lapith princess, Theseus, of course, was invited to the wedding feast. The centaurs were invited too, for though wild and lawless they were nonetheless distant relatives. At first they behaved quite mannerly, but as the wine jugs were passed around, they became boisterous and rowdy. Suddenly a young centaur sprang up, grasped the bride by the hair, and galloped away with her. At that, the other centaurs each grasped a screaming girl and took to the hills.

Theseus and Pirithoüs with their men set off in swift pursuit and soon caught up with the centaurs. There was a brutal battle, for the wild centaurs tore up big trees and swung them as clubs. But in Theseus and





Pirithoüs they had found their masters. They were chased out of Greece, and the victorious heroes, with the bride and the other Lapith girls, returned to the feast.

Pirithoüs lived happily for a while, then he became a widower and asked his friend Theseus to help him win a new bride. Theseus vowed to help him, but shuddered when he heard that Pirithoüs wanted no one less than Persephone, the queen of the dead. She was unhappy with Hades, he said. Since Theseus had promised to help his friend, and a promise could not be broken, he descended to the underworld with Pirithoüs. They forced their way past Cerberus and entered the gloomy palace. Hades glowered at the two heroes, who had dared to enter his realm, but he listened politely while they stated their errand. "Sit down on that bench," he said, "so we can discuss the matter." Grim Hades smiled as the two friends sat down, for it was a magic bench from which no one could ever rise. There they were to sit forever with ghosts and bats flitting about their heads.

A long time later Heracles came to Hades on an errand, and pitied the two heroes trying vainly to get up from the bench. He took hold of Theseus and tore him loose with a mighty tug. But when he tried to free Pirithoüs there came a loud earthquake. The gods did not allow Heracles to set him free, for he had shown too great irreverence by daring to want a goddess for a wife. Theseus returned to Athens wiser but thinner, for a part of him had remained stuck to the bench. Ever since, the Athenians have had lean thighs.

OEDIPUS

ONE DAY a blind old man came to Theseus and asked for permission to stay in his kingdom and die in peace. No one dared let him stay in their country, for he was pursued by the avenging furies, the Erinyes. Homeless he wandered about. The old man, whose name was Oedipus, then told Theseus his sad story.

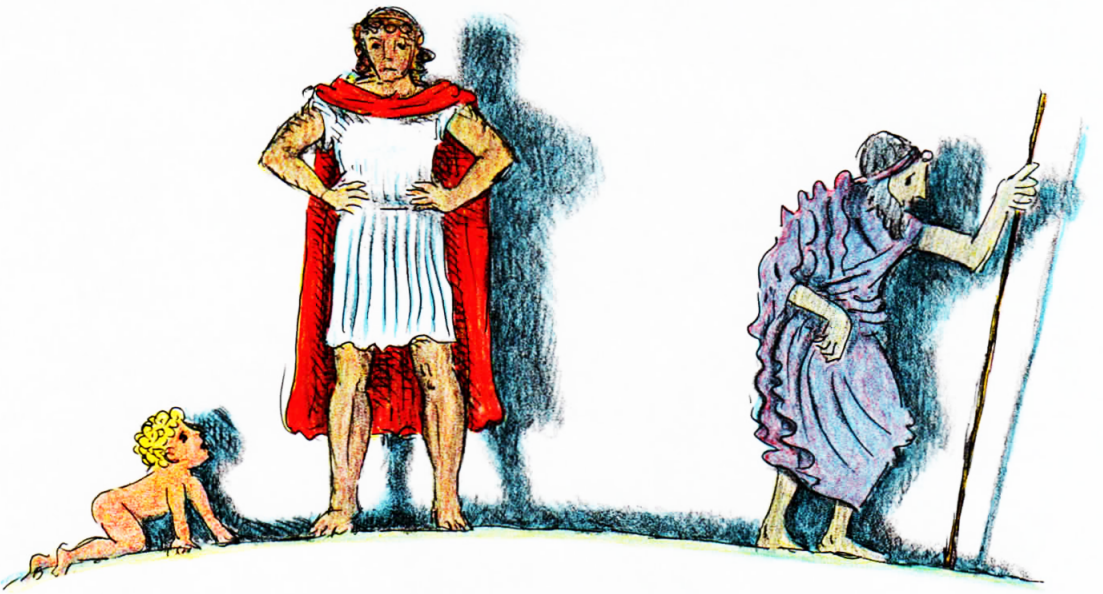
His misfortunes had started before he was born. His father, King Laius of Thebes, had been told by the oracle of Delphi that the child his queen, Jocasta, was carrying was fated to kill his father and marry his mother. This must never happen, thought the king, so when Oedipus was born he ordered a servant to take the child away and abandon him in the mountains. But destiny had willed it differently. A shepherd from the neighboring kingdom of Corinth heard the child's cries. He picked up the little boy and carried him to his king. The King and Queen of Corinth were childless and happily they adopted the handsome little boy. They loved him dearly and he never knew that he was not their real son. Without a care in the world he grew to manhood, and one day went to Delphi to find what the future had in store for him. Great was his horror when he heard the words of the oracle! He was destined to kill his father and marry his mother.

This must never happen, thought Oedipus. He took destiny in his own hands and fled across the mountains, never to see his dear parents again.

On a narrow mountain path, he met the chariot of a haughty lord. "Give way for our master's chariot," shouted the servants, and tried to push Oedipus off the path. Angrily Oedipus fought back and in the struggle the lord and all his servants were killed, except for one who escaped. Oedipus continued on his way and came to the city of Thebes. But its seven gates were closed. Nobody dared to enter or leave, for a monster, the Sphinx, had settled on a cliff just outside the city wall. This winged monster with a woman's head and a lion's body challenged all who passed by to solve her riddle. If they couldn't, she tore them to pieces. Nobody yet had solved the riddle of the Sphinx.

"What creature is it that walks on four feet in the morning, on two at noon, and on three in the evening," she asked with a sinister leer when she saw Oedipus.





"It is man," Oedipus answered. "As a child he crawls on four. When grown, he walks upright on his two feet, and in old age he leans on a staff."

The Sphinx let out a horrible scream. Her riddle was solved and she had lost her powers. In despair she threw herself to her death. The gates of Thebes burst open and the people crowded out to thank the stranger who had freed them. Their old king had recently been killed, leaving no son to inherit the throne and when they heard that Oedipus was a prince from Corinth, they asked him to marry their widowed queen and become their king. To be sure, Queen Jocasta was much older than Oedipus, but she was still beautiful, for she wore a magic necklace that the gods had given Harmonia, the first Queen of Thebes. Those who wore that necklace stayed young and beautiful all their lives. Thus Oedipus became King of Thebes, and he ruled the city justly and wisely for many years.

One day the news reached him that the King of Corinth had died the peaceful death of old age, and while he mourned his father, he was glad that he had been spared from a terrible destiny. Shortly afterward, a pestilence broke out in Thebes and people died in great numbers. Oedipus sent for a seer and asked how he could save his people. The pestilence would last until the death of the old king had been avenged, said the seer. Oedipus swore that he would find the man who had killed the old king, and put out his eyes. He sent his men to search till they found the one surviving servant of King Laius' party. When he was brought before King Oedipus, the servant recognized him at once as the slayer of the old king! And now the whole terrible truth came out, for he

was also the selfsame servant who had abandoned the infant Oedipus in the mountains, and had known all the while that the child had been found and adopted by the King of Corinth.

In despair Queen Jocasta went to her room and took her own life and Oedipus in horror put out his own eyes and left Thebes, a broken old man. His daughter Antigone went with him, and they wandered from place to place, turned away from every city, till, at last, they came to Athens.

"Not cursed but blessed will be the place where you lie down and close your eyes," said Theseus when he had heard the story. "No man could have tried harder than you to escape his destiny."

The avenging Erinyes, who had been chasing him, now dropped their whips, and Oedipus could die in peace.

His two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, had no regard for the sufferings of their father. They stayed in Thebes and fought over the throne. At last they agreed to take turns being king, one year at a time. Eteocles ruled Thebes first, and when his year was up he refused to give up the throne.

Polynices left Thebes in a rage, taking with him the magic necklace of Harmonia, vowing to return with an army and take his rightful throne by force.

He went to his father-in-law, the King of Argos, and tried to persuade him to send an army to Thebes. The king had an aging and very vain sister who had great influence over him. Polynices promised her the magic necklace of Harmonia, which would make her young and beautiful again, if she could persuade her brother to go against Thebes. So great are the powers of a vain woman that, not only the King of Argos and his men, but seven armies of brave men set forth with Polynices to storm the seven gates of Thebes, most of them never to return.

Neither could the seven armies storm the seven gates of Thebes, nor could the Thebans drive the attackers away. So it was decided that the two brothers should fight in single combat, the winner to be king.

Eteocles gave his brother a mortal wound, but Polynices, before he fell, dealt him a deadly blow in return. Side by side they lay dead on the field, and all the bloodshed had been in vain.

The son of Eteocles became King of Thebes, and Harmonia's necklace, which had brought so much misfortune, was hung up in a temple in Delphi, so no woman would ever wear it again.