



DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

Daedalus, hailing from Athens, was the most skilful craftsman and artist of his time. He carved stone and sculpted beautiful statues. His works of art were admired in every corner of the land. But genius is not everything. As skilful as he was, Daedalus was also jealous. He couldn't stand when someone was seen as a better artist than him.

Daedalus had an apprentice whose name was Talos. After some time Daedalus noticed that Talos was very talented, even more than the master craftsman himself. Not only did he create beautiful artworks, but he also invented various tools that improved his craft even more, all of this done completely independently with no help from his teacher whatsoever. Suddenly, Talos was gaining fame and praise all over Athens.

Daedalus feared the glory of his student would overshadow his own, so one day, overwhelmed by anger and envy, he crept up on Talos, who was watching birds from a tower and pushed him off. The master was, however, caught in the act, found guilty and locked up. Yet, he didn't spend much time in prison. Daedalus escaped and fled to the island of Crete, where he got into the good graces of King Minos. Here he cultivated his art skills while enjoying the fame and admiration of the local people. He still crafted the most magnificent

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sculptures in the whole country, the only ones that bore a spitting resemblance to human models back in those days.

Years went by and the long banishment had started to weigh down on Daedalus. He couldn't imagine spending the rest of his days on an island surrounded by sea. King Minos was well aware that Daedalus was his land's best craftsman and when he learnt the master was looking for a new home, he decided to have Daedalus guarded to prevent him from escaping. Day and night, he was watched by soldiers and access to all the ports in the kingdom was forbidden to him.

After a lot of thinking, Daedalus came up with an idea to flee the island by air. He began working on a project that would help him utilize nature itself to his service. He collected bird feathers, laid them side by side, tied together with linen thread, secured with wax, and thus he built himself a pair of wings.

Daedalus had a son named Icarus, who often watched his father while he worked on his wings. Icarus was always happy to help. He hammered nails or stirred the wax which they used to coat the wings before bending them into their final shape.

When Daedalus successfully tested his wings, he shut himself up in his workshop and built another, smaller pair for his son.

When the wings were ready, the master told Icarus: "Dear son, be careful not to fly too low nor too high. If you fly too low, water will soak your wings, they will become too heavy and pull you down into the depths of the sea. If you fly too high, the sun will melt the wax that keeps the feathers in their proper place and you will plummet to the ground. Stay by my side and no harm will befall you."

Daedalus fastened wings to his son's back and then both men soared into the sky. Icarus was still a bit shy in his flying but despite that, he was doing quite well and kept improving. Encouraged by a good flight, he set out to explore the heights. But the wax instantly melted in the sun and the wings lost its feathers. The poor boy quickly started waving his damaged wings, but to no avail. He crashed into the blue depths of the sea. The father desperately called his son's name, but it was too late. He landed, hoping to find Icarus on the shore, but the waves cast up just his body.

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The heartbroken Daedalus buried his only son, then took off again and flew and flew until he reached the island of Sicily. Sicily was ruled by king Cocalus and Daedalus quickly gained his favour, amazing everyone with his artistry and ingenuity. Soon enough, the locals delightedly accepted him.

But news travelled fast and king Minos shortly learnt that the famous master craftsman left his island and fled to Sicily. He assembled a huge army which then sailed to the Sicilian coastal town of Agrigento. Once there, Minos sent a herald to king Cocalus with a request to hand over the fugitive. Cocalus, however, had no intention to give Daedalus up and devised a plan to destroy Minos. He pretended to agree to the request and invited Minos to dine with him and enjoy some rest in a warm bath after the long journey. But once Minos entered the tub, Cocalus gave an order to heat the water up until it boiled, thus killing the Cretan king. He then delivered the dead body to the waiting army, saying the king slipped in the spa and drowned. The soldiers buried Minos and raised a great temple in his honour, completely forgetting Daedalus and returning to Crete.

Daedalus had trained many skilled apprentices during his time in Sicily, but since the death of his only son, he was never happy again. While the islanders were all amazed by his beautiful works, he himself was a sad old man. He died, heartbroken, in Sicily, where he was buried.