



# Perseus



**K**ing Danaüs had fifty daughters, but he didn't want them to marry King Aegyptus's fifty sons. When forced into the marriages, he counseled his daughters to kill their husbands. All Danaüs's daughters followed his directive—except Hypermnestra, who fell in love with Lynceus. Many years later, they became rulers of Argos. In time, their grandson, Acrisius, took over the throne. He learned from an oracle that his grandson would eventually kill him. To avoid this fate, Acrisius imprisoned his daughter, Danaë, but Zeus visited the beautiful girl, and she bore him a child, Perseus.

Acrisius sent Danaë and Perseus to sea in a chest, assuming they would drown. But Zeus intervened, and they landed safely on an island, where an elderly fisherman, Dictys, befriended them. As Danaë raised Perseus, King Polydectes decided he wanted to marry her. But Danaë refused, and Perseus promised to protect her. King Polydectes knew he had to get rid of Perseus. He sent him away to bring back the head of the terrible Gorgon Medusa. Various gods helped Perseus as he used magic and trickery to find the Gorgons and then cut off Medusa's head. On his return, he rescued Andromeda from a vicious sea monster. They married and returned to Argos, assuming that Acrisius would welcome him as the hero he had become. Instead, Acrisius fled, afraid his grandson would kill him. Perseus was left to rule the land, becoming a beloved ruler. An excellent athlete, he also participated in many athletic games. During a discus throw, the wind carried the discus off course, and it struck and killed Acrisius, who had returned to Argos and was watching the game. The oracle's prophecy had been fulfilled.

## *Presentation Suggestions*

Place the narrators on stools on the right and left sides of the stage. The following characters should sit on chairs: King Aegyptus, King Danaüs, Acrisius, and the oracle. The following characters should sit in a row behind the others on stools: Zeus, Danaë, Dictys, and Polydectes. The following characters should stand in the back row: Perseus, Athena, Sister, and Andromeda. Alternatively, have everyone stand in rows, with the first set leaving after their lines, and so forth.

## ***Props***

The characters can dress in robes or clothing appropriate to their roles. The items used by Perseus can decorate the stage: shield, sword, and bag. Consider creating a mural that shows statues of people turned to stone, of the islands, and so forth.

## ***Delivery Suggestions***

The characters can use normal voices appropriate to their lines and the action of the script.

## ***Characters***

- ▣ Narrator 1
- ▣ King Aegyptus
- ▣ King Danaüs
- ▣ Narrator 2
- ▣ Acrisius
- ▣ Oracle
- ▣ Zeus
- ▣ Danaë
- ▣ Dictys
- ▣ Polydectes
- ▣ Perseus
- ▣ Athena
- ▣ Sister
- ▣ Andromeda *Destinee*



## Perseus

**Narrator 1:** The Muses sang the praises of King Danaüs, a mortal who was the first of a line of kings from Libya. King Danaüs had fifty daughters, and, of course, he needed to find fifty husbands for them. His brother, King Aegyptus, had a plan.

**King Aegyptus:** Brother, I have a solution to the problem for finding husbands for your daughters. It is obvious that my fifty sons should marry your daughters. Everyone will be happy then, and we will have wonderful grandchildren.

**King Danaüs:** Ah, that would be fine for your sons, but they are not the refined gentlemen I want for my daughters. You needn't concern yourself with my daughters. I'll find husbands for them somehow.

**King Aegyptus:** Nonsense. Why do you worry about your daughters? You have so many of them! You should be relieved that I am willing to have my sons take them off your hands.

**Narrator 2:** But King Danaüs did not want his daughters carried off by these ruffians. He secretly built a ship with fifty oars and slipped away, with his daughters pulling at the oars. They fled Libya, landing in Argos. When the people saw this amazing ship, they decided Danaüs was sent to be their king.

**Narrator 1:** Danaüs proved worthy of their respect, ruling peacefully and kindly. But the peace was shattered when another ship arrived. King Aegyptus's fifty sons had also rowed to Argos.

**King Aegyptus:** My brother, you can't escape again. Give in gracefully and let my sons marry your daughters. Look at the dynasty we will create!

**King Danaüs:** It seems you give me no choice. I'll prepare the wedding feast, and we'll celebrate together.

**Narrator 2:** But King Danaüs had other secret plans, which he made clear to his daughters before the wedding.

**King Danaüs:** My daughters, I fear that marriage to these men will lead to lives of misery. Therefore I am giving each of you an important gift—a dagger. Kill your husband as soon as you are alone. Don't think about this. Just save yourselves.

**Narrator 1:** The weddings proceeded, and soon the couples were alone. Forty-nine of the brides followed their father's directive and used their daggers to kill their husbands. But Hypermnestra had immediately fallen in love with her husband, Lynceus. Instead of killing him, they ran away together.

**Narrator 2:** King Danaüs was left with forty-nine widowed daughters. He tried to find husbands for them, but no men would marry them for fear that the king's daughters would murder any men they married. The Danaïdes, as they came to be known, lived unhappy lives. When they died, they were sent to the Underworld, where they were punished for the murders of their husbands. Each of them was ordered to fill a bath to wash off their sins. But they had to carry water in sieves, and they spent eternity trying to fulfill their sentence.

**Narrator 1:** King Danaüs grew very old. In need of an heir to his throne, he was compelled to send for Hypermnestra and Lynceus, who had found happiness together.

**King Danaüs:** Hypermnestra and Lynceus, you must take over the throne when I die. I am happy to see that you have a son who will carry on the rule of this family.

**Narrator 2:** Reunited with her father, Hypermnestra and Lynceus prepared to take over the throne. They ruled until their deaths, and their son then inherited the throne. When the next in line, Acrisius, inherited the throne, he had no son, but one beautiful daughter, Danaë. Acrisius desperately wanted a son to inherit the throne and went to an oracle to seek advice.

**Acrisius:** Please, wise one, I have come seeking advice.

**Oracle:** Explain your problem, my son.

**Acrisius:** I have no son to inherit the throne. My daughter is beautiful and loving, but she should not be the ruler. What can I do?

**Oracle:** You will not have a son, I fear. I do see something of great importance in your future, however.

**Acrisius:** What do you see? Tell me.

**Oracle:** It's dangerous to look too far ahead. Are you sure you want to know?

**Acrisius:** Of course! What is it?

**Oracle:** Your daughter will have a child. This child will grow to be very powerful and one day will kill you.

**Acrisius:** Then I must ensure that she never weds.

**Oracle:** You should heed my warning, but I see no change in your future.

**Narrator 1:** Fearing for his life, Acrisius put Danaë in a chamber with no windows or doors. The only opening was in the roof. No one could see Danaë's beauty, so Acrisius thought he would be safe.

**Narrator 2:** Alas, Acrisius forgot that Zeus missed very little. Indeed, Zeus spied Danaë from above and was enchanted with her beauty. A master of shape changing, he turned himself into a golden shower and descended through the opening in the roof of the chamber.

**Zeus:** Danaë, you are too beautiful to be so lonesome. Let me keep you company and make you happy.

**Danaë:** I have been lonely locked away in this room. I welcome you here for as long as you can stay.

**Narrator 1:** Zeus made Danaë his bride, and before long she gave birth to their child. When Acrisius heard the cries of a newborn, he broke through the walls in a rage.

**Acrisius:** What have you done, Danaë? You can't keep this child! Give him to me!

**Danaë:** Father, this is Zeus's son, whom I have named Perseus. Do you dare to harm him?

**Acrisius:** I won't hurt him, but I won't keep either of you here now that you've betrayed me. Come with me to the sea.

**Narrator 2:** Acrisius put Danaë and Perseus in a chest and pushed it into the sea.

**Acrisius:** This breaks my heart, but when they drown, Poseidon will take the blame instead of me.

**Narrator 1:** Once again, Acrisius acted without taking Zeus's powers into consideration. Zeus gently steered the chest to an island, where an old fisherman named Dictys hauled in the chest along with his net full of fish.

**Dictys:** What is this in my nets? It looks like a chest. Perhaps there's a treasure inside.

**Danaë:** Please help us! We're locked inside the chest!

**Dictys:** Gods be praised! Someone's alive in there!

**Narrator 2:** Dictys opened the chest, lifting up the child Danaë offered him.

**Dictys:** How did you come to be locked in a chest, my dear?

**Danaë:** My father wanted to keep me from all men, so he locked me in a chamber with only an opening in the ceiling.

**Dictys:** But why did he punish you so? What had you done?

**Danaë:** I hadn't done anything. But he desperately feared my having a child.

**Dictys:** But what harm could a child do to him?

**Danaë:** It had been foretold that one day his grandchild would end my father's life. He thought he was keeping himself safe. But Zeus made me his bride, and Perseus is our son. Father dared not kill Zeus's son, so he sent us away in this chest, perhaps hoping Poseidon would do what he could not.

**Dictys:** You're both safe now. You have landed on the island of Seriphus, a fine place to live. Come with me to my humble home. I have little, but I'll share it with you and help you stay safe while you raise your son.

**Narrator 1:** Danaë lovingly raised her son to be a fine young man. She remained faithful in memory to Zeus, but she attracted the eye of Polydectes, the king of Seriphus. Polydectes visited Danaë.

**Polydectes:** Danaë, I have an offer for you.

**Danaë:** Sir, what is your pleasure?

**Polydectes:** Your lovely nature and beautiful form have held my attention for many years. I want a wife and have chosen you for that great honor.

**Danaë:** Surely you know that I'm married to Zeus! I can't marry you.

**Polydectes:** You think you won't, but one day I'll find you alone and carry you away. You'll become my bride, just as I desire. And if you resist, there's are other ways to persuade you. Tell me, Danaë, just how much do you love your son?

**Narrator 2:** Perseus overheard the conversation and never left his mother's side in fear that Polydectes would carry through with his threats to abduct Danaë.

**Narrator 1:** Finally, Polydectes pretended that he was going to marry a princess from a neighboring island. It was customary for the men to bring the king a wedding gift. Because Perseus came from a humble home, he had no gift to bring. Instead, he went to see Polydectes with an offer of his services.

**Perseus:** Polydectes, I come to congratulate you on your forthcoming wedding. As my gift, I offer you my services. I am strong and will not back down from a challenge. What might I do for you?

**Narrator 2:** Little did Perseus know that Polydectes was hoping for this very opportunity.

**Polydectes:** Perseus, there is a challenge that I hope you can meet. No one has ever been able to accomplish this task. Are you sure you want to pursue what I am about to request?

**Perseus:** Sir, I am at your service. What do you desire?

**Polydectes:** Medusa. Slay the monster and bring me her head as proof that you have succeeded.

**Narrator 1:** Medusa was one of the three horrible Gorgon sisters. Just looking upon one of the sisters turned any living creature to stone. Polydectes didn't care about getting rid of Medusa; he wanted only to be rid of Perseus. Only then would he have the opportunity to gain the hand of the fair Danaë.

**Narrator 2:** Perseus set out on his quest, asking for help from Athena along the way. Hermes, the god of travelers, appeared with Athena.

**Athena:** Hermes and I can help you, but you have many challenges ahead. I am loaning you my shield. Keep it clean and polished. It will serve you well as protection. Hermes is lending you his sword, so strong that it will cut through metal.

**Perseus:** Thank you for your kindness. These are great gifts.

**Athena:** But they aren't enough. You need to find the nymphs of the north. They have great magic, and only they can provide you with what you need to succeed.

**Perseus:** Where do I go? How do I find them?

**Athena:** They are hidden even from the gods. Only the Graeae sisters know.

**Perseus:** How do I find them?

**Athena:** They live in a land far to the west where the sun never shines. Everything is gray as dusk, just like the Graeae sisters. They share a single eye and single tooth, their most prized possessions. Think of how you can turn this to your advantage.

**Perseus:** Thank you for your kindness and assistance. I will always be in your debt.

**Narrator 1:** Hermes offered to help Perseus with this next challenge. He tucked Perseus under his arm and sped off to the west. When they arrived, it was just as Athena had described—gray and dreary. The Graeae sisters had gray hair and gray faces. They passed one gray eye around, looking through it in turns. Perseus stood by quietly, blending into the grayness. As one sister passed the eye to another, none could see him. He darted forward and wrested the eye out of the sister's hand.

**Perseus:** Sisters! I have your eye. You'll only get it back if you tell me the way to the nymphs of the north.

**Sister:** Give us back the eye! We'll consider your request, but we need to each have a turn to see you first.

**Perseus:** No, no. You'll simply refuse to help me. I have to know the way to the nymphs.

**Sister:** How do you know that we'll tell you the truth?

**Perseus:** You'll tell me the truth because if you don't, I'll be back. There's no way you can keep me from taking your eye again. You should know that now.

**Narrator 2:** The sisters talked it over and decided they had to tell him the way to the nymphs.

**Sister:** Do you have a way to travel quickly?

**Perseus:** Yes, Hermes will help me.

**Sister:** Then listen well. Fly to the north, beyond the North Wind. Keep flying until you come to where the sun never sets. Once you have traveled that far, the nymphs will find you.



**Narrator 2:** Hermes and Perseus flew off to the North until they came to the nymphs. Once they heard about Perseus's quest, they lent him a pair of winged sandals, a cap of invisibility, and a magic bag to hold whatever he put into it.

**Narrator 1:** Now that Perseus had the winged sandals, he no longer needed Hermes. Perseus flew to the west, passing the island of the Gorgons. He knew that if he looked directly at the Gorgons, he would be turned to stone, so he used the polished shield to look at their reflection. He saw the grotesque Gorgon sisters sleeping on the shore. Snakes grew out of their heads, and fangs grew from their evil mouths. Stones of what had once been men foolish enough to gaze upon them surrounded the sisters.

**Narrator 2:** Perseus flew down and used the sword to quickly cut off Medusa's head. As he flew off, a winged horse, the Pegasus, grew out of Medusa's torso. His frantic neighs woke Medusa's sisters, who began to pursue Perseus. Perseus threw Medusa's head into the magic bag, slipped on his cap of invisibility, and sped away. Unable to see Perseus, the sisters gave up their chase.

**Narrator 1:** As Perseus flew over Ethiopia, he saw what appeared to be a marble statue chained to a rock by the sea. As he looked closer, he realized that tears seeped down the lovely face of Andromeda. He flew down and tried to free her from her chains.

**Andromeda:** Stop trying to save me! You'll only lose your life!

**Perseus:** I can't leave you here like this. Who are you? What has led to your imprisonment?

**Andromeda:** My name is Andromeda. I'm the daughter of King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeia. When my mother boasted that she was lovelier than the Nereids were, Poseidon became very angry. He couldn't tolerate a mortal comparing herself to the goddesses of the sea. He sent a sea monster to wreak havoc on the kingdom of Ethiopia.

**Perseus:** But why are you here? You still haven't explained why you are imprisoned.

**Andromeda:** My father was forced to sacrifice me to the sea monster. This was the only way to appease Poseidon. When the monster gets hungry enough, it will eat me.

**Perseus:** Was there no one who would help? You are so beautiful. I can't believe no one came to your rescue.

**Andromeda:** I was engaged to be married to Phineus, but when he saw what had happened, he ran away. He was afraid.

**Perseus:** I will save you, and if you'll have me, I'll marry you.

**Narrator 2:** Before Andromeda could answer, the sea monster reared its ugly head out of the sea. Its mouth opened wide as it reached for Andromeda. Perseus dived at the monster and thrust his sword down its throat. The monster's wails reached to the heavens, and it sank beneath the waves. Its blood filled the sea, and ever after those waters were known as the Red Sea.

**Narrator 1:** The bellowing of the monster alerted Andromeda's cowardly suitor to the fight. Phineus quickly gathered his soldiers and hastened to claim Andromeda as his bride. Andromeda's parents followed, hoping to find their daughter safe from the sea monster. When Phineus insisted that he was going to carry Andromeda away, Perseus took out his shield, calling out to Andromeda.

**Perseus:** Andromeda, shield your eyes. Trust me—don't watch until I tell you it's safe!

**Narrator 2:** Perseus took Medusa's head out of the magic bag, and the men were immediately turned to stone. Sadly, Andromeda's parents had also looked upon the terrible head of the Gorgon. But the gods felt sorry for them and made Cepheus and Cassiopeia constellations in the sky so that they could forever watch the events on Earth. Perseus used his sword to cut Andromeda's chains, and they fled to Seriphus.

**Narrator 1:** When they arrived, Perseus discovered that Polydectes had tried to abduct Danaë as soon as he had left. Danaë and Dictys were in hiding. Outraged, Perseus went to see the Polydectes.

**Perseus:** Your majesty, I have fulfilled your request. Here is the head!

**Narrator 2:** Polydectes was so astonished to see Perseus that he looked directly at Medusa and was turned to stone. His entire court looked on as well, and all were lost. The people rejoiced at the death of the despot, giving Perseus and Andromeda a grand wedding. When Perseus returned the magic items to Athena, he also gave her Medusa's head.

**Narrator 1:** Now a grand hero, Perseus thought that his grandfather would welcome him back. But when he returned to Argos, he found that Acrisius had fled in terror. Perseus became king of Argos and proved to be a kind and wise ruler.

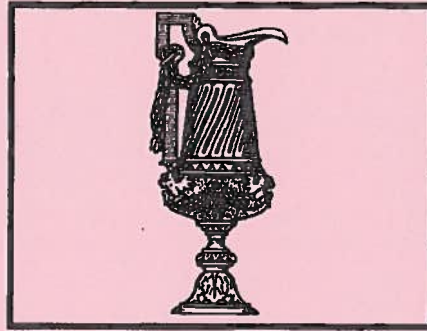
***Narrator 2:*** Perseus was also a fine athlete, and he often participated in the games held throughout Greece. During the discus throw, a wind came up, and Perseus's discus changed course, killing an elderly man who was watching. Thus, the words of the oracle came true, for the old man was Acrisius.

***Narrator 1:*** Perseus continued to bring glory to Greece. He built the city of Mycenae and had many great descendants. When Perseus and Andromeda died, Zeus honored them by putting them in the sky as constellations.





# Prometheus and Pandora



**A**t one time the Titans, powerful giants, fought the Olympian gods. Titan brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus remained loyal to Zeus, who chose to reward them by having them repopulate the Earth. Prometheus took great care in fashioning the mortals, longing to give them comfort and sustenance. Against Zeus's wishes, he gave them fire and meat. After tricking Zeus, Prometheus was sentenced to continued punishment, only to be rescued by Heracles, known to the Latins as Hercules. Woven into this narrative is the story of Pandora, sent by Zeus to further punish the brothers. In this story, Pandora brings along a jug, refusing to heed Zeus's warning to leave it closed. All the plagues of the world are released when she peeks. Only the quality of hope remains for mortals. During the medieval period, the jug was translated as a box, giving us the well-known Pandora's box, which symbolizes the moment when mortals learned of all the world's tragedies.

## *Presentation Suggestions*

The narrators can stand to the sides of the stage. Place Prometheus and Epimetheus in the center, with Zeus and Heracles on one side and Hephaestus and Pandora on the other. Hephaestus and Pandora can enter just before their lines.

## ***Props***

The characters can be dressed in gowns or robes. Pandora should wear beautiful clothing, perhaps with flowers or jewels in her hair. Place a jug on the stage.

## ***Delivery Suggestions***

Zeus should sound regal and vengeful. Prometheus should sound strong and later resigned to his fate. Pandora should sound sweet and persuasive.

## ***Characters***

- ▣ Narrator 1
- ▣ Zeus
- ▣ Epimetheus
- ▣ Prometheus
- ▣ Narrator 2
- ▣ Hephaestus
- ▣ Pandora
- ▣ Heracles



## Prometheus and Pandora

**Narrator 1:** The gods frequently waged war, with the unfortunate result that all living creatures on Earth had perished. Zeus decided it was time to restore Earth to its former splendor. He sent for Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus, both Titans, powerful giants who lived on Earth.

**Zeus:** Prometheus and Epimetheus, I have a task for you.

**Epimetheus:** What do you need, Zeus?

**Zeus:** Go down to Earth and fashion new men and beasts.

**Prometheus:** How will we do this?

**Zeus:** When you arrive on Earth, simply go to the river. Use the clay on the banks to create the mortals, both human and animal. You'll find it works well. As you work, you can give each creature gifts to make it swift, strong, or whatever traits you see fit to bestow.

**Narrator 2:** The brothers journeyed to Earth and began to create many creatures. As was his nature, Prometheus took great care, crafting each man in the image of the gods. Epimetheus created the animals, working as quickly as he could.

**Epimetheus:** Why are you so slow, brother? Look at what I've created in half the time it's taken you to make one mortal.

**Prometheus:** Good work takes time, Epimetheus. Humans deserve to have the best.

**Narrator 1:** Unfortunately, Prometheus was so slow that Epimetheus used up all the good gifts on the animals he created. They could run fast, see far, and hear from great distances. They also had warm coats of fur, while the men were left to shiver at night or in the cold. Taking pity on his creations, Prometheus went to Zeus for help.

**Prometheus:** Zeus, my people are carefully crafted, but they need warmth and a way to prepare their food. Won't you share the sacred fire with them?

**Zeus:** You must think I'm a fool! Fire is for the gods, not for mere mortals. Get back to your work.

**Narrator 2:** Prometheus returned to Earth, but he couldn't stop thinking about the fire. He knew he'd probably be punished, but he felt responsible for the creatures he'd created.

**Narrator 1:** Prometheus sneaked up to Olympus, stole an ember from the fire there, and gave it to man, warning them to never let it die out. The fire not only kept humanity warm, but also kept the beasts at bay. Before long, the humans learned how to kill the beasts and cook their meat. The smell of roasting meat drifted to the heavens, alerting Zeus to Prometheus's betrayal. He summoned Prometheus to his court.

**Zeus:** You have disobeyed me, Prometheus, but I have a proposal for you. Have the men share with me whatever delicious meats they are preparing. Then perhaps I'll let them keep part of the meat for themselves, along with the fire that you stole from me.

**Narrator 2:** Prometheus returned to the mortals and gave them careful instructions.

**Prometheus:** Zeus wants a portion of the meat you are cooking. Here is what I propose. Butcher an ox and divide the meat into two equal portions. Put the fine meat in one sack with the entrails on top. Put the bones in the other sack with the fat on top. Then I'll give Zeus a choice. With some good fortune, he may choose the wrong sack.

**Narrator 1:** Soon Prometheus returned to Zeus with an invitation.

**Prometheus:** Zeus, the men have prepared two portions of the ox. You don't have need for all of it, as you said. Why don't you come to Earth and choose your portion? The men can keep the remains.

**Narrator 2:** Indeed, when Zeus examined the sacks, he assumed that the good meat lay underneath the fat and chose accordingly. He was furious when he realized he'd been duped.

**Zeus:** Prometheus, you have tricked me for the last time. You are to be bound in chains at the top of the Caucasus Mountains. Every day an eagle will come down from the sky and dine on your liver. By night, your liver will return to health, providing dinner for the eagle the next day. I have another punishment in mind for your precious mortals.

**Narrator 1:** Until this time, all mortals were men. Zeus decided it was time they had a woman and called Hephaestus to him.

**Zeus:** Hephaestus, I want you to create a new mortal, fashioned after a goddess rather than a god.



**Hephaestus:** Do you have anything special in mind for her, Zeus?

**Zeus:** You can have all the help you need in bestowing gifts on her. Just call on the other gods as you need.

**Hephaestus:** This will be a worthy project. I can make a wonderful creature, Zeus.

**Zeus:** But don't make her perfect. The mortals don't deserve perfection!

**Hephaestus:** I understand, Zeus. You won't be displeased.

**Narrator 2:** Hephaestus called on the gods and goddesses to help in the creation of the first woman. Aphrodite gave her beauty and charm. Athena taught her cooking, weaving, and spinning. She received many great gifts, but Hephaestus tried to strike a balance, bestowing upon her the gifts of lying and deceit.

**Narrator 1:** Zeus called Epithemeus to his throne in Olympus.

**Epithemeus:** Zeus, how can I serve you?

**Zeus:** Actually, I have a great gift for you. The gods and goddesses have fashioned a woman to be your helpmate on Earth. Her name is Pandora, and you may take her with you on your return. This clay pot is another great gift, but neither you nor Pandora can open it without my permission. Don't defy me.

**Narrator 2:** Epithemeus was immediately enchanted with Pandora's beauty and skills. Prometheus had warned him to be wary of Zeus's tricks and to refuse any gifts he might offer, but Epithemeus could only gaze on Pandora in wonder. Finally he decided he had to marry her.

**Epithemeus:** Pandora, I don't want to share you. Zeus has made a gift of you to the mortals, but you will become my bride.

**Pandora:** I'll be your wife, but I want to find out what is in the clay jar.

**Epithemeus:** Pandora, you heard what Zeus said. We are to never look inside it without his permission.

**Pandora:** Surely a little peek won't hurt anything.

**Narrator 1:** Before Epithemeus could stop her, Pandora broke the seal on the jar and lifted the lid. Out flew all the blessings of the world, returning quickly to the heavens. Following the blessings came the plagues of the world: envy, fear, greed, vanity, old age, sickness, and others.

**Narrator 2:** Pandora slammed the lid on the jar, but it was too late. The mortals began to suffer these miseries immediately, while Zeus observed in disgust. Only one blessing remained in the pot, and that was hope. That is why today all of mankind has only hope to counter all the challenges they face from birth to death.

**Narrator 1:** Meanwhile, Prometheus continued to suffer with his continued punishment. Many years later, Heracles passed by while on his quest for the golden apples.

**Heracles:** Prometheus, why has happened to you?

**Prometheus:** Zeus is punishing me for giving fire to the mortals.

**Heracles:** How can your punishment be broken?

**Prometheus:** It seems I am caught here until someone breaks my chains and takes my place.

**Heracles:** I can break your chains, and I think I can deliver someone to take your place. But first, let me ensure that that eagle no longer torments you.

**Narrator 2:** Heracles quickly shot the eagle with his arrow. Known for being the strongest man in the world, he then tore apart the chains. Heracles then brought Chiron the centaur to take Prometheus's place. Prometheus expressed his gratitude to Heracles by telling him not to pick the golden apples on his quest or he would die. Only Atlas could pick these apples of immortality.

**Narrator 1:** Of course, Zeus observed all that transpired, but he allowed Heracles to free Prometheus. Nevertheless, he had one last punishment. He commanded that Prometheus forever wear an iron ring, complete with a chip from the wall of Caucasus. Prometheus was finally free, but he would always be linked to the mountain.



# Eros and Psyche



The term *psyche* is Greek for “soul.” Born to a family of three beautiful sisters, Psyche’s beauty was almost as legendary as that of Helen. An oracle predicted that she would marry a “monster,” and jealous Aphrodite insisted that Eros carry out this prediction. But Eros intervened, falling in love with Psyche and hiding her in a palace. He visited Psyche only at night, forbidding her to look on him. Psyche eventually became discontent with never seeing her husband during his nocturnal visits, and she lit a lamp to peek at his sleeping form. A drop of oil fell on him, he woke up, and quickly departed, leaving Psyche alone. Psyche wandered the world searching for him until the gods took pity on her. According to Ernest Crawley (*The Mystic Rose*, New York: Meridian Books, 1960, p. 42), the story probably arose from the custom in ancient Sparta of young husbands only visiting their wives at night. In the familiar Latin version, Venus is the jealous goddess, inadvertently sending her son Cupid to Psyche’s side.

## *Presentation Suggestions*

Eros and Psyche can sit on stools in the center of the stage. The narrators and sisters can stand on one side of the stage. Father, the Oracle, and Aphrodite can stand on the other side of the stage.

## *Props*

Psyche and Eros can be dressed in simple, elegant clothing. Eros can have a bow and arrows nearby. Father can be dressed like royalty. The oracle should be in simple clothing. Aphrodite should be in a long, flowing gown. The sisters should wear dresses.

## *Delivery Suggestions*

Eros should sound kind and persuasive. Psyche should sound somewhat evasive when describing her unusual marital arrangement to her sisters and desperate when she loses Eros. The sisters should sound skeptical about Psyche's trust in her husband.

## *Characters*

- ☐ Narrator 1
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Oracle
- ☐ Narrator 2
- ☐ Aphrodite
- ☐ Eros
- ☐ Psyche
- ☐ Sister 1
- ☐ Sister 2



## Eros and Psyche

**Narrator 1:** Once there was a king who had three beautiful daughters. People came from distant lands just to gaze upon these three exquisite creatures, especially the one called Psyche. Soon Psyche's sisters were married, but Psyche's beauty was so stunning that she intimidated all who dared even to think of marrying her. Her father was unsure of how he should direct her future and consulted an oracle.

**Father:** I have come here seeking your wisdom about my daughter.

**Oracle:** Tell me about her.

**Father:** She is an exquisite young woman, but she is so beautiful that men are afraid of her. It's time that she marry, but men take one look at her and fear they could never win her heart.

**Oracle:** Your daughter is indeed beautiful, and she will marry. But she will marry a horrible monster.

**Father:** How can this be? She is a delicate young woman who has done no harm to man or beast. Surely this fate is unworthy and cruel.

**Oracle:** You came to me to learn what to do, and you know that you can't escape what the Fates have prophesied.

**Father:** What must I do?

**Oracle:** Dress her to be married and take her to the summit of the mountain. There she will be claimed.

**Narrator 2:** Psyche's distraught father returned home, wondering how he would find the words to explain to his wife and daughter what lay ahead. Soon, with heavy hearts, Psyche's parents dressed her in wedding clothes and led her to the mountain, where they explained her fate to their daughter and tearfully bade her good-bye.

**Narrator 1:** In truth, as often happens when a mortal attracts the attention of the gods, Psyche faced this fate because she had become the victim of jealousy. Resenting the attention Psyche received, Aphrodite had called upon her son Eros to exact her revenge.

**Aphrodite:** Eros, I want you to do something about this Psyche. In keeping with the directives of the oracle, her parents have dressed her for marriage and abandoned her on a mountaintop. Go there and make sure that she falls in love with the most horrible, despicable monster you can find.

**Eros:** Do you have someone in mind, Mother?

**Aphrodite:** No, son. I am just so weary of hearing about her beauty, and I want her out of my sight. Just do this for me in whatever fashion you wish.

**Narrator 2:** Eros descended to the mountain summit where he found Psyche, sleeping soundly. Just like mortals, he was struck by her beauty and took pity on her. He decided he couldn't give her to anyone repulsive but must have her for himself. He quickly devised a plan that would keep his treachery secret but would allow him to have her all to himself. With the help of Zephyrus, Psyche was transported to a magnificent palace. She woke in the darkness to his quiet voice.

**Eros:** Psyche, wake up. You have nothing to fear, my dear.

**Psyche:** Where am I?

**Eros:** Don't worry about that, you're safe. When daylight comes, you'll see that you are living in a beautiful, comfortable palace. You'll want for nothing.

**Psyche:** But who are you? Let me light the lamp so I can see you.

**Eros:** No, my dear. You need to trust me. Understand that I can only visit you at night and that you can't ever look upon my face. Will you agree?

**Psyche:** Are you so terrible that I can't look upon you without revulsion?

**Eros:** Of course not, Psyche, but it is better that you trust me.

**Narrator 1:** The young couple talked through the night, and Psyche gradually came to trust Eros's kind, loving manner. During the day, Psyche wandered the grounds of the palace, enjoying the pleasant rooms and lush gardens. Each night, her affection for Eros grew, and she was by and large content with her fate. Her days were long, however, and she became lonely. Finally she entreated Eros to let her see her sisters.

**Psyche:** Dear, I have a favor to ask of you.

**Eros:** You know I would grant almost anything to you, Psyche. Has something made you unhappy?

*Psyche:* The time I spend with you is wonderful, but my days are long. I miss my family and wondered if I could see my sisters.

*Eros:* I don't think that would be wise, Psyche. You know you can't leave the palace.

*Psyche:* I know, but what is to stop them from coming here for a visit? It needn't be long, and even a brief visit would sustain me for a long time. I do miss them so.

*Eros:* Well, I suppose if they came here it would be all right. But it can only be a short visit.

*Psyche:* Of course, dear. I promise that it will be just the briefest of visits.

*Narrator 2:* When her sisters arrived, Psyche's luxurious home and way of life impressed them.

*Sister 1:* Psyche, it appears that we were worried unnecessarily. This is a magnificent palace.

*Psyche:* Yes, it is lovely, isn't it? And my husband is really charming.

*Sister 2:* But I don't understand. It was foretold that you would be married to a monster. What is he like? How can the prophecy be so wrong?

*Psyche:* He's not a monster but is kind and loving. I couldn't be happier than when he is with me.

*Sister 1:* What do you mean by that? Doesn't he live with you?

*Psyche:* Of course he does.

*Sister 2:* Then let's meet him. We're so eager to meet him and see what he looks like.

*Psyche:* I'm afraid that's impossible.

*Sister 1:* I don't understand.

*Psyche:* I've never seen him.

*Sister 2:* Psyche, you're talking in riddles. You seem to be in love with him, but you've never seen him? This doesn't make sense.

*Psyche:* It's an unusual arrangement, I admit. You see, he only comes at night, and he won't allow me to light a lamp. So I've never really seen him.

**Sister 1:** Then he *must* be a monster as the oracle foretold.

**Psyche:** No! I don't believe he is. He has been nothing but loving and charming. I know in my heart that he's a wonderful man.

**Sister 2:** He is deceiving you, Psyche, and it's time you found out who he truly is.

**Psyche:** But he's forbidden me to look at him. Although I am curious, of course. . . .

**Sister 1:** Forget that. You *must* look at him. Just light a lamp one night when he's asleep and take a quick peek. He'll never know, and you'll have your curiosity satisfied.

**Psyche:** I'll think about it, but let's talk of other things now.

**Narrator 1:** Their visit soon came to a close. That night, Psyche thought about all they had discussed and decided she couldn't resist one quick look at her beloved husband. She quickly lit her lamp and looked down at the sleeping form of a truly splendid young man. Psyche gasped with joy and leaned closer, spilling a drop of oil on his sleeping form.

**Narrator 2:** Eros woke up and faced her, shaking with anger.

**Eros:** How could you disobey me, Psyche? You've ruined everything! Why couldn't you believe in me? What happened to the love I showed you? Couldn't you trust me? Good-bye, Psyche, for this is the end for us.

**Narrator 1:** With those final words of reproach, both Eros and the palace disappeared, leaving Psyche bereft and frantic with despair.

**Psyche:** What have I done? Why did I listen to my sisters?

**Narrator 2:** Psyche began to wander the world, praying to the gods for help in finding her beloved. Aphrodite pursued her, putting her through a variety of terrible ordeals. Eros, watching from afar, became increasingly convinced that Psyche indeed loved him. After her journeys led her to a brief visit to the Underworld, Eros took pity on her and went to Zeus to ask him to intervene.

**Narrator 1:** Zeus agreed that Psyche had shown incredible devotion and strength of character. He declared that she would be immortal. He gave permission for Eros to marry Psyche, and all of Olympus celebrated their marriage. Even Aphrodite abandoned her jealousy and rejoiced with the gods and goddesses.





# Zeus and Hera



**H**era's name means "protectress" in Greek. Zeus cajoled Hera into marrying him, even though Hera knew that Zeus could not remain true to one wife. She watched him constantly and discovered him hiding in a cloud with Io. To avoid being found out, Zeus changed Io into a pure white heifer. Hera had her servant Argus, who had one hundred eyes, watch over Io. But Zeus sent his son Hermes to free Io. Hermes tricked Argus into falling asleep, releasing Io, who fled to Egypt. Io gave birth to Zeus's son, whom Hera kidnapped. But Io found him, and they returned to Egypt, where she married the king.

## *Presentation Suggestions*

The narrators can be sitting on either side of the stage. Zeus should be in the center with Hera on his immediate right and Io on his immediate left. Hermes and Argus can stand slightly to the back of Hera and Io.

## *Props*

The stage could be decorated with peacock feathers. A mural showing the relationship of Greece to Egypt could decorate that back of the stage. The characters could dress in appropriate clothing, with Argus perhaps wearing a shirt covered with eyes.

## ***Delivery Suggestions***

Hera should sound jealous and angry with Zeus when confronting him about his escapades. Zeus should sound persuasive and charming. Argus should sound obedient with Hera and pleased for Hermes's company. Hermes should sound congenial.

## ***Characters***

- Narrator 1
- Hera
- Narrator 2
- Zeus
- Argus
- Hermes

## Zeus and Hera



**Narrator 1:** When Zeus fell in love with Hera and proposed marriage, she at first refused him. She resented his practice of taking mortal wives and wanted no part of his rule. But Zeus wanted Hera for himself and was not to be dissuaded. He created a thunderstorm and changed himself into a little cuckoo bird, flying into her arms for protection.

**Hera:** Your poor little bird, let me warm you.

**Narrator 2:** Zeus changed back to his godly form, and Hera found herself hugging him.

**Hera:** Zeus! You tricked me!

**Zeus:** Hera, you know I'm not going to give up until you marry me, so you might as well agree now.

**Hera:** I'll marry you, Zeus, but I'm warning you not to make me angry. No more wives, Zeus!

**Zeus:** You know I'll be true to you, Hera. Now let's prepare for the wedding!

**Narrator 1:** The wedding was glorious, with all the flowers and trees in bloom to celebrate. But no matter how hard he tried, Zeus couldn't remain true to Hera. He would sneak down to Greece and marry mortal girls while assuming various disguises. He believed that his heirs would inherit his greatness, which could only benefit Greece. Hera was greatly displeased with his philandering practices.

**Hera:** Zeus, you haven't changed at all. You think that I don't know what you are doing, but I'm always watching you.

**Zeus:** Hera, you know that the sun rises and sets with you!

**Narrator 2:** But Hera wasn't convinced of his fidelity and continued to watch Zeus. One day she spied a dark cloud on Earth and became suspicious. She rushed to the cloud, and just as she suspected, she found Zeus. To her surprise, he was holding a little pure white heifer.

**Hera:** Zeus, what a lovely little heifer. Won't you let me have it?

**Narrator 1:** Hera suspected that the heifer was Zeus's latest conquest, and indeed it was Io, a lovely young girl. Zeus was caught in his ruse, but he had to pretend that the heifer meant nothing to him.

**Zeus:** Of course, Hera, you are welcome to the cow.

**Narrator 2:** Hera tied the heifer to a tree and called for her servant, the giant Argus.

**Hera:** Argus, I have a task for you. I have tied a little white heifer to the tree in the garden. Use your hundred eyes to make sure that she doesn't get away.

**Argus:** As you wish, Hera.

**Narrator 1:** With his hundred eyes, Argus made an excellent watchman, never closing more than half of his eyes at any given time. But he was accustomed to more excitement in his life and watching a cow quickly bored him. Meanwhile, Zeus was plotting to free Io by enlisting the help of his son, Hermes.

**Zeus:** Hermes, find a way to set Io free. Argus is guarding her, but I know you can figure out how to get by him.

**Hermes:** Father, I'll be glad to try. Just watch what I do.

**Narrator 2:** Hermes disguised himself as a flute-playing shepherd, and he went to see Argus.

**Hermes:** Good morning, Argus. You look like you could use some company.

**Argus:** You're right about that, young man. A bit of conversation and music would be welcome.

**Hermes:** Let me play for you, and then perhaps a story would pass the time.

**Argus:** That would surely help keep me entertained, my friend.

**Narrator 1:** After playing his flute for a while, Hermes began to tell a tedious story. Soon fifty of Argus's eyes had closed in sleep. As Hermes persisted with his endless story, the other fifty eyes began to droop. When all one hundred eyes were closed, Hermes cut off Argus's head, leaving his eyes closed for all of eternity.

**Hermes:** Io, I am going to untie you, but I can't break the spell on you. Run home to your father.

**Narrator 2:** Io ran home, but her father didn't recognize her. She could only moo, so she finally scratched the letters *I* and *O* in the sand with her hoof, and her father realized what had happened. He flew at Zeus in a rage, but Zeus threw down a thunderbolt to ward him off. Meanwhile, Hera realized that Argus was dead and Io was free.

**Hera:** Io, I'm not done with you yet. I'm sending a gadfly to pester you to death. As for Argus, he may be dead, but I'm going to ensure that he isn't forgotten. His eyes will be put on the peacock's tail, and everyone will admire its beauty forevermore.

**Narrator 1:** The eyes of Argus were still unseeing, but they looked gorgeous on the peacock, which became quite vain as a result. Meanwhile, Io ran all over Greece, trying to escape from the stinging gadfly.

**Narrator 2:** Finally, Io ran to Egypt, where the people marveled at her pure white form and worshiped her.

**Zeus:** Hera, can't you leave Io alone? Look at how you've tormented her, chasing her all the way to Egypt.

**Hera:** All right, Zeus, I suppose you can change her back to human form now, but you are to have nothing else to do with her. Promise me you'll never look at her again.

**Zeus:** I promise, and I'll see that she stays in Egypt.

**Narrator:** Io did stay in Egypt, giving birth to Zeus's son Epaphus. When Hera heard about the birth, she had the child kidnapped. But Io searched for her son, who was being raised by the wife of the king of Byblos, in Syria. She found him and returned to Egypt, where she eventually married the king, Telegonus. She lived in Egypt happily, enjoying the respect of the people.

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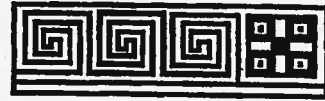
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# Daedalus and Icarus



**B**orn of royalty, Daedalus was a clever sculptor, architect, and inventor. After murdering his nephew, Talos, Daedalus was exiled to Crete, where he built the Labyrinth for King Minos. King Minos blamed Daedalus for the loss of his daughter Ariadne because Daedalus helped her destroy the Minotaur with Theseus, and Ariadne left thereafter. King Minos punished Daedalus and his son, Icarus, by imprisoning them in the Labyrinth. Using his ingenuity, Daedalus fashioned wings of feathers, beeswax, and string to escape. The father and son flew from prison like birds. Ignoring Daedalus's warning not to fly too high, Icarus flew too close to the sun, and the wax melted. Icarus plunged into the sea and drowned. Daedalus flew on to the island of Sicily, where he helped King Cocalus build a palace. King Minos followed in pursuit, and Daedalus killed him to avoid recapture. Icarus's story is sometimes told as a morality tale, cautioning listeners not to fly too high.

## *Presentation Suggestions*

The narrators should stand on either side. Talos should stand to one side and exit after his lines. Daedalus should stand in the middle with King Minos on one side and King Cocalus on the other. Icarus can stand on the opposite side of Talos and exit after his lines.

## ***Props***

The kings can wear crowns. Talos, Daedalus, and Icarus can be dressed simply. Create a backdrop that shows a magnificent palace on an island with birds flying overhead. Include the sun and ocean.

## ***Delivery Suggestions***

King Minos should sound angry during most of his delivery. Talos should sound eager to please. Daedalus should sound intelligent and resourceful. King Cocalus should sound forceful and strong.

## ***Characters***

- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- Talos
- Daedalus
- King Minos
- Icarus
- King Cocalus



## Daedalus and Icarus



**Narrator 1:** Daedalus was a royal Athenian, having descended from Cecrops. He was a talented artist, who loved to invent mechanical devices. For a time, he worked in Athens as a sculptor.

**Narrator 2:** He agreed to tutor his nephew, Talos, and found him to be an apt pupil. Talos especially enjoyed creating new things.

**Talos:** Daedalus, look at my latest invention. I think you'll find it clever and quite useful.

**Daedalus:** What is it, Talos?

**Talos:** I was looking at the jawbone of a serpent, and it occurred to me that it could be the model for this tool that I've designed. Give me a piece of wood, and I'll demonstrate its usefulness.

**Narrator 1:** Daedalus watched in amazement as Talos showed him his creation—what we now know as a saw.

**Daedalus:** You are clever, young Talos. This is a fine invention.

**Talos:** It should indeed be useful, but I have other ideas, too. Let me tell you about some of them.

**Narrator 2:** Secretly, Daedalus was jealous of Talos, resenting his ingenuity. Daedalus decided to get rid of Talos. They often walked together, so at the next opportunity, Daedalus threw Talos off the top of the Acropolis, ensuring that no one would be cleverer than he was.

**Narrator 1:** Before long, the body was discovered, and Daedalus was found guilty of murder by the court that met on Areopagus, a hill in Athens. He was sentenced to exile and fled to Crete, where he became an architect and sculptor in King Minos's court.

**Narrator 2:** It was there that Daedalus was asked to design the labyrinth that would house the fearsome Minotaur, which demanded annual sacrifices of seven young men and seven young women.

**Narrator 1:** You've heard how Theseus killed the Minotaur and later abandoned Ariadne, King Minos's daughter, on the island of Naxos. King Minos was infuriated when he discovered that his daughter Ariadne had left with the Athenians.

**King Minos:** Someone had to have helped Ariadne outwit the Minotaur, and there's only one person who could have done it. Daedalus designed the labyrinth, and he is the only one who knows its secrets. He shall suffer for his treachery.

**Narrator 2:** Daedalus was brought before King Minos, who had given great thought to an appropriate punishment. Of course, Daedalus didn't realize why King Minos had summoned him.

**Daedalus:** King Minos, how can I serve you?

**King Minos:** You have dishonored my daughter Ariadne and me. Because of you, she has fled the island with the Athenians. I have no recourse but to sentence you to the very prison you designed. You shall be taken to the labyrinth and held there. And since I have lost my daughter, your son shall also suffer. I won't banish him. I'm not that cruel. Instead, you'll have your son—but he'll be captive with you in the labyrinth. Now go!

**Narrator 1:** Daedalus accepted his fate, knowing that he had little choice. He resented the imposition on his son, though, and was determined to find a way out for them. He spoke to his son.

**Daedalus:** Icarus, I have an idea that may help us get out of here.

**Icarus:** Father, I knew you'd think of something. What can I do to help?

**Daedalus:** Collect all the feathers you can find. The birds often drop them near the entrance to the labyrinth. I'll go to the beehives nearby. With feathers, wax, and a bit of string, we can escape this underground prison.

**Icarus:** Father, your cleverness always amazes me. Let's get to work!

**Narrator 2:** Daedalus and Icarus created huge wings, made of feathers, string, and beeswax.

**Icarus:** How will these work, Father?

**Daedalus:** You've watched birds in flight, Son. The principles are the same. We'll climb out of the labyrinth and fly away. But there's one thing you must remember.

**Icarus:** What is that, Father?

**Daedalus:** The feathers are held together with beeswax. If you fly too close to the sun, it will melt, and you'll fall back to the Earth.

**Icarus:** Don't worry Father. I'll take care.

**Narrator 1:** Just as Daedalus promised, the wings worked perfectly, and together the two flew away from the labyrinth. King Minos, disgusted at their treachery, watched them leave.

**King Minos:** That accursed Daedalus has outwitted me again! Will I never get my vengeance?

**Narrator 2:** Meanwhile, Icarus was enjoying his flight. In spite of his father's warning, he kept flying higher and higher. Finally his folly sealed his fate. He flew too close to the sun. The beeswax melted, and the wings disintegrated. Daedalus could only watch helplessly as his beloved son plunged to the sea and drowned. With great sorrow, Daedalus flew on to Sicily, where King Cocalus welcomed him.

**King Cocalus:** Daedalus, welcome to our island. I have heard of your many skills. Do you think you can design a new palace for me? I hear that you know the procedures for installing running water.

**Daedalus:** I would be honored to help you in any way that I can. But we must take care in case King Minos comes searching for me.

**King Cocalus:** Don't worry, for you'll be under my protection. Now, let's get started!

**Narrator 1:** While Daedalus worked on the new palace, King Minos set off in pursuit of Daedalus in his ship. When he saw the palace construction underway, he knew Daedalus must be involved and went to see the king of Sicily.

**King Minos:** King Cocalus, I am looking for Daedalus. Is he here on your island?

**King Cocalus:** I haven't seen him, King Minos. Perhaps he is on one of the nearby islands.

**King Minos:** Hmm. A shame. Well, I do have a problem that perhaps someone here can solve. I'll leave you this conch shell. I am looking for someone who could pull a thread through its windings. I'll give a sack of gold as a reward.

**King Cocalus:** An interesting challenge. Let me see what I can do to solve it.

**Narrator 2:** Attracted by the potential reward, King Cocalus asked Daedalus if he could meet the challenge.

**Daedalus:** Here's what we'll do. Tie the thread on this ant. Then put a bit of honey at the other end of the shell. Watch what happens.

**Narrator 1:** When King Minos saw the ant pull the thread through the shell, he knew that only one person could have been so clever as to meet this challenge.

**King Minos:** There is only one man who could do this. Bring Daedalus to me!

**Narrator 2:** The Sicilian king had no choice, but he knew Daedalus wouldn't come willingly. He stalled for time, pretending to cooperate with King Minos.

**King Cocalus:** I will have to dupe Daedalus into coming here. I'm having a feast tonight. Why don't you join us, and you can capture him there. Meanwhile, would you like to bathe after your long journey? My palace is equipped with running water.

**King Minos:** A good plan! And yes, I would appreciate a bath.

**Narrator 1:** King Cocalus called for Daedalus so that he could warn him.

**King Cocalus:** Daedalus, King Minos has caught up with you and demanded I release you to him. I have convinced him that you can be captured at tonight's feast. It's up to you to determine your fate.

**Daedalus:** Will King Minos bathe before the feast?

**King Cocalus:** Yes, I extended the invitation to him to use the new baths you have installed.

**Daedalus:** Then you needn't worry. I'll take care of him.

**Narrator 2:** As King Minos prepared for his bath, Daedalus made his own preparations. When King Minos stepped into the bath and turned on the tap, boiling water rushed out of the tap, scalding him to death.

**Narrator 1:** Free of his enemy, Daedalus spent the rest of his life serving the King of Sicily.