

## The story of Icarus

Long ago on the far away island of Crete, there lived a boy called Icarus. His father Daedalus was a great inventor who could make all sorts of clever things: like wooden cows that mooed and swords that could fight by themselves. But Daedalus worked only for evil King Minos, the ruler of Crete.

Icarus and Daedalus lived in great comfort in the king's palace. They only had to snap their fingers and the servants would bring them whatever they wanted, but they could not leave the palace: they were the king's prisoners. There was nothing for Icarus to do. He would often look out of his window at the sparkling blue sea and the little ships sailing in and out of the harbour. How he longed to leave Crete and go out into the world!

One day, Icarus's dream came true. His father said, "We must leave Crete. The king wants me to build war machines for him now and I won't do it."

"But how can we get away?" asked Icarus. "The king keeps a guard on every door."

"We're going to fly away from the island," said Daedalus.

Icarus couldn't believe what he was hearing. He knew his father had made some weird and wonderful things in his time. But wings? Could he really make wings that worked?

"What do you think?" asked Daedalus the next day as he opened the door to his workshop. Icarus was amazed. There were two pairs of giant wings folded on the table. They looked like birds' wings but they were made of wax and feathers.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" said Daedalus proudly. "And we're leaving tonight."

"Tonight?" gasped Icarus.

"Yes!" said his father. "The sooner we leave the better."

So that night Icarus followed his father up to the roof of the palace and Daedalus fastened the wings to his son's arms.

"I'll go first," he said as he strapped on his own pair of wings. "All you have to do is flap your arms. The breeze will carry you along. Don't fly too close to the sea or the spray from the waves will soak the feathers and make your wings too heavy. But don't fly too close to the sun or the heat will melt the wax and you will fall into the sea."

Icarus was trembling all over – what if his wings didn't work? What if he fell right into the sea? He watched as his father ran off the roof and stretched out his arms. Suddenly, the wind caught him and lifted him high up into the air.

"Hurry up, son!" called Daedalus.

Icarus's legs felt like jelly, but he took a deep breath and jumped off the roof.

For a moment he had the awful feeling that he was falling. Then he felt himself soaring. He opened his eyes and there was the sea far below him, shining in the moonlight. Icarus

whooped with joy. If only the palace guards could see him now – swooping and soaring in the moonlight!

“Look at me!” he called out to his father, and he spun head over heels in the air.

“Be careful!” shouted his father. “We’ve still got a long way to go.”

Icarus sighed.

“Icarus, try to keep up!” called his father.

“I’m coming!” Icarus shouted back.

But as night turned to day, and the sun blazed high in the sky, he wanted some excitement. Could he fly higher than the eagles he wondered?

So Icarus swooped upwards towards the sun. Higher and higher he flew, flapping his wings.

“Wheel!” he cried as he flew faster and faster, and closer and closer to the sun. Icarus laughed and kicked his legs. He felt like the king of the world!

Then he noticed a feather floating past his face, Icarus was puzzled – a feather so high in the sky, higher than any bird would ever fly? He looked at his wings and suddenly remembered what his father had said. The sun was melting his wings. Icarus had to get away from it – and quickly!

He flapped his arms as hard as he could, but even more feathers dropped off and floated away. Wax dripped from the wooden frames and Icarus felt himself falling down, down, down, further and further until...

SPLASH!

By the time Daedalus had realised what had happened, it was too late. All that was left of Icarus was a few feathers floating on the sea.

Poor Daedalus! He flew on until he reached the island of Sicily. Then he put away his wings and lived alone in sadness for the rest of his life. And all because Icarus had been so foolish!

