

Jason and the Golden Fleece (part 3)

Here is how to say some of the more difficult names in this myth. In brackets, I've broken the names down into sounds to help you to say them.

Aeetes- (eye ee teez)

Medea- (mid dee yuh)

Hecate- (heh cot ee)

Aphrodite- (aff ro die tee)

Hera knew that the king's daughter, Medea, who stood at her father's side with modestly downcast eyes, was the only one who could save Jason. She was a lovely young sorceress, a priestess of the witch-goddess Hecate, and must be made to fall in love with Jason. So Hera asked Aphrodite, the goddess of love, to send her little son Eros to shoot one of his arrows of love into Medea's heart. Eros' arrows made people fall in love with the next person they saw, and he shot an arrow into Medea's heart just as she lifted up her eyes and saw Jason.

Her golden eyes gleamed; never had she seen anyone so handsome. She just had to use her magic and save him from her cruel father; there was nothing she would not do to save Jason's life. She went to Hecate's temple and begged the witch-goddess to help her and, guided by the witch-goddess, she created a magic lotion so powerful that for one day neither iron nor fire could harm the one who was covered with it.

In the dark of the night, Medea sent for Jason. When he came to the temple, she blushing told him that she loved him so much she would betray her own father to save him. She gave him the magic lotion and told him that he could go up to the firebreathing bulls without fear. Jason swore by all the gods of Olympus to make her his queen and love her to his dying day. Hera heard him and nodded, very pleased.

When the sun rose in the morning, Jason went straight up to the fire-breathing bulls. They bellowed and belched flames at him, but with Medea's ointment he was invulnerable and so strong that he harnessed the bulls and drove them back and forth till the whole field was ploughed.

Then he planted the dragon's teeth, and right away a host of skeleton warriors sprang up from the ploughed fields. With a spark of genius, he threw a rock among them and watched from afar as they killed one another. In a fit of fury, the skeletons attacked each other in an attempt to discover who had thrown the stone. Before the sun had set, they all lay dead.

Jason had fulfilled his task, but King Aeetes had no intention of keeping his part of the bargain. He called his men together and ordered them to seize the Argo and kill the foreigners at daybreak. In secrecy, Medea went to Jason and told him that he must take the Golden Fleece, now rightfully his, and flee from Colchis before dawn.

Under the cover of night, she led him to the dark grove where the Golden Fleece, shining like the sun, hung on a branch of a tree. Around the trunk of the tree lay coiled the never-

sleeping dragon. But Medea chanted and murmured magical incantations and bewitched the dragon. She stared at it with her golden eyes and it fell into a deep magic sleep. Quickly Jason took the Golden Fleece and ran with Medea to the waiting Argo, and quietly they slipped out to sea.

At daybreak, when the king's men were to attack the ship, they found it was gone. So were the Golden Fleece and the king's daughter, Medea. Red-faced with fury, Aeetes set off in pursuit with his great fleet of Colchian warships. He wanted the Golden Fleece back and he wanted to punish his daughter. The fastest of his ships, steered by one of his sons, soon overtook the Argo. The Argonauts thought themselves lost, but again Medea would save them. She called to her brother, who stood at the helm of his ship, and told him she was

sorry for what she had done. She said she would go home with him if he would meet her alone on a nearby island. At the same time, she whispered to Jason to lie in wait and kill her brother when he came upon the island to meet her. She knew that her proud father would have to stop the chase to give his son a proper funeral. This would allow the Argonauts enough time to make their escape. And this is how Medea and Jason were able to get back to Iolcus to reclaim his rightful throne.

