

Icarus (shorter version)

Once there was a monster, a half man-half bull called the Minotaur. This strange and terrible beast lived in a deep, dark Labyrinth on the island of Crete. The Labyrinth was created by the cunning and clever mind of Daedalus.

Daedalus was a brilliant architect and inventor – in fact, he was so brilliant that King Minos of Crete did not want to let him go back to his home in Athens. Instead, he kept him as a prisoner. Daedalus lived with his son Icarus in a tower of the palace.

Although Daedalus and Icarus had every comfort that they could ask for, the father longed to return home to Athens. His son hardly remembered his home city, but he too wanted to leave, because he longed to run and play in the open, rather than be in a tower all day.

Daedalus looked out over the waves of the Mediterranean Sea, and he realised that even if they could manage to slip out of the tower and find a little

boat, they wouldn't be able to sail very far before they were spotted and caught by one of the ships of King Minos's navy.

He thought for a long time about the best way to escape, and finally he came up with a plan, and this is what he did. He told King Minos that he needed feathers and wax for a new invention that he was working on. When these were brought to him, he took them up onto the roof of the tower. Here he put them in four lines, starting with the smallest feathers, and following those with the longer ones, so that they made gentle curves. After that he began to stick the feathers together with thread in the middle and wax at the base. While he was working, Icarus played with the wax, squashing it between his finger and thumb, and when the feathers blew away in the breeze he ran after them and caught them.

When Daedalus had finished, he showed Icarus his work. He had made the feathers into two pairs of wings. He fastened the larger pair to his arms, and began to flap them until his feet took off from the floor and he began to hover in mid air. Icarus laughed with

delight and could not wait to try out the smaller pair of wings. Over the next few days father and son both practised with them until little Icarus was almost as good at flying as his father.

Then one morning Daedalus said to Icarus:

“Now Son, we are ready to leave this island for good. We shall fly home to Athens. But although you are now quite good at flying, you must not forget that it can be very dangerous. So listen carefully. Do not fly too high, or the sun will heat the wax and your wings will fall apart”.

Little Icarus nodded to show his father that he had understood. And then Daedalus led his son up onto the battlements of the tower, and he jumped into mid air and flapped his wings, and Icarus followed soon after.

Over the seas they flew, and at first Icarus felt frightened for he had never gone very far in his practice flights. But soon he found that he was really good at flying. In fact, it was the most wonderful fun you could ever have. He began to swoop up and down with the sea gulls. Wow! It was amazing ! His father turned round and called:

“Icarus, Take Care!” and for a while after that Icarus obeyed his father and flapped along behind him. But then his wings caught a warm air current, and he found that he could soar along and upwards almost without any effort. This was the life.

His father called up to him

“Icarus, remember what I told you. Come down right now!” But Icarus could not hear, and his father could not catch up with him.

Icarus was way too close to the sun, and soon the wax that held the feathers together began to melt.

Gradually his wings began to lose their shape, and some of the feathers even began to fall off. Icarus flapped his arms frantically, but it was too late. He had lost the power of flight and down he plunged into the sea.



Adapted from

<http://storynory.com/2008/08/24/the-boy-who-flew-too-high/>