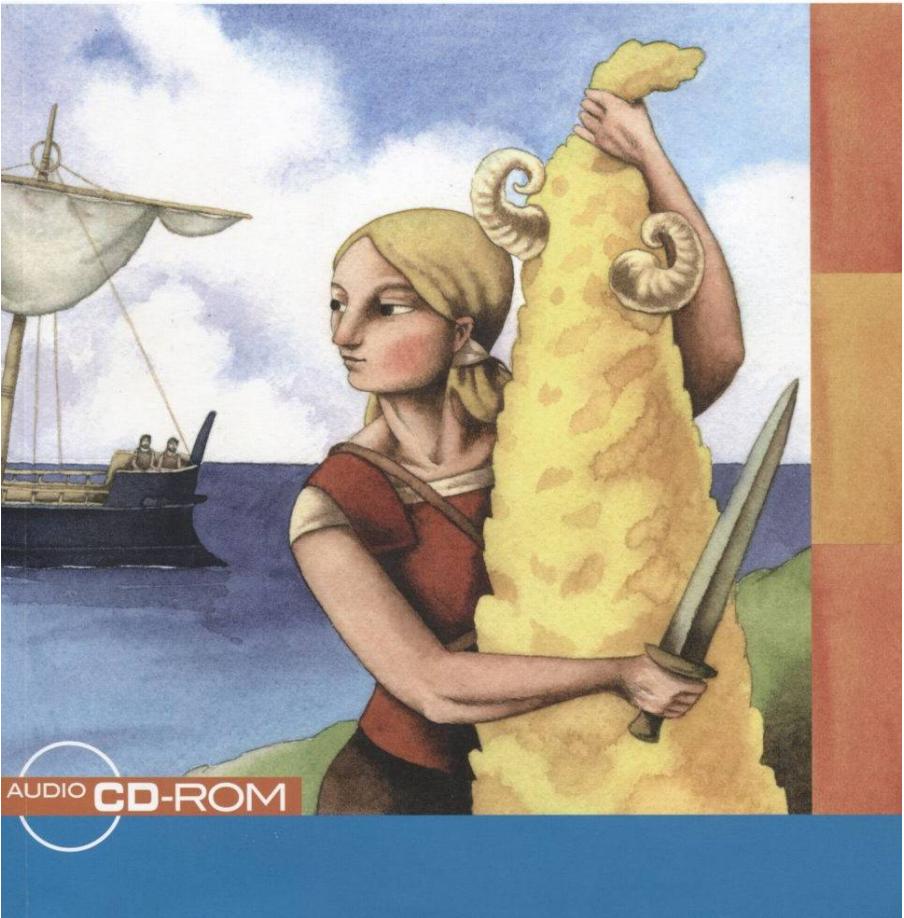


# Jason and the Argonauts



## The Story of the Golden Fleece

Athamas, the king of Boeotia, and his wife Nephele had two children — a boy, Phrixus, and a girl, Helle. Then Athamas met and fell in love with another woman, Ino. They got married and they also had two children. Ino thought that her husband loved Phrixus and Helle more than her own children. She was angry and she decided that the boy and the girl must die. She had a good plan. That year the corn didn't grow and there was no food for the people. Athamas sent messengers to the oracle at Delphi to ask for help. When the messengers returned, Ino gave them a lot of money and asked them to change the oracle's message for the king.

So when Athamas asked the messengers for the message, they said, 'The oracle says that Zeus, the king of the gods, is angry. You must kill Phrixus and Helle and give him their bodies. Then he will be happy and the corn will grow.'

Athamas was very sad but he knew that his people needed food.

'If Zeus wants my children, he must have them,' he said. But Zeus's wife, Hera, was Nephele's friend and she decided to save the children. She sent a ram with a golden fleece to Boeotia. The ram had wings

and could fly. Phrixus and Helle climbed on the ram's back and it flew away over the mountains to the east. The ram was flying over the piece of water between Europe and Asia when Helle suddenly fell off its back into the water and drowned. After that, people called the piece of water the Hellespont, which means Helle's sea.

The ram took Phrixus to the country of Colchis on the Black Sea. The king was happy to see him.

'We must thank Zeus for bringing you here safely,' he said. 'We'll give him the ram.' So the next morning the king killed it and hung its golden fleece in a tree near the city. Phrixus stayed in Colchis and married one of the king's daughters.

Many years later, Jason made the long and difficult journey by ship to Colchis to find the Golden Fleece and take it back to Greece.



## **Chapter 1**

### **From Mount Pelion to Iolkos**

Mount Pelion was the home of Chiron the centaur. He lived there with his wife and their children. He was a teacher — a very good teacher. He taught Hercules and Achilles, the great Greek heroes, when they were children. He was Jason's teacher, too. Jason spent eighteen years on Mount Pelion with Chiron. During that time the old centaur taught him a lot of things. He taught him how to hunt animals with a bow and arrow and how to fight with a spear. He taught him music. He also taught him the names of all the plants on Mount Pelion. He told him which ones were good for

people who were ill. Jason was a good student. He learnt quickly and remembered everything. When he was eighteen, he was a strong, brave and intelligent young man.

Jason and Chiron often climbed to the top of Mount Pelion. It was a nice place to rest. The air was fresh. From there, they could see the kingdom of Thessaly and the blue water of the Aegean Sea below.

One day while they were sitting on a rock on the top of the mountain, Chiron said, 'Jason, you are eighteen years old now. It's time for you to leave Mount Pelion.'

Jason was surprised. 'But why must I leave, Chiron?' he said. 'I'm very happy here. This is my home.'

They stood up and Chiron put his hand on Jason's arm. 'Look over there!' he said, and he pointed to a large city in the distance. 'That's the city of Iolkos. You were born in the royal palace there. Iolkos is your home.'

'Do my parents still live there, Chiron?' Jason asked.

'Yes, Jason, they do.'

'What do you know about them, Chiron? Who are they? I want to know.'

So Chiron told Jason the story of his family.



'Many years ago your father, Aeson, was the king of Thessaly. He was a good king, but his brother Pelias, your uncle, took the kingdom from your father and put him in prison. Pelias wanted to kill you, so your mother brought you here to me.'

'Where's my mother now?' Jason asked.

'She still lives in the palace, but she can't leave — she is a prisoner there,' Chiron said.

'Why didn't you tell me this before, Chiron?' Jason asked angrily.

'Because you were too young,' the centaur said. 'Now you are ready to go back to Iolkos. You must take your father's kingdom back from your uncle.'

'You're right, Chiron,' Jason said. 'How far is it to Iolkos?'

'It's a long way,' Chiron said. 'You must leave very early tomorrow morning.'

It was still dark when Jason got up the next day. He went to say goodbye to his old teacher.

'Goodbye, Jason,' Chiron said. 'You'll learn a lot of new things in Iolkos. One day you'll be a great hero.'

'Goodbye, Chiron,' Jason said. 'And thank you.' Then he picked up his bow and his spear and started his long walk down the mountain.

Many hours later he arrived in the green fields of Thessaly. The sun was high in the sky and it was

hot. He turned round and looked at Mount Pelion. Was that Chiron on the top? Yes, it was. The old centaur was watching him. Jason smiled and continued his journey.

Soon he arrived at a river. An old woman was sitting next to it.

'Where are you going?' she asked him.

'To Iolkos,' he said. Are you going there, too?'

'Yes, I am, but I can't cross the river. I'm afraid of the water. I'm an old woman and I'm not very strong.'

'I'll carry you across,' Jason said. 'I'm strong. Don't be afraid. Climb on my back.'

'You're very kind,' the old woman said, and she climbed on his back. Jason was surprised. She was small and old but her body was very, very heavy.

Jason crossed the river slowly. It wasn't easy. He lost one of his sandals in the water. He was very tired when he arrived on the other side. He put the old woman down carefully and went to look for his sandal.

'Thank you, young man,' the old woman said. 'Don't worry about your sandal. If you go to Iolkos with only one, you'll become a hero!'

'I don't understand,' Jason said. 'What do you mean?' But the old woman didn't answer. She was already walking away. Then, suddenly, she stopped

and turned round. Instead of an old woman, a beautiful goddess was standing in the road. It was Hera, the wife of Zeus, the king of the Gods. She spoke to Jason. 'I gave you a test, Jason, and you passed it,' she said. 'You are a kind young man. I'm going to help you. I don't like your uncle Pelias. He's a bad man. Now you must continue your journey to Iolkos. We'll meet again soon.' And she turned and walked away.

Later that day, Jason arrived in the city. He went to the royal palace and asked to see Pelias.

When the king saw the young man, he remembered the words of an oracle:

*Be careful of a man who is wearing only one sandal.*

'What do the oracle's words mean?' he asked himself. 'Why must I be careful of this young man?'

Jason went up to Pelias and said, 'My name's Jason. I'm your nephew. You took this kingdom from my father, Aeson, eighteen years ago. Now you must give it back.'

Pelias didn't want to give the kingdom back, but he didn't know what to say. He was afraid. 'Perhaps he wants to kill me,' he thought. 'I must send him away.'

'You're very young,' he said. 'You don't know much about the world. You can't rule a kingdom.'



'I'm young,' Jason said. 'But I know how to do a lot of things. Give me a test!'

'Yes, I'll give you a test,' Pelias said. 'And if you pass it, I'll give you the kingdom.'

'What is the test?' Jason asked.

'Go to the kingdom of Colchis. Find the Golden Fleece and bring it to me.'

This was a very difficult test. The kingdom of Colchis was on the Black Sea. It was a long way from Iolkos. The king of Colchis, Aeetes, kept the Fleece in a secret place. A fierce dragon guarded it night and day.

'The journey will be long and dangerous,' Jason thought. 'Perhaps I'll die on the way. But I'm sure that Hera will help me. It will be a great adventure. I'll learn a lot of things about life. And if I come back with the Fleece, Pelias will give me back my father's kingdom.'

'I'll bring you the Golden Fleece,' he said. 'But I'll need a strong ship and a good crew.'



## Chapter 2

### Preparing for the Journey

Argus the shipbuilder had a dream one night. In his dream, he was in Pagasae, a town on the coast near Iolkos in Thessaly. He was walking along the beach. There was a beautiful big ship in the sea. The name of the ship was the *Argo*. Then he woke up. 'This is a message from the gods,' he thought. 'I must go to Iolkos immediately.' He got up, got dressed, put his bag on his back and left his house.

Jason also had a dream that night. In his dream, Hera told him to go to the city gates in the morning. 'A man with a bag on his back will be there,' she said. 'His name is Argus. He will build your ship.'

The next morning Jason went to the city gates. When he saw Argus, he went up to him and said, 'I need a ship. A strong ship with fifty oars. Can you build me one?'

'I'll build you a ship,' Argus said. 'It will be the strongest and the most beautiful ship in Greece. Its name will be the *Argo*.'

The goddess Athene was at the city gates too. She was listening to them. 'I'll help you, Argus,' she said. 'Meet me here tomorrow morning.'

The next day Athene took Argus to Mount Pelion. The trees in the forests on the mountain were tall and straight. They chose the tallest and the straightest trees and took them back to Pagasae. Then Athene helped Argus to prepare the wood for the ship. Argus started his work. He built a strong hull with fifty oars. He made a tall mast. He put a big, strong sail on the mast. When the ship was nearly ready, Hera gave Jason a piece of oak. 'It's very special because it can speak,' she said. 'Put it in the prow of the ship.'

Jason sent messengers to every corner of the country. They told heroes about Jason's adventure and invited them to join the crew of the *Argo*. Soon, people from all over Greece began to arrive in Pagasae. They wanted to be part of the crew.



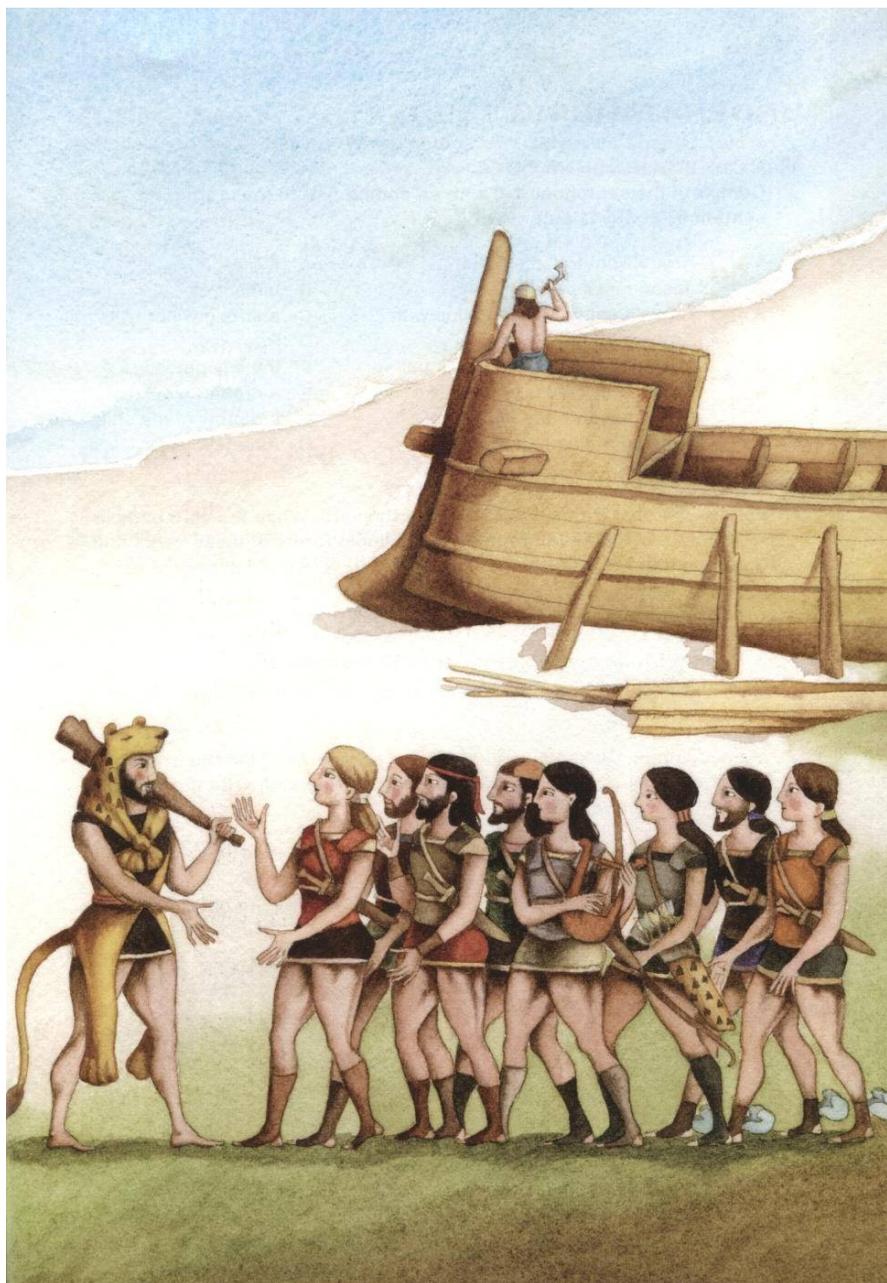
Castor, a wrestler, and his twin brother, Polydeuces, a boxer, were among the first to arrive. Then Orpheus came. He could charm people and animals with his beautiful music. Tiphys, a helmsman, was there. He could take a ship safely through the most dangerous water. Then Calais and Zetes, the sons of Boreas, the North Wind, arrived. They had wings on their feet and could fly like birds. Atalanta, a huntress, came too. She could run faster than anybody in Greece. Jason couldn't take all of the heroes who came because there were only fifty oars on the ship. So he chose only the best people to sail with him. Soon he had forty-eight crew members. He needed one more person for the last oar. Just then Hercules, the strongest and bravest Greek of all, arrived. 'Will you take the last oar, Hercules?' Jason asked him. 'Yes, of course!' the great hero said. Now the crew was complete.

'The name of our ship is the *Argo*,' Jason told them. 'And we are the Argonauts!'

'Who will be the captain of the *Argo*?' Atalanta asked.

Jason looked at Hercules. 'Hercules, will you be the captain?'

'No, Jason,' Hercules said. 'This journey was your idea. You chose the crew. You must be the captain. I'll follow you.'



We'll all follow you, Jason,' the others shouted.

'Thank you,' Jason said. 'I know that I'm young, but I'll try to be a good captain.'

That night they ate and drank together. Orpheus played and sang and everyone was happy. Then they went to sleep under the stars.

The next morning, there was a strong wind. It filled the sail of the ship.

'The weather is good,' Jason said. 'Tiphys, take the helm! Today we must set sail for Colchis.'



### **Chapter 3**

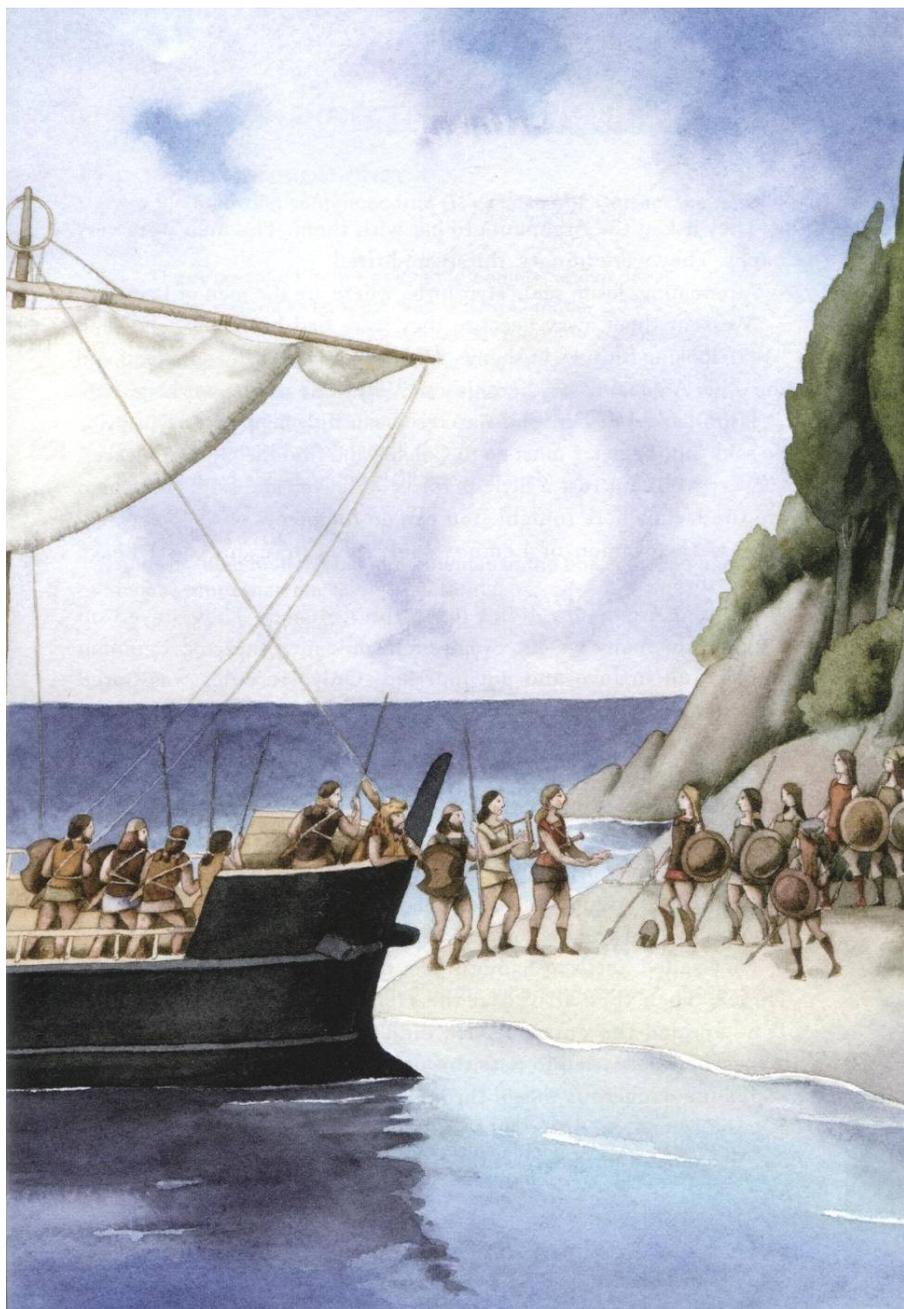
## **The Island of Lemnos**

The *Argo* sailed north-east for four days. On the fifth day, the Argonauts came to the island of Lemnos.

'We'll stop here and get some fresh water,' Jason said.

Suddenly Tiphys shouted 'Warriors on the beach!'

Everyone stopped rowing and turned to look. The warriors were very fierce. They had spears in their hands and they were wearing bronze helmets. Jason stood up and spoke to them. 'Put down your spears! We're friends. We don't want to fight.'



Tiphys took the *Argo* onto the beach. The warriors put down their spears and took off their helmets. The Argonauts looked at them in surprise. They all had beautiful long hair. They were all women! One of them went to Jason and spoke to him. 'My name's Hypsipyle. Welcome to Lemnos!' she said.

They asked the Argonauts to eat with them. The men were very happy. They were hungry, thirsty and tired.

After eating, Jason said, 'Hypsipyle, where are the men of Lemnos?'

'We sent them away because they were bad husbands,' she said. 'We're looking for new husbands. We need a king. Why don't you and the other Argonauts stay here, Jason? Why don't you be our king?'

Jason looked at her. She was very beautiful. 'I'm sorry Hypsipyle,' he said, 'but I can't. I must go to Colchis and find the Golden Fleece.'

'Very well, but rest a little before you leave,' she said. 'Your men are tired. Stay here tonight. You can go tomorrow.'

'Yes,' the women of Lemnos said. 'Stay here and rest! Leave tomorrow!'

But the Argonauts didn't leave the next day. They stayed on Lemnos for many weeks. Some of

Jason's men and the Lemnian women fell in love and got married. Only Hercules was bored with life on Lemnos. He wanted to leave. One day he went to Jason and said, 'Jason! We must continue our journey.'

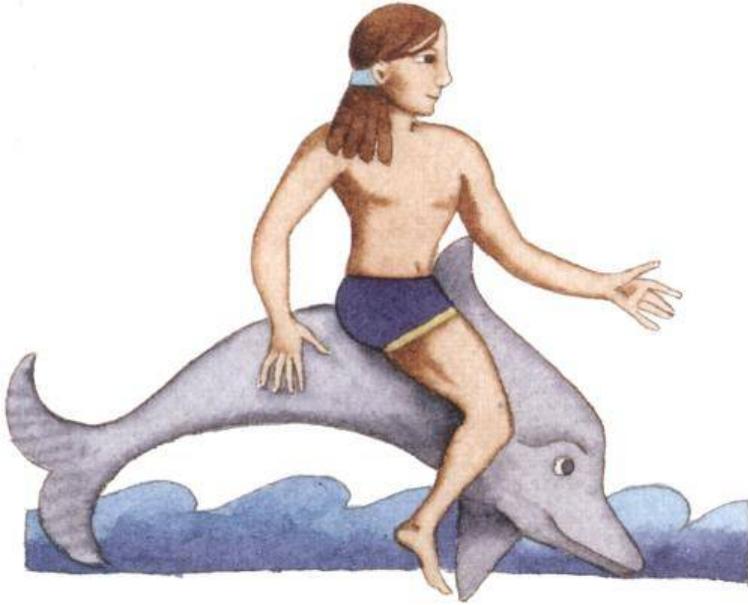
'You're right, Hercules,' Jason said. 'It's time to go. Get the ship ready. We'll leave tomorrow.'

The women were sad. They said goodbye to their new husbands and said, 'Don't forget us. Come back to Lemnos one day!' Then they gave the Argonauts food and water for the journey and the *Argo* set sail for the Sea of Marmara.

They sailed north to Samothrace, then east around the coast of Thrace. Then they arrived at the Hellespont. King Laomedon of Troy guarded the entrance. He didn't like Greeks and he killed them when they tried to pass through in their ships.

'It's too dangerous to sail through during the day,' Tiphys said.

Jason agreed. So they waited until it was dark and then Tiphys took the *Argo* quietly and safely up the Hellespont into the Sea of Marmara.



## **Chapter 4**

### **The Sea or Marmara**

The Argonauts rowed for many hours. Everyone was tired and it began to get dark, so Jason decided to stop at a place called Arcton. The young king of this country and his wife came down to the beach to welcome them. He was happy to see the Argonauts. 'My name's Cyzicus and this is Cleite,' he said. 'We got married today so we're having a party later. Please come!'

'Thank you,' Jason said. 'We'd love to come, but somebody must stay and guard the ship.'

'We'll stay,' Tiphys, Hercules and Atalanta said. 'Don't worry! The *Argo* is safe with us. Go on! Enjoy yourselves!'

It was a beautiful night. The three Argonauts sat on the beach in the moonlight. They didn't want to fall asleep, so they told each other stories of their adventures. Suddenly, they heard a strange noise. They turned round. There were some enormous creatures behind them. Giants with six arms! They were throwing rocks at the ship. Atalanta took out her bow and arrows and killed some of them immediately Hercules and Tiphys fought bravely, too. Soon a lot of the giants were lying dead on the ground and the others were running away.

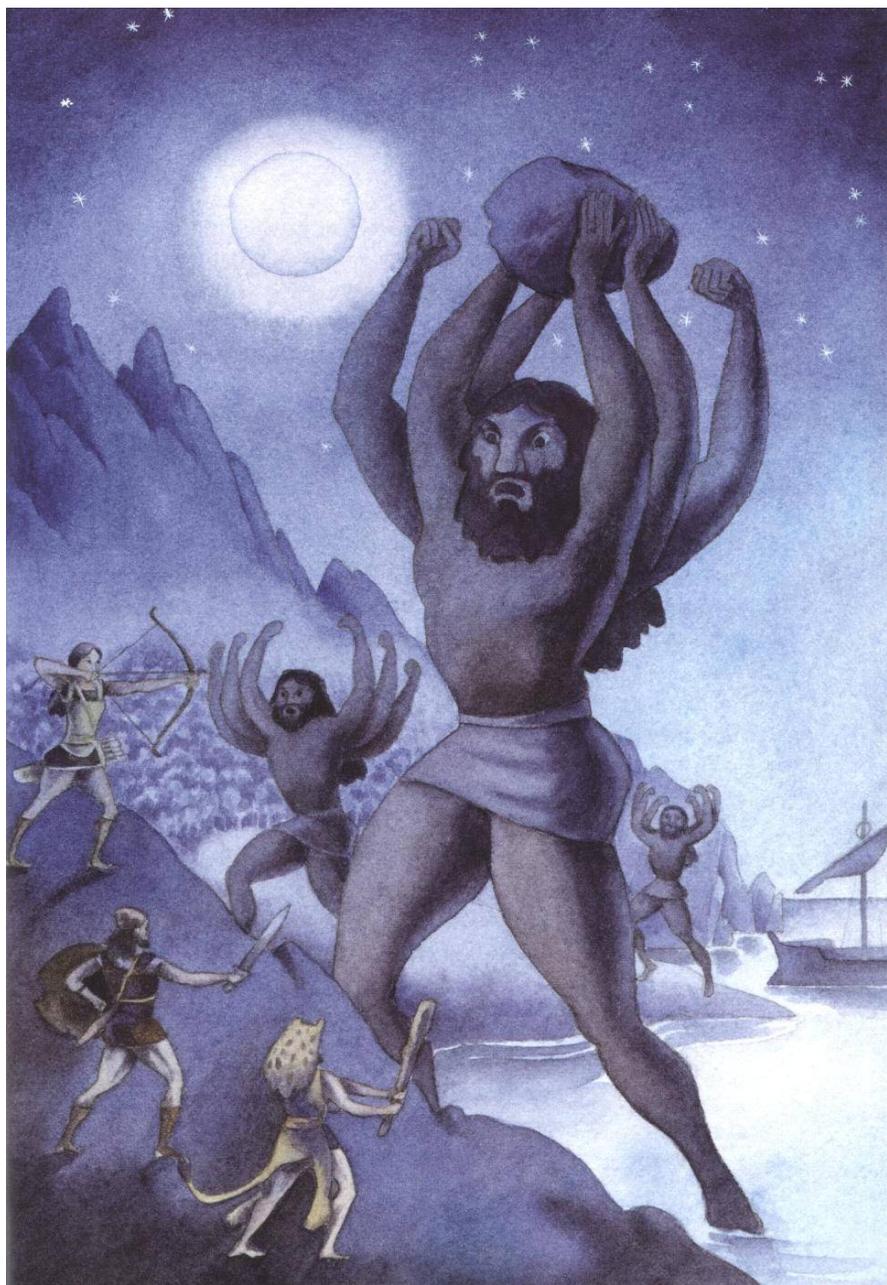
Jason and the others heard the noise and ran back to the beach. King Cyzicus went with them. When they saw the bodies, the king said, 'They're the giants from Bear Mountain. I'm sorry. They don't usually give us any trouble.'

The next morning the Argonauts said goodbye to their new friends and set sail for the Black Sea.

The weather was bad. It started to rain and there was a strong wind. It took the ship in the wrong direction.

'Where are we?' Jason asked Tiphys.

'I don't know,' the helmsman said.



The storm continued all day. It was evening when Tiphys found a beach.

'Stop here,' Jason said. 'Let's find a dry place to sleep.'

It was very dark on the beach because there was no moon that night. The Argonauts couldn't see anything.

Suddenly there were arrows and spears all around them. Warriors were attacking them! Jason and his men fought back bravely. They killed a lot of men.

When the sun came up the next morning, Jason went to look at the dead bodies of the warriors on the beach. One of them was King Cyzicus!

'Oh, no! We killed our friend!' Jason put his head in his hands and cried.

'He couldn't see us in the dark,' Hercules said sadly. 'He thought we were his enemies.'

'This is terrible!' Jason said. 'We must take his body back to Cleite.'

When Cleite saw her husband's body, her heart broke. She went into the forest and killed herself. The Argonauts were very sad. Jason was the saddest of all of them.

They stayed in Arcton for the funerals of the king and queen, and then they set sail again.

The men rowed in silence for many hours. Nobody spoke. They were thinking about King Cyzicus and Cleite. Then Hercules said, 'Let's have a rowing competition!'

'Good idea!' the others said, and they started to row hard. They wanted to forget the sad events in Arcton. One by one, the men became tired and dropped their oars. Only Jason and Hercules were still rowing. Then Hercules's oar broke into two pieces. He was very angry.

'Stop the ship!' he said. 'I must make a new oar.'

Tiphys took the ship onto a beach and Hercules went to look for a tall tree in the forest. The others started to prepare a meal.

'We need some water,' Jason said. 'Hylas! Go and get some.'

Hylas was Hercules's servant. He was a very handsome young boy.

'Yes, Jason,' he said, and he picked up a jug and went into the forest. He found a pool and started to fill his jug. A water nymph was hiding under the water. When she saw Hylas's handsome face, she fell in love with him immediately. She took his hands and pulled him down into the water. Down, down, down they went. She took him to her home at the bottom of the pool and nobody saw Hylas again.

Hercules came back to the beach with a very big tree. He looked for his servant.

'Where's Hylas?' he asked. 'I need some help with this tree.'

'He's getting some water,' Jason said. 'He'll be back soon.'

When Hylas didn't come back, Hercules was worried.

'I'll go and look for him,' he said. 'Perhaps he is lost.'

The next morning the ship was ready to sail but Hercules was still in the forest.

'We can't wait for him. We must leave without him,' Jason said.

The others didn't want to leave Hercules in a strange country.

'We *must* wait for him,' they said.

'I am the captain of the *Argo*!' Jason told them. 'Now, take your oars! Tiphys! Set sail!'

The men were angry, but they had to follow their captain.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Sailing to the Black Sea**

The Argonauts' next stop was Bebrycos. The king of this country, Amycus, loved boxing. He always asked visitors to his kingdom to fight him. He was a good boxer and he always won. If the visitor didn't want to fight, Amycus threw him into the sea. 'Well?' he said, when he saw the Argonauts. 'Who is going to fight me?'

'I'll fight you,' Polydeuces the boxer said.

The two men put on their boxing gloves. The king was big and strong, but he moved slowly. Polydeuces was big and strong too, but he was fast.



He moved quickly. They fought for a long time. Then Polydeuces hit the king hard on the side of his head. The king fell to the ground and he didn't get up again. Jason ran up to him. 'He's dead!' he said.

The men of Bebrycos were angry. They started to attack the Argonauts, but the Argonauts were stronger. They won the fight easily.

The *Argo* left Bebrycos and sailed on to Salmydessus, where King Phineus lived. Jason and the others went to see him in his palace. He was old and could not see, but he was a very kind man. 'Stay and have dinner with me,' he said. He took them into a big room and they all sat down at a long table. Servants brought plates of food to eat and jugs of fresh water to drink.

'Where are you from and where are you going?' King Phineus asked Jason.

'We're from Iolkos, in Greece. We're going to Colchis,' Jason explained. 'We're looking for the Golden Fleece. Is Colchis far from here? Do you know the way there?'

'Yes, I know the way,' Phineus said. 'And I will tell you. But first, you must help me. I've got a terrible problem.'

'What is it?' Jason asked.

'Well, every day at dinnertime two Harpies fly into my palace. These horrible creatures sit on the

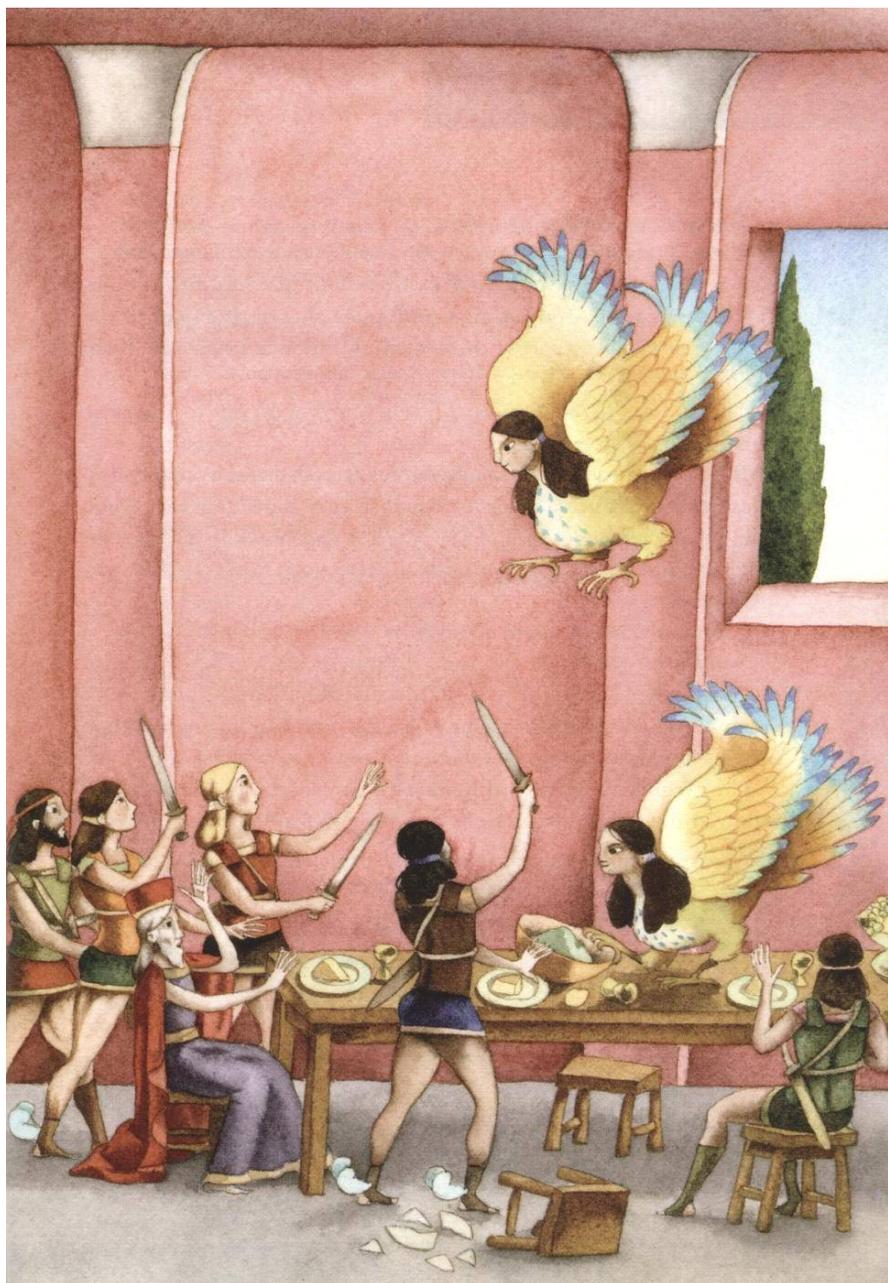


table and steal all the food on the plates. They leave nothing for me. I'm getting thinner and thinner! Soon I'll die. Look! Here they are!

Just then there was a terrible noise and two ugly creatures flew into the room. They had the bodies of birds, the heads of women and big, sharp claws. They sat on the table and started to eat the food on the plates.

'Those are the Harpies,' Phineus said sadly.

'Don't worry!' Jason said to him. 'I've got the answer to your problem.' He looked down the table. 'Calais! Zetes! Where are you?'

The two sons of the North Wind stood up.

'Here we are, Jason!' they said.

'Chase those Harpies away from here! Far away!' Jason said.

The two men took out their swords and flew up into the air. The Harpies were afraid. Calais and Zetes chased them out of the palace and far away across the sea. King Phineus never saw them again.

'Thank you,' he said. 'Now I'll tell you how to get to Colchis.' And he started to explain.

'First you must pass through the rocks called the Symplegades. These two rocks are dangerous because they move together when a ship sails between them. They catch it and break it into

pieces. If you want to pass through safely, you must follow my instructions.'

Jason and Tiphys listened carefully.

'Send a bird through the rocks,' Phineus said.

'They'll start to move together. The bird will be too fast for them, so they won't catch it. When they start to move back, there will be enough time for you to pass through. But you must row very fast!'

The Argonauts left Salmydessus the next morning. Jason followed the king's instructions and the *Argo* sailed safely into the Black Sea.

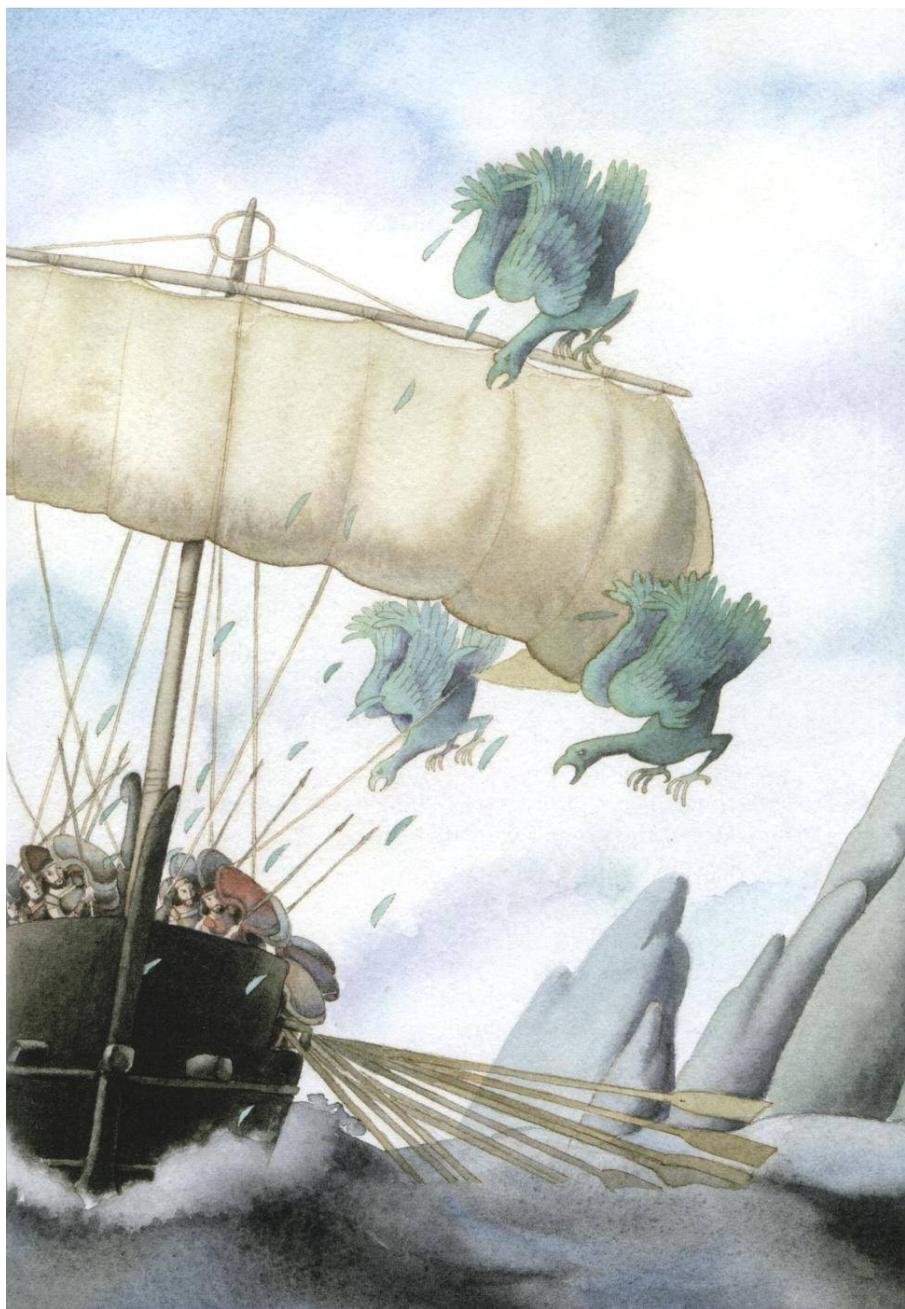


## Chapter 6

### Colchis

Many months later the Argonauts arrived in Colchis. They passed a lot of different countries on the way. When they needed food and fresh water, they stopped in one of them. They were never far from danger. In one country Tiphys became ill and died. In another, a fierce pig attacked and killed one of the men. Near the small island of Ares, the Stymphalian birds attacked them. These big birds had bronze feathers. The birds shot them at the Argonauts. The feathers were very sharp, like knives, and they cut the men's arms and legs.

'Put your shields over your heads!' Jason told his men. And shout as loudly as you can!



The birds' bronze feathers fell on the shields. BANG! BANG! The men shouted. WAAAAH! WAAAAH! The noise was terrible. The birds didn't like it and flew away.

When they arrived in the city of Aea in Colchis, Jason went to the royal palace to meet King Aeetes. His daughter, Medea, was there too. She was a sorceress — she made magic potions with plants.

When she saw the strong, handsome young visitor, she fell in love with him immediately.

Jason spoke first. 'My name's Jason and I come from Iolkos in Greece. I'm looking for the Golden Fleece.'

The king didn't like Greeks. He wasn't happy to see Jason and his men.

'Get out of here!' he shouted. 'Go back to Greece before I cut off your hands and cut out your tongues!'

'Father!' Medea said. 'These men are guests! You must be kind to them.'

King Aeetes was a little sorry. 'You're right, Medea,' he said. But he looked angrily at Jason. He didn't want to give him the Golden Fleece. He decided to give him a test.

'You can have the Golden Fleece, Jason, but you must win it.'

'How?' Jason asked.

'Follow me!' Aeetes said.

The king took him to a field where Jason saw two big bronze bulls. Long flames of fire were coming out of their mouths. When they kicked the ground with their bronze feet, sparks flew up. Nobody could go near them.

'What must I do?' Jason asked.

'Put a harness on the bulls and plough the field,' the king told him.

Then he gave Jason a bag. There were some big teeth in it.

'Plant these dragon's teeth in the ground,' he said. 'They'll grow into warriors. You must fight them and kill them. Then I'll give you the Golden Fleece.'

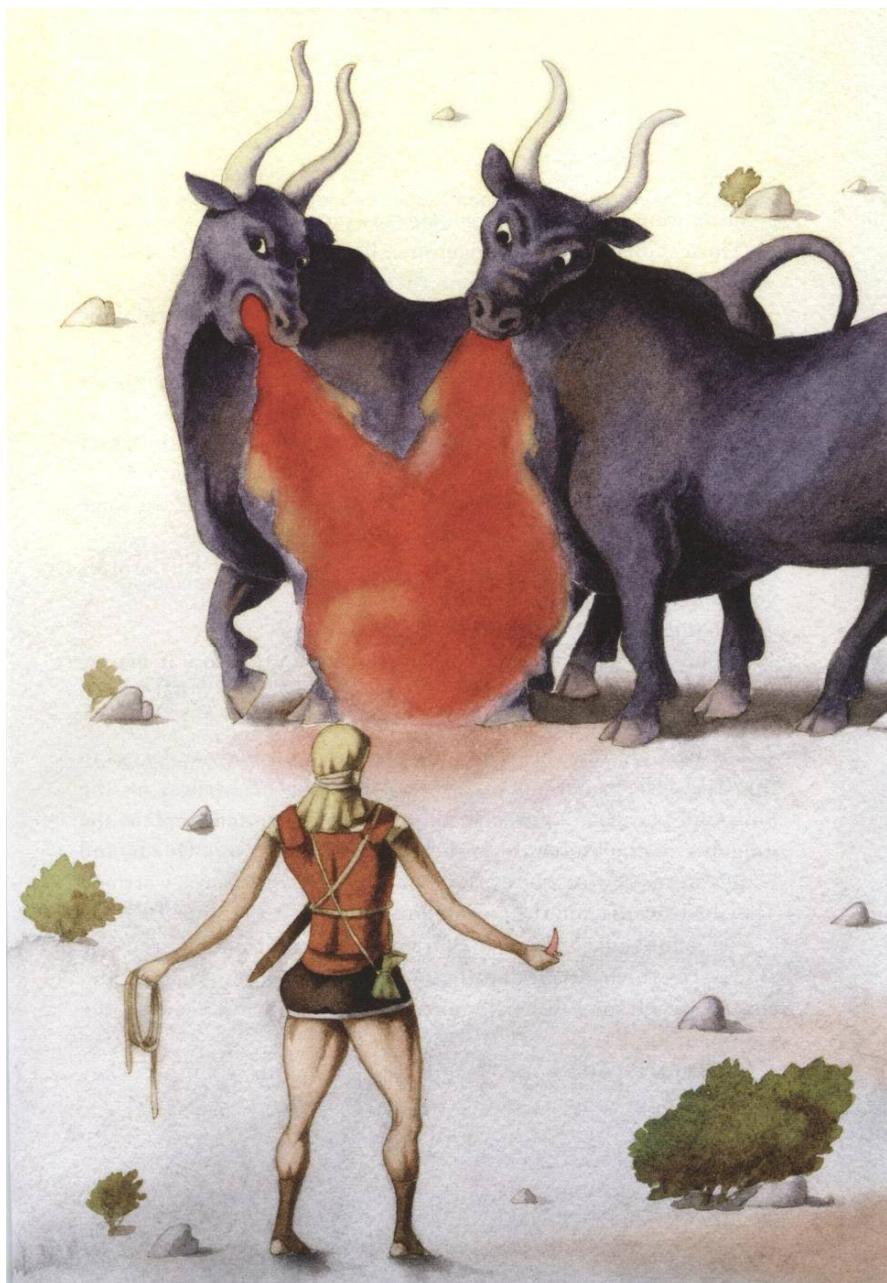
Jason went back to the *Argo*. He was very unhappy.

'Those bulls are very dangerous,' he thought. 'They'll kill me when I try to put the harness on them.'

He was tired but he couldn't sleep. He couldn't stop thinking about the bulls.

Medea loved Jason and she wanted to help him. At midnight she left the palace quietly and went to the *Argo*.

'Jason,' she said. 'I'll help you. But you must promise to marry me and take me back with you to Greece.'



Jason promised. Medea was very beautiful, and he needed some help. Medea gave him a bottle of magic potion and a stone.

'Put this potion on your body in the morning. It will protect you,' she told him.

'What must I do with the stone?' Jason asked.

'When the warriors grow out of the ground, throw it among them. They'll forget you and will start killing each other.' Then she left him and went back to the palace.

The next morning Jason put the potion on his body and went to the field. The magic potion worked! He put the harness on the bulls and ploughed all day. In the evening he started to plant the dragon's teeth. Suddenly he heard a terrible noise. Heads and bodies were growing out of the ground. They were fierce warriors! They had swords and they wanted to fight.

Jason looked at them in horror! Then he remembered the stone. He threw it among them. The warriors forgot him and started to kill each other. Soon they were all lying dead on the ground around him.

'HURRAH! Well done, Jason!' the Argonauts shouted. They picked him up and carried him back to the *Argo*.



## Chapter 7

### Taking the Fleece

King Aeetes was in the palace with Medea. When he heard the news about Jason, he was angry. 'Go and burn the *Argo*!' he told his men. 'Kill all the Argonauts!' Medea was afraid. She ran to Jason and told him about her father's plan. 'We must leave Colchis immediately!' she said. 'What about the Golden Fleece?' Jason asked. 'I can't go home without it.'

'Come with me,' Medea said. 'I'll take you to the Golden Fleece. Orpheus, you must come too.'

Medea took them to a small wood near the city. Jason and Orpheus followed her.

'There's an old oak tree in the middle of this wood,' she said. 'The Golden Fleece is there.'

Doesn't a dragon guard the Fleece night and day?' Jason asked.

'Yes,' Medea said. 'It will kill you if you try to take the Fleece!'

'What can we do?' Orpheus asked.

'You must play some beautiful music, Orpheus, and charm it,' Medea said. 'I'll put this magic potion on the dragon's eyes. When it goes to sleep, you must take the Fleece, Jason.'

They went into the wood. It was very quiet. There was a strange golden light everywhere. It was coming from the oak tree where the Golden Fleece was.

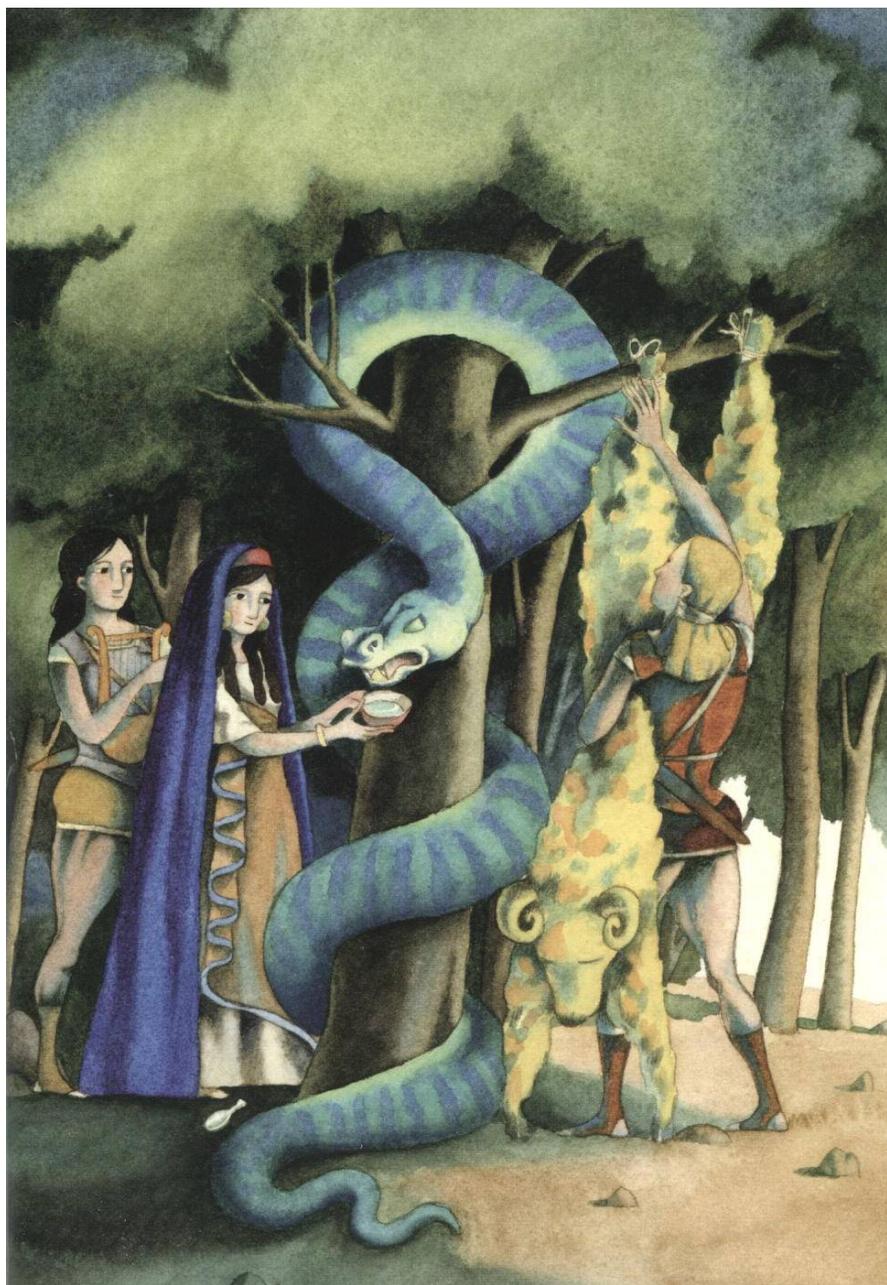
'So, *that's* the Golden Fleece!' Jason said. 'It's beautiful!'

'And *that's* the dragon!' Medea said. 'And it isn't very beautiful!'

Jason looked at the dragon in the tree. Its two small yellow eyes were watching him. Suddenly, it opened its mouth. Flames of fire came out. Jason moved back quickly. He pulled out his sword.

'No, Jason! Put your sword away,' Medea said.

Orpheus started to play and Medea started to sing. The dragon became quiet. It was charmed by the music. Medea took the magic potion out of her pocket and put it on the dragon's eyes. They started to close slowly.



'Quick! Take the Fleece before the dragon wakes up!' she said.

Jason put out his hand and took the Fleece. Medea and Orpheus were already running out of the wood. Jason ran after them. They ran all the way back to the *Argo*.

'I've got the Golden Fleece!' Jason shouted to the Argonauts. 'But King Aeetes is coming to burn the ship and kill us. We must set sail for Greece immediately!'

'What about Medea?' Atalanta asked.

'She's coming with us,' Jason said.

'Jason! Look!' Castor shouted suddenly. A young boy was getting on the ship.

'Medea!' the boy said. 'Take me with you!'

'It's my young brother, Apsyrtus,' Medea said. 'What shall we do?'

Jason didn't have time to give her an answer because, just at that moment, he saw King Aeetes and his men.

'Quick! We must leave!' he said.

'Please, let me stay!' Apsyrtus said to his sister. 'I want to come with you.'

It was too late to send him away.

'Go and sit over there!' she said angrily. 'And be quiet!'

The Argonauts took their oars and started to row hard.

The *Argo* moved quickly away from Colchis. The king and his men followed them in their ships.

They sailed east to the coast of Thrace. King Aetes's ships were very fast. Soon they were in front of the *Argo*. The men from Colchis began to shoot arrows and throw spears at the Argonauts.

'There are too many of them!' Jason said. 'We can't win. We'll all die.'

When she heard this, Medea stood up and went to the prow of the ship.

Apsyrtus!' she shouted. 'Come here!'

The boy went up to her. She turned to Jason and said, 'There's only one way to stop my father.' Then she pulled out a knife and killed her brother.

Everyone watched in horror. She cut his body into pieces and threw them into the sea.

Jason looked at her. He didn't understand her. How could she kill her own brother? It was terrible!

'Let's go,' Medea said. 'They won't follow us now. My father will look for the pieces of my brother's body. Then they'll take them back to Colchis for the funeral.'

Jason took his oar and started to row. The others did the same. Nobody spoke. Medea sat in the prow and sang quietly to herself.

Soon the weather changed. Big black clouds filled the sky and it started to rain. There was a strong wind but the ship didn't move. The Argonauts rowed harder and harder but the *Argo* still didn't move.

'Where's Hera?' Jason asked. 'Why doesn't she help us?'

But Hera was watching them. She spoke to Jason through the piece of oak in the prow of the ship.

'Medea killed her brother Apsyrtus,' Hera said. 'And Zeus is angry. You can't go back to Iolkos. First you must go to the island of Aeaea, where Medea's aunt, the sorceress Circe, lives. She'll purify you with her magic. Then you can go back home.'

The journey to Circe's island was long and difficult. The weather was bad and the men were tired. Jason and Medea became sadder and sadder. They didn't talk about Apsyrtus. Then one day the rain stopped and the sun came out. The sky changed from grey to blue. It became warmer.

'We are very near Aeaea now,' Medea said.

Later that day, they saw the small green island in the distance.

The helmsman took the *Argo* to the beach, where Circe was waiting for them.

The sorceress was happy to see her niece.

'Welcome, Medea!' she said. 'Have you got any news from your father? Come! Let's go to my garden. We can talk there.' Jason and Medea followed her. Circe had a beautiful big garden. It was full of green plants and flowers of every colour. They sat down under a big tree and Medea told her their story.

'You did a bad thing, Medea,' Circe said. 'A terrible thing. And Jason, you did a bad thing, too. You stole the Golden Fleece from Aetes.'

'We are very sorry,' Medea said. 'Can you purify us, Aunt Circe?'

'Come with me!' Circe said. She took them through the garden to a pool of clear water.

'The water in the pool is very special,' she said. 'It will purify you.'

Jason and Medea walked into the pool and poured the water over their bodies. Soon they felt happier.

'Now we can go back to the house and I'll prepare some food for you,' Circe said. She put a lot of plates of delicious food on the table: meat and vegetables, sweet cakes, yoghurt and honey. Jason and Medea were very hungry. Soon all the plates on the table were empty. Then Circe said, 'Now you must leave. I can't do any more for you.'





## **Chapter 8**

### **The Journey Home**

The Argonauts left Circe's island and sailed south. Soon they saw the three rocks where the singing Sirens lived. These terrible creatures had the bodies of birds and the heads of women. When men heard their beautiful voices, they took their ships nearer to listen. But the sharp rocks broke the ships and the men drowned in the water. Orpheus heard the Sirens first. He knew that the Argonauts were in danger, so he took out his lyre and started to sing to them. He sang songs about the adventures of Achilles and Hercules. His voice was sweet and his music was beautiful. The Argonauts listened to him. They couldn't hear the voices of the Sirens. Only Butes, the youngest Argonaut, heard them. He jumped into the water and swam to the rocks where the creatures were. When he was almost there, they

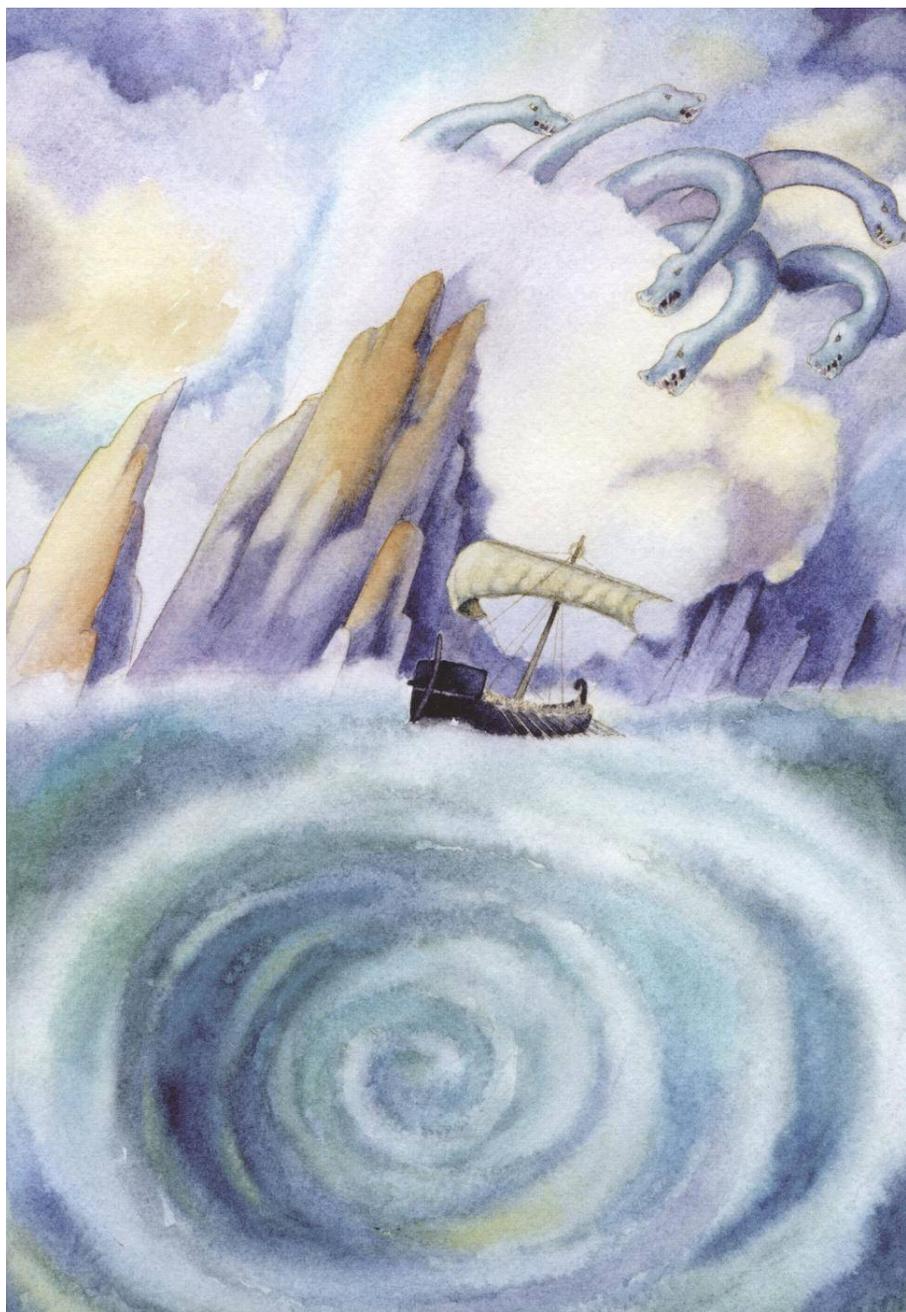
put out their arms and tried to push his head under the water. Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, saw Butes and immediately fell in love with him. She lifted him out of the water and took him to her temple on Mount Eryx in Italy.

The next danger wasn't far away. The ship had to pass between two sea monsters called Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla had six heads, and each of her six mouths was full of sharp teeth. If ships passed too near the rock where she lived, she ate the men in them. Charybdis lived opposite Scylla, but under the water. If ships went too near to her, she pulled them down and the men drowned. Hera asked the sea nymph Thetis to protect the *Argo* while it sailed between the monsters, and so, with her help, the *Argo* arrived safely in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Argonauts weren't far from home now, but a strong wind took the ship south, to the coast of Libya. There, an enormous wave carried the *Argo* to the middle of a desert. Jason and his men had to carry it back to the coast.

From Libya, they sailed to the island of Crete.

'We'll stop here and look for some fresh water,' Jason said. Suddenly, SPLASH! A large rock crashed into the sea and filled the ship with water. SPLASH! Another rock crashed into the sea. The men were afraid.



'What's happening?' they asked.

'Look!' Medea said, and she pointed to a giant bronze man on a mountain on the island. 'It's Talos,' she said. 'The god Hephaestus made him. He guards the island. When ships try to stop here, he throws rocks at them.'

'What can we do?' Jason asked. 'We need water.'

'I've got an idea,' Medea said. She got off the ship and went up to Talos. She smiled at him and took a small bottle of magic potion out of her pocket.

'Talos,' she said in a sweet voice. 'The potion in this bottle is magic. Drink it and you will never die.'

She gave him the bottle and Talos drank the potion. The next moment, he was lying on the ground.

'Is he dead or asleep?' Jason asked.

'Asleep,' Medea said. 'Now, watch!'

She found a large nail in the heel of his foot. She pulled it out. A liquid started to come out of his bronze body.

'Now he can't hurt us,' she said. 'We're safe. He's dead.'

The Argonauts stayed on Crete and rested for a few days. Then they set sail for Pagasae. It wasn't far. When Jason saw Mount Pelion in the distance, he knew that he was home. He remembered



Chiron's last words to him, 'One day you'll be a hero.' He took the Golden Fleece in his hands and stood in the prow of the *Argo*. He could see the city of Iolkos and Pelias's palace. He thought, 'I was young when I arrived at the palace. I didn't know much about the world. My uncle Pelias didn't want to give me the kingdom so he sent me to Colchis. The journey was full of dangers. A lot of my men died, but I came back with the Golden Fleece. Now I'm a hero. Chiron was right.'

