

THE FALL OF ICARUS

Just spread your wings and fly.
If only it were that easy.

Adapted from the Greek myth by Bryon Cahill
Illustration by Allen Douglas

On the island of Crete in ancient Greece, there lived an architect named Daedalus. When Crete's King Minos discovered that Daedalus had built a secret hiding place for the queen, Daedalus was imprisoned in a tower with his teenage son, Icarus.

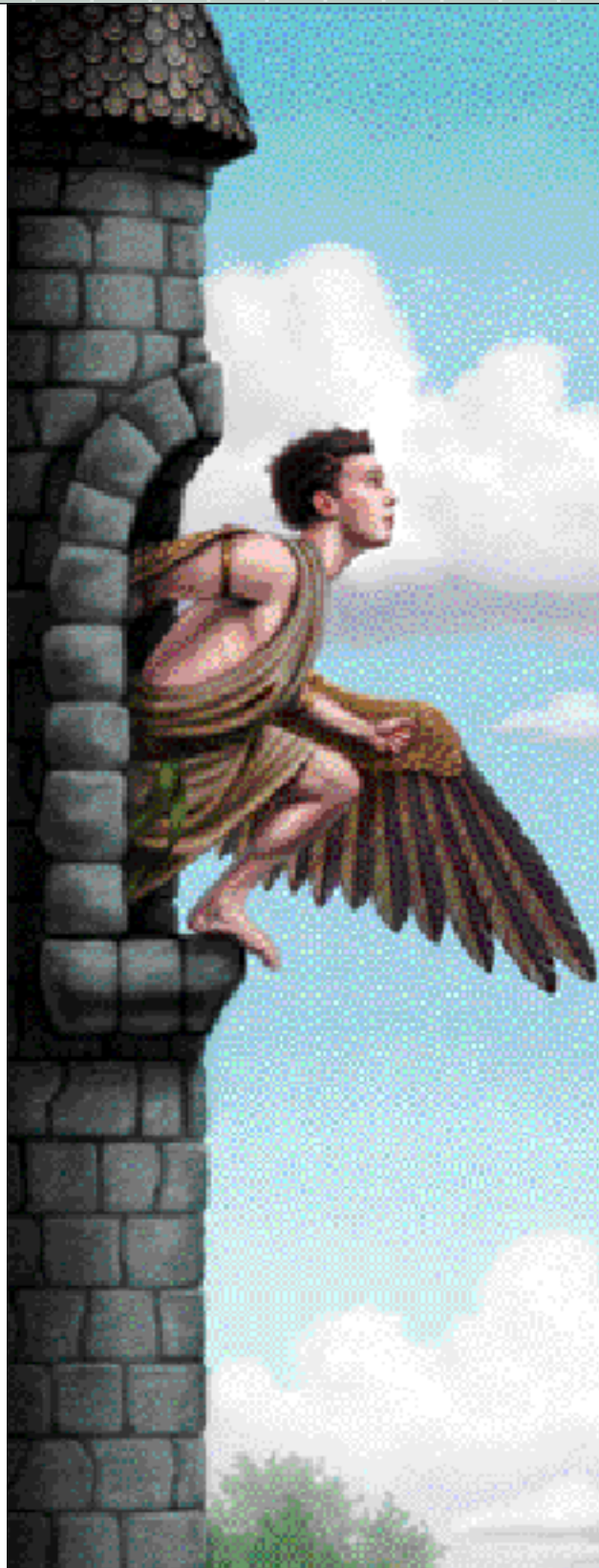
Despite that unfortunate turn of events, Daedalus was not one to lie down and take any injustice. As he was pondering the state of his captivity one day, he came upon an idea: *King Minos may rule the land and the sea ... but he does not rule the skies!* He rushed to find his son and tell him his idea.

"Father! Slow down!" Icarus said. "Breathe ... what are you trying to say to me?" Daedalus had found his boy on the opposite side of the tower. They were not confined to cells, exactly, but their floor was kept locked and guarded. They had the rude benefit of being teased daily by the vast skies and the 100-mile views from every window.

"We will fly!" Daedalus finally managed. "We will fly to freedom, Icarus!"

"What are you talking about?" Icarus was concerned. He hoped his father was not coming down with a bout of lunacy.

"Just look at all these feathers **strewn** about the tower's floor! Birds come and go as they please, and



no one ever sweeps up their discarded flappings!" Icarus looked about the ground and saw that his father was right.

"We will collect them at night," Daedalus said. "When the guards are asleep, I will make us both the most magnificent wings any human has ever seen!"

Icarus had his doubts. But considering that he had little to cheer about these days, he applauded the idea. "I am with you, Father. Let's fly."

That night, after the guards had gone to sleep, Daedalus and Icarus got to gathering all the birds' loose feathers on the prison floor. As Daedalus began molding the wings with candle wax, one lone owl sat in a window shaking its head.

"When this night is over, my skeptical friend," Daedalus addressed the owl, "we will soar with your **kin** in the clouds." The night bird gave a hoot and flew away in disgust.

The night slowly turned to morning. As the first rays of light began to creep up in the distance, Icarus got his first glimpse at his father's creation. "Father! You have made wings!" As skilled a craftsman as Daedalus was, his son never fully expected him to finish the task in one evening. But he had. Two sets of large, brown, flappable arm extensions lay at their feet. His father had even managed to wash all the grime from the feathers so they shimmered like angel hair in the morning light. The gods were smiling on Icarus and his father. The possibility of escape was real!

The sun was coming on stronger now, and light was flooding into the tower. The guards at the door were beginning to stir from their slumber as Daedalus was hurriedly completing the final touches. "Come here, my son. Your wings are ready."

Icarus approached his father and took hold of his majestic future. "Take these and fly out the window, away from this prison and to your freedom," Daedalus said as Icarus caressed his new possession. "But heed my warning, son: Do not fly too

high, for the sun will melt your wings. And do not fly too low, for your wings will be drenched by the sea."

Icarus was amazed by the wings and heard little of what his father said. He took hold of them and spread them out lengthwise down his arms. He gave them a test flap and exclaimed, "By the gods!"

Suddenly, a guard awoke and realized an escape was in progress. He rose to his feet and fumbled with his keys at the lock.

"Go my son! Fly! Fly now!" Daedalus shouted as his son jumped up onto the windowsill, took a great breath, and leapt.

'GO MY SON! FLY! FLY NOW!'

As he fell, Icarus began flapping his arms, flapping his wings. He flapped and he flapped and finally ... he rose.

Daedalus shouted with joy from his prison tower as the guards entered and tackled him. From the ground, he could see Icarus flying higher and higher and higher. "No, son! Not so high!"

But Icarus was far away now and was aware of nothing but the **serenity** that surrounded him. He was free. And he was flying. Nothing else in the world could be as great as this!

He flew and he flew. Icarus burst through the clouds and left Earth's atmosphere behind. He sped on the wings of youth that were forged by his father's hands to greet the sublime new day. He raced toward the brilliance of the sun, which was now completely over the horizon.

Just when he thought his happiness could not be any greater, he looked upon the sun as if it were the only thing in the entire universe. The strength and beauty of all existence were his and his alone in this one, perfect moment. It was everything. It was everlasting life. Icarus smiled and was warmed. His heart was full. And then ...

And then ...

And then ...



* vocab

STREWN: scattered

KIN: relatives

SERENITY: a state of being calm or peaceful; tranquil