

Wings to the Sun

by Richard Scrimger
Illustrated by Josée Masse



Daedalus and Icarus

Long ago in ancient Greece, there lived a great inventor named Daedalus. Because of his fame, King Minos of Crete ordered Daedalus to build a mighty maze for him, called the Labyrinth. It was so intricate, so full of twists and dead ends and unexpected turnings, that no one who ventured in could get out. Minos used the Labyrinth as a kind of jail for the Minotaur, a beast who was terrorizing the countryside.

King Minos was so pleased with the Labyrinth that he decided to keep Daedalus in Crete forever, to create more wonderful inventions for him. So Daedalus and his young son, Icarus, were imprisoned in a high tower.

At once, wily Daedalus set to work to discover a way to escape. As he paced back and forth, he watched great cranes and eagles circling high above the tower. If only he and his son could fly, how easy it would be to escape from Minos! As his father watched the circling birds, Icarus collected the feathers that sometimes floated down.

Daedalus thought long and deeply about how birds flew, making notes on wax tablets with a stylus. Meanwhile, Icarus collected more and more feathers. Soon, the master inventor was ready. He used melted wax from the tablets to fasten feathers to strips of cloth which he tied to their arms and bodies. Then he and Icarus stood on top of the tower with their arms spread, the wind rippling their new wings. "Remember," Daedalus warned his son, "don't try to fly too high, or the heat from the sun will melt the wax from your wings!" Icarus nodded, and the two of them leapt into space.

It was a wonderful flight. They soared and glided and swooped away from Crete. Below lay the blue, blue sea, and the sky was all around them. Daedalus flew steadily toward the mainland, but Icarus, full of the wild joy of his flight, circled higher and higher. The higher he flew, the hotter the sun shone on him, and the softer grew the wax of his wings. Suddenly, the wax burst into flame, the feathers fell away, and Icarus was no longer flying, but falling. Daedalus cried out in horror as his son hurtled past him and crashed into the waves.

Heartbroken, Daedalus landed on the nearest island, ripped off his own wings and vowed never to fly again. In honor of his son, he called the place he landed Icaria.

Icarus Sunset



Wheeling across the sky at dusk, wings outspread
Long-feathered fingers cherishing the wind,
The eagle came to them.
They watched her, high on the tower, a man and a boy
Watched the soaring minister of the air.
See, said the man, See, Icarus, how
She turns into the wind to rise,
Away to fall
Mark how she steers herself.
And the man thought, It is freedom, escape from prison
And the boy thought, It is power.
Remember, Icarus, with the wings on your back, to
Follow me, do as I do.
Yes, father.
But the boy was watching the eagle still
As she flew into the heart of the setting sun
And vanished into gold.

Long labored Daedalus, making his freedom
Carefully choosing the feathers, cunningly
Shaping the wax,
And each day the boy and he waited for the eagle
As the dusk gathered round them
And the sun fell into darkness.





Now, father? said the boy, poised on
The parapet, feathered arms wide, facing the morning.
Now, said the maker, leaping.

The wind bore them gently away,
On its back they rode as birds do
As eagles, as gods.
Follow, Icarus, cried his father
Remember, follow me.
But the boy, deaf with power, heard only
The Sun's voice, coaxing him higher.
Rise with me, Icarus, whispered the god,
I will welcome you.

Far below, Daedalus, fearful with knowledge
Strained his eyes upward, waiting for the
Hurling blackened body that
Passed without speaking and vanished
Into the sea.