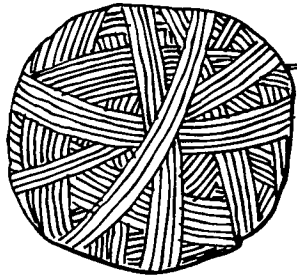# Theseus and the Minotaur
&
Daedalus and Icarus

King Minos of Crete called for his royal architect and inventor, Daedalus. He knew that Daedalus was the only person clever enough to build a prison that could hold the dreaded Minotaur, a monster with a human body and the head of a bull. The Minotaur roamed about the kingdom killing and eating the people of Crete. No one, not even the king, was safe.

Daedalus built a labyrinth that surrounded the Minotaur. The passageways were designed with twists and turns that seemed to have no end. Once inside the labyrinth, the Minotaur couldn't find the way out. Only Daedalus knew how to escape.

After the Minotaur was imprisoned, its hungry roars kept people awake at night. King Minos had to find a way to quiet the Minotaur so people could live in peace. He sent a message to King Aegeus of Athens. He demanded hostages from Athens to feed the Minotaur. Aegeus knew that he had no choice. King Minos's army was much stronger than his. He was forced to send fourteen youths and maidens to feed this monster.

Theseus, an Athenian hero and the son of King Aegeus, volunteered to go with the hostages. If he could kill the Minotaur, no more Athenians would have to be sent to Crete.

When Ariadne, King Minos's daughter, saw the handsome prisoner, Theseus, she fell in love with him. She asked Daedalus to help Theseus slay the Minotaur and then help him escape from the labyrinth. Daedalus gave Ariadne a magic ball of string.

Ariadne told Theseus she would help him if he would take her back to Athens and marry her. Theseus, in love with the beautiful princess, agreed.

Theseus entered the labyrinth when the Minotaur was sleeping. He set the magic string Adriadne had given him on the ground. It rolled in front of him, leading him to the snoring monster. Theseus surprised the Minotaur and killed it. After his victory, Theseus followed the string to the entrance of the labyrinth.

Ariadne and Theseus freed the other prisoners and set sail for Athens.

On the way, the god Dionysus came to Theseus. The god wished to marry Ariadne, and told Theseus to leave her on the island of Naxos.

Although Theseus loved Ariadne, he had to obey the god's command. When Ariadne fell asleep, the broken-hearted Theseus left her on the island and then sailed on to Athens.

King Minos knew that Daedalus was the only one clever enough to help Theseus escape the labyrinth. He blamed Daedalus for the loss of his daughter, and locked him and his son Icarus in a high tower.
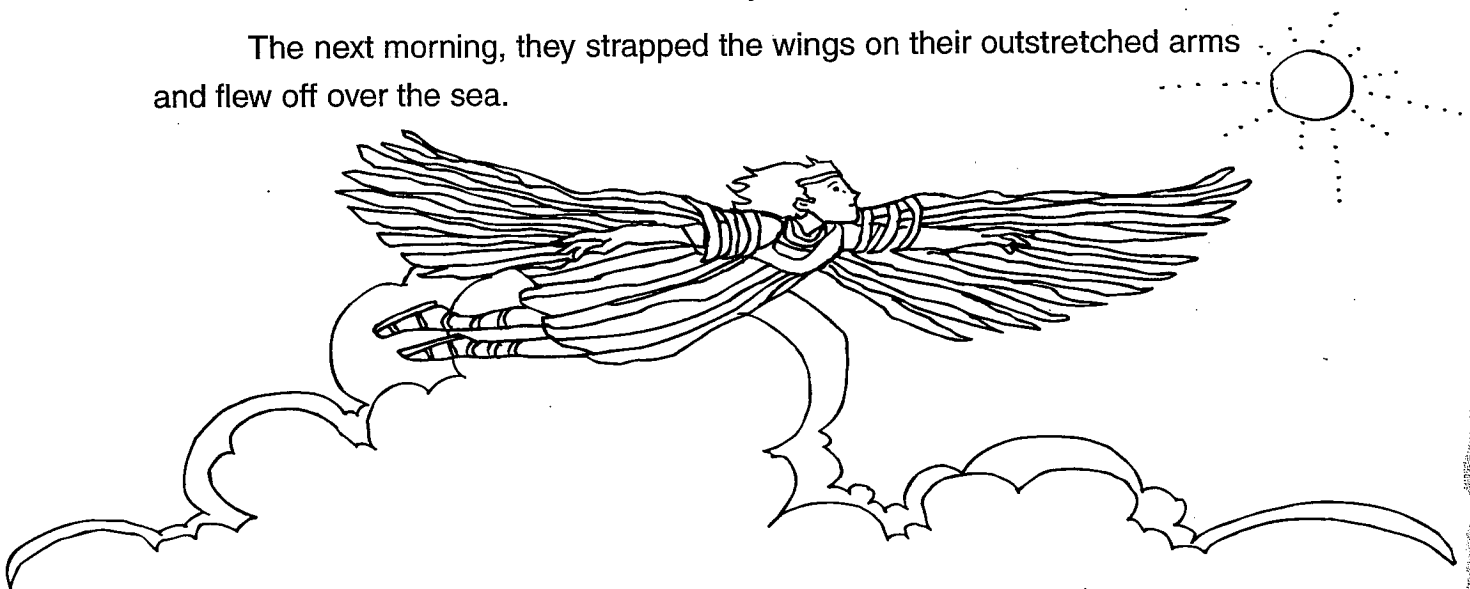
"King Minos controls the land and the sea," Daedalus said to his son, "so we must leave by air."

Daedalus made a giant set of bird's wings from feathers set in wax. He strapped them to his arms and soared through the air. Next he set about making wings for his son. The boy gathered feathers and helped his father fasten the feathers to the wax.

Daedalus, like a mother bird teaching her young, taught Icarus to fly. After a few days of practice, the boy could soar across the sky.

"We will set out when the sun rises," said Daedalus. "Heed my warning, Icarus. Follow close behind me. Whatever you do, don't sail too close to the sun."

The next morning, they strapped the wings on their outstretched arms and flew off over the sea.

Late in the afternoon, Icarus felt chilled by the sea breezes. He flew a little closer to the sun. The warmth made him feel much better. Forgetting his father's warning, he soared higher. When he was close to the sun, the wax holding the feathers in place melted. The feathers drifted down to the sea. Icarus, moving his arms back and forth, struggled. He called out to his father, but the wind swallowed his words. Icarus fell into the sea and, being mortal, drowned.

Daedalus, tired from the long flight, decided it was time to find a landing place and rest for the night. He looked behind him. Icarus was gone! Below him, he saw the feathers from Icarus's wings floating on the water. His son had fallen into the sea.

Daedalus landed on a nearby island. Grieving, he named the great sea the Icarian Sea, in memory of his son.