“Daedalus and Icarus”

adapted from *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* by Edith Hamilton & *Bulfinch’s Mythology* abridged by Edmund Fuller

Daedalus was the architect who built the Labyrinth for King Minos’ monster, the Minotaur in Crete. He then showed Theseus, a prisoner and enemy to the King how to escape from it. When King Minos learned of Daedalus’ treachery, he imprisoned the inventor and his son Icarus in a tower on the island of Crete. But Daedalus told his son, “Escape may be checked by water and land, but the air and the sky are free.” So he set to work to fabricate wings for himself and his young son, Icarus. He worked feathers together, beginning with the smallest and adding larger, so as to form an increasing surface. The larger ones he secured with thread and the smaller with wax, and gave the whole a gentle curvature like the wings of a bird. He then practiced and taught his son how to fly. When all was prepared for the final escape, Daedalus warned his son, “I charge you to keep at a moderate height, for if you fly too low the damp will clog your wings, and if too high the heat will melt them. Keep near me and you will be safe.” As the two flew lightly and without effort away from Crete, the ploughman stopped his work to gaze, and the shepherd leaned on his staff and watched them, astonished at the sight, and thinking they were gods who could thus fly. The delight of this new and wonderful power of flight went to the boy’s head. He soared exultingly up and up, paying no heed to his father’s anguished cries. The boy soared upward as if to reach heaven. The nearness of the blazing sun softened the wax that held the feathers together, and they came off. He fluttered with his arms, but no feathers remained to hold the air. Then he fell, dropping into the sea and the waters closed over him. His father saw the feathers floating on the water and cried out in pain. The afflicted Daedalus finally arrived safely in Sicily, where he built a temple to Apollo, and offered his wings up as an offering to the god.

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