

Story of Atalanta

Calydon was a citystate in Aetolia ruled by King Oeneus. Oeneus had been blessed by the god Dionysus with bountiful vines, and so every year the first harvest was sacrificed to all of the gods. One year the sacrifice went awry, and Oeneus forgot to offer tribute to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, who was greatly offended by the missed sacrifice. To vent her rage, Artemis sent forth a gigantic boar into the Calydon countryside. Crops were destroyed, and people were killed.

King Oeneus dispatched heralds across the ancient world and promised the skin and tusks of the monstrous boar to the hunter who managed to kill it. One of the Argonauts, Meleager, had to first convince the other gathered hunters that it was appropriate for Atalanta to be part of the hunt. Meleager himself had fallen in love with the beautiful huntress. Prothous and Cometes, uncles to Meleager, vehemently opposed. Meleager eventually led out the band of hunters into the Calydon countryside. With the skills and prestige of the heroes assembled, the Calydonian boar was soon cornered.

It was Atalanta who had inflicted the first wound on the Calydonian Boar, and Meleager struck the killing blow. Meleager decided the prize should go to Atalanta instead. But in the eyes of Meleager's uncles, if Meleager did not wish to claim the prize, then they were the next in line to receive it. The lack of respect shown by his uncles angered Meleager, he killed both Prothous and Cometes where they stood.

Prothous and Cometes were brothers to Meleager's mother, and her love for her brothers was apparently stronger than her love for her sons. When she learned of their deaths, she burnt a magical piece of wood. Meleager had been protected from harm as long as that piece of wood was whole, but upon its destruction Meleager himself died. Atalanta took the prize and offered it to Artemis.