

MORTAL DESCENDANTS OF ZEUS

EUROPA AND CADMUS

JOYOUSLY the Muses sang about lovely Europa, chosen by Zeus to be the first Queen of Crete. Her father, King Agenor of Tyre, was a descendant of Io, the girl who had fled to Egypt in the shape of a white cow.

Zeus had been looking far and wide for a maiden worthy of being Queen of Crete, the island where he had been raised. One day his eyes fell on Europa, and her beauty quite captured his heart.

Changing himself into a snow-white bull, he trotted about in the meadow by the sea where Europa was playing with her maidens. At first she was afraid of the strange bull who suddenly stood beside her, but as he looked at her with big, soft eyes, she lost her fear. She tied a wreath of flowers around his broad neck and gently patted his glistening sides. The bull knelt down at her feet, and trustingly she climbed up on his back and asked him to take her for a ride. He walked up and down the beach with her, and Europa laughed and clapped her hands and called to her maidens to come and see the marvelous bull she had found. But suddenly the bull turned and rushed away over the sea with her. Her maidens cried out in terror and the king came running out of his palace, just in time to see the bull and his daughter disappear beyond the horizon.

Trembling, Europa clung to the horns of the bull. But to her surprise, not a drop of water touched her toes, for Nereids swimming all about smoothed the waves with their hands and made the sea a polished road for the bull to run on. Then the bull turned his head and spoke. He was not a bull, he said, but Zeus himself, and he had come to earth to make her his bride and the Queen of Crete.

When Zeus arrived in Crete with Europa, he put a royal crown of jewels on her head as a token of his love, and she lived in Crete in glory and delight to the end of her days. She had three sons: Minos and Sarpedon, who became great kings, and Radamanthus who was so wise that after his death he was made a judge in the underworld.

When Zeus returned to Olympus, he ordered his son Hephaestus, the smith, to make a bronze robot that would watch over Crete and Europa. Three times a day, Talos, the robot, walked with clanking steps



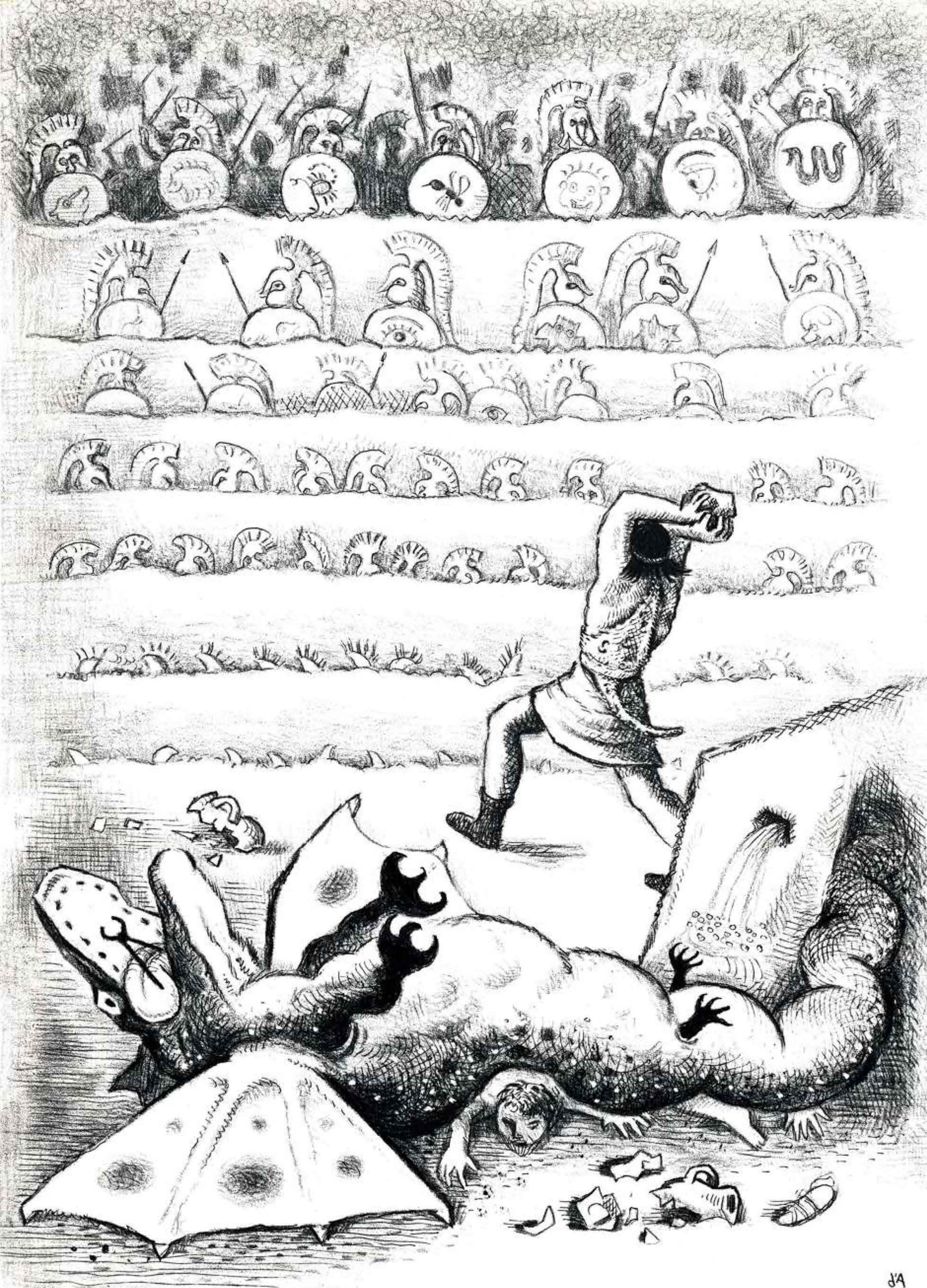
around the shores of the island, and whenever an enemy ship approached, he hurled rocks at it and sank it.

The king of Tyre had sent his three sons to search for their kidnaped sister. Two of the brothers soon gave up, but Cadmus, the third brother, sailed on to Greece with his men. There he went to the oracle at Delphi and asked where Europa could be found. His sister was well and happy, he was told, and he must give up the search for her. Instead, he should stay in Greece and found a new kingdom; a snow-white cow would lead him to a good site for a walled city.

Cadmus left Delphi, and indeed, before long, he met a white cow. He followed her uphill and downhill, over mountains and through valleys, and at last the cow lay down on top of a knoll in the middle of a wide plain. Cadmus saw with pleasure that it was a perfect site for a walled city. He sent one of his men for water from a nearby bubbling spring. The man did not return. Cadmus sent another man to look for him. He did not return either, and, one after another, Cadmus sent off all his men, but not one of them came back. At last, he went himself to see what had happened and found a dragon guarding the spring. The monster had devoured all his men, and now it was so sluggish and sleepy that Cadmus easily slayed it. But that did not bring his men back to life and Cadmus could not build a walled city all alone. He sacrificed the white cow to the gods and begged them for help. Athena answered his plea. "Plow a field," she told him. "Pull out the dragon's teeth and sow them in the furrows."

This advice sounded strange, but Cadmus did as he was told. As soon as the dragon's teeth were sown, up shot a host of fierce warriors. They rushed at Cadmus, waving their swords and the terror-struck hero gave himself up for lost. Again, Athena called to him: "Throw a rock among them!" He did, and at once the warriors flew at one another, each accusing his neighbor of having thrown the rock. They fought furiously till only five were left, and they were badly wounded. Cadmus nursed them back to health and they became his faithful men and helped him to build Thebes, the great walled city with seven gates.

Cadmus became a great king and the gods favored him. Zeus gave him Harmonia, a daughter of Aphrodite, for his queen. The gods gave the bride a magic necklace to keep her beautiful and young and Thebes, ruled by Cadmus and his descendants, became one of the greatest Greek cities.



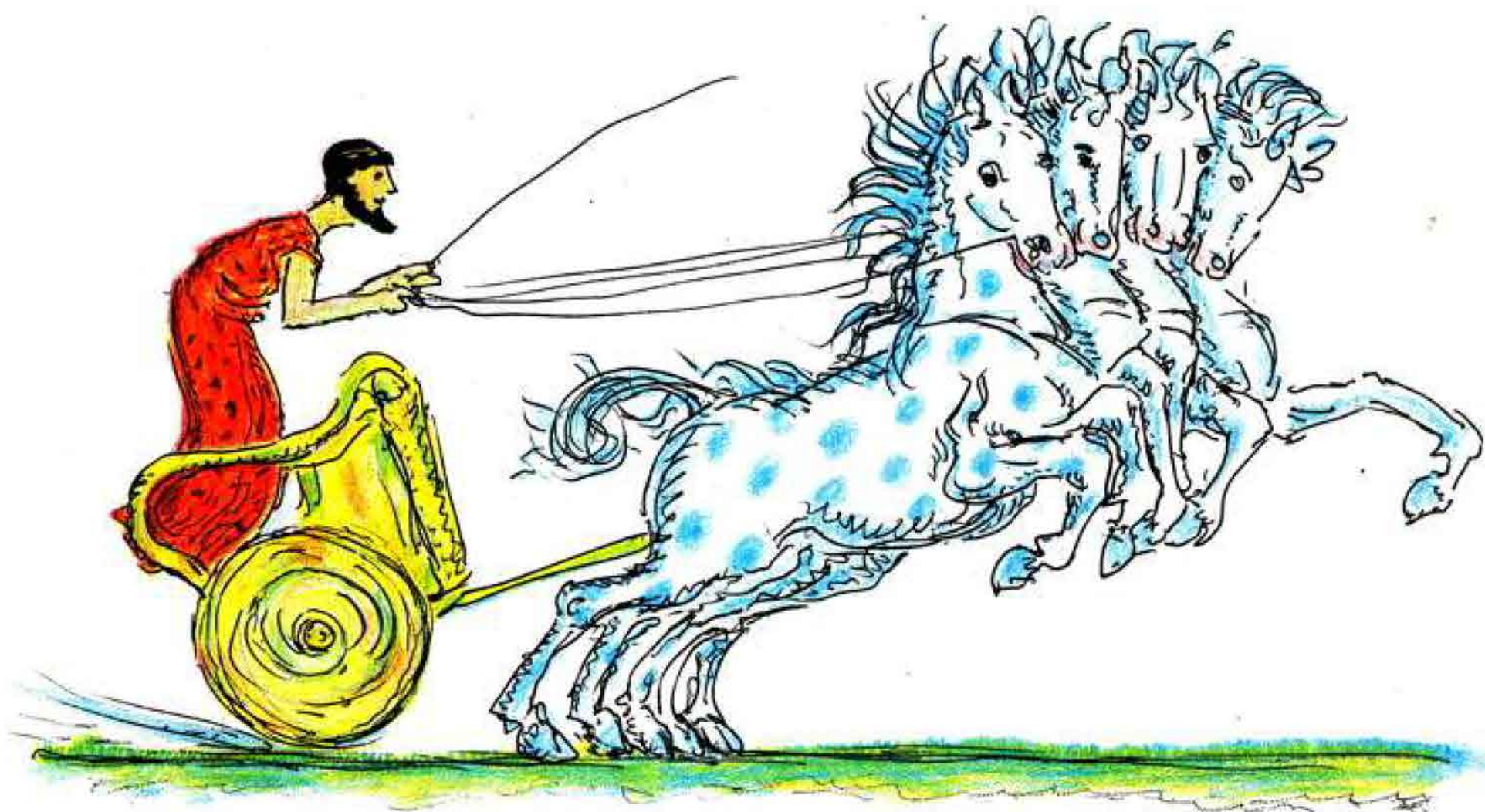


TANTALUS AND PELOPS

THE MUSES sang about Tantalus, condemned to suffer forever in the underworld. He stood in water up to his neck, but could never quench his thirst, for whenever he bent to drink, the water receded. Above his head hung branches loaded with fruits, but whenever he tried to pick one, the branch bent out of his reach.

Tantalus was a son of Zeus, and he had been so favored by the gods that he had been invited to feast with them on high Olympus. In return, he had asked the gods to come to dine in his palace in Asia Minor. He was a king of vast riches, but nothing he owned seemed good enough to set before his exalted guests. His son, Pelops, was his greatest treasure, and, wanting to give the gods his best, Tantalus decided to sacrifice him. He made a stew of him and set the dish before the gods. But the Olympian gods detested human sacrifice. Outraged, they threw Tantalus to the punishing grounds in the underworld and brought Pelops back to life. But one of his shoulder bones was missing, and the gods replaced it with a piece of ivory. They all gave him rich gifts. Poseidon gave him a team of fast horses and told him to set off and win himself a new kingdom.

In Greece there was a beautiful princess whose name was Hippodamia. She was the daughter of Oenomaüs, the King of Elis, and whoever married her would inherit his kingdom, but her father loved her so dearly that he could not bear to part with her. He had a team of horses given to him by Ares, the god of war, whose son he was, and whenever a



suitor came to ask for his daughter's hand, Oenomaüs challenged him to a chariot race. If the suitor won, he would win the princess; if he lost, he would lose his head. No horses on earth could outrun the horses of Ares, and the heads of twelve suitors already hung at the gates of the palace. When Pelops arrived in Elis to woo the princess, Oenomaüs did not know that Pelops also had a team of magic horses, and the King looked forward to nailing the thirteenth head on the gates! But Hippodamia fell in love with the young prince and wanted to save his life. She asked her father's stable boy to fix the king's chariot so that Pelops would win. The stable boy, eager to please her, did more than he was asked to do. He took out the wooden pins that held the wheels to the axle, and replaced them with pins of wax.

Never had there been such a race! The fiery horses ran neck to neck, and the king, to his surprise, could not pull ahead, no matter how hard he swung the whip. Then suddenly the wax pins gave way. The wheels of the chariot flew off and the king was thrown to his death.

Pelops married Hippodamia and became the King of Elis. He flung the faithless stable boy into the sea, and gave the old king a magnificent funeral feast inviting heroes from all over Greece to take part in athletic games in his honor and offered fabulous prizes to the winners, for Pelops had brought with him the great riches of his father, Tantalus. The games were held on the plain of Olympia, in Elis, and were to be repeated every four years. They were called the Olympic games.