



APOLLO grew rapidly, as all gods did, and when he was full grown, Zeus sent him off in a chariot drawn by white swans to win for himself the oracle of Delphi.

No place in Greece was as sacred as Delphi, on the steep slopes of Mount Parnassus. Sulphurous fumes rose from a deep cleft in the mountainside. A sibyl, the priestess of Delphi, sat on a tripod over the cleft and the vapors put her into a magic sleep. In her dreams the sibyl heard the voice of Mother Earth coming up from the depths, and repeated the mystic words she heard. Priests stood around the sibyl and explained the meanings of her muttered prophecies to the pilgrims who had come to the oracle of Delphi to learn about their future.

The oracle was guarded by the darksome dragon Python, who lay coiled around the sacred place. Old age had made him mean and so ill-tempered that the nymphs fled from the sacred spring nearby and the birds no longer dared to sing in the trees.

The oracle had warned Python that Leto's son would one day destroy him. He had tried to devour Leto when she wandered about looking for a place to give birth to her children, but she had escaped. When the old black dragon saw radiant Apollo flying toward him in his golden chariot, he knew that his last hour had come. But he sold his life dearly. He unleashed his fury, spitting fire and venom, and his black scaly body did not stop its writhing and coiling until Apollo had shot him with a thousand of his silver shafts. In torrents did the dragon's venom flow down the mountainside, and the oracle of Delphi was Apollo's.

Now there was light and joy on the once-somber slopes of Mount Parnassus. The air was filled with sweet tunes as the birds in the sky and the nymphs of the sacred spring returned to sing Apollo's praise. The voice of the young god rose above all the others, for he was also the god of music.





ARTEMIS, as a newborn goddess, went to her father, Zeus, and asked him to grant her a wish. She wanted to remain forever a wild young maiden hunting through the woods, and she asked him to promise never to make her marry. Zeus consented, and then she asked him for fifty fleet nymphs as companions and a pack of lop-eared hounds to hunt with. Her father gave her all she asked, and she herself caught four hinds with golden antlers and harnessed them to her silver chariot.

When the moon's magic light shone over echoing hills and wooded valleys, Artemis hunted with the nymphs and her hounds. After a wild hunt, the goddess loved to bathe in a quiet pool. Woe to the mortal who happened to see her then!

One night, quite by chance, a young hunter whose name was Actaeon came upon the pool in the woods where Artemis and her nymphs were bathing. He should have taken to his heels and run for his life, but instead, he stood spellbound by the sight of the goddess. Artemis was furious! While the nymphs flung a tunic over her shoulders, the goddess dipped her hand into the pool and threw a handful of water at Actaeon. The moment the silvery drops touched his forehead, antlers sprouted, and rapidly all of Actaeon changed into a stag. His own hounds leaped at him, and, to his horror, he could not utter a human sound to call them off. They brought him down, never knowing that the deer was their own master.

"No mortal shall live to boast that he has seen Artemis bathing," said the goddess, and she picked up her bow and arrows and went on hunting with her nymphs. Artemis was a cold and pitiless goddess.



Apollo and Artemis, though different as day and night, were very fond of each other and they both adored their mother. No one could say a belittling word about gentle Leto without arousing the wrath of her twins.

There was a queen of Thebes whose name was Niobe. She was beautiful and she was rich and she was blessed with fourteen children. Zeus himself was her grandfather, and she was very proud.

"Why worship Leto?" she said to her people. "Build me a temple and worship me in her stead. I have seven sons and seven daughters, while she has only one of each."

When Apollo and Artemis heard this, they grew very angry. Niobe's disrespect could not go unpunished.

Apollo shot his hard arrows at Niobe's seven sons. By no fault of their own, they were torn from life in the prime of their youth. Then Artemis let fly her painless shafts at the seven daughters. Quietly, they lay down on their beds and died.

Niobe's proud heart was broken. She wept for so long that the gods at last took pity on her and changed her into an unfeeling rock. Still, inside the rock, a spring welled up and water like tears trickled down the face of the hard stone.

Apollo had many wives, but Zeus kept his promise to Artemis and never made her marry. Only once she promised her hand to a suitor, but that was a promise she had no intention of keeping. The suitor was Otus, a gigantic son of Poseidon.

Otus and his brother, Ephialtes, were almost sixty feet tall when they reached manhood, and still they went on growing. The gods watched them with concern, for an oracle had predicted that neither gods nor mortals could kill the giant brothers. Mother Earth, however, watched them with pleasure. She was still angry with Zeus for keeping her sons, the Titans, in Tartarus, and she hoped that Otus and Ephialtes would grow big enough to overthrow him.

One night as the brothers slept with their ears to the ground, they heard Mother Earth whisper that such tall and handsome youths should not let themselves be ruled by Zeus. That was just what they had been thinking themselves, for they were vain, as many strong people are. They pulled up mountains, piled them on top of each other, and built a vast new mountain as high as Olympus. From the top they called to Zeus to

surrender his powers to them and move out of his palace with the other Olympians. Artemis could stay and become his bride, shouted Otus, and Ephialtes would take Hera.

The two goddesses tossed their heads with scorn, and Zeus in a fury hurled thunderbolts at the ruffians. Zeus's thunderbolts glanced off harmlessly, and when Ares rushed out to fight them, they grabbed him and crammed him into a bronze jar and clamped the lid shut.

For once Zeus was really worried, but Apollo, the god of reason, said that if no one could kill them they must be tricked into killing each other. He persuaded Artemis to pretend that she was in love with Otus. Otus smirked when Apollo called to him that Artemis thought so much of him she had accepted his proposal and would wait for him on the island of Naxos. That made Ephialtes jealous. Why hadn't Hera fallen in love with *him*? Wasn't he as handsome as his brother? But he swallowed his pride and went to Naxos with his brother to meet the bride.

When Artemis saw the two brothers arriving, she quickly changed herself into a white deer and ran across their path. She darted to and fro between them and the brothers, who were eager huntsmen, threw their javelins at the deer. Cleverly, she dodged and the brothers fell to the ground, pierced by each other's javelins. Neither gods nor mortals could kill the giant brothers, but now they had put an end to each other and were thrown into Tartarus, tied back to back with writhing snakes.

All the gods thanked Artemis for saving them, and pulled Ares out of the jar where he had been crouching all the while, howling and screaming.





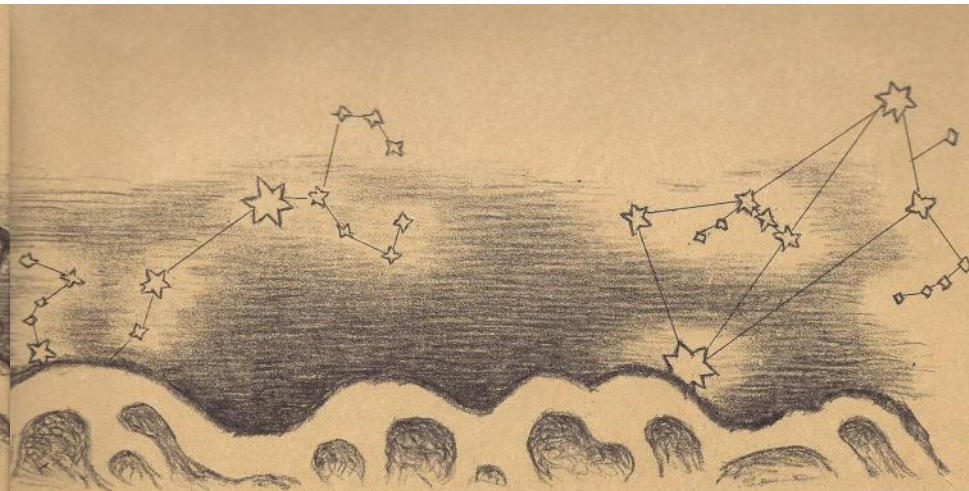
Orion was another giant son of Poseidon, but, unlike Otus and Ephialtes, he was modest. He was a great hunter, no beast could escape from his club and jeweled sword, but he never forgot to praise Artemis as the greatest of all hunters.

One day Orion, who could walk on water as if it were land, came to the island of Chios. The island was infested with lions, wolves, and boars who roared and howled so loudly at night that the King of Chios could not sleep. He promised Orion the hand of his daughter if he could rid the island of all the wild beasts. The king's daughter was beautiful, her father's greatest treasure, and Orion hunted as never before. Soon there was not a wild beast left, but the king did not want to part with his daughter, and claimed that he could still hear the howling of wolves at night. Orion grew angry and threatened to carry off the princess, but the king soothed him with honeyed words, sent for wine, and filled his cup so often that Orion drank too much and fell asleep. Stealthily the evil king crept up and put out both his eyes.

"Now see if you can carry off my daughter," he said.

Blind and helpless, Orion left Chios and staggered over the seas in search of the sun, which he knew could restore his eyesight, but he could not find his way. From afar he heard the Cyclopes' hammers and he followed the sound till he came to Hephaestus' forge on the island of Lemnos. The kind god took pity on him and lent him a Cyclops boy to show him the way to the East.

With the Cyclops on his shoulders to see for him, Orion walked on



till he met the rising sun. The sun let its healing rays play over Orion's blind eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he rushed back to seek revenge on the false king. But when he arrived, the palace was empty, for the king had seen his huge, menacing shape against the sky and fled with his daughter.

Again Orion went hunting and soon forgot the king and the beautiful princess. He walked from island to island and after a while he came to the island of Crete. There he met the goddess Artemis. She was glad to see him, for he could hunt as well as she and was so very modest about it. Together they hunted wild goats and rejoiced in each other's company. Orion was the only man Artemis had ever favored, and her brother Apollo grew jealous. One day while Artemis was away, he sent an enormous scorpion to attack Orion. Orion's club and mighty sword were no avail against the scorpion's poisonous tail. He turned to flee, but as he did, the giant insect stung his heel.

Artemis was angry with her brother when she returned and found her companion dead. But she could not stay angry with her twin for long, and he helped her hang Orion's image in the skies as a constellation so the great hunter would never be forgotten.

Over the stormy winter sea the constellation of Orion glitters, enormous and menacing, and the dark clouds flee before him like wild animals. But in summer, when the constellation of the Scorpion rises over the horizon, Orion begins to sway and stagger, and then he, in his turn, flees and disappears into the ocean.