

TALOS: The Bronze Giant of Crete

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A charming and original tale about Talos, the bronze giant who guarded and protected Crete at the time of King Minoas. Along with Talos we encounter many more characters from Greek mythology whose lives were filled with intense passions and incredible adventures. Men and gods such as Zeus and Hephaestus, Minoas and his wife Pasiphae, the Minotaur and his brothers, Theseus and Ariadne, and the nymph Calypso.

Although Midea, the witch, will render Talos powerless for a while in order to protect the Argonauts, strange and unexpected events will bring the giant back to life again.

The great earthquake of Santorini and the tsunami which destroyed Knossos, as well as Theseus and Phaedra's flight to Athens will, however, mean the end of an era but also the beginning of another...

Chapter 1

Not one moon had passed since the night that I had found myself at King Minoas palace at Knossos. The oil lamps and torches had gone out, and all – kings, princes and slaves – were sleeping soundly. Loud voices and the sound of footsteps running through the palace corridors woke me. Startled, I jumped from my bed and ran to the door finding myself face to face with Eliki, Princess Ariadne's faithful servant.

"You must wake Phaedra quickly! Feed her, dress her in her best clothes and bring her down to the central courtyard immediately. The coaches are waiting", she ordered.

"Has something bad happened?" I managed to ask.

"The one we have been waiting for is coming by sea", she replied and then disappeared into the dark corridor.

My name is Pylia and I was Princess Phaedra's servant, the daughter of King Minoas and Queen Pasiphae. I am now old, nearing eighty, and am waiting – from day by day – to be called upon to meet my ancestors in the dark kingdom of Hades.

Lately my mind keeps travelling back to years long gone. I remember everything as if it were yesterday. I have never forgotten those I loved and was close to during the trials that were sent to them by the Gods, all those who have now departed the world of the mortals in unexpected and tragic ways.

I had just turned fifteen when my parents took me to the palace at Knossos to take care of little Phaedra, who had only just begun to walk. I lived many beautiful but also difficult days amongst Minoas' and Pasiphae's family. The children would disrupt the palace with their cries, their games and their antics and all of us who served them would be entertained and amused along with them. In later years, when fate began to call on each of the princes – one by one – I was by their side and I dedicated my life to healing their wounds and suffering.

My family was of noble descent and it was a great honour for me to live at the palace of Knossos. It wasn't very easy for me at first. It took me ages to find my way through the three-floor apartments, the countless halls, the long corridors and the covered courtyards. But I slowly became familiar with every corner of the palace and its gardens: all the trees, the flowers, the animals and the birds with multicoloured

feathers – presents brought to King Minoas by kings and lords from far and wide in the hope of gaining his friendship.

The only place that the servants – but also the princes – were forbidden to enter were the palace cellars. It was rumoured that there were so many rooms there that no-one had ever been able to count them. It was dark and full of complicated passageways some of which ended as dead ends and you would have to go back to try and find another exit. Whoever dared to disobey and had gone down to the cellars had finally been trapped and never managed to return alive. Some had said that two slaves who had thought that the underground cellars were where the king hid his gold and precious jewels had secretly gone down to the cellars one night in the hope to steal some of this treasure for themselves. Once the oil in their lamps ran dry, however, try as they might they never managed to find their way out and their dusty bones were found many years later.

There was, of course, one other and very serious reason why Minoas forbade entry to the Labyrinth – as the palace cellars were called. That is also where Asterios, also known as the Minotaur, lived. Asterios had the head of a bull and the body of a man and he was immensely strong and wild. Only a handful of slaves knew the way to where Asterios lived. They would take him food and water, clean his quarters, keep him company and try to calm him whenever he got angry.

I gently woke Phaedra, fed her some goats milk cheese, rye bread and honey, dressed her, and – as I got ready – let her play with Momo, the rainbow coloured bird with the hooked beak who knew how to talk and had been a present from the king of Egypt.

Throughout the entire palace, all the oil lamps and torches had been lit again, sleepy-eyed slaves were rushing through the corridors, the princes were complaining for having been woken from their dreams, and the coachmen's voices could be heard in the courtyard.

When we came down the stairs, the courtyard in front of the west gate was crowded. The sun was just coming up and the red palace columns looked as if they had been dipped in bright blood.

The procession had already been formed. Queen Pasiphae, high priestess of the goddess of fertility, was sitting in the royal coach. It was the first time that I had ever seen her so heavily adorned in jewellery, dressed in a long purple tunic which left her breast uncovered and her waist tightened with a wide gold belt. Her black curly hair fell like waves on her shoulders and her eyes were accentuated with black colour.

King Minoas followed in his own coach and then came the rest of the royal family – princes Katreas, Deukalion and Glaukus and the princesses Ariadne and Ksenodike with their nurses.

Priests and priestesses, the diviner Konus, lords and ladies all followed in their coaches, on transportable seats carried by servants, and behind them two slaves dragged a bull who kept planting his legs firmly in the ground and refused to continue – as if he knew what fate had in store for him. Myriads of people came running to join the procession.

As we advanced, so my curiosity grew to find out who this person was that we were expecting to arrive by sea. In the end I couldn't resist any longer. I nudged Lykia, Ksenodike's nurse, and asked her. "Nobody knows", she replied. "Two messengers arrived at the palace in the night and woke the king. They told him that just before dark, a huge fire appeared on the top of Zeus, the small island that ships meet as they sail out of the harbour of Amnisos. It seems that the king has been

expecting this signal for a long time now because he immediately gave the order that the procession prepare to go to the harbour.