

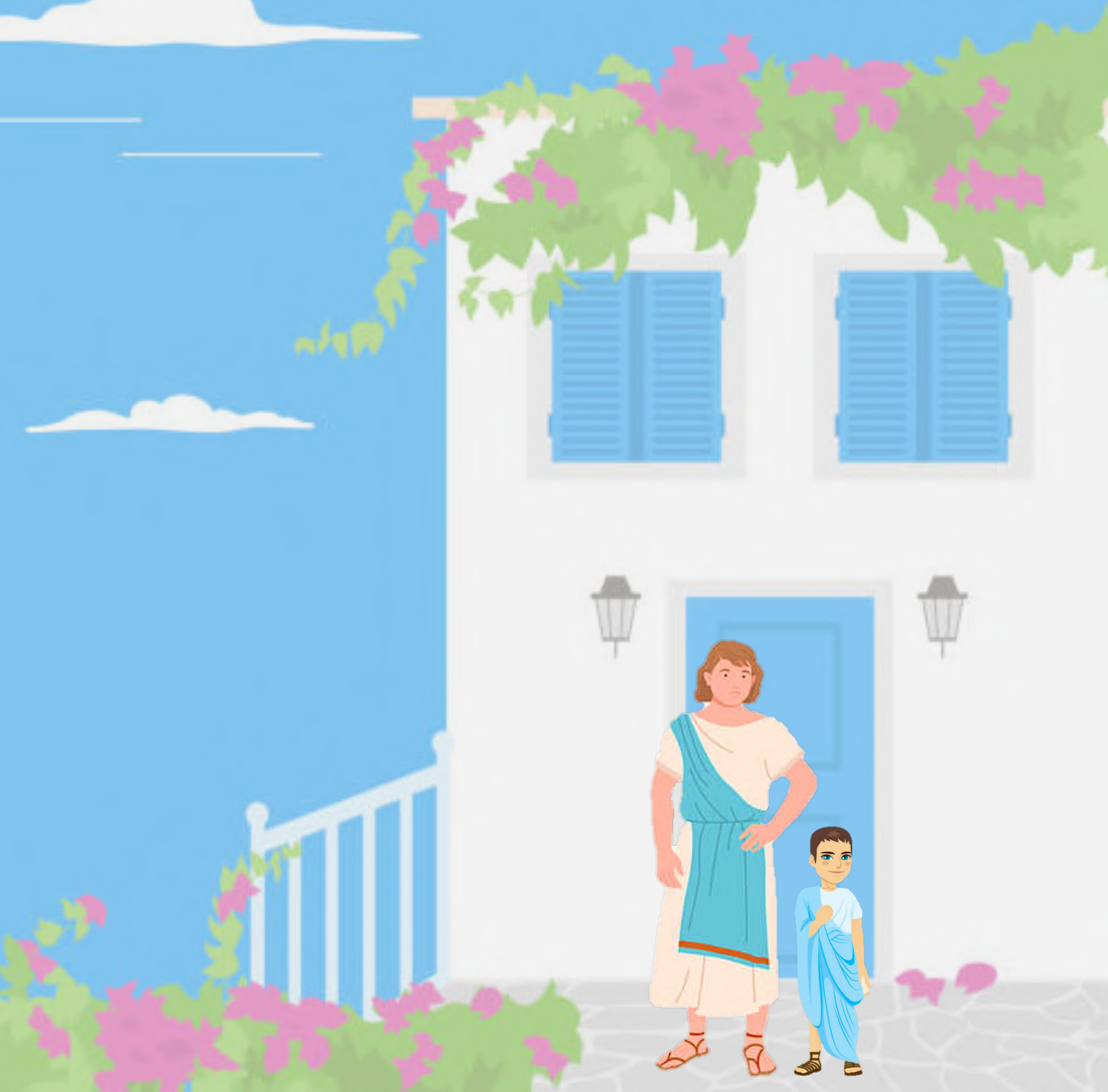
Græsk Mythology

The Fall of Icarus



On the island of Crete during the age of King Minos, there lived a man named Daedalus and his young son Icarus.

Daedalus was just an ordinary man, except for one special talent – he was an inventor of strange and wonderful mechanical creations.



Now this was a very long time ago – and in this ancient time there were no televisions or cars or clocks. Instead of the television, people learned what was new in the land by listening to the gossip at the local inn.



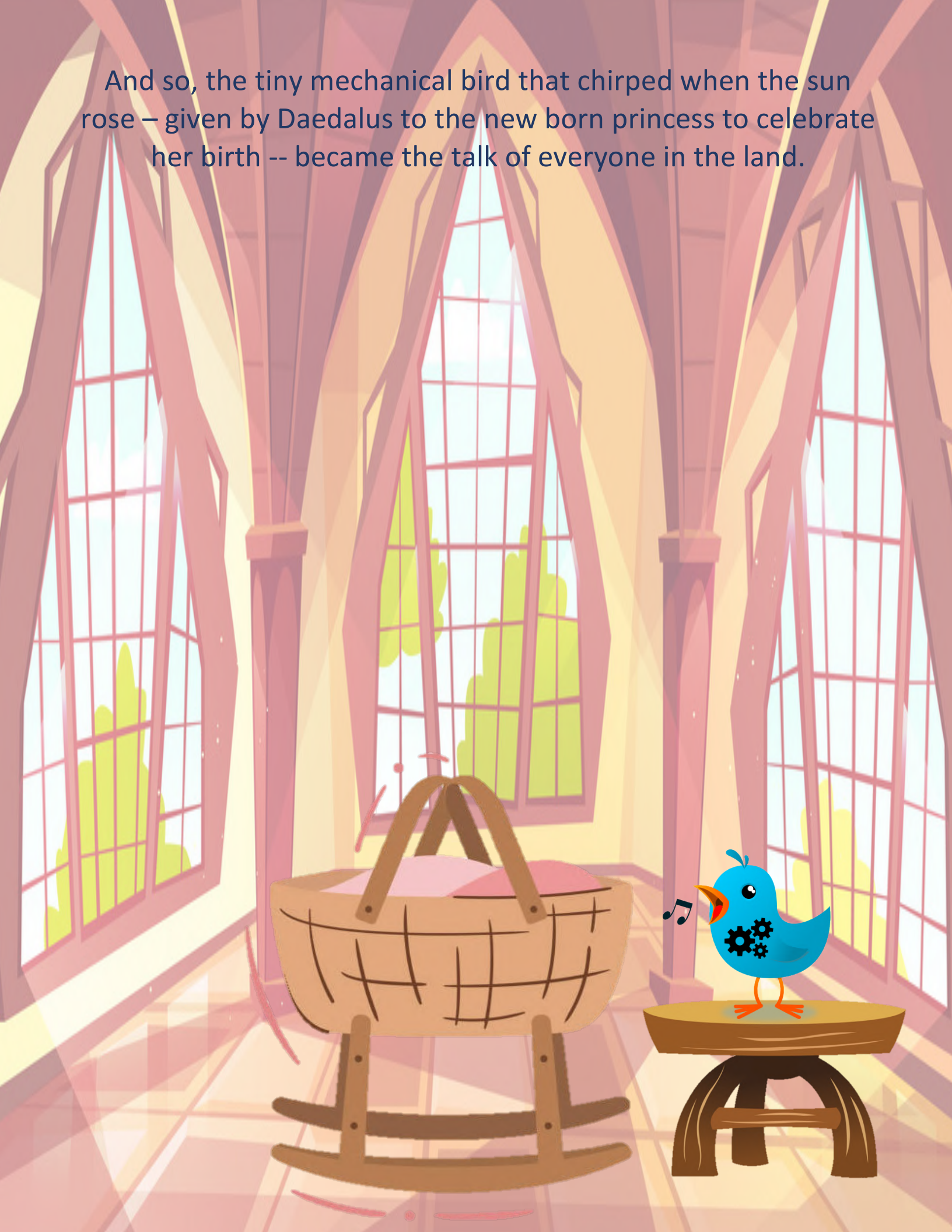
Instead of cars, people got from place to place by walking or if they were wealthy by riding on a horse or in a carriage.



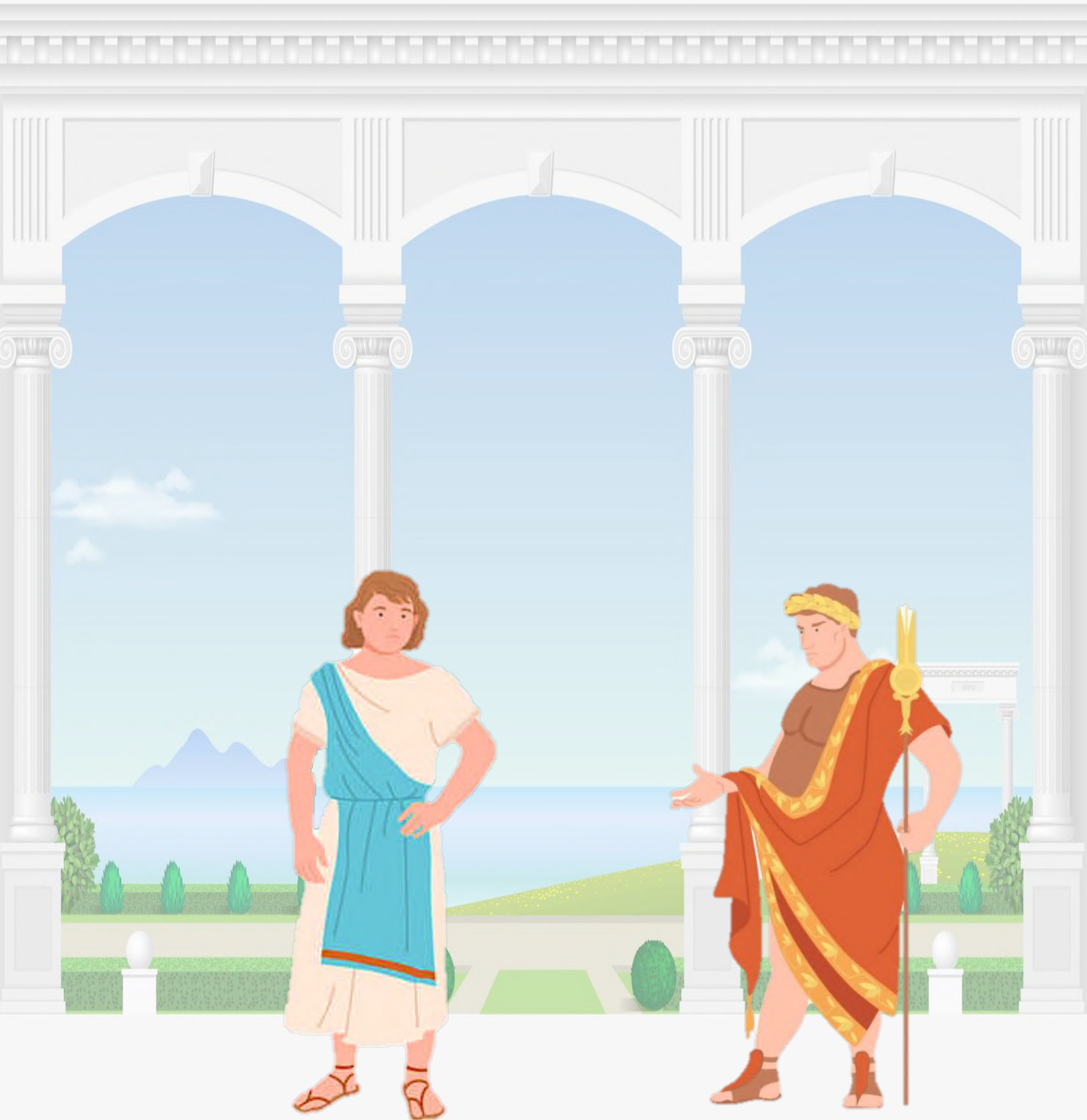
Instead of clocks people kept track of the time using sundials.



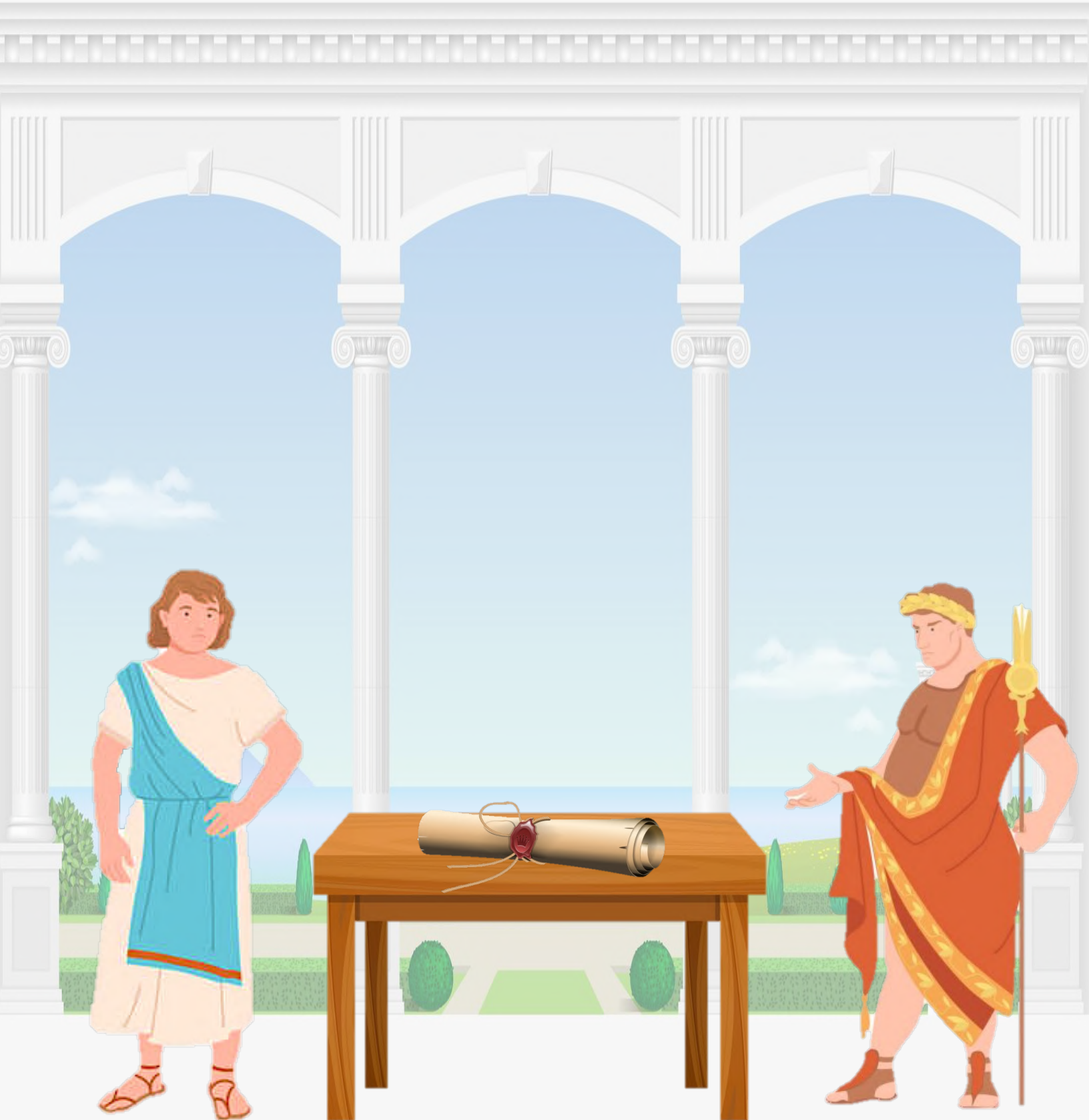
And so, the tiny mechanical bird that chirped when the sun rose – given by Daedalus to the new born princess to celebrate her birth -- became the talk of everyone in the land.



King Minos approached Daedalus to ask if he might be able to invent something less pretty but more useful and Daedalus did not disappoint.



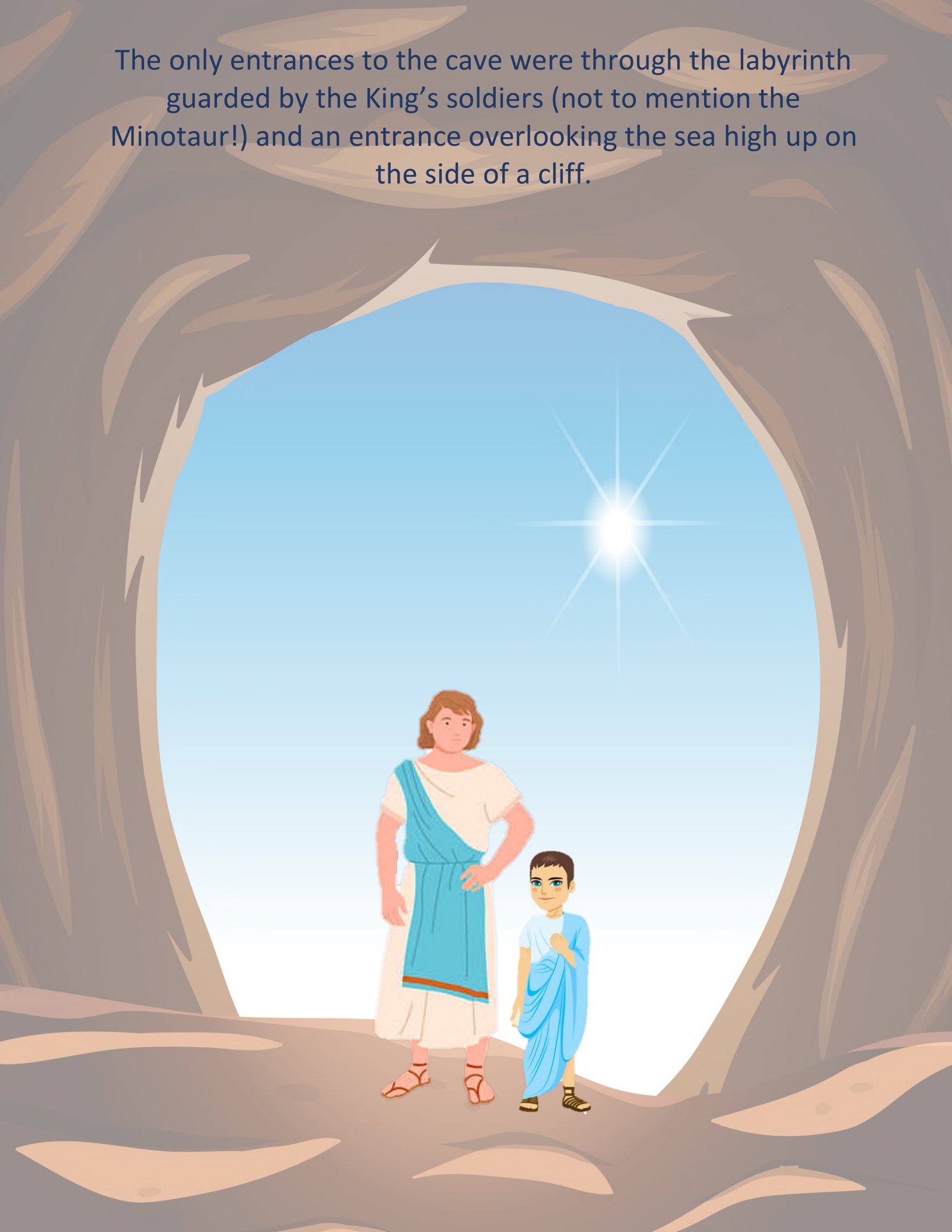
A few months later he presented the plans for a giant labyrinth to hold the half-man and half-bull monster, known as the Minotaur, prisoner.



King Minos was very pleased. Unfortunately, King Minos was also very greedy. He wanted Daedalus to work only for him and so he had his Royal Guards take Daedalus and his



The only entrances to the cave were through the labyrinth guarded by the King's soldiers (not to mention the Minotaur!) and an entrance overlooking the sea high up on the side of a cliff.



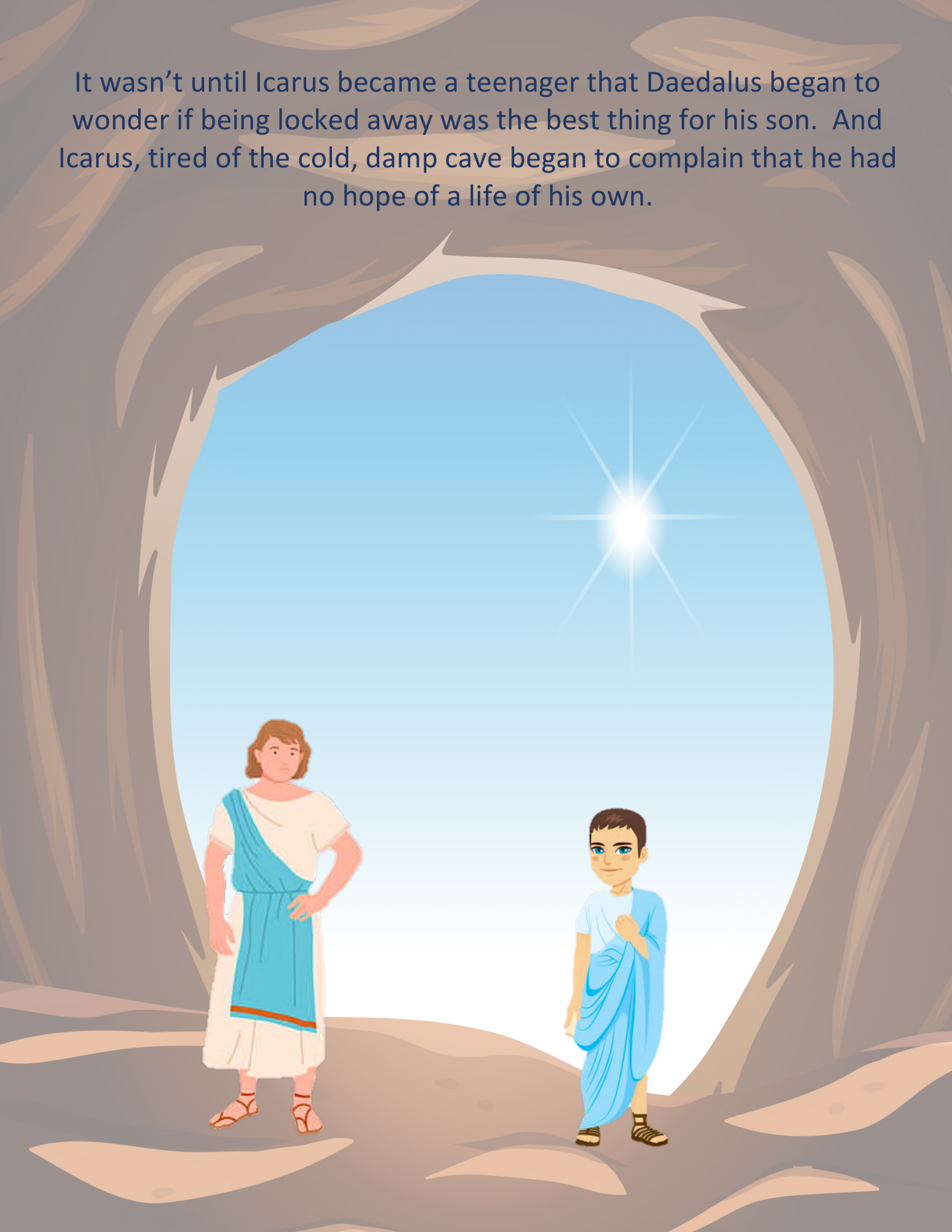
Daedalus didn't mind his imprisonment at first. Whatever Daedalus needed King Minos provided without question -- food, drink, tools of all shapes, rare metals, leather, parchment and even candles so he could work late into the night.



Daedalus lived happily for many years working away on an endless variety of wondrous inventions. And young Icarus, although sometimes bored, was usually quite happy helping out his father and playing with the mechanical toys Daedalus made for him.



It wasn't until Icarus became a teenager that Daedalus began to wonder if being locked away was the best thing for his son. And Icarus, tired of the cold, damp cave began to complain that he had no hope of a life of his own.

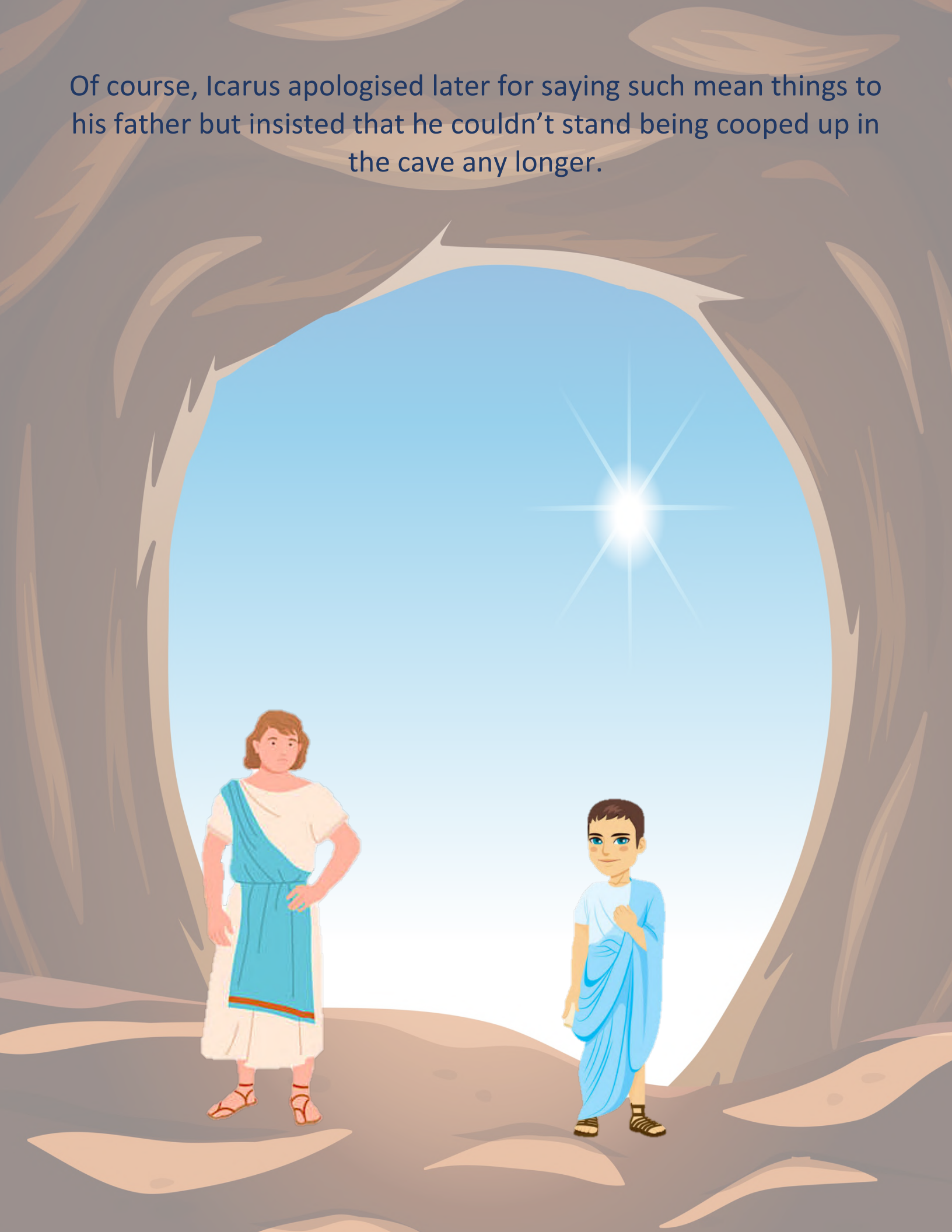


On his sixteenth birthday Icarus broke into a rage, “But father, I want an adventure – maybe even to meet a girl and have a son of my own! I can’t very well ask a wife to come live with me in this lonely cave over the sea.

I hate this cave. I hate the King. And I hate you!”



Of course, Icarus apologised later for saying such mean things to his father but insisted that he couldn't stand being cooped up in the cave any longer.



The next time King Minos visited, Daedalus approached him nervously, “Your Majesty, surely you must see that Icarus is becoming a young man.

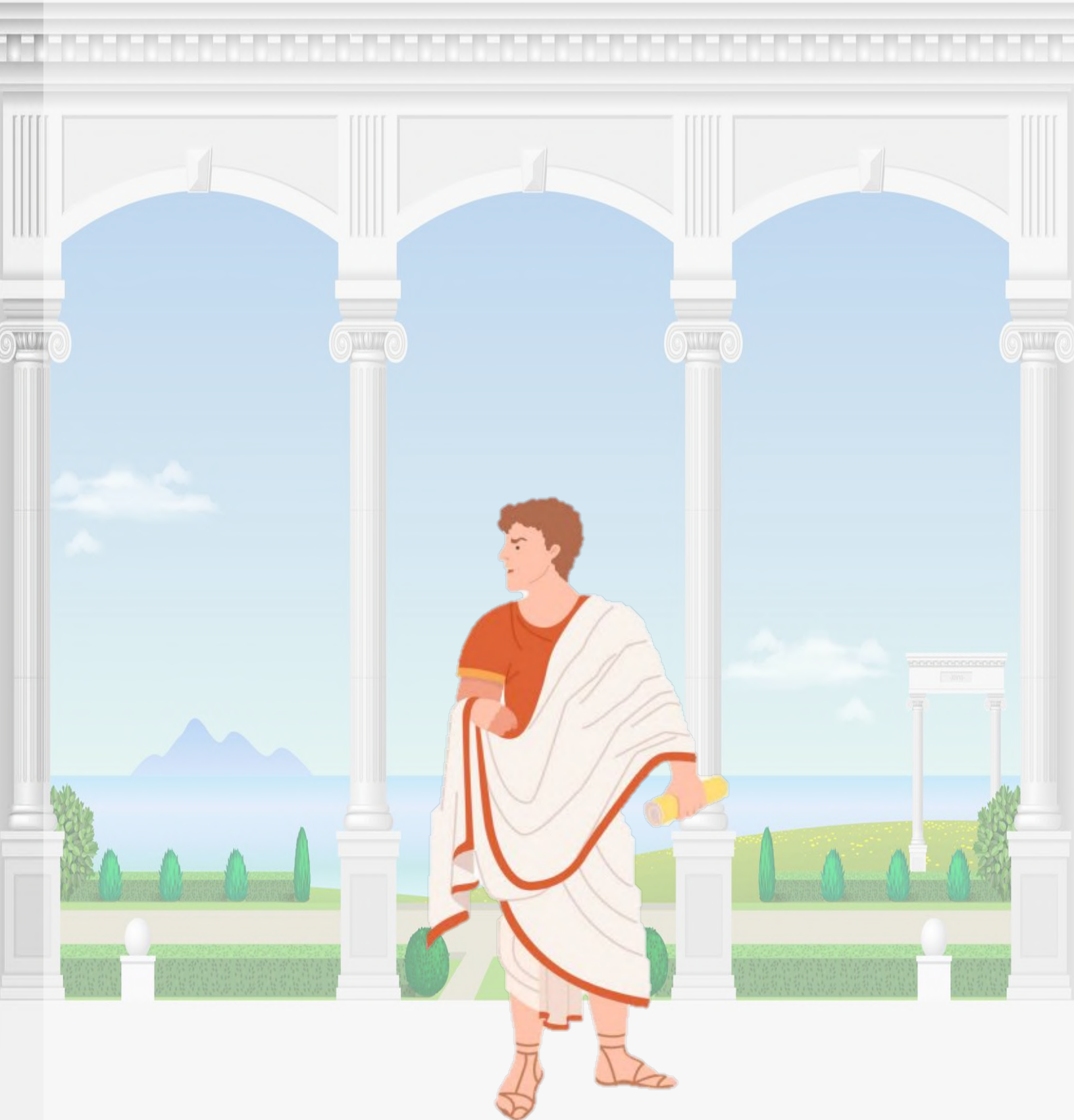
You can’t plan to keep him locked away for his entire life. Please sire, let him join your Royal Guard and seek a life in your service.”



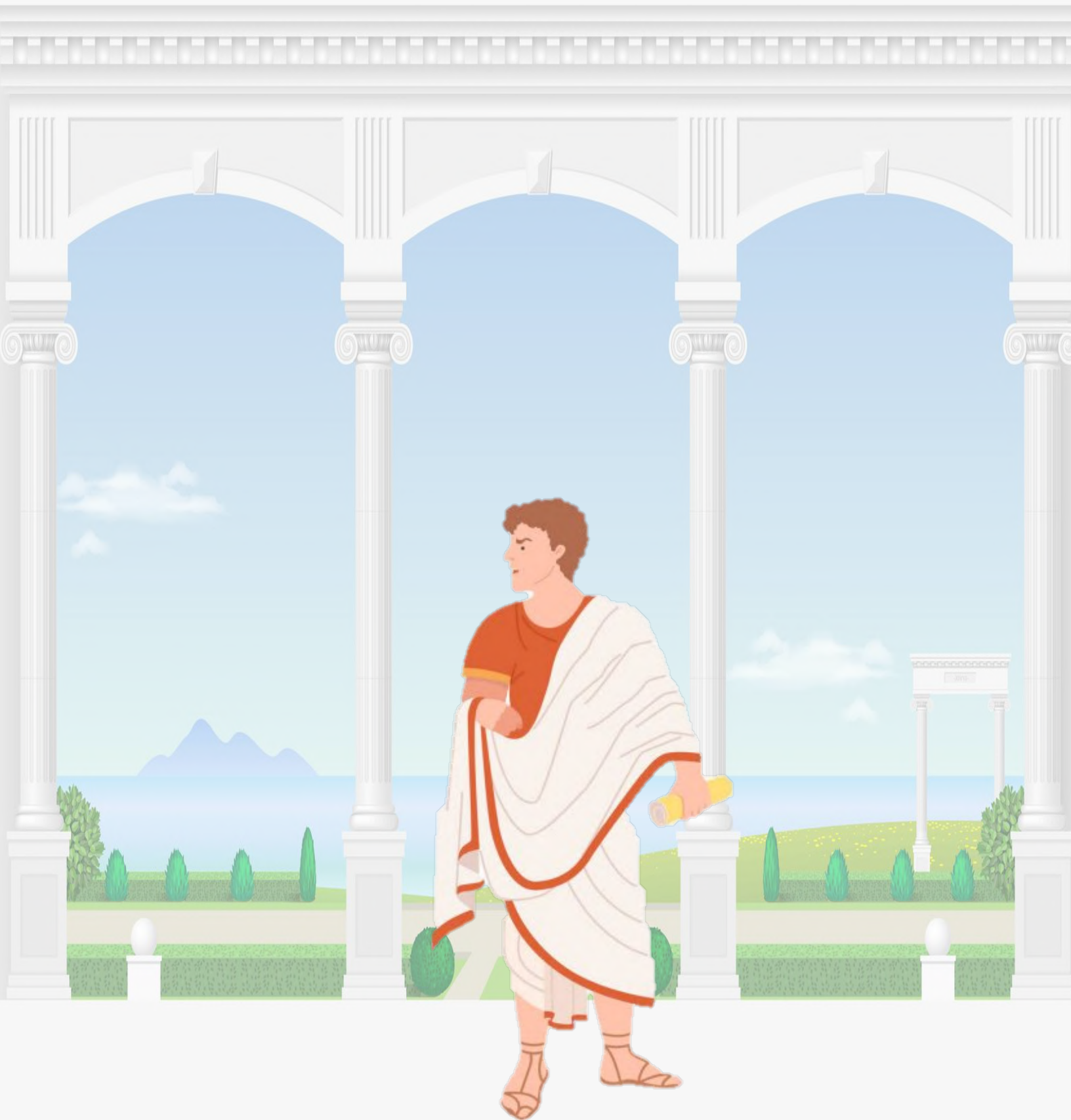
The King raised an eyebrow and stared thoughtfully out the opening of the cave, “I shall consider your request. Now if you please, show me again your idea for giant mechanical men.”



The King didn't really have to think too long about it. He knew right away that he didn't want to let either Daedalus or Icarus go. Who could know whether Icarus would have his father's talents – after all Icarus had watched and learned from his father for his entire life.



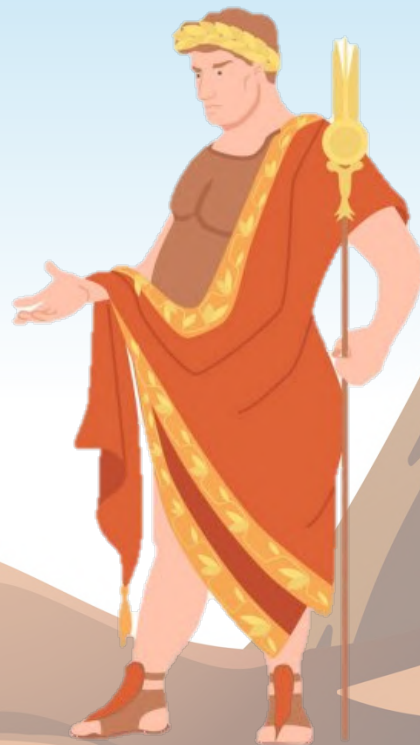
Under no circumstances did he want another kingdom to get their hands on the mechanical wonders Daedalus created and that Icarus might someday produce.



Weeks later, King Minos returned to Daedalus with his answer,
“Icarus provides the greatest service to our realm by keeping
you company here.”

“But sire,” began Daedalus.

“Enough!” roared King Minos, “The decision has been made. I
will have no arguments.”



Daedalus turned to Icarus to explain that there was nothing to be done but when he saw the look of utter despair on his son's face, Daedalus' heart broke and he vowed that he would do everything in his power to make his boy happy again.

But what to do ...



Daedalus stood staring out the entrance of the cave overlooking the sea, watching the waves crash on the rocks below and the seagulls circle over the cliffs. It was spring and the nests on the cliffs were filled with eggs and chicks.



Icarus walked up beside his father and said softly, “How I envy those baby birds, for soon their wings will be strong and they’ll be able to fly away from this wretched cliff.”



Daedalus blinked, a smile slowly growing on his face. He turned to Icarus his eyes twinkling, “Well then, my little fledgling, we’d best start working on strengthening your wings so you can be off with the others!”



First Daedalus used strips of leather and fine twigs to fashion a broom and a large net which he had Icarus dangle down towards the cliffs to sweep up the feathers near the seagull nests.

For many days Icarus carefully gathered every feather he could reach.



While Icarus was busy with feathers, Daedalus created thin tubes of light metal which he used to form the frame of two pairs of man-sized wings.

He used leather strips to create a harness and pulleys to allow the wearer to flap and tilt the wings in various directions.

Then he took the feathers that Icarus had collected and used candle wax to begin to attach the feathers to the light metal frames.



“Two frames?” Icarus smiled happily at his father, “Are you coming too?”

Daedalus clasped his son on the shoulder and replied, “I am, my son. Thank you for reminding me that of all my creations, you are the most important to me. I’m sorry that it’s taken me so long to free us both.”



It was painstaking work collecting the feathers and attaching them, one by one, to the frames but a few weeks later, as the first fledgling seagulls began to leave their nests, Daedalus declared the wings complete.



The day they were to leave, Daedalus lectured Icarus one last time, “Now son, remember, you must be cautious when we fly.

Fly too close to the ocean and your wings will become too heavy with the water that sprays off the waves.

Fly too close to the sun and the wax will melt and you will lose feathers. Follow my path closely and you’ll be fine.”



Icarus nodded and excitedly slid his arms into the harness. He listened absently as his father explained how to open the wings wide to catch the air currents and how to use the pulleys to steer.

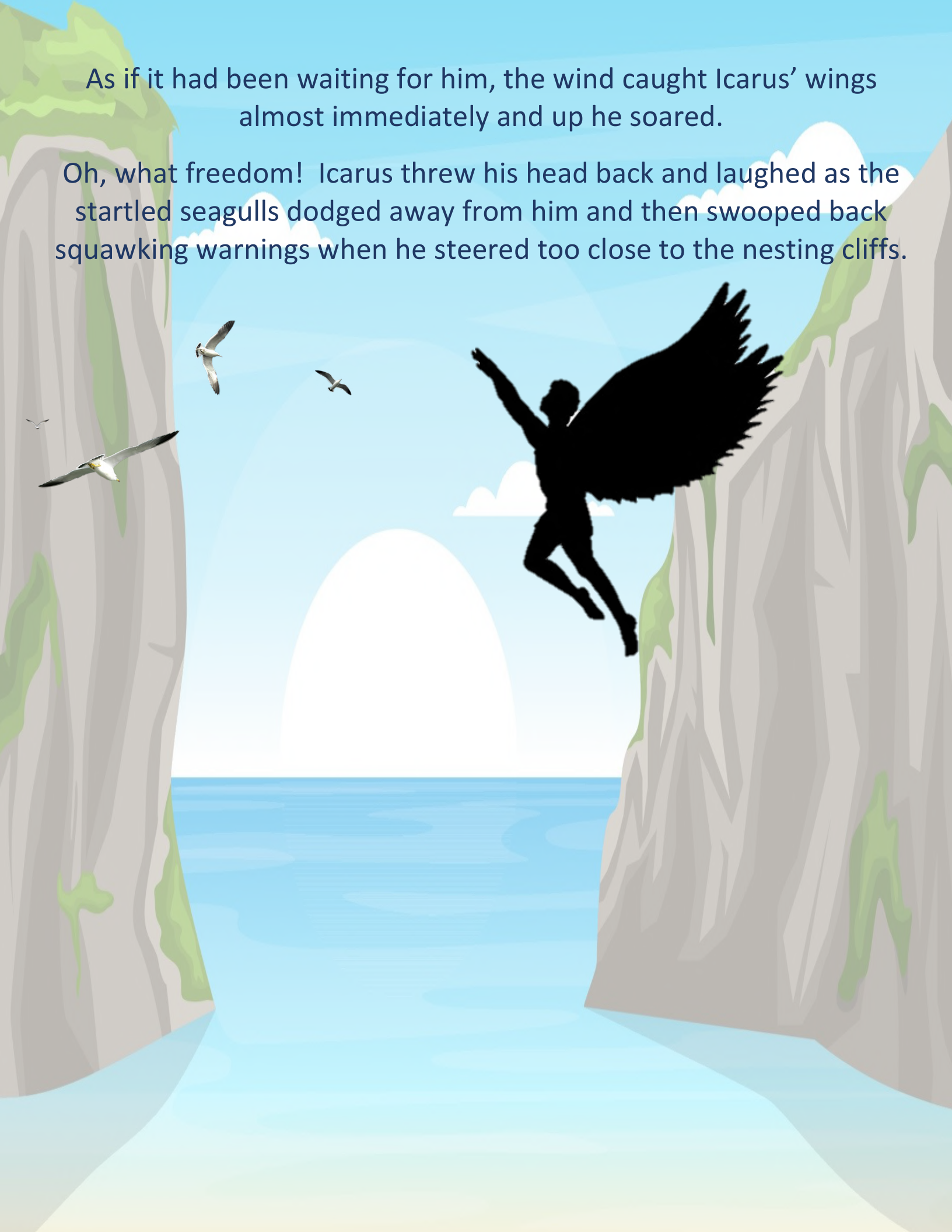


With an eager hug good luck Daedalus and Icarus stepped into the entrance of the cave overlooking the sea, spread their wings as wide as they would go and leaped, one after the other, out over the ocean.



As if it had been waiting for him, the wind caught Icarus' wings almost immediately and up he soared.

Oh, what freedom! Icarus threw his head back and laughed as the startled seagulls dodged away from him and then swooped back squawking warnings when he steered too close to the nesting cliffs.



Daedalus shouted to his son to be careful, stop playing with the birds and follow him toward the shore of an island in the distance.

But Icarus was having too much fun – he was tired of always following his father, always listening to his endless lectures and Icarus was thrilled with his sudden freedom.



He watched the seagulls rise on the air currents high up over the sea and thought to himself, “Careful, bah. The birds aren’t careful, they’re happy – they’re free! Oh, what a glorious adventure this is.



The sun is so warm and the breeze tugs at my wings as if even the wind is happy I'm finally loose. I can't believe I've been missing this for all these years trapped in that cold, damp cave." And with that he followed the seagulls up and up and UP into the sky.



“No Icarus! Stop!” shouted Daedalus, “The wax will melt if it gets too warm. Not so high. Not so high!”

But Icarus was too far away or too lost in his own happy thoughts of excitement to listen to his father’s warnings.



As he flew still higher he began to feel the warm wax dripping down his arms and saw feathers falling like snowflakes down around him. Remembering his father's lectures, Icarus realized with horror his mistake. He began to work the pulleys to tilt his wings back down toward the sea but as he did so, he saw more feathers drift away and he began to lose height more quickly than he wanted.



Working the pulleys even more frantically, Icarus flapped the wings trying to slow his fall but the harder he flapped, the more feathers detached from the frame of his wings.



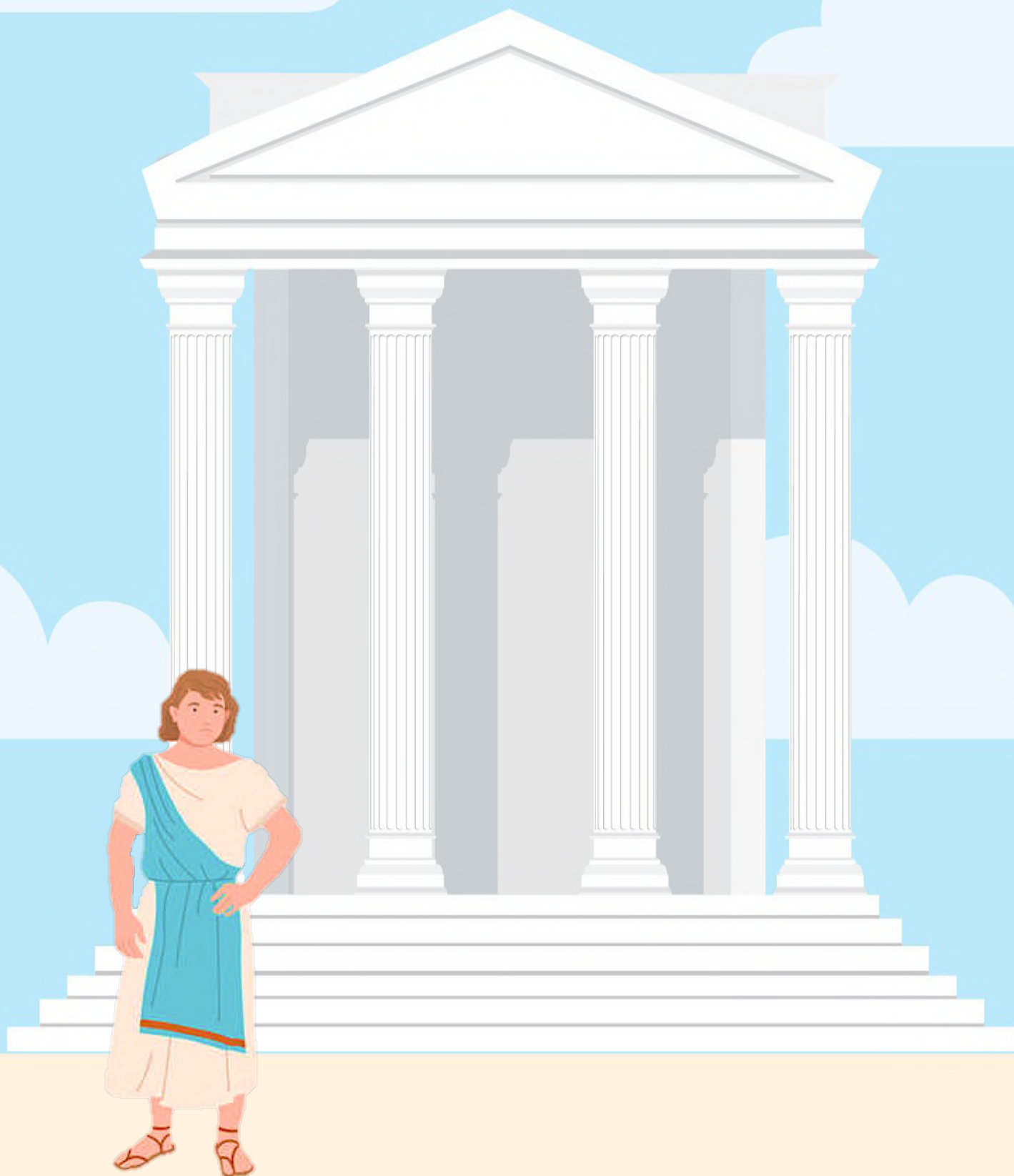
As Daedalus watched in horror, Icarus plunged toward the sea frantically flapping the pulleys with his arms. When he finally hit the water, there wasn't a feather left attached.



Daedalus landed as quickly as he could on the beach near where Icarus had fallen but the only sign of his poor child was a few feathers floating in the waves. Daedalus crumpled to the sand, his face in his hands for he knew his son was dead.



After many months, when Daedalus began to recover from his grief, he named the island Icaria in memory of his son. On the beach where he landed, he built a temple to the sun god Apollo and inside it hung the wings he had created, vowing never to fly again.





THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

