

to settle and live within the city walls or outside them.
The king replied reassuringly, saying, "We welcome strangers,
even without such noble lineage as you claim.

There's no need for your pleading. A descendant of Jove is
welcome

with special warmth and honor. Pick out some land and settle
wherever you like. I only wish we could offer you better
and richer, as you deserve." Here, he broke down and wept.

When Peleus asked the cause of his grief, the king replied:

"See that bird, that raptor. He is no bird but a man,
changed to a feathered creature that flies through the air. My
brother

was a bloodthirsty man, and he keeps still to his violent ways
and character. We were born to Lucifer, the morning
star. I was the placid and peaceful brother, while he
was the braver and more combative. He loved fighting and
conquered

many kings and nations. Now, as a hawk he harries
birds, all of those gentle doves that flock about Thisbe.

A dismal story this is. He had a lovely daughter,
Chione by name, at fourteen a beauty *en fleur*,
with hundreds and hundreds of suitors. But nothing is safe
or sure,

and it happened that Phoebus Apollo and Mercury together
saw the attractive girl, and both, smitten with love,
were rivals for her. Apollo bided his time until darkness,
but Mercury wasn't disposed to wait. He touched her eyelids
with his magic wand, which put her to sleep, and then he
took her,

coming to her in a sudden violence she may have dreamed of.
Apollo, not at all put off by this, appeared
that night to enjoy the other's buttered bun. She conceived
and bore to each god a son. Mercury's boy was called
Autolycus, a sly and cunning creature who'd twist
your words in the air and make you agree that black was white.
Apollo's son was Philammon, famous for song and lyre.

So far, so good—or not, at any rate, too bad,
but Chione started to boast of how attractive she was,
how she had polyandrously borne two sons to two different
gods. Who else had done this? She was a goddess, she claimed,
the equal of any—Diana, for instance. This was an error
Diana proposed to correct. She let fly an arrow that silenced
the blathering woman, transfixing her tongue, her voice, and
her life.

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It was in my arms she died, this niece of mine whom I mourned
as if I had been her father. I went to my brother to tell him
what had befallen the girl, and it drove him mad, I'm afraid.
He was the cliff that the waves break on, roaring and sighing
in elemental despair. We bore her corpse to the pyre
and had to restrain Daedalion, who kept on trying to join her,
to fling himself on the burning wood in a last embrace
of his lost darling. Deranged, he was a bullock whose neck
is stung by hornets and rages over the trackless hills,
goaded by insupportable pain. We tried to follow,
but his was the strength and speed of a madman as he raced up
Parnassus' slopes to the top, where Apollo—his son-in-law—
took pity at last upon him. My brother hurled himself over
the topmost precipice hoping to smash on the rocks below,
but the god caught him and turned him there in midair to a bird
with claws and a great hooked beak, a hawk who glides over
the land,

strong as ever and brave as he ever had been as a man,
looking for what to tear into bloody pieces and eat.

As the son of the morning star was telling this story, Onetor,
one of Peleus' wranglers, came running in with disastrous
news of the herd. Great Ceyx fell silent at once as they all
heard the report: "I had driven the cattle down by the shore,
where some of them knelt down to rest in the midday Sun,
and others were wandering, browsing the marsh grass, or wading
in cool

water up to their withers. It was near some simple old temple,
one of those fairly primitive timbered structures. This place,
a fisherman told me, is sacred to Nereus and to his daughters.
Near that temple, a little way back of it, there is a salt marsh
that's not quite dry at low tide. From this place we heard a
roaring,

and then we beheld a huge beast, a slaving wolf with his jaws
caked with drool and blood, and eyes that were flaming with rage
more than simple hunger. Or maybe we thought that later,
after we saw him attacking one beast after another.

He wasn't apparently hungry but eager only for killing,
for blood and death. We ran down to drive him away, but the wolf
was hardly fazed. He charged and wounded some of the men.
I ran to get help. You must hurry. If we wait, there won't be a
single

cow left alive or, for all I know, any herdsmen either.
We must get down there at once with reinforcements and
weapons."

Ceyx told his men to put on their armor and grab spears and lances and hurry down to the shore. He was dressing, preparing to lead the party, when his wife came in, the queen, Alcyone, who was troubled by terrible premonitions and wanted him not to go, begged him with prayers and tears to send the men willing to go but not to go there himself. Ceyx looked displeased to be shamed so before his guest, but Peleus spoke up and said to the queen, "Your fears are groundless. Nothing will happen. No men need go. This is not

a mere wolf but a monster sent by the gods to torment me. I must go myself to pray for remission of sin and ask of the nereid Psamathe pardon for what I have done."

There was, on a bluff near the shore, a lighthouse tower.

To this

Peleus made his way and climbed up to get some idea of how bad it was. The beach was a shambles, with bloodied and mauled

carcasses strewn about in a tableau of the violence the wolf had done. And there he was, still prowling, a sinister beast, worrying what was left of a dying heifer whose blood had turned them both gory, a garnet horror that shone in the late afternoon glare. Peleus held out his hands and prayed to the sea nymph to ask forgiveness. He had not meant to kill his half brother, her son. Accidents happen, and grief must somehow be borne. And the guilt. But her bitter rage was more

than he, contrite, deserved. Could she believe and accept his deep regrets, and relent? No, she refused him. But then Thetis, Peleus' wife, added her prayers to her husband's, and the grief-stricken nymph at last granted Peleus' prayer and forgave him. That wolf on the beach, that dreadful representation

of wolfishness, froze and turned into marble. The heifer also froze and hardened. And both turned from their red to an eerie white, which inspired a different and greater degree of terror. The Fates are sometimes hard—as they were in this instance, decreeing

that Peleus could not stay in Trachis but had to move on, wandering even farther before he could find at last an eventual haven somewhere. He moved on into Magnesia, where in the end, in a fight with Acastus, that headstrong king, he redeemed himself and regained the blessing of almighty Jove.

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As one might imagine, Ceyx was much impressed by these strange and disturbing events—his brother's fate had perhaps unsettled his mind, and this business with wolves that turn into statues was scary.

He resorted, as some men do, to gods, and decided to ask advice from the oracles. Surely, the power of heaven was such as to force any prudent and sensible man to take care not to give offense to these unruly powers. He planned to travel to Claros, which, after Delphi, was Phoebus' favorite haunt—but Delphi was under attack at this moment, for Phlegyas resented

Apollo's rape of his daughter, Coronis. To punish the wanton god and show that mortals are not always inconsequential, he raised an army to march on Delphi and burn it to ashes, if it was the last thing he ever did . . . which it was.

But second only to Delphi was Claros, which Manto, the daughter

Teiresias left, had founded. Hard by the lake of her tears in a small temple, a woman announced the words of the god. She was the one whom Ceyx wished to consult. He proclaimed his purpose to all—but the queen again had her premonitions and begged him to change his mind. Frightened, chilled to her marrow,

and ashen, she begged her beloved husband to stay home. Her sobs

and tears made it hard to follow the words she gasped and choked on.

Her meaning, however, was perfectly clear. "How can you leave me

alone? I'll pine at your absence. Overland, it's a long and arduous trip, but one I'd prefer to a voyage by sea, which I fear, for my father's winds are wild and savage. You think

as his son-in-law you may get some special treatment. Not so! Once they've escaped from Aeolus' cave, those winds are wild and beyond anyone's control as they menace the clouds of heaven itself. As a girl I watched them come home exhausted and spent, and I learned to fear them then. Now I am petrified, surely, for if you die my life is over and I shall be cursed with every reluctant breath I draw as I wait to rejoin you. Take me with you at least, so that storms may keep us together in life or death, which I fear much less than to be left a widow."

How could he not have been moved by these plaintive words?

The son

of the morning star adored his wife, but he hated choosing
between his journey and her. How could he live that way,
domesticated, diminished, unmanned, a kind of a lap dog?
He spoke whatever comforting words he could think of, but
nothing

he said could assuage her griefs and fears—until he devised
a promise that he would return within two months. For that short
time, she could surely be brave and endure the trial of waiting.
She was hardly enthusiastic but could not hold out any longer
in the face of his resolve. She allowed herself to be soothed
and consented at last to his going. He ordered his ship to be
readied

and manned for sailing. She watched the sailors set to their tasks,
and collapsed and gave way again to her terrors. They made no
more sense

than did his voyage, but then they made no less. She was sure
she'd never see him alive again, and she wept and held him
in a desperate embrace, from which he broke away at the last
to board his vessel. There were no more details left to be checked,
no last-minute changes to make, and the men, arranged on their
benches,

were ready to row and go. He boarded and gave the sign,
and the oarsmen pulled with a will, sweeping the long bright oars,
which flashed in the Sun and churned the sea in their rhythmic
strokes.

Alcyone lifted her face and, with glistening eyes, stared out
at the man she loved, who was posed on the high-curved poop
abaft

the mast, where he waved his hand. She waved back a last
farewell,

and stared at the vessel, which dwindled into the middle distance
until the face was no longer distinguishable, or the figure.
Still she could see the ship and follow as it receded
to a smaller and smaller object. And then the whole hull was
gone,

and only the sails remained as a tiny dab in the sky,
and that, too, disappeared. She gazed still at the empty
and desolate blue and then went to her empty bedroom to lie
on the huge and vacant bed and give herself over to weeping.
A piece of her body was gone, her life was gone, and this husk
remained, a derelict thing she scarcely could recognize.

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The vessel had cleared the harbor and caught the freshening
wind,

which set the rigging to singing and slapping against the spars.
The captain ordered the rowers to ship their oars and the sailors
to set the yards and make sail. The ship ran before the wind,
and behind it a churning wake fanned out on the sea's blue
surface.

They made satisfactory progress all that day and had reached
a point of no return, with as much blue water astern
as remained ahead, when the wind picked up further. The water,
everywhere blue until now, was flecked with the whitecapped
waves

sailors dislike. The Sun was low in the West, and the weather
turning worse every moment. The captain ordered the sails
reefed, but the wind in his face tore the words from his lips,
and the roar of the sea was louder than any human could shout.
The sailors nevertheless are doing what needs to be done,
some of them bailing the water washed in over the gunwales,
some of them closing the oar holes, and some of them reefing
sheets,

while others secure the spars. Meanwhile the winds are raging
as if with evil intent, and the waves appear to be angry
and meaning the vessel harm. The captain is terrified now,
won't admit it, but cannot think what to do, what to order
or what to forbid. He prays to be spared but knows his belief
is minimal and his chances therefore bad, for the storm
is stronger than all his skill or the strength of the craft he sails.
The men are shouting and working as the waves crash over
the bow,

enormous bilious green catastrophes. They are mountains
come to life that have turned spiteful as they hammer
an insignificant boat. The spray they churn up is topless
and seems to extend to the skies, to mix with the lowering clouds
that pile on the defenseless crew as bullies will do
in a free-for-all fight. In the day's last light, the dejected captain
looks out at the water, which churns in a dismal array of colors,
now a sickly tawny with the sands it has roiled from the bottom,
now the dismal black of the even deeper Styx,
or now a funereal white as the spume spreads out on the surface,
which hisses its derision. It's all a matter of luck,
always was, but the captain knows that his luck has run out,
and this is the end of the world, which is turning, pitching,
yawing,

as the ship is heaved and plunged, tossing this way and that,
so there is neither an up nor a down, let alone a course
set on a two-dimensional chart. The ship lurches,
careens suddenly downward as if to fall into Acheron's
pit, but time after time it rights itself, and the water
punishes it each time for its impudence in surviving.
The timbers creak and shudder under the battering blows
of the crazed sea, and the captain feels each shock in his soul,
thinks of the ship as some desperate besieged town that a horde
of madmen is attacking, and each blow of the ram
against the gate is a warning of what the flesh will endure
of every man under arms, and every woman and child
after the strength of the beams of that gate has given out
to the rhythmic onslaught whose cadence is their own funeral
march.

He looks out at the water the winds have lashed to a fury
and thinks in an oddly abstracted way that the waves are lions
that the wounds of hunters' spears have made more dangerous,
charging

in single-minded rage. He hears the pegs of the hull
pop from a strain they were never built to withstand. He sees
the pitch that caulks the strakes washing away in the maelstrom
that rushes in to mix with the rain water that seethes
in the bilge. It's only a matter of time, he is sure, looking up
to check on the way the torrents of rain continue to fall
in opaque sheets. One would think the heavens were crazed with
lust

to join the turbulent sea, which returned their bizarre passion
and tried to rise up and embrace the air as their waters mingled.
The sky is utterly black except when a bolt of lightning
throws a dreadful and livid glare on the skulls of the men,
whose flesh is still somehow—it is hard to believe—alive.
The waves continue to beat at the hull, each one a soldier
determined to scale the walls of that poor beleaguered fortress
and be the one to open the gates for the rest of the horde.
Nine waves try and fall back, but the tenth, with a mightier heave,
inundates the vessel and almost sinks it. The men
have lost their belief in their captain, their courage, their nautical
skill,

and even their will to live as they wait for the end. One weeps
and groans aloud. Another, no braver, is silent, dumbstruck.
One calls on the gods for mercy. Another curses his fate.
One thinks of his wife and children. One envies landlubbers dying

warm and safe in their beds, with their families huddled about
them.

Ceyx thinks of his wife, who begged him not to attempt
this pointless journey, who saw that this would be how it would
end.

Alcyone's love was a treasure he'd been crazy to let slip away—
for surely that would now happen. It isn't death he dreads
but leaving her. He remembers she wanted to come, and rejoices
that she is not here in the boat. . . . But to see that face once
again,

what wouldn't he give? He opens his eyes and the water of sky
and sea is all but blinding. The mast shudders and cracks,
breaks away, and is washed overboard. They are lost, all lost.
The rudder is also gone, and the helpless hull is a toy
the waves can play with and torment, taking delight in their
triumph.

Then comes at last the monster wave, a mountain of water
or, worse, a flood that could wash whole mountains out of their
sockets

and into the sea—it towers and falls, overwhelming the tiny
broken vessel, and plunges it down to the bottom. Sailors
drown, sucked down with the ship. A few splash around in the
eddies,

clinging to broken spars and other such fragments of flotsam
as tumble by. One of these is Ceyx, whose hand once held
a jeweled scepter and now is clutching a length of timber,
calling now on his father-in-law, the lord of the winds,
and now on his father, the morning star, but none of it helps.
He calls on the name he loves best in the world, on Alcyone,
with a modest prayer—that his corpse may wash ashore at
her feet,

where she may with gentle hands prepare it to be entombed.
Again and again he calls her name, which the howling winds
shred to a garble. And then in the water it turns to a glug
and then to silence. That dawn, Lucifer hides his face
in thickest clouds of mourning for the loss of his precious son.

At home, meanwhile, the queen, counting the days and
nights,
works at her loom to fashion his homecoming present, a robe,
and one for herself to match. The incense she burns and the
prayers

she recites at the altar of Juno are useless, irrelevant now,
but she has no idea, and fervently asks of the gods

that they bring him back to her, keeping him safe and sound and faithful

(all too late, except for that last part of her plea).

Juno, deeply troubled by these piteous hopeless prayers,¹ sent her messenger, Iris, to the house of Sleep to arrange a nighttime visitation that might show her the sorry truth. Iris put on her rainbow cloak and glittered across the skies to the misty palace where the lord of dreams presides.

Far off in remotest Campania, beyond where Cimmerians live

in their gloomy caves, is a deeper and even darker grotto, the home of Sleep, where the Sun can never, even at midday, penetrate with his faintest beams. In that cloudy twilight no rooster dares disturb the silence with his rude crowing, no dog or nervous goose gives voice to challenge the passing stranger. No cattle low, nor do humans chatter and prate. Not even branches sigh in occasional passing breezes, but an almost total silence fills the air, in which one may detect the barely audible murmur of Lethe's snore from below in its gravelly bed, inviting an endless sleep. At the mouth of this cavern, red-headed poppies nod soporific blossoms, which radiate sweet and narcoleptic odors into oppressive air. No doors are allowed in this singular palace—lest their hinges should creak or their locks squeak to disturb the night. At the heart of an almost painted stillness, in a huge, darkened chamber, on a towering couch draped in the thickest black duvets, the god himself relaxes, drifting in languor. Around him the fragments of ill-assorted dreams hover over the floor in grand profusion like leaves the trees have let go to float through the currents of air and fall in their gorgeous billows below, making impromptu pillows.

Into this strange and breathless place, Iris intruded, brushing aside the phantoms, wishes, and fears that blocked the path she trod, which her brilliant garments lit as she moved. The gloom of the room retreated, and in the big bed the sleeper stirred, fluttered his heavy eyelids, which then in an instant closed, but he had seen and recognized his guest. He dozed as he gathered his energy and focused his attention until, at last, he was able to speak in a kind of groggy mutter words of welcome to his remote, obfuscate abode. He rested a moment and then remembered to ask her why she had come so far. "O somnolent one," she said, "mildest of all the gods, soother of souls, and healer

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of wearied and pain-wracked bodies and minds, I bring instructions.

Devise, if you can, some form to resemble King Ceyx, the Lord of Trachis, and send in that guise to his wife, the queen. Let her know the news of the wreck of his ship and the death of the husband she loved so well. Juno has bidden you do this." Then, with a hand to her mouth to conceal a yawn—for the place had begun to affect her, too—Iris withdrew, retracing her path to the shining heights of the sky from which she had come.

Now the father calls out to one of his thousand sons.

It's Morpheus he summons, who knows the secrets of human forms and can put on the look and gait and the habits of speech of any man in the most uncanny way, as his brother Icelos can put on disguises of birds or beasts or serpents that creep on the ground. (Phantasos, another brother, is said to be able to look like a rock or a tree or even a puddle of water—any inert thing. These three sons of Sleep present themselves at night to the minds of chieftains and kings, while their younger brothers appear

to the common folks to enact their dreams as well as they can.) Sleep rehearses Iris' message, and, waving a languid good-by with a hand that falls in midgesture exhausted back to the cushion, he sends Morpheus off to deal with this business while he resumes his now well-deserved rest.

On noiseless wings, his son darts through the gloom to arrive at Trachis, where, taking off the wings, he assumes the look of Ceyx, not as he was when he sailed, but Ceyx now—his drowned face a puffy caricature, his eyes dead and sad, and his beard and the hair on his head streaming water more bitter than tears that pour from his eyes as he leans over his sleeping wife to chide her: "Do you not know me? Has death undone me so? Look at me, I charge you, and know your husband's ghost. Your prayers have done no good, for I am gone, beyond all help or hope forever. I am not some bearer of tales, but the man himself to whom it happened. Get up from your bed and put on the garments

of mourning. Weep for my death. Do not allow my shadow to go down unlamented to the land of uncaring shadows." He spoke these words in the way that Ceyx used to speak, the tones and timbres his, and all the gestures and pauses

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those of the husband she'd loved. He even wept real tears,
which poured onto her skin and burned like liquid fire.
He seemed so real, she reached out her arms to try to hold him,
to embrace him one last time, but her arms enfolded only
agonizingly empty air, and she cried aloud:

"Wait for me! Come back. Where are you going? Wait,
and I will go with you, as wives are supposed to go with their
husbands."

The sound of her own voice woke her out of her dream,
and she looked around the darkened room, but he was gone.
One of her female attendants, hearing her cries, brought in
a lamp, and they held its flickering light in all the corners,
but nothing, nothing. . . . She wailed again, louder and longer,
and tore her sleeping garment and beat her breasts as she cried
for the worst thing in the world she could think of. It had
happened,

and living now was a pointless burden, an imposition
of her stupid body. She pulled at her hair to inflict some pain
to match the pain of her soul. Her old nurse tried to console her,
but Alcyone would take no comfort from her. "He's gone.
And I am gone. We have died together. I saw him myself.
The poor waterlogged hulk of his corpse was here in this room.
I reached out my hands to hold him, but he was already air,
a shadow's shadow—but his. I knew him, pale and naked
and dripping from all that water. . . ." She knelt in the place he
had stood

to search for the wet footprints he'd left, but they, too, were gone.
She thought she was going crazy. The world from moment to
moment

was not to be trusted. She rocked on the floor, and each breath
was a sob
or groan as she keened for her loss. "I told you. I knew it would
happen

and begged you not to go. I felt it was wrong, was risky—
that a terrible thing would happen. I knew the day you sailed
I had lost you forever. The ship, my hopes, and my life grew
smaller

all at the same time. You should have allowed me to come,
for then we would be together in death. This is no good,
no good—that I should be living and you be elsewhere or
nowhere.

I drown now in the air, am wrecked here on the land,

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where the currents are just as cold and cruel, and the pain is as
great

as waves of unbearable grief wash over me in dreadful
storms no soul can expect to survive. I see my end
and will not struggle against it. Instead, I shall cleave to your spirit
and dwindle away. Our ashes may not be inurned together,
but a single gravestone's letters shall spell out both our
names. . . ."

And here her words dissolved to the pure vowel sounds of
keening
from the depths of her hurt heart, which continued all night long.
Morning came, and the grieving woman walked forth from
the palace

and down to the strand where she'd stood to watch his boat
disappear,
dwindling into the offing. The iodine tang in the air
was reassuringly real. She remembered how on that other
terrible day she had stood there and kept her moans to herself,
which she felt welling up from her vitals. Now she could let
them loose
to the empty sea and the sky, where they did neither harm nor
good.

She remembered his last kiss, the way he turned to the ship,
walked a few steps, looked back, could not quite bear it,
continued

into the vessel and out to sea. . . . Again her eyes brimmed
with tears she rubbed away with instinctive fists. And she saw
something afloat out there in the harbor. A creature swimming?
Or no, it seemed not to move except as the waves and the current
tossed its indifferent bulk. An animal then? Some fish?
It drifted in toward shore, and she startled. A human corpse?
A shipwrecked sailor! The omen struck her, but what did it mean?
"Poor man, whoever you are," she started to say, "alas
for your wife and your children. . . ." But then her breath caught
in her chest

as it drifted closer still, and she saw it was he whom she mourned.
She shrieked with a birdlike cry into the seaside air,
and her fingernails raked her cheeks, and she tore her widow's
garments.

She waded into the surf and reached out her hands to the dreadful
hulk, calling out, "Ceyx, o dearest, o poor, poor Ceyx!
Is this how you return?" There was, at the harbor, a mole

of large stones men had built to shelter the cove. To these rocks she hurried and clambered out to the end, from which she leapt into the wash of the sea, or over it, skimming the tops of the waves, still crying that same mournful birdcry, long and drawn out, and her mouth drew out and hardened to beak.

She was, by the time she reached his floating corpse, a sea bird, and she settled onto this lifeless body and spread her arms, which now were wings to embrace and protect him. She tried to kiss

the cold flesh with her bill, and, by some trick of the ocean's heaving, it seemed that his head reached up to hers in response. He couldn't have felt her kissing. But better ask how the gods could not have felt it, could not therefore have shown their compassion,

for the dead body was changing, restored to life and renewed as another sea bird, that mate whose loss Alcyone mourned. Together they still fly just over the water's surface, and mate and rear their young, and for seven days each winter Alcyone broods on her nest that floats on the gentled water—for Aeolus, her father, then keeps the winds short-reined and grants to the sea for that week a respite of peace and safety for the sake of those helpless nestlings, his grandsons and granddaughters.

Thus, some waterfront geezer will tell you how things are, and point to the birds and recite their story. Another old salt will nod and point to another bird, that long-necked diver, and tell the yarn that explains why this one behaves as he does:

"No ordinary bird you see out there, but a fellow of royal blue blood, he comes from a line that traces back through Ilus and Assaracus, and Ganymede whom Jove took up with him to Olympus to serve him there, and old Laomedon, and Priam, the last of Trojan kings.

King Priam was his father, and Hector his half brother. . . . If he'd lived, and if fate had been otherwise, he could well have been

another Hector, as brave and famous. . . . Who knows how these things

happen in this life? On Hecuba Priam begot Hector, but on the daughter of the two-forked Granicus River, Alexirhoë, he begot in secret this one, Aesacus, who was born in Ida's foothills. Maybe that's why he hated palaces, city walls, the jostle of streets and alleys,

preferring the quieter life of the woods and the mountainsides. He kept to himself mostly but wasn't indifferent to women, and he took a liking and more than that to Hesperia, daughter of the River Cebren. He'd seen her drying her hair in the Sun on the banks of her father's stream. When the nymph saw him, she ran

as a doe runs from the wolf or a duck from the circling hawk. A chase, then, friendly enough, but suddenly she falls. It's a snake in the grass, a viper, and she has been running barefoot.

She's hurt by its bite, is killed, in fact. And the lover stops dead in his tracks and is stricken with grief and terrible guilt. He feels like the serpent's accomplice and wishes he'd never seen her or chased her.

He wants still to run after her, to comfort her or atone for what he has done. He calls aloud to the trees and rocks, 'I never meant to hurt her. I wish I had never beheld that lovely creature, whose ruin I seem to have caused. It's my own

fault, my blindness, my lust. . . .' And he runs to a high cliff top, where the waves have chewed a hollow below, and he hurls himself

over and into the sea. But Tethys pities the lad, retrieves him as he's falling, sticks feathers on him, and makes him into a kind of a bird. He isn't pleased, but keeps on diving into the water, surfacing, soaring again and plunging, over and over, as if his spirit were still intent on this precipitous ending. The spirit rebels, detests the body, the world, and it hurls the desperate creature down. Its feathers break its fall, and it slices unharmed into the waves. This only enrages him further. He keeps at it. Aesacus' frenzy and the exercises have made him stronger than ever. That bird is the one we call a merganser—

the *mergus* part meaning 'diver,' and the *anser* being 'goose.' It couldn't be any better designed to do what it does, with its small head, long neck, and slender legs like arrows. It spots a fish and dives down to the fish's death or its own—he doesn't seem to care a hell of a lot which one."