

107 Pelias sends Iason after the Golden Fleece. Aeson, also a son of Cretheus, and Autolycus' daughter Polymede were parents of Iason. He lived in Iolcus, which Pelias ruled after Cretheus. When Pelias asked an oracle about his kingdom, the god warned him against "the one-sandaled man." Now at first Pelias did not catch the meaning of the

oracle, but later on he understood. For while he was sacrificing by the sea to Poseidon, he sent for many people, among them Iason, to come and join in. Iason, who lived in the country because of his love of farming, hurried to the sacrifice. As he was crossing the river Anaurus, he lost one of his sandals in the current, and so he reached the sacrifice wearing only the other one. When Pelias saw this and interpreted the oracle, he went up to Iason and asked him what he as king would do, if an oracle had told him he was to be assassinated by one of the citizens. Iason's reply was made either because he was taken by surprise or because of Hera, who, in her wrath at Pelias for not honoring her, had planned Medeia as an evil for him. "The golden fleece," said Iason, "I would assign him the task of retrieving it." When Pelias heard this, he straightway commanded Iason to go after the fleece, which was in Colchis in a grove of Ares, hanging from an oak tree, and guarded by an ever wakeful serpent.

Argus builds the Argo. As preparation for his expedition Iason enlisted the help of Argus, son of Phrixus, who under the direction of Athena built a fifty-oared ship known as the Argo after its builder. In the prow Athena fitted a piece of the Dodonian oak that had the power of speech. When the ship was ready, Iason consulted the oracle, and the god sanctioned his gathering together the best men of Hellas and setting sail.

The Argonauts. The assembly of nobles consisted of the following: Tiphys, son of Hagnias, the helmsman; Orpheus, son of Oeagrus; Zetes and Calais, sons of Boreas; Castor and Polydeuces, sons of Zeus; Telamon and Peleus, sons of Aeacus; Heracles, son of Zeus; Theseus, son of Aegeus; Idas and Lynceus, sons of Aphareus; Amphiarus, son of Oicles; Coronus, son of Caeneus; Palaemon, son of Hephaestus or Aetolus; Cepheus, son of Aleus; Laertes, son of Arceisius; Autolycus, son of Hermes; Atalante, daughter of Schoeneus; Menoetius, son of Actor; Actor, son of Hippasus; Admetus, son of Pheres; Acastus, son of Pelias; Eurytus, son of Hermes; Meleager, son of Oeneus; Ancaeus, son of Lycurgus; Euphemus, son of Poseidon; Poeas, son of Thaumacus; Butes, son of Teleon; Phanus and Staphylus, sons of Dionysus; Erginus, son of Poseidon; Periclymenus, son of Neleus; Augeas, son of Helius; Iphiclus, son of Thestius; Argus, son of Phrixus; Euryalus, son of Mecisteus; Peneleos, son of Hippalmus; Leitus, son of Alector; Iphitus, son of Naubolus; Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, sons of Ares; Asterius, son of Cometes; and Polyphemus, son of Elatus.

At Lemnos. Under the command of Iason, these men set out and sailed to Lemnos. Lemnos happened to have no males at the time, and

was ruled by Hypsipyle, the daughter of Thoas. The reason for this was that the women of Lemnos had failed to give due honor to Aphrodite, in return for which she inflicted them with a foul odor. Whereupon their husbands took to bed women whom they captured from neighboring Thrace. For this dishonorable treatment the Lemnian women slew their fathers and husbands. Hypsipyle alone kept her father Thoas safely hidden. So when the Argonauts landed at gynaecocratic Lemnos, they had sex with the women. Hypsipyle slept with Iason, and bore two sons, Euneus and Nebrophonus.

116 *They slay Cyzicus.* From Lemnos they proceeded to the Doliones, whom Cyzicus ruled. He welcomed them cordially. They left there at night, but because of unfavorable winds they lost their way and returned to the Doliones, who mistook them for a Pelasgian force (the Doliones were constantly being attacked by the Pelasgians) and joined battle with them, both sides unrecognized by the other. The Argonauts slew many, including Cyzicus. When they found out the error in the daylight, they made lamentations, cropped their hair, and honored Cyzicus with an elaborate funeral. After the burial they sailed off to Mysia.

117 *Heracles and Polyphemus stay at Mysia.* They left Heracles and Polyphemus behind at Mysia. For Theiodamas' son Hylas, whom Heracles loved, while off on a mission to fetch water, was kidnaped by nymphs because of his beauty. Polyphemus heard him cry, and, thinking that he was being abducted by pirates, started after him with drawn sword. He ran into Heracles and told him, and while the two of them searched for Hylas, the ship departed. Polyphemus founded the polis in Mysia called

118 Cios, over which he ruled, but Heracles went back to Argos. (Herodorus, by the way, says that Heracles was not on the voyage at all at that point, but was in servitude to Omphale. Pherecydes, on the other hand, says that he had been left behind at Thessalian Aphetae, because the *Argo* had announced that she was not able to sustain his weight. But Demaratus held that he had sailed as far as Colchis, and Dionysius even says that he was the leader of the Argonauts.)

119 *Polydeuces slays Amycus.* From Mysia they left for the land of the Bebryces, whose king was Amycus, son of Poseidon and a Bithynian nymph. A powerful fellow, he would force arriving strangers to box with him, and in this manner destroy them. So he went down to the *Argo* when it put in, and challenged the best man aboard to a match. It was Polydeuces who took him on, killing him with a blow to the elbow. The Bebryces then made for Polydeuces, but the leaders of the expedition grabbed their weapons, slew many, and routed the rest.

*Phineus and the Harpies.* From there they again set out and sailed to Salmydessus in Thrace, where Phineus, a blinded prophet, lived. Some say that his father was Agenor, others say Poseidon. According to some the gods blinded him because he was telling men their futures. Others say that Boreas and the Argonauts mutilated him because he had blinded his own children in obedience to their stepmother. Still others say that Poseidon did it because Phineus had told the sons of Phrixus how to sail from Colchis to Hellas. The gods also sent on him the winged Harpies, who, when a table was prepared for Phineus, would swoop from the sky and grab most of the food. What little was left smelled too foul to be served. When the Argonauts sought information about their voyage, Phineus said that he would oblige them if they would exterminate the Harpies for him. So they set a meal on a table beside him, and the Harpies with a cry at once swooped down and seized it. When the sons of Boreas, Zetes and Calais, saw them, they unsheathed their swords and, since they were themselves winged, took after them through the air. Now it happened to be a decree of fate that the Harpies should die at the hands of the sons of Boreas, and also that the sons should meet their end whenever they failed to catch the object of their chase. So as the Harpies were being chased, one fell into the Peloponnesian river Tigres (which is now called the Harpys after her; she, by the way, was named Nicothoe by some, Aellopus by others), while the other (called Ocypete or Ocythoe, or, according to Hesiod, Ocypode) fled along past the Propontis until she reached the Echinades islands, which are now called the Strophades, because she turned when she reached them and fell exhausted on their shore along with her pursuer. Apollonius, however, in the *Argonautica* writes that both Harpies were pursued to the Strophades, but suffered no harm after swearing that they would no longer mistreat Phineus.

*The Symplegades.* Phineus, free of the Harpies, disclosed to the Argonauts their voyage, and warned them of the clashing rocks in the sea called the Symplegades. These were of great size, and when they were brought colliding together by powerful winds, they blocked off passage through the sea. A heavy fog hung over them and the sound of their collision was crashingly loud; not even the birds could get through them. Phineus told the Argonauts to let a rock-pigeon fly through the rocks, and, if they saw that it was safe, to sail through without giving it a second thought, but, if they saw the pigeon perishing, to make no effort to sail through. They heard this and set out, and, as they approached the rocks, they released a rock-pigeon from the prow. As it flew through, the meeting of the rocks sliced off the tip of its tail. So

they watched until the rocks drew apart and then, by dint of vigorous rowing and Hera's help, they made it through, although the tip of the ship's curved poop was trimmed off. But from that time forward the Symplegades were inactive, for it was fated that they would stop entirely when a ship penetrated them.

*They are received by Lycus.* The Argonauts made it to the land of the Mariandynians, where their king Lycus gave them a gracious welcome. The prophet Idmon was wounded by a boar and died there, as did also Tiphys. Ancaeus took over as helmsman.

127 *Aeetes, Medeia, and the Golden Fleece.* They then sailed past the Thermodon river and Mount Caucasus, and reached the river Phasis in Colchis. As soon as they were anchored in the harbor, Iason went to Aeetes, explained his assignment from Pelias, and asked for the fleece. Aeetes promised to give it to him, if Iason by himself could yoke his bronze-hooved bulls, two immense wild beasts which Hephaestus had given him, with hooves of bronze and fire shooting from their mouths. Aeetes ordered him to yoke them and sow some dragon-teeth which he had received from Athena: they were half of the teeth which Cadmus had sown in Thebes. As Iason pondered the problem of yoking the bulls, Medeia fell in loved with him. She was the daughter of Aeetes and Eidiua daughter of Oceanus, and was a sorceress. In fear that Iason might be killed by the bulls, unknown to her father she offered to work with him in yoking them and getting the fleece, if he would swear to marry her and take her back to Hellas with him. He swore, and she gave him a drug, which, before yoking the bulls, he was to rub on his shield, spear, and body. So anointed, she said, he would be invulnerable to both fire and iron for one whole day. And she explained to him that, when he had sown the dragon-teeth, armed warriors would rise up from the earth to attack him. When he saw them grouped together he was to throw stones into their midst, keeping his distance, and as they were fighting each other over the stones, he was to slay them. Iason noted this, rubbed on the drug, and went to the grove of the temple in search of the bulls, which he yoked despite their attack of fire. Next, he sowed the dragon-teeth, and armed men did rise up from the earth. Wherever he saw a quantity of them, he threw stones without their seeing him, and as they fought with each other he moved in and slaughtered them.

132 Aeetes, however, still would not surrender the fleece, even though the bulls had been yoked. It was his plan, rather, to burn the Argo and slay those sailing on it. But Medeia anticipated him by leading Iason in the night to the fleece. She put the serpent guarding it to sleep with her drugs, took the fleece, and went with Iason to the Argo. Her brother

Apsyrtus also accompanied her. And in the night the Argonauts set sail with these two aboard.

When Aeetes discovered what Medeia had dared do, he set out in pursuit of the *Argo*. As Medeia saw him gaining on them, she slew her brother, dismembered him, and threw the pieces into the sea. Aeetes stopped to gather up his son's limbs, and thus fell behind in his pursuit. So he turned back and buried the limbs that he had recovered, and called the burial site Tomi. But he sent many Colchians out to search for the *Argo*, threatening them with Medeia's punishment if they failed to return with her. They split up and conducted their search one here, another there.

*Zeus sends a storm.* As the Argonauts were sailing past the River Eridanus, Zeus, angered by the slaughter of Apsyrtus, attacked them with a wild storm which drove them off course. And as they sailed past the Apsyrtides Islands, the ship herself told them that the anger of Zeus would not end unless they went to Ausonia for purification by Circe of Apsyrtus' murder. So they proceeded past the lands of the Ligyes and the Celtians, through the Sardonian sea, past Tyrrhenia, and reached Aea, where they became suppliants of Circe and were purified.

*The Sirens, Scylla, Charybdis, and the Phaeacians.* As they sailed past the Sirens, Orpheus kept the Argonauts in check by singing a song that offset the effect of the sisters' singing. The only one to swim off to them was Butes, whom Aphrodite snatched up and settled at Lilybaeum.

The ship then came successively to Charybdis, Scylla, and the wandering rocks called Planctae, beyond which a mighty flame and smoke were seen rising. But Hera sent for Thetis and the Nereids, who escorted the ship through these hazards.

Passing the island of Thrinacia, which held the cattle of Helius, they made their way to Cercyra, the island of the Phaeacians, whose king was Alcinous. When the Colchians could not find the *Argo*, some of them took up dwelling in the Ceraunian mountains, while others went to Illyris and settled in the Apsyrtides Islands. But still others reached the Phaeacians, where they discovered the *Argo*, and they demand Medeia from Alcinous. He said that if she had already had intercourse with Iason, he would give her to him, but if she was still a virgin, he would return her to her father. But his wife Arete in the meantime married Medeia to Iason, and so the Colchians moved in with the Phaeacians, and the Argonauts sailed forth with Medeia.

*The altar of Apollo Aegletes.* They sailed by night into a savage storm, but Apollo, standing on the Melantian ridges, shot a shaft of

lightning into the sea with his arrow and made it dazzle. The Argonauts spied an island nearby where they anchored, naming it Anaphe for its bright and unexpected appearance. They set up an altar to Apollo Aegletes, made sacrifices, and then held a merry feast. Twelve serving-maids, given by Arete to Medeia, joked and played with the nobles, from which event it is the custom even now for the women to make jokes at this sacrificial rite.

140 Talos. After they left Anaphe they were prevented from landing at Crete by Talos. This creature some say was one of the bronze generation and was actually a bronze man; others hold that he was given to Minos by Hephaestus and was a bull. He had one blood vessel that extended from his neck down to his ankles, the lower end of which was held in place by a bronze stud. This Talos would run round the island rapidly three times a day as a security patrol, and in that capacity, when he saw the Argo sailing toward the shore, he threw stones at it. He died from the deceits of Medeia, who some say drove him mad with drugs; others allege that she promised to make him immortal and then removed the stud, so that his ichor all flowed out and he expired. Still others say that an arrow from Poëas in the ankle finished him.

142 The return of the Argo and the death of Pelias. After spending one night on Crete, they went on to Aegina to take on water, turning this activity into a contest. From there they sailed a course between Euboea and Locris on to Iolcus. The voyage took four months from start to finish.

143 Pelias, who had abandoned any fear that the Argonauts would return, wanted to slay Aëson. But Aëson asked permission to commit suicide, and at the end of a sacrifice he fearlessly drank the bull's blood and died. Iason's mother, after imprecating a curse upon Pelias, hanged herself. She left an infant son named Promachus, but Pelias slew even him. When Iason arrived, he gave Pelias the fleece: he was anxious to attend

144 to the injustices against him, but waited for the opportune time. Meanwhile, he sailed with the other nobles to the Isthmus, where he dedicated the Argo to Poseidon. Then he encouraged Medeia to figure out how Pelias might undergo justice at his hands. Medeia went to Pelias' palace, where she persuaded his daughters to cut their father up butcher-style and boil him, assuring them that she would rejuvenate him with her drugs. To convince them she dismembered and boiled a ram, which she then made into a lamb. So they compliantly butchered their father and set him on to boil. Acastus buried his father with the help of the citizens of Iolcus, and banished Iason and Medeia from the land.

145 Medeia and Iason in Corinth. They moved to Corinth, where they prospered for ten years. Then King Creon of Corinth promised his

daughter Glauce to Iason, who married her after divorcing Medeia. Medeia thereupon invoked the gods by whom Iason had made his oaths to her, and, after repeatedly casting his ingratitude in his teeth, she sent the bride a robe impregnated with drugs. When the girl put it on she was burnt to death by a terrible fire, along with her father who was trying to help her. Next Medeia slew Mermerus and Pheres, her sons by Iason, and escaped to Athens on a chariot drawn by winged dragons which she had received from Heliös. In another account she left her sons behind, inasmuch as they were still infants, setting them before she fled as suppliants on the altar of Hera Acraea; but the Corinthians took them from the sanctuary and wounded them thoroughly.

Medeia in Athens and after. Medeia proceeded to Athens, married Aegeus there and had a son Medus. Later on, because of a plot against Theseus, she was cast out of Athens along with her son and lived as a fugitive. The son became a conqueror of many barbarian people, and named the lands he ruled collectively Media. He died in a campaign against the Indians. Medeia went to Colchis unrecognized, where she found that Aeetes had been deprived of his sovereignty by his brother Perses. So she slew Perses and restored the rule to her father.

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by Apollodorus

Translated, with notes and indices  
by Keith Aldrich

Drawings by Voula Tsouvelli



Coronado Press: Lawrence, Kansas  
1975