

Chapter 4 On Marcus's estate

Some minutes later, they were standing at the gate of Marcus's villa.

"Listen," said Maya. "I can hear voices inside the gate."

The two girls looked carefully into the courtyard. On the other side of the gate, a group of young gladiators was standing around and talking.



While the boys were still talking, a guard with a big black beard hurried towards them.

"That's enough talking, gladiators! Your break is over."

"Where's Antonius? We haven't seen him," said one of the boys.

"And he's not the only one," said another. "Other boys have disappeared too."

"What do I know?" said the guard. "Maybe they walked off in the night. Maybe they saw Medusa. Maybe Medusa turned them into stone."

"Oh no," cried Maya.

The guard looked in the girls' direction. "What are you doing?" he shouted. "Get out of here!"

"Quick, Maya!" said Martia, and the two girls hurried back into the forest.

"Something strange is going on, Martia," Maya said. "A lot of boys have disappeared. Just like Philo."

"Let's look around," Martia said. She was scared and her heart was beating loudly in her chest, but she wanted to find her brother. "Maybe we can find out something about Philo. Before it gets dark"

The two girls started looking around the forest, but there was no sign of Philo. "I'm not sure what we're looking for here," Maya said. "Maybe we should go back to Marcus's villa."

"Wait," Martia cried. "There's someone next to that tree!"



"Is it really just a statue?" Martia asked suddenly. "Or ... is it someone that Medusa has turned into stone?"

"Oh, stop it, Martia," said Maya. "You don't really believe that story!"

"Look," said Martia. "There's another one over there."

They looked around the forest for another hour and found more stone figures.

"There's still no sign of Philo," said Martia. "It's getting dark now, Maya. Maybe we should go home."

They walked out of the trees and started down the road towards Iscalis.

"There's another stone figure," cried Martia, and pointed back into the trees.

"We haven't seen that one yet."

They walked over to look at it.

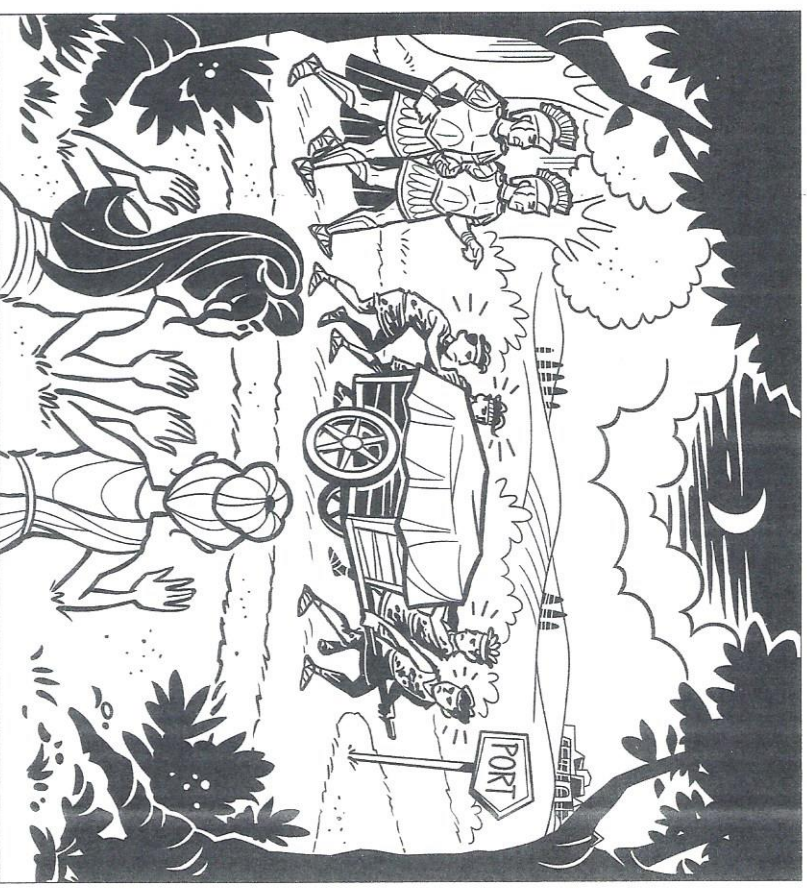
When Maya saw the stone face, her mouth dropped open and she let out a little cry. She knew that face. There was no doubt about it.



"So, the story is true," Maya said. "Poor Philo."
 Martia looked at her sadly. "What can we do, Maya?"
 "We can't stay here, Martia," Maya said. "It will be dark very soon. We mustn't be in the forest then – or the Gorgon might come and kill us too."
 Suddenly, as they were walking back towards the road, the girls heard a noise.
 "What's that?" whispered Maya.
 The noise got louder.
 "I'm scared," said Martia. "Let's hide."
 The girls knelt down behind a bank next to the road.
 "Close your eyes, Maya," Martia whispered. "Then you won't see Medusa's face and she can't turn you into stone."

Chapter 5 A cart in the night

While the two girls were waiting, the noise grew louder and louder.
 "Are your eyes still closed?" Martia asked.
 Then suddenly, Maya realized what the noise was.
 "Martia," she said. "That isn't Medusa. Listen ... it's just a cart on the road."
 Both girls opened their eyes. They got up quietly and looked over the bank.



While they were watching the cart, the moon came out.
 "Where are they going?" Maya asked.
 "That's the road to the port of Iscalis. Marcus built it last year. The other road goes to the town," Martia answered.
 Suddenly one of the guards called out, "Time for a rest. We'll go over there. We can leave the cart here until we're ready to go on."

The guards moved away from the road and took the boys with them.
"You can rest for a bit," one of the guards said to the boys.

"But don't get too comfortable," shouted the other. "We won't be here for long." The boys lay down. It was clear that they were tired and wanted to sleep.

"Let's go over there," said the first guard. "We can sit down for a bit and have a drink."

While the guards were drinking and laughing, Maya spoke to Martia.

"Let's go and see what's in the cart," she whispered. "Those guards are so noisy, they won't hear a thing."



Martia explained. "The lead mine is near here. Marcus runs it for the Roman Empire. But the lead from the mine always goes to Iscaldis, not to Iscaldis."

"So why is it going to Iscaldis now?" Maya asked. "There must be a reason." Suddenly Martia's eyes opened wide. "The lead is worth a lot of money," she said. "Maybe Marcus is stealing it."

"Stealing from the Roman Empire!" cried Maya. "That's serious."

"It would explain why they're out at night," said Martia.

"Of course!" shouted Maya. "People would see them during the day."

"Maya," said Martia. "We must run back to Iscaldis and tell the commander about this. I know where the Roman fort is."

"Yes," Maya agreed. "Quick, let's go."

Chapter 6 Medusa's secret

As Martia and Maya turned to go back to Iscaldis, the moon disappeared again behind a cloud.

"It's so dark now," said Maya.

"Listen," said Martia. "Can you hear that sound? What is it?"

"It isn't a cart this time," said Maya.

"Listen," Martia whispered. "There's something behind us."

The two girls turned around. Maya screamed.



Maya tried to move, but she couldn't. She felt as cold as ice. She couldn't say a word. Medusa was hissing loudly.

"Is this really happening?" Maya thought. "I've seen Medusa, and she's turning me into stone."

Suddenly Martia was shouting.

"You monster! You killed my brother! You turned him into stone!"

Martia ran at Medusa and knocked her down. The hissing stopped. As the Gorgon fell to the ground, she hit her head against a tree and let out a soft cry.