

# The Winged Horse

Rosalind Kerven

- 1 A lone seagull was flying over the barren country of Kisthene, swooping, soaring, a bright white streak in the gathering dusk.
- 3 All at once, there was a movement below. Medusa the Gorgon darted out of hiding, and her stony glance pierced the seagull like an arrow, and turned it into solid rock. The bird fell headlong out of the sky.
- 6 Medusa and her sister Gorgons ran capering over the rocks, snarling and clawing as they fought over the dead bird. Stone prey: their joy and their delight since time began.
- 8 A thousand miles away, Perseus sat talking with three gods: Hades, Hermes and Athene.
- 9 "Perseus," said Athene, "you must kill Medusa, and bring back her sliced-off head. Borrow Hermes' winged sandals, to carry you to her lair. Take Hades' helmet of invisibility to help you creep up on her unseen. And take my mirror-shield to save you from her stony glance."
- 13 The gods vanished, and Perseus buckled on his sword, and put Hades' helmet on his head and Hermes' sandals on his feet. Then he took Athene's glittering shield and flew, wind-fast, to Kisthene and the Gorgons' lair.
- 16 The three Gorgons were snuffling and snorting in their cave, asleep. Their snake-hair bristled at the whirr of Perseus' winged sandals, but he was invisible: unaware of the danger, Medusa and her sisters slept on.
- 19 Perseus turned his back on the Gorgons. Then he held up Athene's mirror-shield to guide his movements behind his back. He lifted his sword and sliced off Medusa's head. It fell on the floor and the deadly eyes flickered open. If Perseus had been looking straight at them, he would have been turned to stone.
- 23 He stuffed the head into a sack. Then he jumped back in amazement. Out of the blood from Medusa's neck a winged horse, Pegasus, was appearing and growing before his eyes.
- 26 Pegasus stretched his wings, whinnied and pawed the ground. Then, to Perseus' surprise, he spoke human words. "Quick, Perseus! Jump on my back. Hurry!"
- 28 Perseus scrambled onto Pegasus' back, and Pegasus reared and beat his wings for take-off. The sound woke the sleeping Gorgons, and he soared away just in the nick of time, leaving them clawing angrily at empty air.
- 31 Pegasus carried Perseus safely home, and set him down in a grassy field. Then he soared away to his master Zeus, high in Olympus. Perseus watched him climbing higher and higher, like a dazzling constellation in the sky.