

King Midas and the Golden Touch

Once upon a time, a long time ago in ancient Greece, there lived a king named Midas. King Midas loved three things more than anything else in the world - his little daughter, his rose garden, and gold. Nothing gave him more pleasure than seeing his little daughter picking roses in the garden, roses she placed in a golden vase to decorate the castle.

One night, while strolling through his rose garden, the king stumbled over a satyr. A satyr was half man, half goat. This satyr looked half starved and very ill. King Midas brought the satyr into his castle. He made sure the satyr was washed and fed and tucked into bed for a good night's sleep. When the satyr woke up the next morning, his fever was gone. The king and the satyr had quite a nice chat over breakfast. King Midas was surprised to hear that the satyr belonged to the powerful god Dionysus, the god of wine and truth. That very day, the king personally took the satyr home in his very best chariot. The satyr might only be a servant, but he was the servant of a god, and deserved the very best treatment, which is something the king would have done anyway, because the king had a very kind heart.

As it turned out, the satyr was more than a servant. To Dionysus, the satyr was his teacher and good friend. Dionysus told the king he would grant any one wish the king made to thank him for taking such good care of his friend. The king did not wish anything for his daughter because he had given her everything she wanted and a whole bunch more besides. He did not wish anything for his rose garden because everyone knew he grew the finest roses in all the world. That left gold. King Midas wished that everything he touched would turn to gold.

The king did not have much hope that his wish had been granted, because if it *had* been granted, his chariot would have turned to gold when he climbed aboard to go home, and it had not. Still, he was happy he had helped the satyr, and not just because the satyr was the servant of a god. Satyrs were not always treated kindly in the ancient Greek world because they looked rather different, being half man and half goat. When the king arrived back at his castle, he pulled out a chair to sit down at his table. The minute he touched it, the chair turned to gold. He touched the table. He touched a vase. As soon as he touched them, they turned to gold. King Midas raced through his castle. Everything he touched turned to gold! He was so happy. He shouted to his servants to cook him a feast in celebration!

His servants were very fond of King Midas. They knew he was foolish, but he was rather a dear. So they cooked and cooked and served him a feast. That's when the trouble started. Everything looked and smelled so good that King

Midas did not wait for his daughter to show up for lunch. He reached out and grabbed a fistful of food. The food made quite a clatter when he dropped it back on the table in shock. It had turned to gold in his fist. He touched other food. Whatever he touched turned to gold. He tried leaning over and ripping a piece of meat with his teeth, but that did not help. The meat turned to gold in his mouth. The king's eyes filled with fear. He knew if he could not eat, he would starve. This was terrible. The king did not know what to do.

King Midas wandered sadly out to his rose garden. His little daughter was in the garden, picking roses. When she saw her father, she ran into his arms for a hug and turned to gold. King Midas hung his head and cried. As his tears fell on his precious roses they turned to gold, but the king did not care. He did not care about his roses or his gold or himself. Dionysus, hear my prayer, the king begged. Take my wish back! Please, take my wish back and save my daughter!

One last time, the king's wish was granted.