

King Midas and the Golden Touch

Adapted by Mistress Dervila ni Leonon

Based on Ovid's Metamorphoses

Ancient Greek

Time: About 3:41

Bacchus, the god of wine and chaos, was traveling through Greece. The women who worshipped him, the Bacchantes, were with him, as was his favorite traveling companion, old drunken Silenus. They drank and reveled their way across Greece, but when they reached Sparta, Silenus got lost. He was so drunk he just fell over where he was and lay there.

Some peasants found him and recognized him, so they took him to their king, Midas. King Midas was a devout worshipper of Bacchus, so he was thrilled to see Silenus. He took him in, cleaned him up, fed him, and they drank deep into the night.

Midas found Bacchus quickly - all he needed to do was look for chaos and drunkenness - and brought Silenus to Bacchus himself.

"There you are, my boon companion of the vine! I grieved for your loss! King Midas, thank you for returning him to me! I grant you one wish for doing me this favor."

Midas was greedy, and had always wished for one thing. "O lord of wine, I wish that everything I touch turn to gold."

[pause] "You are certain, good Midas? *[small smile]* Very well. Everything you touch will turn to gold. I wish you joy of it!" *[laughs]*

Midas walked back, his heart singing. His head was filled with dreams of gold - he would be richer than Croesus <spelling? pronunciation?> himself! He played with the golden touch, tapping plants and leaves as he went by, grinning as they changed. He could hardly believe his luck!

He arrived back at his palace, and ordered a feast set out for him. He went around and turned his plate, bowl, goblet, spoon, and knife into gold. He admired the gold, its beauty and its sheen. Then the servants set food before him. *[dawning horror throughout this sequence]* He picked up his golden goblet, filled with red wine. The wine touched his lips - and turned to solid gold. King Midas was taken aback. He touched his bread - solid gold. He brought food to his lips - solid gold again. His servants, watching, *[stare in horror]* began to back away.

Then his daughter rushed out. *[arms open wide]*

"Father! Where have you been?"

[Midas waves her off, backs away] "No, no NO! Stay away, child!" A servant caught her just as she was about to throw herself into her father's arms.

[despair, looks around] "Oh, what have I done? What have I done? Oh, Bacchus! This is no blessing, it is a curse! I pray you, god of the vine, lift my foolish wish away from me!"

And Bacchus appeared *[laughing]* "Are you certain you wish to be rid of the golden touch?"

"Yes, oh yes great god!"

"You learned more quickly than I thought, foolish little king. Go wash in the river Pactolus and you will be free of your wish."

Midas hurried to the river, touching nothing on the way. He had had enough of gold. He washed in the river, and just as the god said, he was free of the golden touch. Now the sands of that river sprinkled with gold, and Midas is a wiser man.

Full bibliography of source:

Ovid, The Metamorphoses. Translated by Horace Gregory. New York: New American Library, 1958. ISBN: 0-451-62622-2

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