

Theseus's Adventures

Theseus was a great hero in Greek mythology. As a young man, he set out on the difficult and dangerous journey from his birthplace, Troezen, to the Greek capital, Athens. He experienced many adventures during his journey. This extract describes two of those adventures.

Theseus continued his journey in peace, until he came to the Isthmus of Corinth, where two adventures awaited him. The first was with a cruel giant named Sinis, nicknamed The Pine-bender, whose usual practice was to bend some huge pine until its top touched the ground, and call to any unsuspecting passer-by to seize it and
 5 lend him a helping hand for a moment. Then, as soon as the innocent stranger had complied with his request, he would suddenly let go the pine, which, freed from his gigantic grasp, sprang back to its upright position, and hurled the unfortunate traveler way up in the air, to be dashed to pieces against the rocky mountain side.

Theseus, who had already heard of the giant's
 10 stratagem*, skillfully eluded the danger, and finally caused Sinis to perish by the same cruel death which he had dealt out to so many others.

In one place the Isthmus of Corinth was exceedingly narrow, and the only practicable pathway led
 15 along a rocky ledge, guarded by a robber named Sciron, who forced all who tried to pass him to wash his feet. While the traveler was thus engaged, and knelt in the narrow pathway to do his bidding, he would suddenly raise his foot, kick him over the side, and hurl him down into the sea below, where a huge tortoise was ever waiting with gaping jaws
 20 to devour the victims.



Instead of yielding* to Sciron's exactions*, Theseus drew his sword, and by his determined bearing so terrified the robber, that he offered him a free passage. This offer, however, did not satisfy Theseus, who said he would sheathe his sword only on condition that Sciron performed for him the menial office* he had imposed upon so
 25 many others. Sciron dared not refuse, and obeyed in fear and trembling; but he was doomed never to molest* any one again, for Theseus kicked him over the precipice*, into the breakers, where the tortoise feasted upon his remains with as keen a relish as upon former victims.

An abridged extract from *Myths of Greece and Rome* by H.A. Guerber.

Glossary

stratagem — trick

yielding — giving in

exactions — demands

menial office — lowly task

molest — attack

precipice — steep cliff