

## **“Midas and the Golden Touch”**

### **Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Book 11.100-105, 119-126**

Blessed and cursed with the infamous “touch of gold,” Midas is one of the more memorable characters to be found in Ovid’s motley collection of myths entitled *The Metamorphoses* (“The Changes”).

**Section I. 100-105.** After Midas, the king of Phrygia, took in Silenus, the god of wine, Bacchus is delighted to be reunited with his foster-father (*altor*) and offers to grant any favor Midas might choose. Unfortunately, the mortal king is driven by avarice and asks that everything he touch turn to gold.

**Section II. 119-126.** As he goes about touching everything within reach, ecstatic over his newly-granted power, Midas discovers there is a drawback to his new power.

### Text and Translation

#### Section I

Huic deus optandi gratum — sed inutile! — fecit 100  
To this man the god gave (lit. “created”) the pleasing — but useless! —

muneris arbitrium, gaudens altore recepto.  
power of choosing a gift, rejoicing in (his) foster-father returned.

100. **optandi:** *opto* (1): choose; genitive gerundive (“of choosing”) agreeing with *muneris* (line 102)  
**gratum:** *gratus, -a, -um*: pleasing  
**inutile:** *inutilis, -e*: useless
101. **muneris:** *munus, -eris, n*: gift  
**arbitrium:** *arbitrium, -i, n.*: power  
**gaudens:** *gaudeo, -ere, gavisus sum*: rejoice  
**altore:** *altor, -oris, m*: foster-father

Ille, male usurus donis, ait “Effice, quicquid  
That man, about to use the gifts poorly, said, “Make (it that) whatever

corpore contigero, fulvum vertatur in aurum.”  
I will have touched with my body, might be turned into tawny gold.”

Adnuit optatis nocituraque munera solvit  
Liber granted (the things) desired and paid the gift(s) (though they were) going to harm

Liber et indoluit quod non meliora petisset. . . 105  
and grieved because he had not sought better things.

102. **male:** poorly  
**usurus:** *utor, -i, usus* (deponent verb; + abl. object): “(he) about to use”  
**effice:** *efficio, -ere, feci, factum*: make it (that . . .)  
**quicquid:** (indefinite pronoun) whatever
103. **contigero:** *contingo, -ere, -tigi, -tactum*: touch  
**fulvum:** *fulvus, -a, -um*: tawny  
**aurum:** *aurum, -i, n.*: gold
104. **adnuit:** *adnuo, -ere, adnui, adnutum*: grant (the subject is Liber)  
**optatis:** *optatum, -i, n.*: wish  
**nocitura:** *noceo, -ere, nocui, nocitum*: harm  
**munera:** *munus, muneris, n.*: gift; here, plural for singular  
**solvit:** *solvo, -ere, solvi, solutum*: pay
105. **Liber:** *Liber, -eri, m.*: another name for the god Bacchus  
**indoluit:** *indolesco, -ere, indolui*: grieve  
**petisset:** = *petivisset*

## Section II

. . . Gaudenti mensas posuere ministri

To (him) rejoicing, (his) servants set tables

exstructas dapibus nec tostae frugis egentes:

heaped up with meals and not lacking in (lit. “of”) baked bread:

120

tum, vero, sive ille sua Cerealia dextra

then, truly, whether that man had touched with his own

munera contigerat, Cerealia dona rigebant,

right hand (the gifts) of Ceres, the gifts of Ceres became stiff,

sive dapes avido convellere dente parabat,

or if he was preparing to tear apart a meal with a greedy tooth,

119. **gaudenti:** see line 101

**mensas:** *mensa*, -ae, f.: table

**posuere:** = *posuerunt*

**ministri:** *minister*, -tri, m.: servant

120. **exstructas:** *exstruo*, -ere, *exstruxi*, *exstructum*: heap up

**dapibus:** *daps*, *dapis*, f.: meal

**tostae:** *tostus*, -a, -um: baked

**frugis:** *frux*, *frugis*, f.: grain; here, bread

**egentes:** *egeo*, -re, *egui*: lack; with genitive (literally, “lacking of...”)

121. **vero:** (adverb) truly

**sive...sive:** (conj.) whether... or if

**Cerealia:** *Cerealis*, -e: belonging to Ceres, the goddess of grain; here, “of Ceres”

**dextra (manu):** *dexter*, -tra, -trum: right (hand)

122. **rigebant:** *rigeo*, -ere: become stiff

123. **avidus:** *avidus*, -a, -um: greedy

**convellere:** *convello*, -ere, -velli, -vulsum: tear apart

**dente:** *dens*, *dentis*, m.: tooth

lammina fulva dapes admoto dente premebat;  
he was pressing golden sheets of metal (for) food when (his) tooth was applied;

miscuerat puris auctorem muneris undis:  
had he mixed the giver of the gift with pure water(s):

125

fusile per rictūs aurum fluitare videres.  
you would see liquid gold flow over his open mouth.

124. **lammina:** *lammina*, -ae, f.: sheet of metal  
**admoto:** *admoveo*, -ere, -movi, -motum: apply
125. **miscuerat:** *misceo*, -ere, *miscui*, *mixtum*: mix  
**puris:** *purus*, -a, -um: pure  
**auctorem:** here, giver  
**undis:** *unda*, -ae, f.: water
126. **fusile:** *fusilis*, -e: liquid  
**per:** here, over  
**rictūs:** *rictus*, -ūs, m.: open mouth; here, plural for singular  
**fluitare:** *fluito* (1): flow