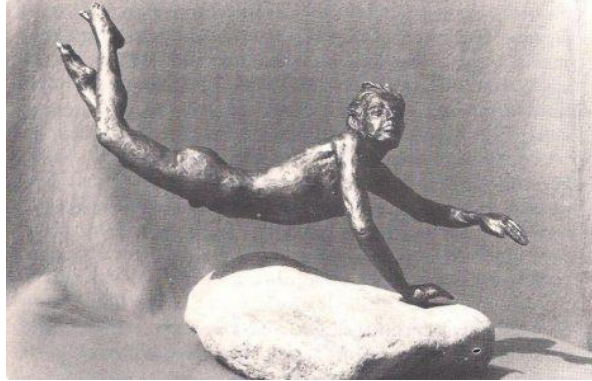


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SICILY

COLAPESCE: THE LEGEND OF THE MAN WHO WAS HALF MAN AND HALF FISH



This is the story of a Sicilian boy named Cola but everyone called him “Colapesce (pesce=fish)” because he loved the sea and he spent his days swimming and diving. He lived in Messina, a beautiful city on the east coast of Sicily, with his mother. She didn’t like Cola’s strange habits and she used to tell him that sooner or later he would have changed into a fish. Colapesce loved to go out and to tell everyone about the wonderful treasures he had seen while diving.



One day Federico II king of Sicily heard about Colapesce and about his strange adventures. The King had a daughter, Costanza.

She was very beautiful. A lot of brave boys had fallen in love with the pretty princess but had failed to pass the challenges the king had set in order to give his daughter’s hand; Costanza hoped that Cola could succeed and become her heroic husband.

The King decided to test the stories about Colapesce’s skills so he threw a golden goblet into the sea.

Colapesce disappeared until midday, then he rose from the sea, holding the golden goblet.



The King was very impressed but still not satisfied, so he threw his crown into the swell. Cola spent 2 days down in the depths seeking the crown and on the third day rose from the now still sea at dawn, holding the crown. Colapesce told the King that whilst recovering the crown he discovered that Sicily is held up by three pillars, the first was in good condition, the second was cracked, and the third was about to fall after carrying the weight of Etna and the towns of Messina and Catania, and that he supposed that Sicily would be soon submerged by the sea.



The king paid no attention to the boy's words, and Princess Costanza, impressed by the brave boy, threw her ring into the sea and told the boy that if she said if he brought the ring back to her she would marry him.

Cola was really tired but he dived once more into the depths where he saw that the third pillar was now completely broken. Over the love of Costanza, Colapesce chose to honour his community and to stop the island from sinking. He swam over to the column and took all the weight of the island on his shoulders.



Everybody said that Colapesce had become half man and half fish and had remained under the sea, helping the third column to remain stable. From that moment on nobody saw him anymore. It is said that he is still there, holding up Sicily and preventing it from sinking.

