In ancient Greece, on the island of Cyprus, there lived a handsome and talented sculptor named Pygmalion. He loved his work and would spend hours carving beautiful ivory statues, always at his happiest when immersed in his art.

One day he chose a large, beautiful piece of ivory, and worked for many long hours at it, chiseling and hammering until he finished. It was a statue of a beautiful lady, so exquisitely carved that she seemed almost alive.

Pygmalion at once fell in love with his creation - he thought it was so beautiful, and he clothed the figure, gave it jewels, and named it Galatea, which means "sleeping love".

Treating Galatea as if she were his girlfriend, he brought his ivory statue shells and pebbles, little birds and flowers of all colors, anything that he thought would please his love. He was obsessed!

Now, you must understand that Pygmalion was so into his art that he had vowed never to marry. He had no time for girls, he would always say, just his art and his sculptures.

There was a deeper reason for his aversion to women. The females of that area of Cyprus had failed to pay homage to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who was also the patron deity of Cyprus.

To punish this disrespect, Aphrodite had cursed the women to a loveless life of prostitution, and this was what had caused Pygmalion to want nothing to do with them in particular, and women in general.

Still, the more he gazed upon Galatea, the more he wished that he had a wife just like her, but alive. The statue was so gorgeous and perfect that he dreamed that she were flesh and blood, responsive to his words and touch.
During a big festival in honor of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, Pygmalion went to the temple of Aphrodite to pray for a wife just like the statue in his home. His prayers were so fervent and heart-felt, and his passion so great, that the great goddess took notice.

Wanting to see for herself what all the fuss was about, Aphrodite visited the home of the sculptor and was delighted to see the ivory Galatea. She couldn't help but think that the statue looked much like herself, it was so perfect.

Indeed, Pygmalion had fashioned his ivory lover after the most beautiful woman alive, Aphrodite.

Pleased and flattered she immediately brought the statue to life, not even waiting for Pygmalion to come home. When the sculptor returned to his house and kissed Galatea as was his custom, he was startled at her warmth.

As he showered her with kisses he was beside himself with joy at discovering that slowly the ivory was turning into flesh. Galatea smiled down at him and spoke adoring words to her loving creator.

Galatea told Pygmalion that it was his deep love for her that had convinced the goddess of love to bring her to life. Together they prayed and gave thanks to the great Aphrodite.

Soon thereafter the two got married and invited Aphrodite as their guest of honor at the wedding. Pygmalion never forgot to pay homage to Aphrodite for his good fortune. He and Galatea brought gifts to her altar and sang her praises as long as they lived.

Aphrodite blessed them with happiness and love in return, and permitted both of them to live long and blissful lives. They had two children, a boy named Paphos and a girl called Metharme. The city of Paphos in Cyprus was named after their son.