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opening extract from

The Adventures of Odysseus

written by

**Hugh Lupton and Daniel
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For my parents, remembering the mosquito-ridden evening at
Kings School that started it all — H. L.

For Mick and Margaret, my first storytellers — D. M.

For Scott Croucher — C. B.

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THE ADVENTURES OF ODYSSEUS

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CHRISTINA BALIT


Barefoot Books
Celebrating Art and Story

• PROLOGUE •

One bright morning Prince Paris was out hunting. He was climbing the high rocky slopes of Mount Ida. Far below him his father's walled city, the city of Troy, lay like a circlet of stone, a shining diadem of towers. As he climbed there was a sudden shimmer of light to one side of the stony mountain path.

Paris turned and saw Hermes, the messenger of the Gods. He knew him at once by his winged sandals. Hermes smiled his inscrutable, playful smile. 'Paris,' he said, 'I have been sent by great father Zeus, the Cloud-compeller. He has told me to tell you that you must decide which of these three Goddesses is the most beautiful.'

Hermes clicked his fingers and Paris was blinded by light. He covered his face with his hands. Slowly he opened his fingers and saw standing before him the three most powerful Goddesses of all.

There was Hera, the wife of Zeus, the Queen of Heaven, terrifying in her brilliance. There was owl-eyed Athene, the fierce and implacable Goddess of War and Wisdom. And there was beautiful Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, to whose lilting tune the whole world dances.





Hermes gestured to the Goddesses with his hand. 'Paris, when you have decided which of these three is the most beautiful you must give her this golden apple.'

Suddenly Paris felt the cold weight of a golden apple against the palm of his hand. He looked down at it. When he looked up again Hermes was gone. The three Goddesses glowered at him. Paris's mouth went dry. He knew that if he chose one, the others would hate him. And the hatred of a Goddess is something to be avoided at all costs.

He stood motionless, dumbfounded, hardly daring to breathe. Hera, the magnificent Queen of Heaven, stepped forward. She whispered urgently, 'Paris, choose me and I will give you power. Choose me and I will make you a great king — half the world will be yours.' She stepped back.

Athene came forward, her grey eyes shining with light. 'Paris, choose me and you'll never lose a battle. Choose me and you will be famous the length and breadth of the world for your wisdom.' She stepped back.

It was Aphrodite's turn. The Goddess of Love stepped towards Paris, smelling of musk and honey. Her voice was deep and enchanting. 'Paris, choose me, and I will give you the most beautiful woman in the world.'

'Who is she?' whispered Paris.

'Her name is Helen. She is the wife of red-haired Menelaus, the king of Sparta. I will bind her with love for you. She will give you everything!'

'What does she look like?'

Aphrodite smiled. 'She is as beautiful as I am.'

Then she stepped back.

Paris lifted the golden apple above his shoulder. The choice was clear as daylight.

'The golden apple goes to Aphrodite.'

Aphrodite was true to her word. She made Helen fall in love with Paris. Paris stole her from her husband and carried her across the blue Aegean Sea to the city of Troy. Menelaus was beside himself with rage. He sent messengers to all the other Greek kings — Agamemnon, Nestor, Ajax, Odysseus — and a huge army set sail. For ten long years they laid siege to Troy.

Hera and Athene, furious that they hadn't been given the golden apple, threw in their lot with the Greeks. And those vengeful Goddesses didn't rest until Troy's walls were crumbling, blood-soaked rubble and Paris was dead.

When the city had been destroyed, when Menelaus had won back his wife, the Greek kings set sail for home, swollen with pride, their ships crammed with the spoils of war.

