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opening extract from

The Boy Who Cried Horse

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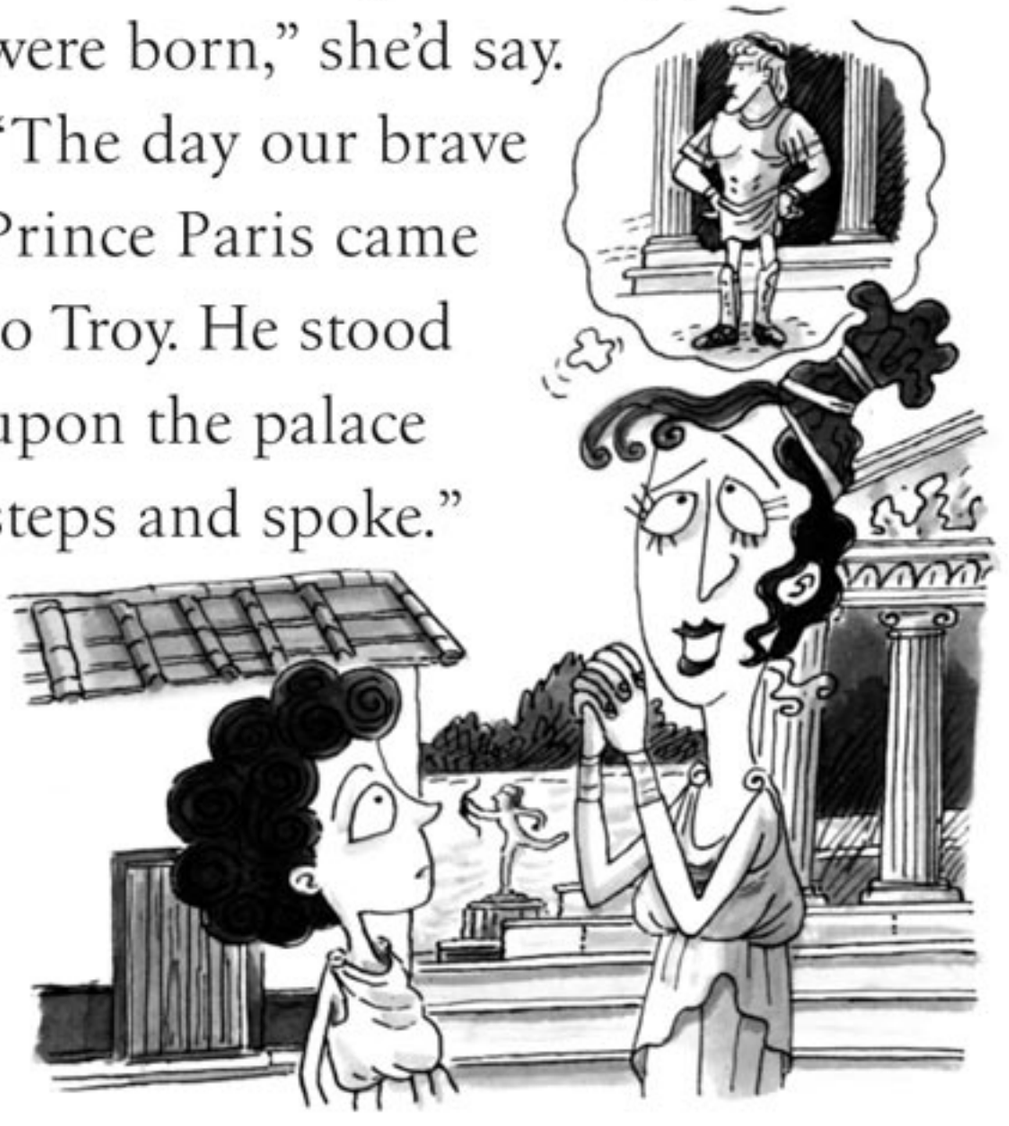
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Chapter One

My mother used to tell me stories.

"I'll not forget the day you were born," she'd say. "The day our brave Prince Paris came to Troy. He stood upon the palace steps and spoke."



Then Mother would stand and raise her chin. Her eyes would gaze into the distance and she became our prince. "People Trojan, greet you I with deep joy, godly thanks give us for journey safely homeward be today in shiply sail."



"Why does he speak like that?" I'd ask.



Mother would shake her head. "Our Paris is good with a sword. Hopeless with words. He tangles them up like wet washing on a windy day."

And then she'd tell me how Prince Paris showed the Trojans his new wife, Queen Helen. "Lovelier than a great steak pie," she'd sigh.



When you are starving every day, then *nothing* is lovelier than a great steak pie. We were lucky to get a little rat meat in our watery soup.

The trouble was Prince Paris had *stolen* Queen Helen from the Greeks. And no sooner had he landed back in Troy, than the Greeks arrived...



"We want her back!" her husband, Menelaus, said. "We'll stay right here, outside your walls, until you starve to death."



"Not a chancely hopeful thing, think I," Prince Paris laughed. "We overstuffy with foodlets!"



"And that happened the day you were born," my mother said. "Ten hungry years later, and still we battle on."

In the palace, Prince Paris found ways to feed the people. Troy was a huge city with many little gates to sneak food in. A deep well in the market place made sure that we had water.



The best food went to Paris and Helen, and the next best to the fighting men who stood guard on Troy's massive walls.



The next best went to the people working in the palace. The rest of us were left to live on scraps – or any rats that we could catch.

But soon even the rats were as thin as the east wind that blew across the plains of Troy.



And that was why I learned to be a storyteller.