

## EPISODE 3 – Stolen Love

CD 1 tracks 7-10

total running time: 16:30

### *Paris goes to Sparta* (⌚ 4:43)

In the city of Troy, there was Paris, the youngest son of King Priam, and he was in love with Helen, the wife of Menelaus, the king of Sparta. Every day he would go to the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and he would say prayers, and he would make offerings. And Aphrodite was not deaf to his prayers.

5 And some little while later, as chance would have it – if there is such a thing as chance when three goddesses are watching any human being – there was a message that had to be taken from Troy to Sparta. And Paris went to his father, King Priam, and he begged to be allowed to take the message. And Priam nodded his head and he said, “I see no reason why not.”

And a ship was prepared and the sails were lowered, the anchors were lifted. Paris stepped  
10 onto the deck of the ship. The prow of the ship cut a path through the churning, blue waves of the sea from Troy to Sparta.

And Paris made his way to the palace of red-haired Menelaus and Menelaus welcomed this Trojan prince and he took the message. And he told Paris to sit down at the feasting table, and meat and bread and wine and honey cakes were served. And Paris ate and he drank. And  
15 then the door of the feasting hall opened and in came Helen.

And when Paris saw her, it was as though all sensation faded. His eyes were filled with her beauty. His ears were filled with the sound of her voice. His nostrils were filled with her scent. She sat down opposite him at the table. Without knowing what he was doing, with the tip of his finger he reached across and, in the spilt wine on the tabletop, he wrote ‘I love you’.

20 And she read it and she smeared it with the back of her hand. When she set down her drinking cup, Paris seized it and he kissed the place her lips had touched. And she turned and she looked at her husband, Menelaus, but Menelaus was talking to somebody else. He hadn’t seen.

When the meal was over, Paris seized her hand and he pressed it to his heart. But she pulled  
25 her hand away. She took her husband’s arm and she walked out of the room.

But the next day, as chance would have it – if there is such a thing as chance when three goddesses are watching any human being – King Menelaus was called away urgently, on urgent business. And so he called to his wife Helen. He said, “Helen, my wife, you must entertain this Trojan prince.”

30 And so it was that Paris found himself alone with Helen. And he took her hand and he pressed it to his lips. And in that moment Aphrodite loosed a second arrow, which struck Helen in the heart, and she melted into Paris’ arms and they kissed.

And together they stole what treasures they could from the palace of red-haired Menelaus and they made their way, running and running, across Sparta and down to where the ship was

35 waiting. They loaded the golden treasures onto the deck of the ship. The anchors were lifted.  
the sails were lowered, and they sailed away.

But they didn't go far. They went to the island of Cranae and there they lay on the soft grass,  
locked in one another's arms, each one lost in the other's beauty. And they kissed.

And from Cranae they made slow progress across the blue Aegean sea, stopping at every  
40 single island, until there wasn't one island between Sparta and Troy on which they had not  
slept for a night together.

### ***An oath remembered*** (🕒 3:07)

When Menelaus returned to his palace, he found his treasure rooms empty. His wife had gone!  
They had been stolen by that pretty Trojan prince! Menelaus travelled across Greece to the  
palace of his brother, the high king of all Greeks – Agamemnon. Menelaus said, “Years ago,  
when we Greek kings first heard of Helen's beauty, we gathered in the palace of her foster  
5 father in the hope that we could win her hand. Her foster father slaughtered a stallion before  
us, laid out the severed pieces across the floor and each of us kings stood upon the severed  
limbs of that horse and swore that, when Helen chose a husband, we would accept her  
decision and we promised that, if ever she was stolen from her husband, we would come to  
his aid. Helen chose me that day. The time has come to make those other Greek kings honour  
10 the oath they swore. We will gather an army, the like of which the world has never seen. We  
will sail across the sea and we'll fetch back my wife, even if we have to flatten Troy to do so!”

Agamemnon was less anxious to risk life and limb. He sent envoys to Troy, demanding that  
Helen be returned. But the envoys reached the city long before Paris and Helen, who were  
stopping on every little island in the blue Aegean.

15 And so the envoys came back with this message. “I, King Priam, father of Troy, have no  
knowledge of this Helen. But, if my son has chosen to take her from you, it must have been  
with good reason and I will defend his decision, no matter what the cost.”

The high King Agamemnon had no choice then but to send messengers to all the other Greek  
kings. High, proud ships were built. Armies were mustered. Agamemnon had a prophet, a  
20 seer, a wise man. Far-sighted Calchas announced that the Greeks would only be successful  
in this venture if they had among their number the son of Peleus and Thetis, the young man  
Achilles.

Achilles' father, warlike Peleus, was anxious for his son to go and fight but his mother had  
stolen him away. Rumour had it that he was hidden on the island of Skyros. The high king of  
25 all Greece, Agamemnon, sent for one of the Greek kings, a man famous for his tricks, for his

love of deceit and intrigue, a man of nimble wits. His name was Odysseus.

***Odysseus' cunning plan*** (📍 4:39)

King Odysseus was sent to find this hidden Achilles. Odysseus disguised himself and his ship as though he was a merchant and then he sailed across the sea to the little island of Skyros.

Odysseus, in his disguise, searched the court of the king of Skyros, with no success. Then he  
5 went down to the harbour, to his crew in his ship. And he said, "My friends, I go now to the palace of the princess of Skyros. Give me the morning and then I need you to make a great commotion. I want swords clashed against shields. I want the sound of bronze trumpets, as though you are attacking, as though you are invading."

Then Odysseus went to the palace of the princess of Skyros. He asked for an empty room and  
10 he covered the floor of that room with things a merchant might bring, things a merchant might sell – bolts of embroidered cloth, beautiful rugs, mirrors, jewels, food, wine. Under one of those rugs he slipped a battered, rusty old sword.

Then he told the servants to fetch the princess and her friends. In came the women. They fell upon the merchant's wares. They wondered at these beautiful things that had been brought  
15 from so far away. They were surprised to see among them a battered old sword. They paid it no heed. They tasted the food and the wine.

Odysseus looked from one woman to the next. Surely none of these was Achilles in disguise – they were all so beautiful. Each one was beautiful in her own way.

Then there came a great commotion, the sounds of swords clashed against shields. the sound  
20 of bronze trumpets. The women stood. They looked at one another in horror. Except for one. One knelt. She peeled back the corner of a rug, grabbed that battered, rusty old sword and bounded out of the palace to attack the invaders.

Odysseus rushed outside. He put his hand upon her shoulder. She turned and looked at him, her eyes blazing. Odysseus said, "You can languish here no longer. Your disguise has failed.  
25 I know who you are. You're the son of warlike Peleus and the sea-nymph Thetis. You are Achilles. Listen to me! I have been sent to find you. You know who needs your help? The great king, the high king of all Greece – Agamemnon needs you to help him. There's a war coming. A great wrong has been done us Greeks and we need you to help us. We need you to fight against the Trojans. If you come with us, I promise you, you will be the greatest warrior in the  
30 greatest army in the history of the world. If you come with us and fight alongside us Greeks, I promise you, your name will be synonymous with ferocity for as long as men and women speak!"

As he listened, Achilles began to grin. He took off the clothes of women, and he dressed himself instead as a warrior. He and his best friend Patroclus sailed across the sea to the  
35 palace of Achilles' father. Warlike Peleus gave his son all the fateful wedding gifts – the spear that could cut through the wind, the golden breastplate covered in silver stars, the four white horses who once had been the crests of waves. The ant army, the Myrmidons, were put under Achilles' command and the last gift was given to Achilles, the gift of the god of death.

The black urn inlaid in silver, across its front a picture of three goddesses, the three fates: the  
40 first who spins out the thread of a life; the second who measures out its length; and the third  
who cuts it.

Achilles and Patroclus prepared to go to war.

### ***Paris and Helen enter Troy* (☺ 4:01)**

Finally Paris and Helen reached the shores of Troy. They made their way across the plain of  
Troy and soon the city walls were stretching high above their heads. And, ranged along the  
walls, all the men and the women and the children of Troy, each person holding in his hand or  
her hand a rock or a stone. They'd heard stories of how Paris had been tricked into falling in  
5 love with a Greek queen and, fearing that she might be the cause of a terrible war, they were  
going to stone her to death as soon as she entered the city.

But when Helen came through the great bronze Scaean gates, every man, as he looked at her,  
fell in love with her. The women were enchanted by her beauty. The children fell in love with  
her. And, not only the people – the horses of the city fell in love with Helen. The dogs, the cats,  
10 the pigeons, perched on the gutters, fell in love with her. Even the stones of the city turned  
towards her in some strange crystalline way, as iron filings might turn towards a magnet.

And King Priam swore a solemn oath, by all the mighty gods and goddesses, that nobody  
would ever take Helen away.

Across the sea there came a thousand ships, each one with a bright sail, each one crammed  
15 with warriors with flashing breastplates and plumed helmets.

One morning a warrior at the front of the first ship blew a bronze trumpet. The men aboard  
that ship, they stood and saw what he had seen – land! A broad beach of white sand; behind  
it a long flat fertile plain, fields, farms, vineyards, shambling cattle. On each side of the plain,  
a wriggling river. Behind each river, a long ridge leading to a headland overlooking the sea.  
20 At the back of this plain, a city wrapped in stone, the walls as tall and broad as any they'd  
ever seen. Behind the city, a mountain rose into cloud. Those who saw that sight then felt a  
tingling, a mingling in their guts of excitement and terror. Surely, they thought, some god or  
goddess must have had a hand in the building of such a place? Surely some god or goddess  
must watch over it? Perhaps this was the dwelling place of the very gods and goddesses  
25 themselves!