



The House of Atreus

Agamemnon and Menelaus's father was Atreus the King of Mycenae. While Atreus was ruling his nephew Aegistheus murdered him so that his father own Thyestes could be king. Agamemnon and Menelaus were forced into exile. They found refuge in Sparta where the King Tyndareus took them in. There they grew up and married Tyndareus' two daughters, Clytemnestra and Helen. Agamemnon with the help of Sparta took back his father's throne in Mycenae and killed Thyestes. Menelaus became King of

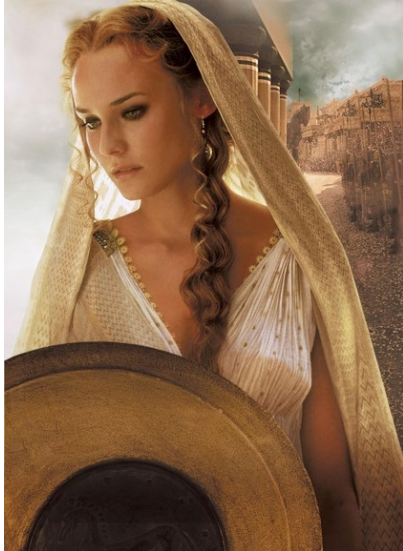
Sparta once Tyndareus died. Agamemnon and Clytemnestra had four children, Iphigenia, Orestes, Electra and Chyrsothemis.

A few years later Paris abducts Helen and as a result activates the Oath of Tyndareus which had previously been taken by many of the Kings of Greece. Agamemnon now ruler of Mycenae was the most power of the Greek kings and was made high commander of the great Greek army. He gathered all the armies of Greece together at Aulis, a port town so that the Greeks could launch their ships at the Trojans. However, there was no wind to be found and the ships could not set sail.

Agamemnon consulted with the Greek soothsayer, Calchas who informed him that he had angered the goddess Artemis. Previously Agamemnon had hunted and killed a deer at a grove that was sacred to Artemis and then he boasted that he was a greater hunter even that the Artemis. To punish him Artemis demanded that either he step down from his command as leader of the Greek army or sacrifice his eldest daughter, Iphigenia. Agamemnon was an ambitious man and there was no way he was going to lose the opportunity to lead the greatest army the world has ever seen.



With the help of Odysseus, King of Ithica and Diomedes, King of Argos they arranged for a mock marriage between Iphigenia and Achilles to lure Iphigenia out from her home in Mycenae. When she arrived at Aulis she was taken to be sacrificed to Artemis. Artemis seeing that Agamemnon was actually going to sacrifice his own daughter swooped down and replaced the child with a deer that had been disguised as Iphigenia and took her away. Agamemnon never knew that the sacrifice had been switched as once the deer had been killed the winds returned and the Greeks finally set sail to wage the largest war that the world had ever seen. Meanwhile Agamemnon left his wife and three children back in Mycenae where his wife, Clytemnestra was torn between anguish and fury at the fact that her own husband had murdered their eldest child. A fury that one day would be the end of Agamemnon.



Helen of Troy

Long ago when Greece was filled with heroes and demi gods there was a women of such incomparable beauty that Kings would gather their armies together, thousands of men just so they could be associated with her. This women's name was Helen, Helen of Troy.

Helen had two fathers one was Zeus, the king of the gods the other was Tyndareus the King of Sparta. Her mother was Leda, a mortal and the queen of Sparta. According to legend, Zeus came to Leda in the form of a swan and fathered Helen. That night Leda also slept with her husband and thus Helen was born to two fathers. It was said that she was born from an egg laid by her mother. From birth, Helen was divine, noble, and exotic. Helen also had one sister called Clytemnestra and two twin brothers called Castor and Pollux.

Helen was raised in the house of King Tyndareus of Sparta, along with her two brothers and her sister. There, she grew to be an incomparable beauty. Her loveliness incited jealousy in women, both mortals and goddesses. Her beauty drove men to desperate actions. In her teens, Helen was kidnapped by King Theseus of Athens. Desiring to have Zeus as a father-in-law and hearing tales of Helen's beauty, he kidnapped the girl and brought her to Athens. Helen was rescued by her bothers, Castor and Pollux while Theseus was stuck in the Underworld.



While kidnapping a woman for marriage was not as despicable then as it is now, Helen's kidnapping made King Tyndareus realised that he had to quickly find a suitable husband for this desirable

beauty with the divine birthright.

Oath of Tyndareus

Word of Helen's marriage spread rapidly across ancient Greece. King Tyndareus' house was besieged by suitors eager to marry Helen. Among the suitors were many famous Greek leaders. Among them were Odysseus, Ajax, and brothers Agamemnon and Menelaus. This was a dangerous situation for King Tyndareus. There were so many important and powerful suitors, but the king could choose only one to be Helen's husband. He was fearful of insulting all the others. His decision would make all of them losers, maybe even vengeful losers. He feared attack.



So, King Tyndareus accepted an arrangement proposed by Odysseus who, although officially among Helen's suitors, really wanted to marry the King's niece, Penelope. Odysseus was known as the cleverest king in Greece so in exchange for Penelope's hand in marriage, Odysseus conceived a ingenious strategy that would stop revenge from the suitors not chosen to marry Helen. The suitors were gathered together and, per Odysseus' strategy, each swore an oath to respect the king's choice of husband for Helen and to protect the marriage against harm. This meant that if any of the suitors were to try and steal Helen away all the other suitors must help protect and defend Helen.

After the suitors swore not to retaliate, Menelaus was chosen to be Helen's husband. The newly-weds settled in Sparta. Soon, Helen gave birth to a daughter, Hermione. But, the routine of married life was to be short lived for Helen. Fate had woven a larger tapestry of life for her. As she raised her newborn child, other forces, both mortal and divine, were in motion. Ultimately, these forces prevented Helen from settling into home life and triggered a series of events that led to an awful affair, murder, mayhem, cheating, and the founding of Rome.



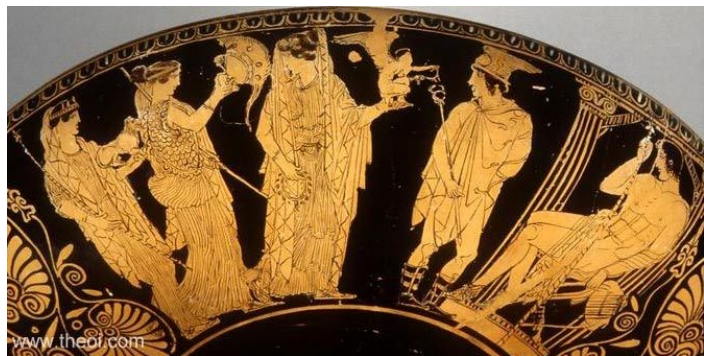


The Judgment of Paris

The wedding of Peleus, a former Argonaut and Thetis, a daughter of Poseidon, was a large event. The wedding was very popular, it was attended by both the gods and mortals. However, one goddess who was not invited was Eris, the goddess of discord and strife. Insulted because she was not invited, Eris decided to cause

trouble at the wedding. She threw a golden apple into the crowd with the words "The Fairest" inscribed on it. Three goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite all claimed the apple should be for them. Zeus knew that to involve himself in this contest would only bring misery on himself. Instead, Zeus visited Troy and asked the Prince Paris if he would choose who 'The Fairest' god was.

All three goddesses did not want to lose so they bribed Paris. Hera said that if you choose me I will give you power over all of Asia. Athena said that if you choose me I will give you wisdom beyond any mortal and victory in battle. Aphrodite said that if you choose me I will give you the



most beautiful woman in the world. Paris picked Aphrodite for the title "The Fairest." Both Athene and Hera were very angry that they were not picked and vowed to hate the Trojans for as long as they survived.

The most beautiful women in the world was Helen, however there was one problem, Helen was already married to Menelaus, King of Sparta. There are many different versions as to what happened, some say that Aphrodite made Helen fall in love with Paris and they ran away together. Other stories say that Aphrodite helped Paris kidnap her. Either way Helen returned to Troy with Paris. All of Helens previous suitors had made the Oath of Tyndareus and were obliged to help Menelaus get her back and thus the Trojan War began.

