



## Stories from the Iliad

*Jeanie Lang*

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In the deep forest that clothes Mount Ida, not far from the strong city of Troy, Paris, son of King Priam, watched his father's flocks by night.

Suddenly through the dim woods he saw a light, as if the golden sun and silver moon shone both together. And, lo! in the radiance of this light there stood before him the three fairest of the goddesses—queenly Hera, wise Athene, and lovely Aphrodite.

Like music stealing through the trees came the soft voice of Hera:

“Of all mortal men art thou the most beautiful, Paris, and to thee do we come for judgment. Tell us which of us is the fairest of all, and to that one whom thou so deemest, give this golden apple.”

So spake Hera, and placed in the hand of Paris an apple of purest gold.

Again she spake: “If to me, Hera, queen of goddesses, and wife of mighty Zeus, king of all the gods, thou dost grant the prize of loveliness, Power immeasurable shall be thine. King shalt thou be of the lands where the grey dawn rises, and king even to where the red sun goes down. A hundred peoples shall call thee lord.”

She was silent, and the voice of Athene, fair and pure as a silver moonbeam, broke the stillness of the starless night.

“To me award the prize,” she said, “and wise as the gods shalt thou be. With me as thy friend and guide, all things will be possible to thee.”

Last of all, standing in a rosy light, as of the dawning sunlight in the spring, spoke Aphrodite.

“What are Power and Wisdom, fair Paris?” she pled. “Wisdom and Power bring no joy at last. I will give thee Love, and for thy wife thou shalt have the fairest woman in all the world.”

And Paris, the melody of her voice still in his ears, as he gazed spellbound on her face of wondrous beauty, handed to Aphrodite the golden prize.

So was it that the wrath of the gods came upon Paris, son of Priam. For Hera and Athene, filled with rage, vowed to be revenged upon Paris and all his race, and made all the gods pledge themselves to aid them in their vengeance...

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