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TROJAN WAR
Thomas
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TROJAN WAR

The Story Behind The Story

For the past two millennia and more, Homer's epic poems Iliad and Odyssey have been the major sources for what is "known" about the Trojan War of some 3000 years ago. But it was not always thus.

Homer's masterpieces spoke primarily of events in the ninth year of the siege of Troy and of Odysseus' long voyage home. Yet, in ancient times, there were other Greek works, since lost, that related other aspects of the Trojan War and its aftermath. Known as the Epic Cycle, they included The Cypria (which dealt with events preceding The Iliad), The Aethiopis (the days afterward, through the death of Achilles), The Little Iliad (which carries the story through the building of the great wooden horse), The Sack of Ilium (the fall and destruction of Troy), and The Returns (the homecomings, some of them tragic, of the Greek heroes). Today only scattered fragments of these works remain, quoted in other writings of antiquity. In addition, the classic Greek tragedians wrote plays that highlighted certain events, most notably Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis and The Trojan Women and Aeschylus' Agamemnon.

In later days, the literati of Roman civilization took up the story. Perhaps as late as several centuries A.D., Quintus of Smyrna wrote The Fall of Troy (also known as The War at Troy), which covers the same ground as the first four poems of the Epic Cycle. In his Dialogues of the second century A.D., a Syrian named Lucian related the tragic Judgment of Paris, which led to the war. The Roman poet Ovid focused on various aspects of the war in his Metamorphoses and especially in The Heroides. Other details were related by such authors as Apollodorus, Servius, Pausanias, and others. These works sometimes contradicted each other, but out of them all emerged Western civilization's first epic story—that of the struggle fought over Helen of Troy.

From all these sources, this graphic novel of The Trojan War has been assembled…that the whole story may be known….

Writer – Roy Thomas
Penciler – Miguel Sepulveda
Inker – Jason Martin
Colorist – Arthur Fujiwara
Letterer – Dave Sharpe
Cover Artist – Dennis Calero

Special Thanks –
Allo, Suter, Nausedas, Ginter
Production – Paul Acerios
Assistant Editor – Michael Horwitz
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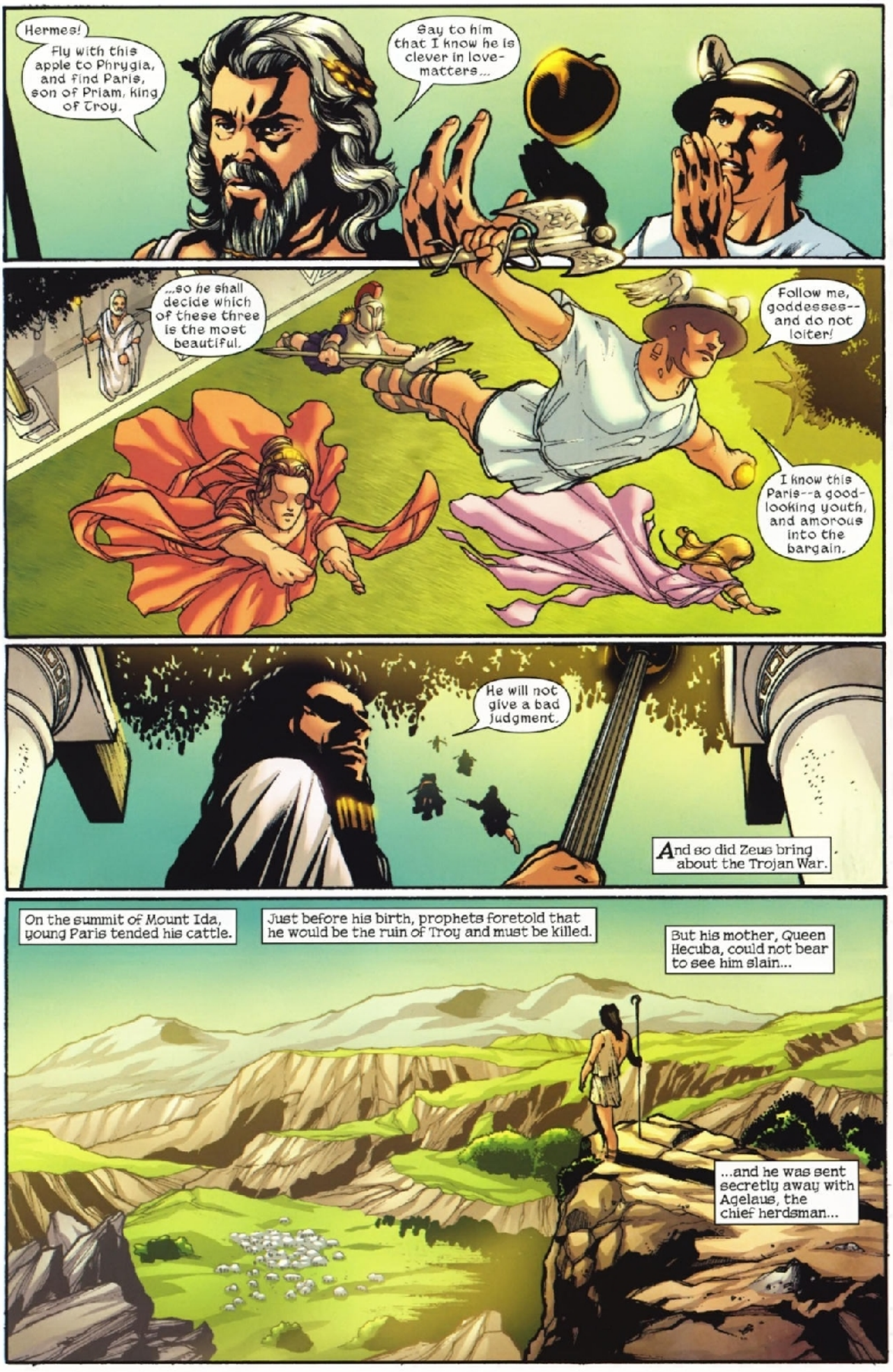
There was a time when Zeus, king of the gods, plotted with the goddess who was Justice incarnate...
Themis...the countless tribes of Man, though widely dispersed, oppress the surface of the deep-bosomed Earth.
I, too, have pity in my heart for the all-nurturing Gaea.
Then let us cause a great struggle in Troy--an *Ilian War*--that the load of death might empty the world!
And this shall be the way the plan of Zeus shall come to pass...

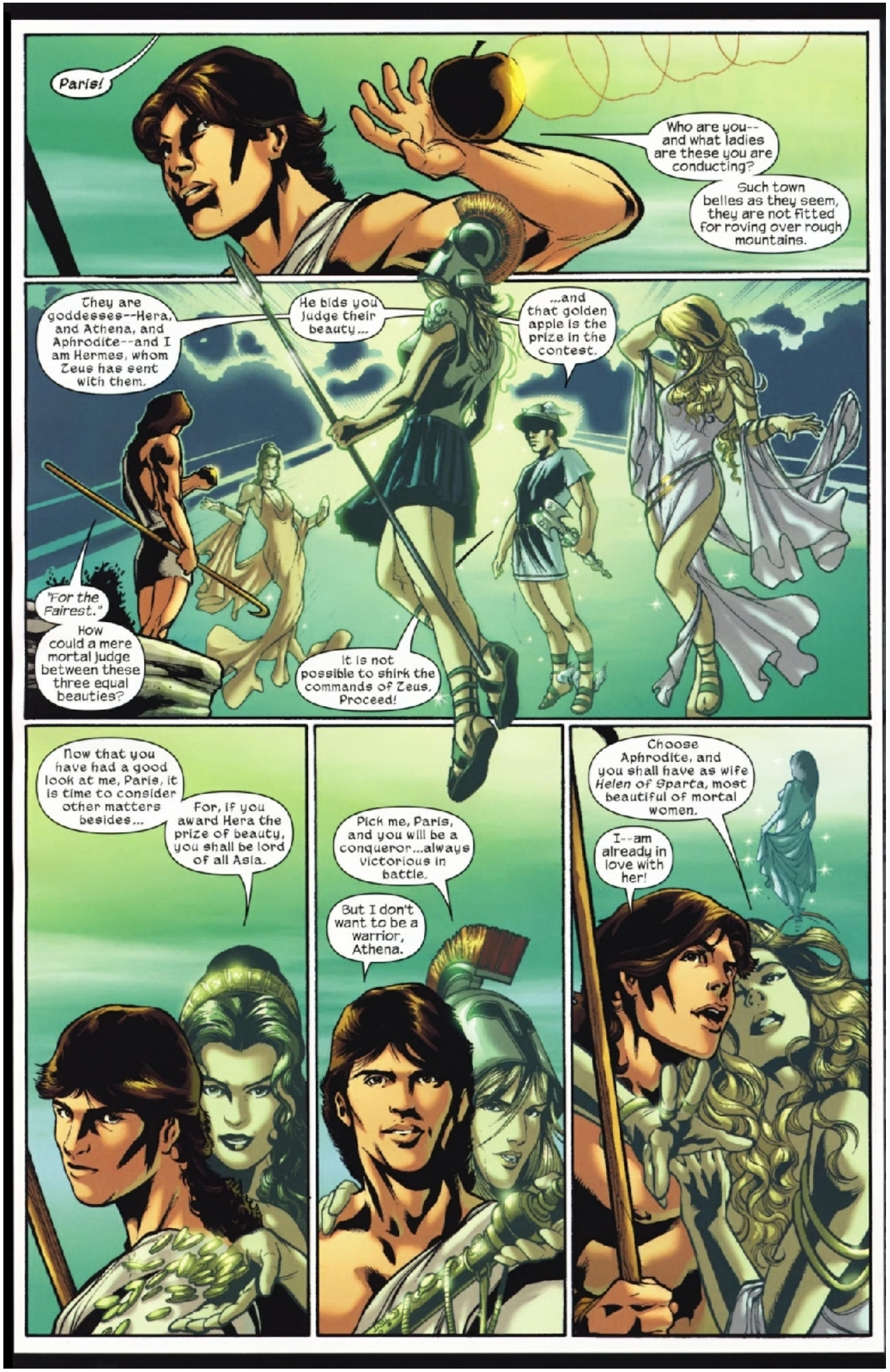
To please my wife Hera, the sea goddess Thetis avoided union with me.
In my rage, I swore she would become the wife of a mortal...
...Peleus, that greatest of Achaean warriors.
Even now, the gods gather on Mount Pelion for their wedding...
...to feast, and to bring gifts.

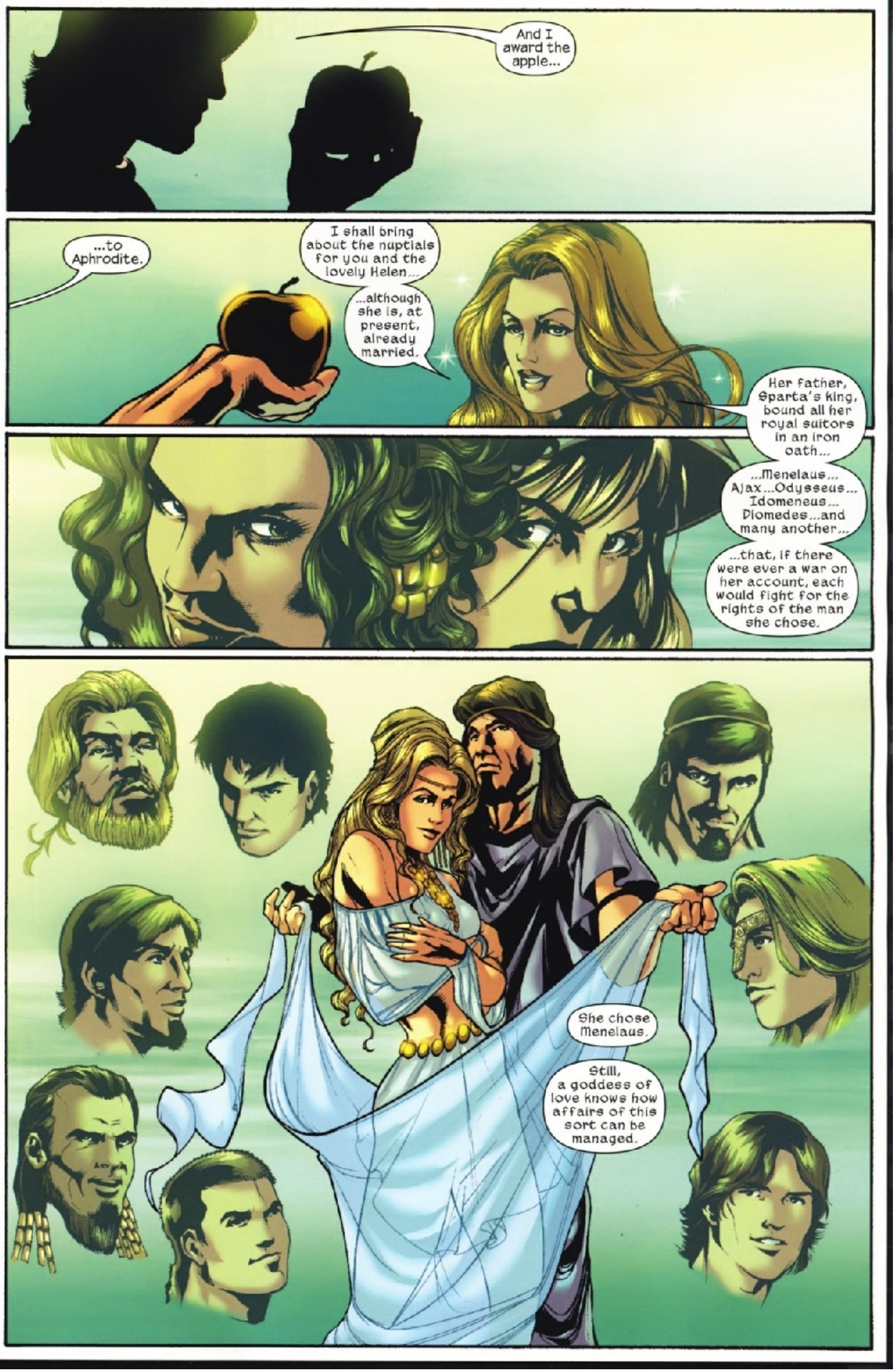
"Cheiron, the centaur, gives Peleus a stout ashen spear..."
Athena herself polished it...
...and Hephaestus, the blacksmith god, has fitted it with a spearhead.
Peleus, my love...
Beautiful Thetis...
WHY?
Why was I not invited to this banquet?

Eris! How have you entered, unobserved by any?
Goddess-- on this joyful wedding day, Hermes plays his lyres...and the Muses sing.
But your very name mean *discord*... *strife*...
And so I could not be present as a guest?
Yet I, too, have brought...
KALLISTEI
...a gift...
KALLISTEI
...for the *fairest!*

I claim this golden apple, with its inscription-- "For the Fairest."
It was, of course, meant for me.
No. It is mine...
...for am I not sister and wife to Zeus himself?
Wisdom and warfare are beautiful in their way, Hera...
...and so, thus, is Athena.
And who could possibly find fault with me?
Is not Aphrodite goddess of love and beauty?
Let it be decided, then, by Zeus!
Yes. Father, we earnestly call upon you...
Be judge in this matter!
Nay! Loving you as I do with equal affection, I decline to arbitrate.
If it were possible, I would with pleasure see you all winners.
More-- in giving the prize of beauty to one, I would certainly incur the hatred of the rest!


Hermes!
Fly with this apple to Phrygia, and find Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy.
Say to him that I know he is clever in love-matters...
...so he shall decide which of these three is the most beautiful.
Follow me, goddesses--and do not loiter!
I know this Paris--a good-looking youth, and amorous into the bargain.
He will not give a bad judgment.
And so did Zeus bring about the Trojan War.
On the summit of Mount Ida, young Paris tended his cattle.
Just before his birth, prophets foretold that he would be the ruin of Troy and must be killed.
But his mother, Queen Hecuba, could not bear to see him slain...
...and he was sent secretly away with Agelaus, the chief herdsman...


Paris!
Who are you--and what ladies are these you are conducting?
Such town belles as they seem, they are not fitted for roving over rough mountains.
They are goddesses--Hera, and Athena, and Aphrodite--and I am Hermes, whom Zeus has sent with them.
He bids you judge their beauty...
...and that golden apple is the prize in the contest.
"For the Fairest."
How could a mere mortal judge between these three equal beauties?
It is not possible to shirk the commands of Zeus. Proceed!
Now that you have had a good look at me, Paris, it is time to consider other matters besides...
For, if you award Hera the prize of beauty, you shall be lord of all Asia.
Pick me, Paris, and you will be a conqueror...always victorious in battle.
But I don't want to be a warrior, Athena.
Choose Aphrodite, and you shall have as wife *Helen of Sparta*, most beautiful of mortal women.
I--am already in love with her!


And I award the apple...
...to Aphrodite.
I shall bring about the nuptials for you and the lovely Helen...
...although she is, at present, already married.
Her father, Sparta's king, bound all her royal suitors in an iron oath...
...Menelaus... Ajax...Odysseus... Idomeneus... Diomedes...and many another...
...that, if there were ever a war on her account, each would fight for the rights of the man she chose.
She chose Menelaus.
Still, a goddess of love knows how affairs of this sort can be managed.