

FROM THE BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF HORRIBLE HISTORIES

**TERRY DEARY**



# TERRIBLE TRUE TALES

## GREEKS

Inside illustrations by Helen Flook

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# THE TORTOISE AND THE DARE



# INTRODUCTION

**Olympia, Greece, 776 BCE**

Aesop the Greek storyteller said: *Slow and steady wins the race.*



It started with the mighty Heracles, the hero of the gods. Heracles won a race at Olympia, the home of the gods. Well, he *would* win a race – he was the strongest, fastest hero the world has ever known. I think he was also like a lot of people. Vain.



“The world must remember my great victory,” Heracles said. “Humans must have races every four years! They will be called the Olympics.”



The priests said it was a good idea and that’s how the games began.

But Heracles didn’t just start the Olympic Games... he started a lot of trouble.

Oh, yes, a lot of people enjoy watching the winners. They love the show, the sport and the excitement. But what about the cheating? What about the arguments?



What about the losers? And what about the women? Women are not allowed to race, of course. They are not even allowed to watch. If they try, they are executed... thrown off a cliff.



Ooooh! It makes me so angry. I am an angry sort of person. I was angry when I was a girl, all those years ago, and I am still angry when I remember...



I am angry with my brother, Cypselis. *Dear Cypselis* had a bet on a race. And what was the prize? Me! Yes, he bet his own *sister*! Would *you* do that? No, of course not. So do not blame me for being angry now when I tell you the tale of 'The Tortoise and the Dare'.

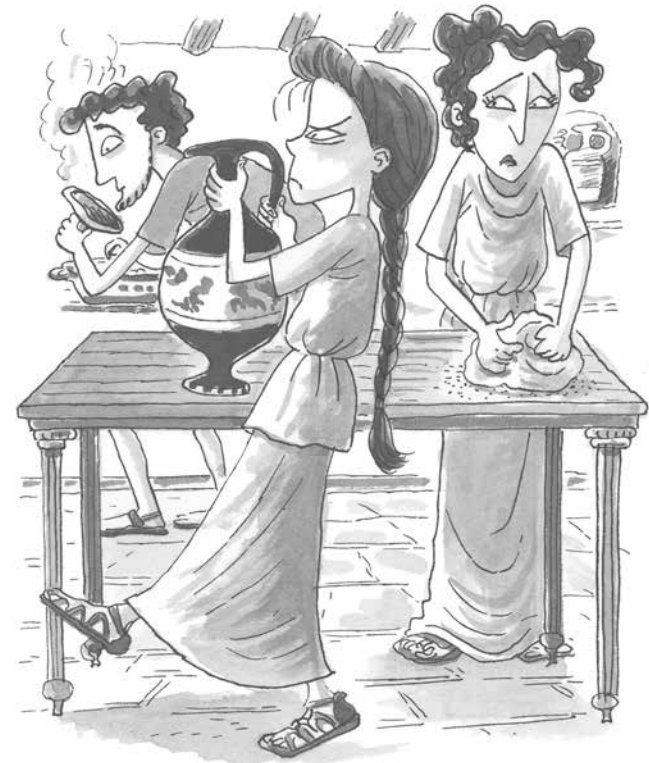
# CHAPTER 1

My brother Cypselis ran in from school, bubbling like a soup pot. He was so happy he didn't notice how miserable the family



was.

“The Olympic Games start next week and our head teacher, Master Sophos, said we can have our own school Olympics tomorrow. There will be all sorts of prizes and it'll be more exciting than the real games.”



“Nice,” I muttered.

“The boys have already started talking about who will win. We’re doing the same events as the grown-ups. There’s the foot race – 200 paces – then the double foot race – 400 paces. We’ll have the standing long jump, quoit throwing and javelin!”



“Great,” I said.

“I think I could win the foot race,” he babbled. “I’ll practise after dinner. What are we having for dinner, Mother? Cheese



and milk?”

“Bread and water,” she sighed.

“I love cheese and milk!”

“Bread and water,” I said, louder.

Cypselis blinked. “An athlete needs

cheese and milk.”

“Where will we get it from?” I snapped.

Cypselis laughed. “Why, from Nan the goat of course.”

Father shook his head. “They came and took Nan away from us.”

“Who did?”

“The priests from the temple. They always have a feast when the games start. They will sacrifice 20 goats to Pelops. They took



Nan to sacrifice.”

“Then what will I eat?”

Cypselis wailed.

That’s when I lost my temper.

“Oh, never mind

about poor Nan – who’s nearly as old as us. Never mind how

Mother and Father will get through the

winter. Never mind how we’ll find the money for another goat.

All you can



think about is your own stomach!”

Cypselis blushed. He wasn't really thoughtless, just stupid. He nodded. "Sorry, Ellie," he muttered.

"You deserve to be sacrificed like



\* As you know, Pelops was the grandson of Zeus. When he was a boy, his father cut him into pieces, stewed his flesh in a pot, and served him as a feast for the gods.

Pelops\*!" I raged.

"Maybe I can win us a goat if I win the race," he said quietly.

I stopped shouting and listened. "A goat is the prize?"

"Not exactly... I had a dare with Big Bacchiad in my class. He said he will give me a goat if I can beat him."

I frowned. "And what will you give him if *he* beats *you*?" I asked.

Cypselis muttered something.

"What did you say?"

He looked up with a smile as weak as water. "I said he could have you to be his slave, Ellie. I'm sorry! Mother, don't let her hit me! Mother! Ouch!"