

ROMAN
DIARY

For Eloise, from W.S.F.

R.P.

For Fred and Peggy, Guin and Keith – who took us under their wings

D.P.

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ROMAN DIARY

THE JOURNAL OF
ILIONA A SLAVE

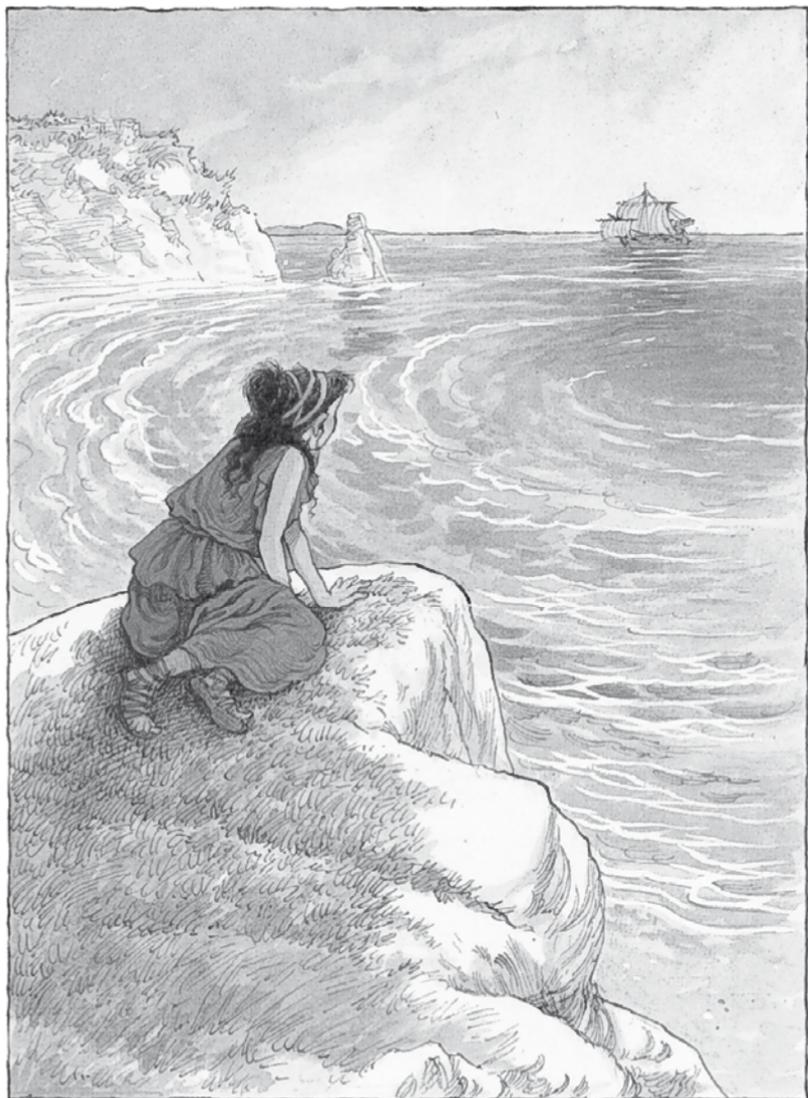
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THIS IS THE JOURNAL OF ME,
ILIONA, A NEW DIARY FOR MY
NEW LIFE IN EGYPT, YEAR 3 OF
THE 221ST OLYMPIAD.

MY thoughts run faster than my pen as I write this, for today I learned that our lives are about to change – we are to sail to Egypt on a galley that leaves the day after tomorrow!

We must make this sudden journey because my father has learned that a warehouse he owns in Egypt has burned to the ground. He must travel there immediately to see it rebuilt. Mother, my brother Apollo and I will all travel with him, and make our home in Alexandria for two years at least.

It is a thrilling and wonderful idea, for I have

never left our Greek island before. We have a fine, big house here on Mytilini, but in Egypt we will have an even bigger one. Everything else will be different, too. This, in truth, is why I have begun a diary, so that I might write down all that we do each day, and record everything new while it is still fresh.

To help in this project, my mother has given me a writing set – a bundle of fine goose-quills tied with a purple ribbon, a knife to sharpen them, a travelling ink-pot and a roll of the finest papyrus I have ever seen. Its surface is as smooth as the skin on Apollo's back.

In just two days, we shall board our ship in the harbour here, and set sail from Mytilini across the warm Aegean Sea. I think I shall like to stand at the front, let down my hair and feel the salt wind comb and curl it! In little more than a week we shall be in Alexandria. I cannot wait for this adventure to begin...

FIRST DAY OF OUR VOYAGE

This morning before dawn we came aboard our ship. As the sun rose, the crew put out their oars and began to beat a splashing tune on the water. From land, I have often watched boats leaving the harbour: they seem to glide gracefully over the blue sea. From the deck, the view is different: a hundred men or more must strain every muscle to push the boat forwards.

This morning, though, the crew did not labour for long. The wind blew from the land, and once a sail was raised, they could rest. I stood at the front of the ship with Apollo to let the wind comb my hair, as I had dreamed. Instead it teased it into a knotted mass which took an hour to untangle!

FIFTH DAY

Pity us! Apollo and I have lost everything we loved and cherished. Now we are orphans and slaves, to be bought and sold like goats.